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**A Christmas Wish...**  
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## Movement Mortgage: Markedly Different

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

Teresa Hagood was one of the first people I met when Steve and I moved to North Alabama from Mexico in 2000. She was a serious professional in the mortgage industry, and I knew that she was trusted implicitly by several successful realtors in

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## Caleb Lawler Of Edward Jones Financial Services: Hope From History

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

In this year of 2022, for the first time in our history, the classic and accepted definition of "recession" was changed into something that no one understands. Inflation is at a 40-year high, the markets are unhappy, and given what is going on in China, it would not

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**Publisher's Point**

*When Nothing Says  
All That's Necessary*

We have always heard that “the pen is mightier than the sword,” and I believe that’s true. Martin Luther penned his 95 theses, nailed them on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg, Germany, and the course of history was changed by way of a movement now called the Reformation. The framers of Declaration of Independence as well as the United States Constitution wrangled over what to commit to parchment, and they chose that expensive option because parchment was carefully crafted from animal skins for the use of creating and preserving important legal documents. And, each one of these documents was handwritten with great attention to detail.

So, who would have ever dreamed that a blank piece of paper (and not necessarily very expensive paper at that) would become the symbol of speaking volumes for millions of Chinese citizens? Tens of thousands of mostly young Chinese people across several cities have held up what is known in the paper industry as “A4,” or a standard 8 1/2” x 11” sheet of letterhead/printer paper sideways across their faces, much to the outrage of the powers that be. Why? They have had it with being tied up in knots with China’s COVID policy. If they are caught by the drones that fly over their



Photo credit: Hector Retamal/1P7 via Getty Images

dwelling without a mask on, they can be arrested and “vanish.”

Some are calling this the “A4 Revolution,” and as of this writing, it seems to be gathering steam. The idea behind using blank pieces of paper as a means of expressing protest actually started in Hong Kong in 2020, and it has spread. The thinking is that if you are not actually saying anything on the piece of paper, you can’t be arrested, but that simply is not true.

What are they protesting? Communism. For what are they longing? Freedom. Liberty. Democracy. Essentially, they want the things that we are allowing to slip through our fingers. One of the most interesting things I learned during my time in Iraq is that there is something

universal in the hearts of humans everywhere that cries out for freedom, for a sense of agency, the opportunity to breathe freely, and that longing transcends religion, gender, education, and socio-economic status. There were Iraqis who went and lived in the desert and waited for the Americans to return to liberate them as had been promised in the Gulf War. They knew they couldn’t stand up to Saddam alone, and they were willing to do anything to help the Coalition just to have a taste of what we take for granted and are in the process of discarding.

It is worth noting that just prior to Mao taking over China in the late 1940s, there was a remarkable revival that prepared and strengthened the leaders of the Chinese un-

derground church for any and all persecution. From then until now, the underground church has remained strong. And I have a feeling that we will see a rebirth spiritually of a whole new generation of Chinese believers. I do know this: prayer changes nations, and it is time for us to fight for China on our knees and in our prayer closets. If we can’t be bothered, or think that the whole idea of praying for a country with the idea of changing it is pretty silly, we do so at our own peril.

*Ali Elizabeth Turner*

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# The Fightin' Preacher

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



I have Phil Williams to “blame” for the topic of this particular Soldier column, and here is what happened. It was Publication Day, and I was coming up dry for a topic. That doesn’t happen very often, and without fail experience has taught me that if I just calm down, trust, pray, and wait, something will “pop.” As Phil did his opening radio monologue, which he entitles “The Right Side Way,” he told a story about a WWII soldier that reached out grabbed me, and I knew I had my topic. But, the question became, could I do it justice? Make it my own? Avoid getting sued for plagiarism? (I’m joking.) You and Phil will have to be the judge of that, so here goes.

Colonel Logan Weston was part of the legendary Merrill’s Marauders, a group of guys who served in the Pacific theatre and whose approach to waging war went on to become what we call today the Army Rangers. They were foot soldiers, they were an all-volunteer crew, and they embodied Special Forces in their strategies as well as their steely resolve.

Colonel Logan Weston was a man of deep faith and found a way, much like King David, to be a worshipping warrior who was deadly in battle. He had plans to become a chaplain, and that transfer didn’t come through. However, through WWII,

the Korean War as well as the Vietnam War, he functioned as a chaplain, and on one occasion, it saved his life.

Weston wore a silver cross on his belt, and one day, unbeknownst to him until after, he very nearly got picked off by a Japanese sniper. Right when the sniper was going to take his shot, the sun hit the cross, the glint and glare hit the sniper, and he was not able to take his shot because he couldn’t see. The sniper then set up again, and noticed that it was a cross that had prevented him from firing, and he felt he should take that as a sign that this man was not to be harmed.

On another occasion during the Korean War, Weston directed mortar fire into advancing North Korean forces in the Battle of Pusan. He was shot in the arm and the chest, and had to be evacuated in order to receive the medical attention that would save his life and enable him to fight once more in Vietnam. Before he left the battlefield that day, he walked down the battle line and encouraged his men. He also helped organize the evacuation of the wounded, even though he was one of them.

What Logan represented is that for which everyone it seems these days is clamoring: leadership. His men literally would have followed him into hell, and did so. They were fiercely loyal because he gave

them good reason to be. To this day he remains one of the most highly decorated soldiers in American history. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross,

Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts, a Legion of Merit, Presidential Unit Citations, the Combat Infantryman Badge (3 awards), and the Parachute Jump

Badge (3 awards).

*The Fightin' Preacher* is the book that tells the story, and I believe it is a book whose time has come...again.

His God called him to preach . . .  
His country called him to fight . . .  
His men called him

# The Fightin' Preacher

Colonel Logan E. Weston

## Special Feature

# A Christmas Wish

by Holly Hollman



There are two people missing from our recent City of Athens Relay for Life Team group photo -- at least physically.

Teammates Kathy Cothren and Helen Greenhaw rarely missed decorating our team's North Pole Stroll tree sponsored by Athens Utilities. Usually, we bundled up against the cold drizzle or even snowflakes. This year, on the morning set aside to decorate, the sun shown as if the love we carry for them and teammate Frank Travis was bright enough to remind us, "We're still with you, in your memories and your hearts."

In late March, Kathy, who had already defeated breast cancer but was battling colon cancer, asked me to help her sister take her and her husband Charles to Gulf Shores to watch their granddaughter Emma play in a softball tournament. While we were at a game, I received a phone call informing me my mentor from UNA, Bill Jarnigan, passed away. He also battled cancer and had not yet undergone his first chemo treatment.

Kathy hugged me as I cried, and I knew that despite her feisty attitude, her body was so thin and weak, and we would lose her to cancer as well.

On April 11, City Councilman Frank Travis died from his battle with cancer. By this time, Kathy's health had declined and she mainly stayed in bed. She could not hug me as I cried and told her the news. Kathy died on April 22.

That heart shattering experience drew several of our team members closer to Helen, who taught Kathy and had been close friends with her for more than 50 years. We made more time for lunches, birthday dinners, and phone calls, and we included Kathy's husband, Charles. On Oct. 17, Helen, Charles, Chief Floyd Johnson, and I ate lunch at Ro's, laughed, and told stories. That night, Helen and I talked on the phone for about 30 minutes. She died from a stroke the next morning.

How does our team find the Christmas spirit after a year like this?

We know we must continue the fight against cancer for



these three (Helen may not have had cancer, but she was an amazing caregiver more than once to those who did) and my mentor Bill.

We know we must continue the fight for Doug Gates who died this year from cancer, Councilman Jimmy Gill, Mayor Dan, Lisa Vaughn, and so many others our community has lost to cancer.

We know we must continue the fight to support our survivors, like team members Jennifer White and Marcia Day. We must continue the fight for survivors like my momma and my friends, from my UNA band pal Amanda Speegle to my go-to during my *Decatur Daily* reporting days, Daveen Stanford.

We must also learn from this experience despite our grief. This year taught us to pause from life's hectic race and take that road trip with a friend, get together for lunch, celebrate birthdays, call and check on someone.

We embrace the Christmas spirit through our memories, our dedication to keep fighting, and our desire to



spend time with loved ones.

Our North Pole Stroll tree is full of names in memory and in honor of those impacted by cancer. Our team encourages you to go to the Duck Pond and see the names. Chances are you'll know more than one person

honored on those branches.

We have a community-wide theme, "A Christmas in Candyland." Our tree states, "Curing Cancer Would Be Sweet."

I can't think of a better Christmas wish.

### Our two current fundraisers are:

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Call Kim at 256-233-8730



# Calendar of Events

## Athens Limestone Tourism Hosts North Pole Stroll Through December 31

The 2022 Athens North Pole Stroll will return to Big Spring Memorial Park in the Beaty Historic District during the month of December and this year, we have Electric Power! Each tree sponsored by area agencies, groups, businesses, and families will sparkle to life after dark and will be decked with a variety of decorations and themes. Sponsor a tree in honor of a loved one or to promote your business! Only \$100 and we provide the tree! 256-232-5411 for info.

## Environmental Warriors Wanted December 3

Join our ranks on December 3rd and rendezvous at the District 4 Shed, Saturday at 9 a.m. West Limestone needs some cleanup and we are called into service. Eat a donut and slam some coffee, the caravan leaves at 9:30 sharp. Partake in goodness. RSVP for donuts. Volunteers, to action! Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful (256)233-8000. KALBcares@gmail.com 22155 District 4 Shed Road, Elkmont, AL 35620.

## Storytelling's Tim Lowry's A Christmas Carol December 8

7:00pm - 9:00pm. Athens Storytelling Festival teller Tim Lowry is bringing his one-man retelling of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol to Athens to benefit the local Brodie family in their journey to adopt a child this winter. Join us in the new Athens Bible School Auditorium. Seating is limited. Get your tickets today! \$20 Adults \$10 Children 12 and under.

## Sippin' Cider Festival December 10

2:00pm - 8:00pm. Downtown merchants will be open late for shopping and dining. While shopping, patrons can sip on cider

### Digital Literacy Classes

Athens-Limestone County Public Library will host a series of Digital Literacy Classes in conjunction with Calhoun Community College & Drake State Community & Technical College. Classes will boost your digital confidence & provide you with skills and training needed in today's job market. Courses include: Computer & Internet Basics, Email, Windows OS, & Microsoft Word®. M-W 9:00 – 12:00 or M-W 1:00 – 4:00. Classes start January 24th. Call us at (256) 306-2830 to learn more.

and vote for their favorite! Merchants are competing for the coveted Cider Cup and bragging rights for the year.

## 2022 Bells of Christmas Holiday Home Tour December 11

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, the Athens Ladies Civitan Club is pleased to announce the 2022 Bells of Christmas Holiday Home Tour from 1 to 5pm. Six beautiful homes ranging in style from a 1830s restored Federal/Greek Revival home in downtown Athens to a modern take on a traditional farmhouse complete with "Smart" house features will be open to guests. The fee for the tour is \$25 and may be purchased at Pimentos and Square Clock/Epiphany's both located on the downtown square, at SheaLeigh's Gifts at MEWS on Hwy 72 West or any house on day of the tour. For more info, call Carolyn Stair at 256-658-1985 or Dianne Newby at 256-777-2155. Proceeds benefit programs for Limestone County children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, college scholarships for local youth and other worthy community causes.

### Silver Sneaker Flex™ Classes Every Tuesday and Thursday

Strength and Balance classes meet every Tuesday and Thursday at 9:00 a.m. beginning 12/7/21. Classes are open to all. No signup needed. Classes will meet in the Lighthouse Building behind Emmanuel Baptist Church at 1719 Hwy 72W. All equipment will be provided. Donations accepted. For information: jhunt9155@gmail.com or 256-614-3530.

### Senior Lunch Matinee Series Third Thursdays Monthly

We are back to full speed with our third Thursday Senior Lunch Matinees and first Saturday Early Dinner Shows, already scheduled through Dec 2022. All remaining 2022 public events will sell out in advance, welcoming attendees from 17 adjacent counties, and 2 neighboring states. Our Senior Lunch Matinees provide guests with a complete lunch including drink and dessert, and a one hour live show featuring one of our roster of 8 of the best regional oldies groups and performers in rotation throughout the year. E-mail reservations are required in advance for all Lunch Matinees and Early Dinner Shows. web: [www.yesterdaysevents.com](http://www.yesterdaysevents.com)  
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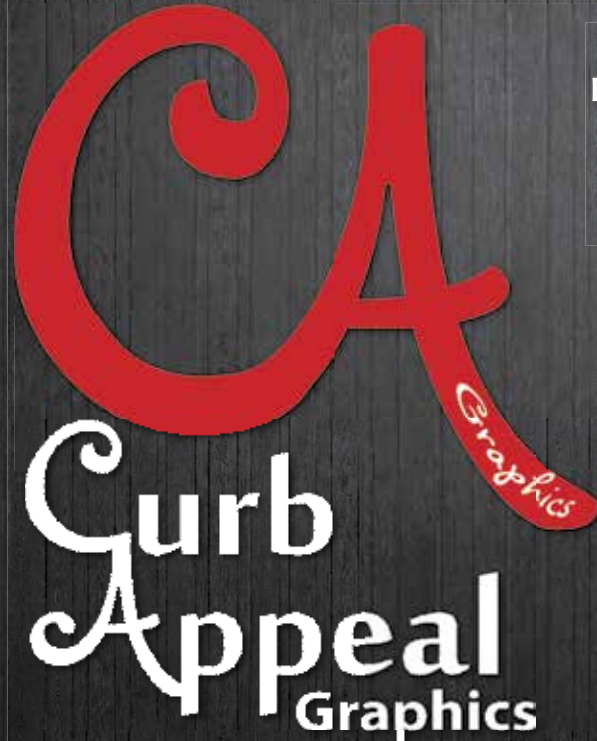
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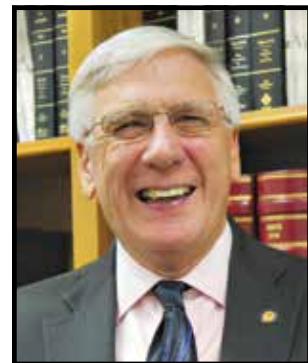


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# What Makes Ronnie Roll

## One Athens, Many Gifts

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



The only appropriate greeting for this particular Monday morning after the Iron Bowl was, “Roll, Tide!” So, we dispensed with that while grinning, and quickly moved to the topics that cause no pain for anyone, especially Auburn fans. We were referring mainly to the fun we had at the Grand Opening of Buc-ee’s and the Christmas Open House, both of which had been a smashing success. And, we spoke with anticipation with regard to the Christmas Parade coming up on Dec 1, along with other activities such as the Christmas Concert being put on by Athens High School on December 9, the North Pole Stroll, and more. We marveled at how quickly the year had gone, and that it was winding down. There was much that had happened, both good as well as hard, and lots to look forward to.

We had to address the fact that the holidays can also be tough, and there is a strong need to look out for each other. “There has been a lot of loss,” said the mayor, and some of that was discussed in Holly Hollman’s Special Feature article, “The Christmas Wish.” (See page 5.) And, one of the things that makes Athens



*The Twinning Tree, celebrating our friendship with Stonehaven, Scotland from left, Kim Glaze, Ronne Marks and Holly Hollman*

so wonderful is that even loss gets slowly translated into beauty and gain because Athenians work so hard all year long to make it so. Relay for Life has a display in City Hall and a beautiful tree at the North Pole Stroll. “We need to reach out. It may not be COVID now, but it is flu season, and we need to take care of each other and ourselves. We need to recognize the importance of ‘One Athens,’” said

Mayor Ronnie.

The other tree about which the mayor was excited was the one that celebrates our city’s “twinning” relationship with the city of Stonehaven, Scotland. For those of you who might be new to our area, a most remarkable and unlikely friendship with Stonehaven began back in 2018 (our city’s bi-centennial year) that has resulted in them vis-



*Mayor Marks at the recent ribbon cutting for the new Athens Buc-ee’s*

iting us, us visiting them, and having school kids get a chance to get cross-cultural exposure to Scottish history and culture via Zoom. They even sent our city a birthday cake... no small feat!

“You probably didn’t see this,” said Mayor Ronnie, “but two kids from our area who play for the NFL got mentioned on the Sunday night game.” He was right, I hadn’t, but it

sure was fun to hear about it. Quez Watkins, who graduated from Athens High School, and Reed Blankenship, who graduated from West Limestone High School both play for the Philadelphia Eagles. Quez caught a touchdown pass in the end zone, and Reed intercepted a pass. Both of them were mentioned by the commentators as having hailed from Athens, Alabama. He asked with a smile, “How often does something like that happen?”

We talked for a moment about how the past 11 years of “Ronnies” had flown, and tossed around some ideas for a new book series starting in January. Then we prayed, and then it was time once again for Ronnie to roll.

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# *It's All In The Details*

by Phil Williams



Some folks say, “The devil’s in the details.” Not me. I believe that God is in the details. Details are what makes the big picture come together. Details are what makes bad get better and good become great. That sounds like a Godlier approach in my view.

Being detail oriented can be a personality trait, but it can also be a learned behavior. For me, I know that the mentors in my life intentionally taught me to care about details.

My first real paycheck came when I was 16 years old working for Chick-Fil-A in what used to be called Parkway City Mall in Huntsville. It was an education about the working of commerce in action, but it was also an education in paying attention to details. You might think that the preparation of a chicken sandwich only has so many things to think about. Not so, it’s all about the details. Are the buns fresh? Two pickle slices per sandwich. How many do we have on hand for the Christmas shopping rush? Preparation of the chicken alone was detailed and thorough, with each one being dipped, battered, and cooked to standard, and that’s just the sandwich! I learned about stocking, receiving shipments, scheduling staff, dining room checks, reconciling registers, and all while keeping a smile on and telling folks it’s your pleasure to serve them.

Trying to be a good employee at a fast-food joint was a lot for a 16-year-old learning the world. But it taught me details that are still carried forward today.

Details truly matter. Think

about some examples: How about your favorite restaurant? Was it just the food? Or was there a combination of service, atmosphere, AND quality food. What about architecture? Is it just that a building is dried in and can support people being in it? Or is a beautiful building a combination of strong architecture, construction quality, and refined elements that create something more than just a building?

Then of course there’s politics. Do details matter in politics? Absolutely! We’ve just finished the midterms and that cake is baked. But now, we actually see whether or not they live up to the hype. It’s one thing to look at a candidate’s advertisements and billboards, but it’s quite another to see the person work in living color. Do the actions, the history, the past achievements, and life experiences really add up to match the glossy mailout that came into your mailbox? Details my friends. It’s all about the details.

So let’s talk some more about details among politicians, because I predict that now that the Thanksgiving holidays are over, we’re going to begin seeing the next flurry of ads for all of the candidates vying for the right to push the Biden Administration into the annals of history. Every Republican presidential candidate is going to have pictures of themselves with a firearm because they’re 2nd amendment friendly. All of them will have a pro-life statement. You’ll be amazed to know that none of them would ever consider raising your taxes. They are all balanced budget fiscal conservatives who love the rule of law and are hard on crime. At least

that will be the message.

The real trick is to look behind the curtain. What does their life tell you? What does their prior public image tell you? What have they actually done? Are they on the record in any way?

The hope of every candidate for any office is that you won’t look too closely. Everyone has that moment that they don’t want to have to explain, or that less-than-flattering photo. Unless the dirt is verifiable and truly egregious, the real kicker will be looking at policy positions.

Voters have to recognize the importance of voting on policy as much as personality, and the classic example of why I say that is currently sitting in the oval office.

Think about it. So-called “never-Trump Republicans” and independents were more concerned in 2020 with mean tweets and big personalities. “We must restore decorum!” they shouted. “We must have a change in the political tone in DC!” they cried. How’s that working out?

When it comes to policy positions, Joe Biden had over four decades of details, actual details, on the books. Policy positions, votes on record, soft on crime, hard on energy, wrong on foreign policy, terrible on taxes, and one weird gaffe after another. But hey, no mean tweets!

If you wondered about what Biden would do on energy policy, or education, or the border, or military strength, all that was needed was a quick look at Biden’s actual history touting the Green New Deal, sucking up to the teachers unions, calling for amnes-

ty, and the failed pullout from Iraq. The man had a record of failure that could stretch from here to the moon. Oh, except from here to the moon would be a bad analogy since the Obama-Biden administration effectively defunded NASA.

Aside from all of the usual policies that any president must deal with, there were also two monstrous elephants in the room during the 2020 campaign season: COVID and race relations.

If there was any question about how Biden would handle COVID policy, all you had to do was look at his COVID protocols at his rare campaign events: everybody distanced, muzzled, and not allowed to fully assemble. It should be no surprise at all that the Biden Administration is still imposing worthless vaccine mandates on society.

If you wondered at all how Biden would treat race relations, all one had to do was look at a single interview in which he condescendingly told a black radio host that if he didn’t support him, “Then you ain’t black!” -- indicating clearly that he did not believe that black voters knew how to assess a candidate past what party affiliation they had.

It’s all about details. The year 2024 is already underway in the political sense. It is vital that conservatives find that candidate who appears to fit the bill and then look behind the veil. Get away from the shiny stump speech. Check out their actual record. Have they voted as a politician anywhere in the past? Have they held down a private sector job, started a business, made a payroll, served in the military, worked for a charity? Who is

sponsoring their campaign? Are they bullish on school choice but yet taking contributions from the teacher’s union? Do they claim to be tough on crime, but they knelt down with BLM? Do they claim to be for the free market, but they voted for the Green New Deal subsidies that prop up a whole section of the energy industry?

Details. When you get past the ads, the billboards, the public speeches, what details do you find?

It’s all about the details, and the 2024 election will matter more than any we’ve seen in decades. If conservatives don’t find, support, promote, and vote for their candidates based on policy, not personality but policy, then the 2024 presidential election is going to mean more of what we’ve been lamenting in the aftermath of this year’s midterms.

It’s all about the details.

*Phil Williams is a former state senator, retired Army colonel and combat veteran, and a practicing attorney. He has served with the leadership of the Alabama Policy Institute and currently hosts the conservative news/talkshow Rightside Radio M-F 2-5 p.m. on multiple channels throughout north Alabama. (WVNN 92.5FM/770AM-Huntsville/Athens; WXJC 101.FM and WYDE 850AM – Birmingham/Cullman) His column appears every Monday in 1819 News. To contact Phil or request him for a speaking engagement go to [www.rightsideradio.org](http://www.rightsideradio.org). The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of 1819 News. To comment, please send an email with your name and contact information to [Commentary@1819News.com](mailto:Commentary@1819News.com).*

## Slinkard On Success

# “W” Is For Winning

by D. A. Slinkard

*D.A. Slinkard would love your feedback. You can contact him at [da.slinkard@gmail.com](mailto:da.slinkard@gmail.com)*

This article brings us to the letter “W” and our word is “Winning,” and just like that we are in the month of December with the year 2023 fast approaching. The new year is right around the corner, and we are about to turn the final page of 2022. How has your year been for you? Have you been able to achieve what you set out to do? Do you find yourself hitting the targeted mark or are you like so many other people and missing out on the success you would like to achieve?

It has been my experience that too often we decide to make changes in our lives, but we decide we are go-

ing to start on Monday, or two weeks from now, or even at the beginning of next year. This thought process sounds good in theory, but it only becomes a form of procrastination which will ultimately lead to us getting the same old results. For success in life, I believe we need to have a winning mentality with the focus on giving 100%. The reality is that too many people do not have the right mentality and even fewer people are willing to give 100% in life.

It is as if we want success, but instead of working for it, we want it to be handed to us. I am reminded of the quote which states, “The only place ‘success’ comes

before ‘work’ is in the dictionary.” If you want success, it will take work. No work means no success. We live in a society that is accustomed to instant gratification. If we have to wait any length of time for something, many people begin to wonder whether or not it is truly worth it.

Any great thing in life is worth waiting for and is worth working for -- and I believe there are three types of people in our society. We have the defeated, the disheartened, and the devoted. To have a winning attitude, a person is going to need to learn how to get to the latter approach of being devoted. We have far too many people walk-

ing around with a defeated attitude trying to figure out what is the next thing that is going to go wrong for them.

These are the people who have given up before they have even started, and if they were to start, they are already expecting to lose. When it comes to our daily living, we need to expect to win, and we need to expect to have success. Instead, we have a society who feels entitled to get things they have not earned. No one owes me anything; no one else owes you anything; the only person that owes you anything is yourself! We live in the greatest country known to man and we need to have the victor

(winning) attitude and not the victim approach.

It is easy to feel like a victim in the world we live in, but this attitude and approach is not the right one to have. People can easily become disheartened if we try to look at the world in a manner that victimizes people. I was 15 years old when my dad died; I was 17 years old when my mom left me to live on my own. I do not say this for you to feel sorry for me. I say this because life should not be dictated by circumstances, but life should be dictated by the choices we make. I could have chosen to be disheartened and defeated, but instead I decided each day to be devoted to having a winning approach.

When I say I am devoted, it means I am committed to have a winning attitude and approach to life. Do I get down? Absolutely, but negative things happening to us are only temporary. The issues in my life I have found are 10% of what happens to me and 90% of how I allow it to impact me. Will you decide to be devoted to success in your life?

This year is almost over, and we cannot get the previous days back. We can only change today and our future. What approach are you going to take? Are you going to allow for your circumstances to dictate whether you are the victim or whether you are the victor in your life? The choice is yours to make, and no one else can decide for you. When will you commit to success?



Clean, Green And Beautiful

# The Secret To Life

by Benjamin Lawrence Bradley - Executive Director, Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful



ty, when our respective generations are rocked by plague and famine and war, we live in a land of milk and honey. We have ourselves and we have each other.

We all have hard times and easy times. Each of us is a yin and yang of good and bad experiences. We hear that it is bad and getting worse, but that is only a half-truth. It is also good and getting better. This life is for living. For finding

the good and embracing it.

I try to imagine living a hundred or however-many years ago. I see core joys perpetuated through the decades. Family. Love. Success.

We've got that *and* Wi-Fi.

I think about humankind and ponder what blessing I would wish upon us all to find comfort in the spirit of the season.

We are surrounded by beautiful people who are each a blessing to increase the good in this world. I would that we may be made capable of considering the good things we want, and view clearly the paths to make them happen for ourselves and one another.

Nowadays when my anxieties arise, I will notice myself not breathing. I take a deep breath to calm



myself and consider that I may have finally come to understand that perhaps the secret to life is to simply keep breathing. Some things may get worse, yet we will continue to breathe because the worth of this life is in the things that are good, and the good-

ness that just keeps getting better.

This holiday, as we share a *Merry Christmas*, may we all consider, as an 8-billion-member family, that there is goodness to be had, and it is ours for the taking.



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## Cooking with Anna

# *Do You Have The Christmas Spirit?*

by Anna Hamilton

*As the month of December begins, we are brought back to thoughts of love, peace, and hope. All things that describe someone who has the Christmas spirit. But do you know truly what the Christmas spirit is? I read a quote this week that beautifully summed up how we should live our lives every day, and the month of December seems to be a pretty good place to start. "True love is a reflection of the Savior's love. In December of each year, we call it the Christmas spirit." Thomas S. Monson*

*If someone was describing my personality to a stranger, I would hope they would call me a reflection of love. What a beautiful thought. When we are fully immersed*

*in Christ's love, it shines out of us. People around us know that there is something special about us. Our entire life should be a mirror image of Christ.*

*It is easy to feel that way in December. The entire world seems to turn into a softer place. Peace, love, and hope abound. It just seems easier this time of year to focus on these things. Imagine a world where the Christmas spirit, the reflection of Christ's love, reigns in our lives for the entirety of the year. Let's make a promise that at the end of the year, we begin to live our lives as a mirror of Christ.*

*Most of the time when you begin something new, you start at the very beginning. But with the Christmas spirit, the end seems like a good place to begin.*

*continued on page 23*

## *Homemade Granola*

### *Ingredients:*

*4 cups old fashioned oats*

*1 cup unsweetened coconut*

*Pinch of salt*

*1 Tbsp of your favorite spice like cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, or a mixture of cardamon, ginger, cinnamon, and clove for a gingerbread taste*

*1 cup raw sliced almonds, feel free to use pecans, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, or a fun combination*

*½ cup dried cranberries, feel free to use raisins, dried apricots, or dried cherries*

*¼ cup coconut oil*

*¼ cup plus 2 Tbsps maple syrup*

*1 ½ tsp vanilla extract*

*Orange zest*



### *Directions:*

*Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with tin foil.*

*Mix together oats, coconut, spices, nuts, and dried fruit in a large bowl.*

*In a separate bowl, combine the oil, maple syrup, vanilla extract, and orange zest.*

*Once the oil mixture is thoroughly combined, mix well with the oat mixture until everything is evenly coated.*

*Spread granola mixture evenly on the foil-lined pan and bake for 30 minutes or until lightly golden. Stir every 10 minutes in order to make sure the granola doesn't stick together.*

*Allow to cool before packing in jars to give as gifts, or in a storage container for you and your family to enjoy.*

# Understanding Hormone Imbalance

by Danny Moon



Your body has over 50 hormones, and they are constantly fluctuating. Here, is how to keep them from getting too out of whack.

Our hormones are responsible for essentially every function in our bodies. Hormones are chemicals secreted by our glands to send “messages” through the bloodstream. Those messages then tell our organs what to do to keep us alive and healthy.

When we think “hormone,” we usually think about the sex hormones testosterone or estrogen, but there are more than 50 different hormones circulating inside your body right now.

For example, your thyroid hormones oversee your metabolism, energy levels, and temperature, while cortisol, “the stress hormone,” plays a role in fetal development and your response to physical and psychological stress. From heart rate to appetite to sexual function, every hormone plays an important role.

When your hormones are balanced and working in sync, you won’t notice them, of course, and that’s a good thing. It’s when they’re imbalanced that you could start seeing cascading health issues take over.

Hormonal imbalance stems from your body making too little or too much of a hormone or a series of hormones. There are many hormones, such as insulin or adrenaline, that everyone shares, but specific hormones can affect men and women in different ways. For example, women may see an imbalance in estrogen and progesterone levels, while men may experience an imbalance in testosterone.

You have or will likely experience a hormonal imbalance at some point in your life, especially if you have an endocrine disorder. Age and lifestyle are factors, too. The symptoms of hormonal imbalance can vary widely, as each hormone is uniquely responsible for its role.

### Symptoms of hormonal imbalance

- sudden or inexplicable weight gain or weight loss
- difficulty sleeping
- feeling very hot or very cold changes, or extreme sensitivity to heat or cold
- excessive sweating
- heart rate changes
- dry skin or sudden acne
- anxiety or other mood changes
- sexual function or sexual appetite shifts
- blurred vision
- brittle hair and nails
- excessive hair growth
- breast tenderness

### Causes

There are a few main causes of hormonal imbalance, and they’re not uncommon. Firstly, medical conditions, as well as the medications or treatments for those conditions, can all impact your hormones.

For example, some breast cancer treatments can reduce estrogen levels, while Cushing’s syndrome or Addison’s disease are marked by too-high or too-low (respectively) levels of the hormone cortisol. Other causes of hormonal imbalance may include type 1 and 2 diabetes, hypoglycemia, and thyroid disorders such as hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism. In women, conditions such as menopause or

polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) may cause hormonal fluctuations. In men, hypogonadism may lead to low hormone levels.

Other culprits include injury, trauma, or eating disorders. One of the most common causes of hormonal imbalance, however, is stress — which is, unfortunately, a stranger to no one. Stress can lead to gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and brain function problems. We’ve all been there. Running to the bathroom before a big deadline? Heart skipping a beat when you’re dealing with big life decisions? That’s right, you guessed it; it’s called stress

### Diagnosis

No one test can diagnose or pinpoint a specific hormonal imbalance, so you must work with your endocrinologist to get to the bottom of your particular set of symptoms. Some of the things you’ll want to let them know include if you’re experiencing:

- weight gain or loss
- fatigue
- skin problems
- mood problems
- high levels of stress and anxiety
- sexual libido and function issues

Your endocrinologist could perform a blood test, a biopsy, an ultrasound, or another form of testing depending on your symptoms. Because there’s no one way of knowing which hormones are imbalanced, your doctor may need to do a bit of investigation and more than one test to determine the root of your symptoms and the best course of treatment tailored to your specific imbalance.

### Treatments

Prescription treatments, which often involve hormone therapy (HT), should be discussed with a qualified endocrinologist.

According to sleep research, sleep is key. “Hormones play a massive role in how you sleep, and your sleep plays a massive role in how your hormones are balanced. You need all five stages of sleep, about seven to nine hours, to help maintain and balance your hormones.”

For optimum hormonal balance, you should be:

- Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day as often as you can
- Decreasing blue light at night
- Getting sunlight in the morning, and throughout the day as often as possible
- Drinking water first thing in the morning
- Creating a bedtime ritual

Diet is the most potent agent you have to balance your hormones. This is because it allows you to directly change the levels of hormones (insulin, glucagon, and eicosanoids) depending on the balance of macronutrients consumed at every meal.

Make sure you’re eating regularly, and within a healthy calorie range for your body. Aim for lots of fatty fish, omega-3 fatty acids, eggs, healthy proteins, vegetables, and greens.

According to another clinical study, you’ll also want to eat alkaline or higher-pH foods. What does that mean, exactly?

Alkaline and plant foods such as green leafy vegetables and other low-calorie vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, and

cauliflower sprouts have a natural detoxifying effect on the body. Choose free-range, wild-caught, and clean protein sources as well as more alkaline fats, such as avocado, nuts, and olive oil. Other alkaline-rich foods include tofu, cucumbers, and sweet potatoes.

Additionally, you may want to take a magnesium supplement and drink a cup of high-quality green tea each day. Green tea can help lower blood sugar levels, which is especially important for someone with insulin issues. Magnesium can also help us respond to stress.

Regular exercise is important when it comes to hormonal imbalances. It isn’t just about weight, either. Exercise can help regulate our metabolism, and it affects how much cortisol is released in our bodies.

Hormonal issues do cause unwanted weight gain, though. Losing weight has been shown to improve hormonal conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome and erectile dysfunction, while studies found that insulin sensitivity issues improve with regular exercise. Even walking regularly has been shown to make a difference.

How does exercise benefit us? Exercise will increase AMPK activity which has significant benefits on gene transcription factors that control metabolism and tissue repair, while stress management and improved sleep will decrease excess cortisol levels. AMPK activity stands for “adenosine monophosphate-activated protein kinase.” This is an enzyme that helps our bodies maintain healthy energy levels—a beneficial boost for anyone feeling sluggish and fatigued from hormone imbalance.

# Movement Mortgage: Markedly Different

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

*continued from page 1*

our area. However, it was not until she joined our BNI chapter, Limestone Leaders, that I really understood what a gem she was and how she equitably goes to bat for anyone who is trying to buy a home. One day she gave a presentation about a mortgage company that she had recently joined called Movement Mortgage, and even though I am not looking for a house myself, I became a raving fan of “the Movement.”

Mortgage companies are often not trusted, and in days gone by, sadly that was with good reason. So, smack dab in the middle of the 2008 mortgage meltdown, former NFL player and Super Bowl champion Casey Crawford and his business partner, Toby Harris, decided to found a mortgage company with the following markedly different purpose:

*To love and value people in everything we do.*

Wait, we’re talking about a mortgage company, here, right? Absolutely, and that is how they “had Teresa at hello.” She wasn’t even looking to make a change in terms of the company she worked for. She just knew that Movement Mortgage was the type of company that she had always wanted to be a part of, and until last August didn’t even know it. She told me, “My values as a person matched with theirs as a company. I knew it was a good fit, and that this was where I needed to be.” These guys walk the

talk in the business, in how they give back both in the States and abroad, in how they treat their customers as well as their employees, and in how they have streamlined the mortgage process to the great benefit of their customers.

Movement Mortgage started out with 4 employees, and today they have 4500. They are based in South Carolina, and have over 775 offices nationwide. They have an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau and have been voted as one of the Top Ten Mortgage Lenders in the country. They are privately held, so they can choose to do what they wish with their profits, and their commitment to giving back is stunning.

Movement has started tuition-free elementary and middle charter schools in the Southeast that have as their mission: *We exist to love and nurture scholars by leading a movement of changes through academic excellence, character development, and preparation for success in life.*

Movement Mortgage has invested \$100 million in education with the goal of having 100 schools nationwide in ten years. They have also recently earmarked another \$100 million to expand community outreach, build affordable housing and clinics. They chose to use the recent unprecedented gains in the housing market to invest in their communities. Teresa told me about their *Love Works* program that is



for employees. It was discovered that a single mom who was a recent hire at Movement was living in her car with her family, trying to hang on until she could improve her circumstances. Movement employees took care of her through *Love Works*, got her into good housing and took care of her while she got on her feet. She and her family are now thriving.

Another unusual feature of Movement Mortgage is the fact that they sponsor foreign mission trips for their employees to travel to Central America where Movement Mortgage is building what they call Hope Centers. I can attest that when people get a chance to help people in a foreign country who have virtually nothing, there are changes that occur whose positive impact can’t even be measured, and that is certainly the case here. Teresa has not had the chance to go on a trip yet, but it is definitely one her goals.

Okay, all of this vision and generosity is great, but what about the business side of things? Well, Movement Mortgage closed over 75,000 home loan mortgages in 2021, which as you remember was right in the middle of COVID. They are committed to what they call

the “6-7-1 process,” which means that they will pre-approve a mortgage in six hours, fully process the loan in seven business days, and stand ready to close within one additional day. Impressively, 75% of Movement’s loans are processed within seven business days. Needless to say, those are some impressive statistics.

The housing market is changing almost daily, and you need a loan officer and a mortgage company that have your back. You will find both in Movement Mortgage and Teresa Hagood. Call her today for all your home loan needs, and “join the Movement.”



**Movement Mortgage is well known for the ways it gives back to communities here and in Central America. They sponsor charter schools, mission trips, building projects and more.**



**Teresa Hagood**  
 Movement Mortgage - Loan Officer

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# Memory Trees Shine Bright In Big Spring Memorial Park

by Tina Morrison, Tourism Athens

The Athens-Limestone Tourism Association has been bringing the North Pole Stroll to Athens for almost a decade, and while the joy it brings is no surprise to Tourism President Teresa Todd, the growing number of Memory Trees adds a special heartwarming facet to this annual fundraising event. Out of the 80 trees sponsored this year, almost 25% of them are in honor of loved ones who have passed on. Loss has affected Teresa Todd personally this year, and she donated a tree in the North Pole Stroll this year to Diane Hutchins to decorate in honor of her daughter, former Tourism employee Cayce Lee who passed away in February of this year.

Limestone Funeral Chapel Home has dedicated its memory tree to all the

families it served this year with a list of those who are having their "First Christmas in Heaven." There's a large sign with a list of names and bells you can hang in honor of your friends or loved ones.

Ride With Me Addiction Ministry's tree is in memory of all lives affected or lost to addiction.

Hugo Bates's family has their tree loaded down with bubble gum decorations in honor of the local beloved man who handed out bubble gum to so many.

Connie Dunn and family have done a memory tree for son Isaac Batrum every year, as do the Williams family in honor of son Kolter Williams. The Williams family also add-

ed a second tree this year in honor of Gwen Chandler.

The family of Emily Grace Bradford sponsored a tree with this sign next to it: "Looking for a Sign Not to Hurt Yourself? THIS IS IT."

Others who are doing memory trees this year are:

-Wallace / Chambers / Gee family

-Ming Commercial Group in honor of Jessica Elkins

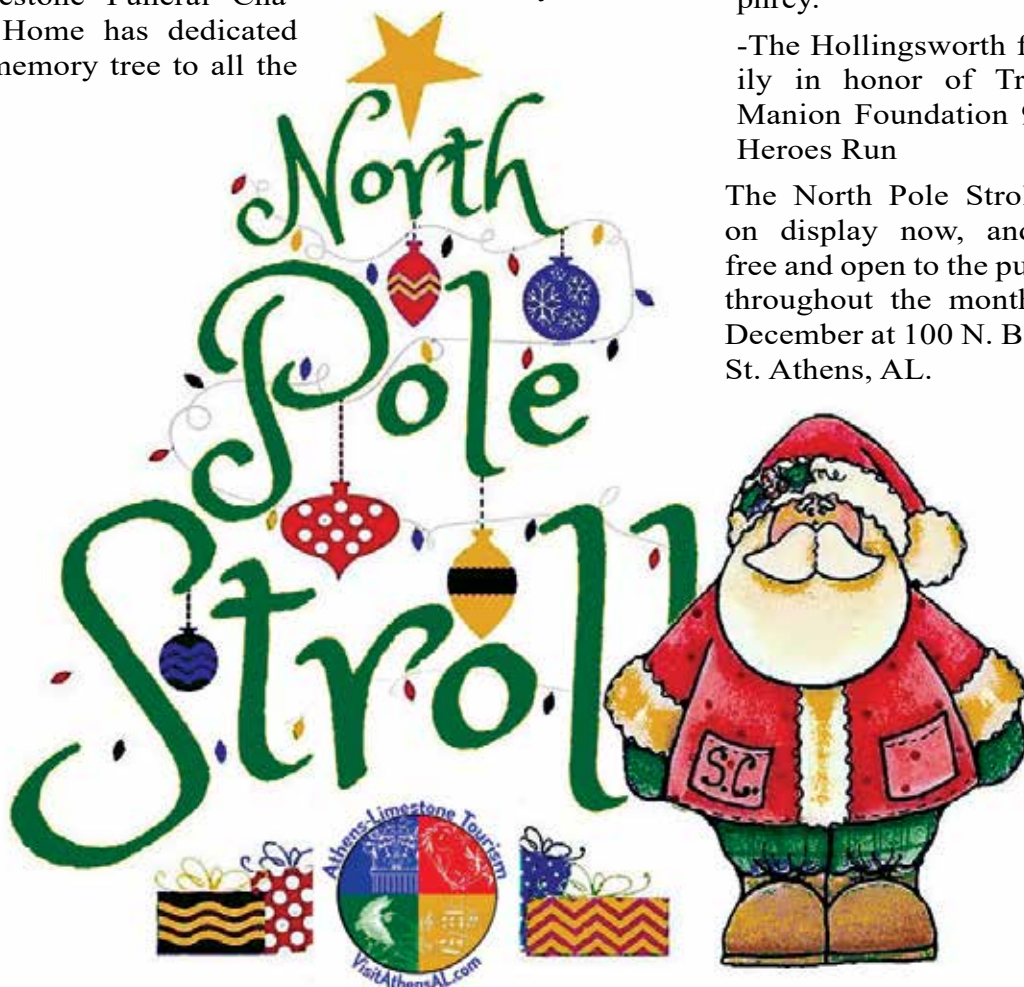
-Limestone NAACP Youth Council in honor of Frank B. Travis

-Hays & Colvard family in honor of Levi Hays

-The Humphrey family in honor of Kyle Humphrey.

-The Hollingsworth family in honor of Travis Manion Foundation 9/11 Heroes Run

The North Pole Stroll is on display now, and is free and open to the public throughout the month of December at 100 N. Beaty St. Athens, AL.





# Caleb Lawler Of Edward Jones Financial Services: *Hope From History*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

*continued from page 1*

take much to disrupt supply chains even further. There is a lot of confusion about what we should do with our money, whether we have a lot or a little. We need trustworthy folks to make sense of it all, and while no one can “predict the future to the last farthing,” one fellow who I know from experience has the ability to help greatly is Caleb Lawler of Edward Jones Financial Services.

Recently, I sat down with Caleb for the purpose of preparing for this advertorial, and as always, felt encouraged as he told me about what we can glean from history as it pertains to times of financial uncertainty. Caleb is the president of Limestone Leaders, our local Business Networking International chapter, and I have learned more from him about finances and investing in the few short years he has been a member than I have in my whole life.

By way of background, Caleb is a graduate of UNA, and thought he would pursue a career in software engineering. While he genuinely loved it and was successful in his field, what he found he wanted to do more is help people with whom he could meet face to face. It was at a family BBQ that a relative suggested he

look into becoming a financial advisor with Edward Jones, and he has never looked back. Edward Jones is a privately held, solid, reputable financial advising corporation well known for how it gives back to the community and teaches its advisors to do the same. I asked Caleb for an example, and he said, “When I was taking my training, they had seasoned veteran agents come in on their own time and teach us how to help our clients, what to say to say to them, how to ask the hard questions. That’s how they do business, and that’s why I took the ‘leap of faith.’” He further describes Edward Jones as a company that concentrates on getting to know clients -- finding out their needs, goals and dreams, and then developing a strategy that meets those needs. Once Caleb finds out what is important to them, he asks, “Is this goal attainable? If not, how can we change things so that it can become attainable? How can we get them back on track?”

So, what can we glean from history as it pertains to finances, and is there any reason for us to have hope? While it’s necessary to reiterate that investing always involves risk, here is what Caleb taught me, using the weather of North Alabama as an analogy:

*“What I want to share with people is that downturns are normal, and negative years*



*are normal. Just like living in North Alabama, there will be storms, and sometimes tornadoes. Sometimes they will affect us, and sometimes not. When you look at history and look from the Great Depression until now, averaging out good years and bad, three years will be positive, one will be negative. The good outweighs the bad. We tend to remember the bad, but we need to look at the odds, especially the long-term perspective. It’s important to be appropriately invested.*

*That’s where I come in and say, ‘Okay, here is where you need to be, and here’s why. We’ll discover information together, and here’s what we can do.’”*

One thing you can do that will make a difference is to get together with Caleb and discuss certificates of deposit (CDs). Short-term CD rates offered by Edward Jones are more than generous, but this won’t last long. The minimum investment requirement is \$1,000, and for a six month CD, the rate is 4.5%, and a one year is 4.70%. Caleb explained

**Current rates - as of 11/30/2022**

**FDIC-Insured Certificates of Deposit**

Term	Annual Percentage Yield* (%)
3-month	4.00%
6-month	4.50%
9-month	4.700%
1-year	4.70%
18-month	4.85%
2-year	N/A
30-month	N/A
3-year	N/A
4-year	N/A
5-year	N/A
7-year	N/A
10-year	N/A

to me, “Short term rates are more competitive, and we will have more desirable rates in comparison to what is offered currently with banks.” Caleb finished up our time by saying, “The worst thing you can do is nothing because you think it’s too late. It’s not.” If you are in need of understandable financial information, education, and direction, then call Caleb Lawler of Edward Jones

Financial Services today at (256) 232-9120, and let him give you help and hope.

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**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

\*Annual Percentage Yield (APY), effective 11/30/2022. APY interest cannot remain on deposit; periodic payout of interest is required. Certificates of deposit (CDs) offered by Edward Jones are bank-issued and FDIC-insured up to \$250,000 (principal and interest accrued but not yet paid) per depositor, per depository institution, for each account ownership category. Please visit the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or contact your Edward Jones financial advisor for additional information. Subject to availability and price change. CD values are subject to interest rate risk such that when interest rates rise, the prices of CDs can decrease. If CDs are sold prior to maturity, the investor can lose principal value. FDIC insurance does not cover losses in market value. Early withdrawal may not be permitted. Yields quoted are net of all commissions. CDs require the distribution of interest and do not allow interest to compound. CDs offered through Edward Jones are issued by banks and thrifts nationwide. All CDs sold by Edward Jones are registered with the Depository Trust Corp. (DTC).

# *Delays And Discouragements*

by Eric Betts

**Assistant Director, Curtis Coleman Center for Religious Studies and Ethics at Athens State University**



As we approach the close of another year, there are so many who suffer from discouragement because they failed to reach their goals due to setbacks and disappointments. In many cases, it may seem as if the discouraged one is no closer to their goals than the previous year. The temptation is to conclude that all of their efforts are useless and a waste of time. What discouraged souls often forget is that sometimes the process that one endures is as important as reaching the destination. Indeed, there is value in the journey. We are stronger, better, and wiser as a result of the journey; these experiences can never be taken from us and will never be lost.

As a leader, one must have their eyes and ears open for discouragement in others and in themselves. Oftentimes, discouragement comes as a result of comparing one's experience to that of others, or it appears that they have more failures than successes. What often occurs is that too many do not see the failures that others experience, but only

their successes. If they had an inside view, they would see the struggles of others. When watching sports highlights, we do not see the football passes that were dropped, or in basketball, the shots that were missed. The highlights only show the completed passes and the shots that went into the basket. Additionally, we do not see the difficult practices or the arguments and disagreements in the locker-rooms. We only see the televised game and the results of difficult practices. This is how it is in your own professional development and success, and why one should not focus too much attention on the success of others. Use their success to inspire but not as a point of comparison. Everyone has his or her own path to travel, and each will reach their destination in their own time.

Social media is another example. Many assume they are failing or falling behind when they see others posting about their success. It is rare that one will post on social media about their failures, and it will therefore be impossible for

you to measure the trend of their lives. You may see others posting about graduations, weddings, course completions, recognitions and awards from community leaders, career success, and international travels, but these posts often do not include the headaches and heartaches in the background. Social media shows its posters on their best days and never on their worst days. This medium often shows the happy faces but almost never does it reveal the tears. One expression that has recently become popular is that "comparison is the thief of joy." The way that so many professionals have approached social media has led to frustration and disappointment, due to this reality. You may have failed many times, but you are never a failure if you keep moving toward your dreams. Sometimes you may feel lost, but you are never a loser when you take one day at a time.

Moreover, regardless of one's level of success, no one is immune from moments or periods of discouragement. Some of the most famous people in

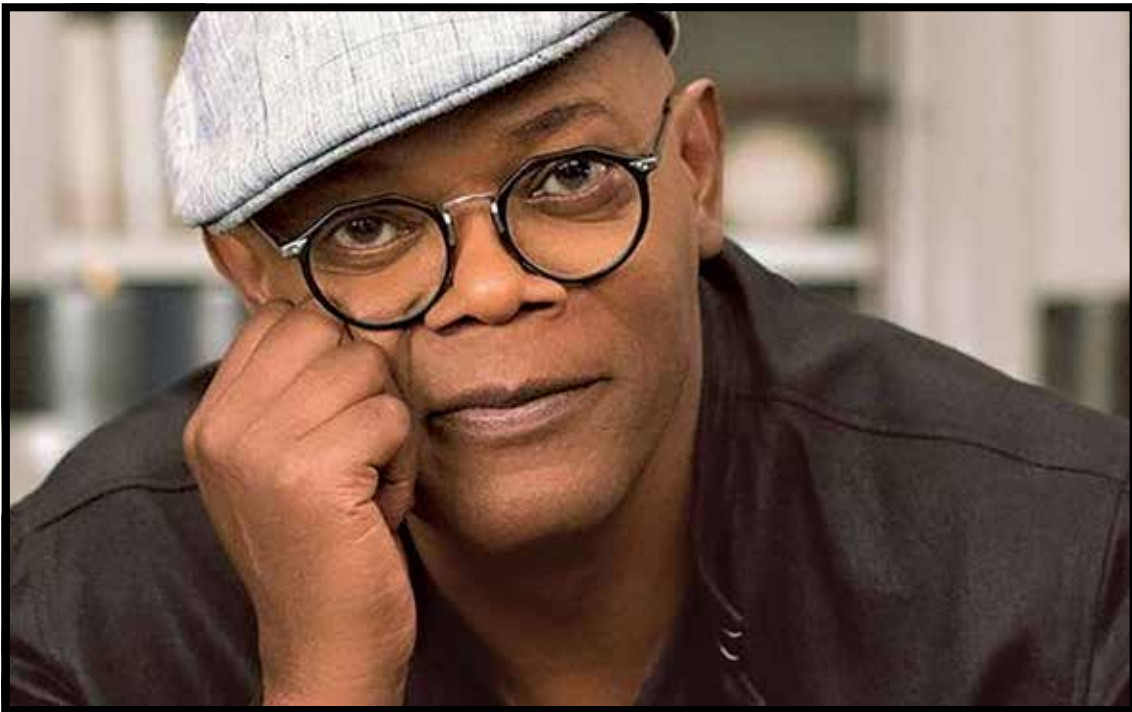
the world have gone through periods where they have hit rock bottom due to discouragement. Samuel L. Jackson, the actor, is one prime example. The John Maxwell Company tells the story of Jackson as an example of how even the best become discouraged, but it is how they react to the discouragement that makes all the difference. By the age of 41, Jackson had only a few appearances on camera, and they were quite minor. It was his dream to become a great actor, but he felt that he would never achieve his goals. As a result, he gave up on trying to become an actor. He shortly thereafter turned to drugs, and began to throw his life away. The soon-to-be famous actor became addicted to cocaine, while married and having a beautiful little girl as his child. Jackson would eventually overdose and become unconscious. This was extremely frightening to his family. There was no guarantee he would survive.

After being treated in the hospital, Samuel L. Jackson recovered from his disabled state. He then checked into a rehabilitation clinic, and received the professional help he needed. Jackson decided to continue to receive counseling, not only for his drug problem, but also the causes of his discouragement that led him there. It became his own choice to do so. He would soon afterwards break the addiction with the help of counselors and the encouragement he received from his family. These events occurred only a year prior to Jackson becoming the famous movie star for which he is known today. From that time forward he became an inspiration and developed an impeccable repu-

tation. He has blazed the trail for other aspiring actors.

The question was asked, "What if Jackson had not been surrounded by family and loved ones who believed in him?" If Jackson had not been surrounded in this way, we would have never been entertained by his talents, and he would have never achieved his dreams. Thankfully he had a family and a support system that pointed him in the direction where he could break free from his addiction and discouragement. Jackson bounced back because he believed in himself and was surrounded by others who believed in him. Only 12 months after going through a hell of an experience, he arrived at his destination. He would have never predicted such.

This is why you should not wallow in discouragement; no one knows what the future holds or how close one is to success. No one is above discouragement; the key is not allowing oneself to be overcome by discouragement. It may be that one's life's dreams are months away. Should one become overwhelmed or paralyzed with discouragement, they must never lose hope in the fact that all have the capacity to bounce back through counseling and professional resources. And finally, as a leader, one must work to save others from being overcome by discouragement either through their influence or by pointing them to the help they need. One can never predict what a person might become or achieve simply through a word of encouragement at the right time or place. You may well be the catalyst for a major success story that will inspire millions.



# He Went In Peace -- Part II

by Jerry R. Barksdale

[www.jerrybarksdale.com](http://www.jerrybarksdale.com) [fb.com/jerry.barksdale.7](https://fb.com/jerry.barksdale.7)



Summer, 1983, Beirut, Lebanon.

Captain William E. "Bill" Winter, age 32, had departed his peaceful home in North Carolina on Mother's Day leaving behind his wife, Melia, and two children, Michael, age 6, and Amanda, age 2 ½. It was a Marine's life - the price of freedom. Now he was in a war zone, part of a multinational peace-keeping force caught up in a civil war. He missed his wife and children terribly, and counted the days until he could go home.

The Marines were sitting ducks with their hands tied. They were ordered not to carry loaded weapons. "The natives are getting restless," he wrote on August 10. "What is frustrating is we have their firing positions located with radar and could easily blow them away if we could shoot back."

August 12: "Everybody busy filling sand bags and building bunkers... this place is going to come apart..."

August 24: "I've been in the Marine Corps over 10 years now. Seems like yesterday. I pray this will be our last separation."

By September 14, they had been steadily shelled for two weeks. "... 4 KIA, 30 WIA. 82 more days to go." He was pining for his family. "I realize how horribly lonesome I am for you. You fill a great emptiness in me... I sleep with my helmet and flak jacket right beside my bed... incoming about 3:45 p.m.; went on all night... 4 WIA... went to church Sunday..." Then, he listened to a Dolly Parton tape Melia had sent him.

September 28: He wrote that when he got home he would be assigned duty in Atlanta, and they would go looking for

a house. Life would be normal again.

October 9: "I feel like a spring getting wound up tighter and tighter. I just hope I get home before something gives... Marines killed last night on way to shower... I feel better writing you... I just feel all knotted up inside with no release valve."

October 15: "Sniper killed a Marine and wounded another." Again, he wrote, "I feel like a spring wound up inside me that just keeps getting tighter."

October 16: "51 days to go... went to church this morning. That half hour helps a lot... I looked at your 3 beautiful faces in my picture and hurt from missing you."

October 17: "Mike Ohler was killed by sniper last night... got him in the head. He died instantly. It's frustrating to see armed terrorists move around in front of us and not being able to shoot until they do..."

October 18: "Mike Ohler's death really bothers me. It makes me realize I should have said and done a lot of things I haven't. I want you to know that I love you with all my heart. I'm so thankful I found you."

October 19: "One of our convoys got hit by a car bomb this afternoon... wish I could hold you for just a few minutes."

On Saturday night, October 22, Bill wrote a short letter to Melia and the children. "Another day down, everything's been quiet today... I guess everyone is busy getting ready for Halloween. Wish I could be there. I just wish I could be there period! I still miss you each day and love you very much. You are and always will be very special to me... All my love Bill." He mailed the letter and went to bed. His bunk was located on the first floor of the four-story concrete, Marine

barracks. Tomorrow was Sunday. He could sleep late if he wanted to, then perhaps, attend church.

On Sunday morning, October 23, at 6:22 a.m., while Bill and fellow Marines slept, a yellow Mercedes-Benz truck barreled down the road at high speed heading toward the four-story Marine barracks. It was loaded with the equivalent of 12,000 lbs. of TNT. The driver was smiling. The truck ran over a concertina wire barrier and sped between sentry post 6 and 7 where both guards carried unloaded weapons. The truck came to rest beneath where Bill slept. A massive explosion lifted the building upward, then it collapsed into rubble.

On Fripp Island, near Beaufort, South Carolina, where Melia and the children were temporarily residing with her parents, the phone rang on Sunday morning. It was a lady who worked with her father at the Federal Credit Union.

"Are you watching the news?" she asked. "They just bombed the Marine barracks." Melia turned on the TV and watched in horror. She immediately called Lt. Col. James Livingston who had been Bill's CO in England. "Colonel, do you have the news on?" she asked. "They just bombed the Marine barracks."

"I'm calling Marine Headquarters right now," he replied and hung up.

"I didn't know if he was alive or dead," says Melia. "Nobody knew anything at that point. We were all watching TV, including the kids. Michael was 6 years old and understood the severity of the news. They just kept scrolling the names of the dead, and all we could do was watch."

Wind had blown sand from the beach onto the walkway, and

Melia busied herself clearing it off. "I went out and shoveled, shoveled, shoveled sand. It was nervous energy." Meanwhile, she received Bill's October 22 letter - his last one. Could he be alive? On November 6, Lt. Col. Livingston called Melia. "Just making sure you're home. I'm coming out."

She knew why. "No, you can tell me on the phone."

"No, I'm coming out."

Lt. Col. Livingston arrived and gave her the bad news: 220 Marines, 18 sailors, and 3 soldiers were dead, along with 128 wounded Americans. It was the worst one day loss of life in the Marine Corps since the Battle of Iwo Jima during WWII.

"They didn't find Bill's body," Colonel Livingston said. "He was supposed to be in the building at the time, but they found no remains."

No trace of Bill was found; no wedding ring, no nothing, only an empty wallet that once belonged to him. When he departed home on Mother's Day, it was the last time she saw him. "I didn't fall apart," she told me. "I had to take care of the kids and my mom and dad. We didn't have Valium and Ambien back then. I didn't go to counseling. Back then you didn't do that. You do now, but not back then."

On November 4, Melia attended a memorial service at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, and met President Reagan and the First Lady. Bill was posthumously promoted to major the same day. The following evening she was officially notified that Bill was dead. "It was the hardest 13 days of my life," she told me.

The next day a flag-draped, empty coffin arrived at Dover Air Force Base, Maryland. It contained only the memory of Major Winter. The empty cof-

fin was escorted to Athens. On November 8, a beautiful fall day, Melia, her two children, flanked by Colonel Livingston, family members, several Marines and a large crowd gathered around the open grave at Athens Cemetery.

"Mommy, is Daddy gone?" asked Amanda, age 3, as Marines folded a flag over his coffin.

"Yes honey, he's gone," Melia replied.

A Marine Honor Guard fired 3 volleys, piercing the solitude of an otherwise beautiful and tranquil day. A bugler blew the mournful notes of Taps, then the crowd melted away. Melia, like any good Marine, knew she must move forward.

"I didn't have a first date until a year and half after his death," she says. "And not a kiss until two years. Since I had no closure, I felt very guilty."

Melia married Athens pharmacist, Tim Collier, on December 30, 1988. "He has loved me unconditionally. He knows I have a dead husband and a live husband. The kids have a dead dad and a live dad."

They reside just off Menefee Road in East Limestone on a farm teeming with life - horses, goats, dogs, geese, chickens, mules, peacocks and grandchildren. An American flag flies in the front yard. Below it a Marine Corps flag flutters in the breeze. Semper Fi - always faithful.

A memorial monument erected near the entrance to Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, lists the names of the 214 Americans who died in the Marine barracks. On the opposite side is chiseled, "They came in peace."

In Teheran, Iran, a memorial commemorates the "martyr" who murdered those Americans.

# Another Letter To Doggie Claus

by Joel Allen



Dear Doggie Claus,

Another year has quickly gone by and I have a lot to ask for. This year I have taught my "hooman" to fly, so to speak. We were walking along, the sun was shining, and there was a light breeze in the air. Suddenly, out of nowhere, appeared a squirrel. I was barking, "SQUIRREL!" and before my hooman had time to stop me, we were off with him flying in the air behind me and holding on for dear life! The squirrel was zig-zagging to escape me, and I was running for all my worth trying to catch it. I remember feeling a tug on my collar and could hear some yelling behind me, but that did not slow me down. The squirrel managed to get up a tree with me right behind it lunging and my hooman crashing down behind me in a heap of disheveled clothing and messed up hair. Of course, after I realized what had happened to my hooman and that I was the cause of his present condition, I kissed him with my long drooling tongue apologetically. Oooops! LOL! When we got home, my hooman limped over to the computer and went online. He ordered an E-collar (shock collar)! So, Doggie Claus, I am writing to ask that the order be replaced and made to look like a mix-up with toys and yummy treats (I am such a "foodie") along with a "How To Walk Your Dog Better" book. Could a football helmet and pads be included also in the order for my hooman?



Lately, my hooman and I have been in this routine; he goes to work or whatever and I stay home waiting for his return staring at the door he left through. Mysteriously, in his absence, the bed has been getting messed up. This tends to happen when he remains gone for what I feel is too long. Maybe 5 minutes after? Anyways, who's counting?! When he comes home, I have an alibi but he does not believe me because I try blaming a phantom cat we don't have, and he hollers at me pointing at the bed saying things like, "BAD DOG!" or "I know you did this!" I look at what he is pointing at, all the blankets and pillows piled into a huge mound in the center of the bed, and then I turn on the

"Puss-n-Boots" apologetic eyes (puppy dog eyes) and pretend to be sorry. He quickly sighs, rolls his eyes, and forgives me. So, I have a solution, could a cat from the Athens-Limestone Shelter be adopted by us? I always wanted a scapegoat, I mean cat. I might even come to like the critter enough to share the blame for everything that goes wrong around the house when our hooman is away. Yes, I can see it now, our hooman comes home, sees the mess, and I dutifully point at the cat, laying the blame at his feet! I will have to think of creative ways to get the cat blamed for my shoe addiction though.

Okay, now for a real serious problem I am having

with my hooman about the bed. He seems to think that a small part of the bed can accommodate me. Oh no, we have to really show him that 75% is mine and the edge is his. Get where I am going with this yet? I am requesting, if possible, could a California king-sized bed be brought to us for Christmas? Of course, the same rules will apply, most of the bed is mine and he gets the edge!!! LOL!

Yeah, all in all it has been another good year for me. Not so for my hooman's shoes and the occasional sock. I feel that my hooman is lucky to have me. If not for me, he would not get the latest fashionable shoes every few weeks. Oh sure, he grumbles a little but I do it out of love and missing him. Could there be

some extra pairs of socks and his favorite shoes under the tree on Christmas morning? I promise to wait a week before chewing on any of them! Hehehe!

Finally Doggie Claus, I have a Christmas wish. Could all the people in the world visit their local animal shelters (aka "Doggie Jail") and see if there are programs like "Foster to Adopt" and perhaps give some of my distant cousins a loving "forever" home? Thank you Doggie Claus and Merry Christmas to everyone -- fur and hooman!

Sincerely,

The Family Canine

P.S. Could you, as always, bring extra toys and bones? Squeakers are great too!

PSA: This Christmas, I challenge my readers to open their hearts and homes to a shelter animal. If you live in Limestone County, call 256-777-7889 for the Athens-Limestone Shelter or Peace, Love and Animals at 256-233-4343. If you live elsewhere, I strongly encourage you to look up and visit your local shelters. Who knows?! You might find a love that never ends, Amen!

***"Remember to love your dogs because they love you. Maybe not the way you want them to, like chewing up your favorite shoes or what not, but that is just love chewing. Be thankful for the time you have with them always."***

**Joel Allen  
256-651-2211**

## Mental Health Minute

# *Coping With Stress, Depression, And The Holidays*

by Lisa Philippart,  
*Licensed Professional Counselor*



***“The first step in this journey is to remember that a great deal of the stress we feel at the holidays is of our own creation.”***  
**- Dr Daisy Sutherland**

You can't put your finger on it. You feel lackluster and sad, sluggish, and overwhelmed, even though it is the festive holiday season. What gives? Where is that holiday merriment you envisioned when entering this joyful time of year? The holiday blues are not an uncommon phenomenon. Perhaps feelings of nostalgia for the holidays from an earlier chapter of life create a sense of sadness. Maybe there was a recent loss of a loved one. The holidays seem to bring our emotions up to the surface. The music, Christmas movies, the decorations we put out each year...all these things may lead to a wistful longing for something that seems unattainable. Financial concerns can also factor into feelings of not measuring up to expectations when it comes to gift-giving. So, it isn't surprising that many people struggle with depression during this season. With all the demands over the next month, it can be simply overwhelming. Let's look at some ways to better manage your emotions for the rest of the year.

During the holiday season, we are wired to give -- give to others, do for others, and be there for others. And while this is praise-worthy, sometimes being swept up in the giving can cause us to lose track of our own personal

needs. To help find a healthy balance, don't forget to practice self-care. This means listening to your body and knowing when you might benefit from some quiet time to relax. Tending to your own wellness during the busy holidays can help regulate mood. Back to the idea of giving... giving oneself in a selfless manner is a positive mood booster. Helping someone less fortunate can provide a sense of purpose. Find an organization that you can get behind and offer your time. It's a win-win!

If you struggle to find a balance, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Know your limits. Be aware when you are sinking into the pit of depression and contact your support network. This can be a close friend, a family member, or a support group. Please do not ignore the signs that you are in a dark place. Ask those who care about you to sit and talk with you, take

a walk together, or go grab lunch so you can share your feelings with them. Even during this cooler time of year, fresh air and sunshine have remarkable restorative properties. Physical activity is one of the best things we can do for depression, as it is a natural resource for improving our state of mind.

When grief and loss are at the root of holiday depression, it can be painful to face the seasonal traditions in the absence of a loved one. As difficult as it is to change it up, try doing something different at least for the first Christmas without that person. Instead of the traditional family holiday dinner, suggest a different location like someone else's home, a restaurant, or a weekend at an Airbnb cabin at the lake. Your family will understand, so don't be shy about throwing out some suggestions.

Sometimes all the commotion

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surrounding the holidays can blot out our ability to remain in the present. Our attention is pulled in all different directions and worries about the past and future can cause us to lose sight of today. By focusing on the here and now, you can refocus attention on enjoying the present moment. By reining in thought distractions, you can pause and check in with yourself. Are you okay? And finally, believe it or not, how much sleep we get on a regular basis is really important to our state of mind. Lack of restorative sleep disrupts our circadian cycle, which can cause

us to go through our days feeling tired, moody, and unproductive. For better quality sleep, stick to a regular daily sleep schedule, limit caffeine intake, avoid heavy meals after 7 p.m., and turn off the electronic devices.

Let's get started on a healthy and joyful Christmas season!

*Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor, providing mental health services through her own private practice in Madison, Alabama.*



## The Alternative Approach

# Anxiety. The Real Pandemic.

by Dixie Bell



I lived to tell the tale. And you can too. As an anxiety survivor, I know firsthand that it can feel overwhelming and unbearable at times. I know how heavy it can feel. I spent the larger half of my life being anxious and fearful. Going through abuse, divorce, severe illnesses in the family, almost losing my sister to heart failure, and many other events really took its toll on me. I say all of that to tell you that you are not alone. My goal today is for you to have a complete mind shift. By the end of today's article, I want you to see your life in a different light. My goal is to speak life and power over you. I want you to feel hope that having a peaceful mind is possible. Are you ready? Let's get started.

First of all, I want you to know that there is absolutely nothing wrong with you if you struggle with high-functioning anxiety. You are human. However, it can make you feel like no one else in the world struggles with it as you do. Trust me. You are not alone. Struggling with anxiety doesn't mean you are weak, and it doesn't mean that you don't have enough faith. It means that you have been through struggles. If anything, you are probably stronger than the average person. We just need to tap into that power!

Let's take a quick look inside your brain. Understanding how the mind works is the key to unlocking its potential. Memories, emotions, and habits create pathways in your brain called neurotransmitters. These are literal pathways that look like tiny trees in the brain. They are responsible for recurring thought patterns and making new ones.

So here's what happens. Life experiences teach us to be fearful. Abandonment, trauma, abuse, and even fears of things like spiders and heights are learned fears. We were not born to be fearful creatures. The Bible actually tells us that God doesn't give us a spirit of fear, but one of a calm, sound mind. If all of these behaviors and triggers to our anxiety can be learned, they can be unlearned too. It's as simple as that.

Your mind has more storage than any computer ever designed or will be designed, and it uses LITERAL electricity to send messages to the brain and body. It works faster than light speed. It's not just physically powerful either, its intention can change the energy of physical things...but that's a whole other story for another time. There is not enough time for me to get into quantum physics. For the time being, just



trust me on this one, your brain is infinitely powerful. You can heal your body with the power of the mind. It's incredible. Hundreds of studies have been done on this with mind-blowing results. We aren't going to be doing anything complicated today, we are simply going to be talking about how to unlearn anxiety. I've done it myself and helped countless others do the same.

Reprogramming the brain is actually very simple. It's a matter of rerecording new feelings toward anxiety triggers. This is done through

meditation and breathing techniques. There are TONS of guided meditations and free information online that will help you get started on the right path! Some of my favorite mind-reprogramming gurus are Dr. Caroline Leaf, Bob Proctor, and Dr. Joe Dispenza. Do a little research on what type of meditation and breathwork is right for you. There is really no right or wrong way to go about this. Do some research, get your feet wet by trying different meditation techniques and you will be on a good path to recovery.

There are also some wonderful supplements that can help naturally reduce stress while you are working through retraining the brain. My ultimate favorite is Sure Calm. It's a blend of nutrients and herbs that help relax the muscles and calm the mind. The good news is that it won't make you drowsy. You can take it at any point in the day and it's so effective! That is probably why people keep coming back for more!

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Cooking with Anna (continued from page 13)

## *Do You Have The Christmas Spirit?*

by Anna Hamilton

*continued from page 13*

*Maybe we should start a new tradition that instead of having New Year's resolutions, we have December beginnings.*

*My birthday is December 30, the next to the last day of the year, so December for me starts my new year. Since we spent most of this year discussing 1 Corinthians 13, and the importance of love, it truly seems fitting to end the year making sure we are reflecting that love to others around us. 1 John 4:21 says it beautifully, "This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also."*

*You may be the only version of God that the people around you see. How do you want the people in your world to see God? Don't you want them to see and feel God's love? Being able to love others around you the way that God loves you, allows them to know God. "No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us." 1 John 4:12*

*We ended our study on love in 1 Corinthians 13 and the first part of verse 8, "Love never fails." The very last verse of the chapter ends like this, "And these*

*three remain: Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." Love in our lives is the greatest gift we can give ourselves and others. By allowing that love to flow out of us and to others, they can truly come to know God. What a wonderful way to lead others to the gospel of Christ, by love.*

*So as the year ends, I urge you to let your new year begin. Begin in the season of hope, peace, and love. Let that love, the Christmas spirit, you feel carry on throughout the entire year. Let the love of Christ reflect as a mirror to all those around you.*

*This week's recipe is actually a gift. You can keep this delicious granola to eat for yourself or pack it in cute little Christmas jars to give to friends and family as a wonderful, handmade Christmas gift. A gift that is filled with love. Feel free to change up the spices, nuts, and sweetener to make this sweet Christmas gift one that truly reflects you and your family.*

*"Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?' He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.'" Matthew 22:36-39*



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call a grumpy  
reindeer?

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*During the holiday season, our thoughts turn to those that make our business possible. A sincere "Thank You" for trusting us with your real estate needs. May you and yours have a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!*

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