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Ali Elizabeth: 256-468-9425

IN THIS ISSUE:

Carissa's Corner

Our Freedom To Worship...

Over the last several months, very large insects have invaded our living room...

Page 5



J.G. Ward And Operation Dragoon

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

When long-time Athens resident Bill Ward was only seven years old, his 19-year-old big brother as well as his hero, James Griffin (J.G.), parachuted into the south of France just weeks after the Normandy invasion. The purpose of the mission was to get Allies into a position where they would create a bottle neck to put the squeeze on the Germans by marching north to meet those who had just been victorious

Continued on page 11



Cooking With Anna

My Identity In Christ: God Says I Am Equipped...

Life often brings challenges that feel bigger than we are. Whether it's stepping into a new season, facing hardship, or trying to fulfill a calling, it's easy to feel unqualified, unprepared...

Page 9



Captain's Log

Home...

"Hey, ma'am?" Hearing a soft voice behind me, I responded to the handsome new rider while keeping my eyes on the rainy street ahead of me. "Yes, sir?"...

Page 14



Award-Winning Devoted Health: Treating Seniors Like Family

By Ali Elizabeth Turner



In 2017, brothers Ed and Todd Park created Devoted Health because they had developed what they call a "maniacal commitment" to help improve health care for seniors in America. They were watching their own parents age into Medicare and felt that they

Continued on page 13

Clean, Green And Beautiful

A Better Way To Spend A Million And A Half Bucks...

I know that we have all driven down the highways in Limestone County, and we have plenty of complaints...

Page 12



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YOUR HOMETOWN FRAMER

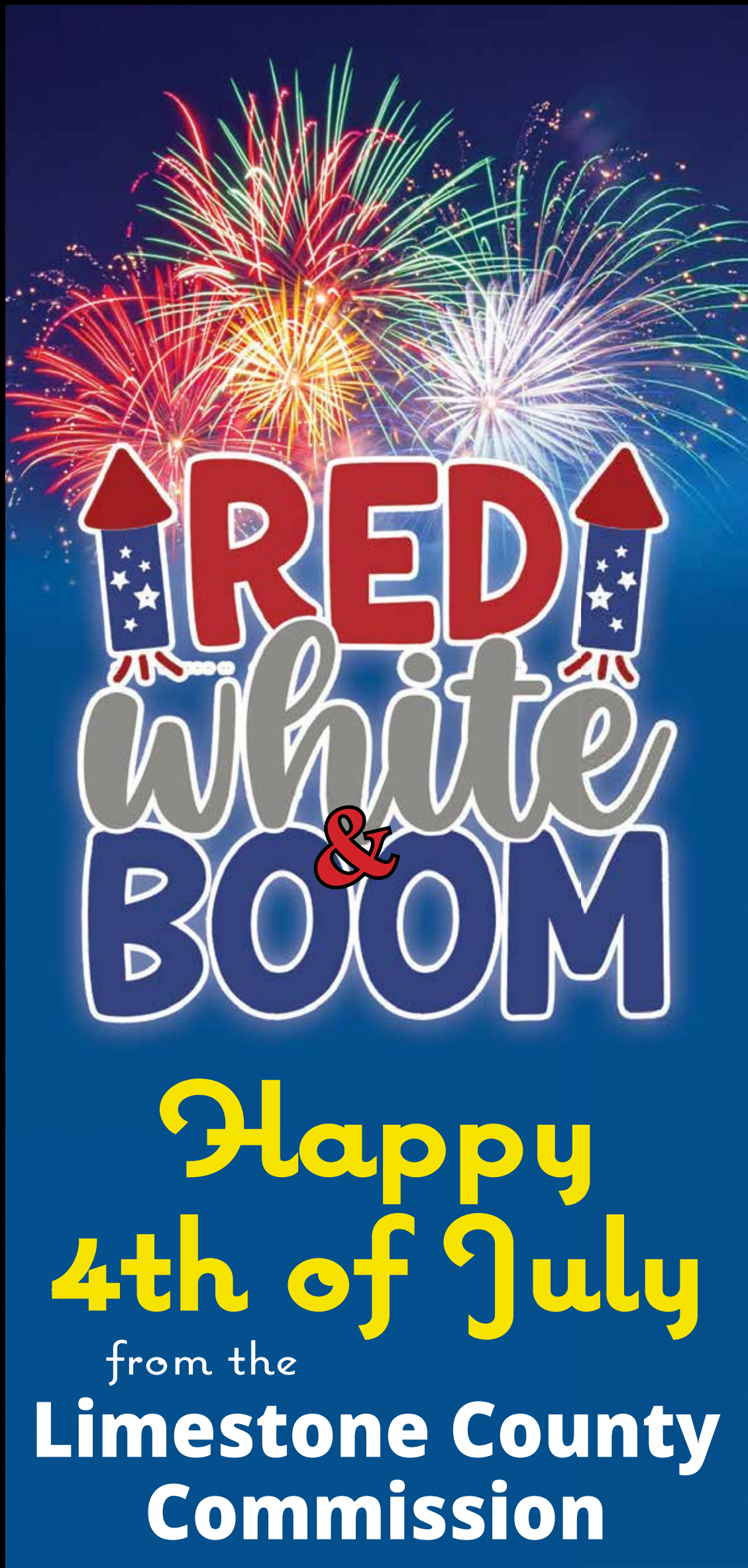
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 **Caleb Lawler**
CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™
Financial Advisor | Edward Jones
27453 Capshaw Rd. Suite D | Athens, AL 35613
Phone 256.233.4037 | Fax 855.225.7589
caleb.lawler@edwardjones.com

 **Grant Gilbert**
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Publisher / Editor
Ali Turner

Copy Editor
Yvonne Dempsey

Graphic Design
Jonathan Hamilton

Web Design
Teddy Wolcott

Marketing and Delivery
David Robinson

Contributing Writers

D. A. Slinkard
Anna Hamilton
Phil Williams
Claire Tribble
Eric Betts
Roy Williams
Stephanie Reynolds
Brenda Wilkerson
Detri McGhee
Deb Kitchenmaster
Carissa Lovvorn
Nick Niedzwiecki

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Send Inquiries to P.O. Box 428, Athens, AL 35612, or call (256) 468-9425. Emails are preferred, send email to info@athensnowal.com

Contents

Publisher's Point	3
All Things Soldier	4
Carissa's Corner	5
Calendar Of Events	6
What Makes Ronnie Roll	8
Cooking With Anna	9
Health And Fitness	10
Cover Stories	11 & 13
Slinkard on Success	15
McGhee On Management	16
Clean Green And Beautiful	12
Captain's Log	14
From The Tourism Office	17
Learning As A Lifestyle	18
Alternative Approach	19
Rightside Way	21



Publisher's Point

Boundaries - Three Decades Later

In 1992, I was still adjusting to being a single mom, homeschooling my kids, and working on my master's degree. To say that I needed help with healthy boundaries was the understatement of a lifetime. And, I don't think that it was a coincidence that Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend decided to travel the country to give INTENSE weekend-long workshops on the topic of what was then their brand-new book, simply entitled *Boundaries*. The book continues to be a best-seller three decades later, and I imagine I will be learning its lessons for the rest of my life.

If you are not familiar with it, I will tell you what it is **not**. It is **not** a justification for selfishness, a guide to building barriers, or crafting a life that has you living squarely on the throne of your own heart. It demonstrates the fact that Jesus set boundaries all the time, and He was the most unselfish human that has ever or will ever draw breath. When it was time to be done with the Pharisees, He was done, like, "done-done."

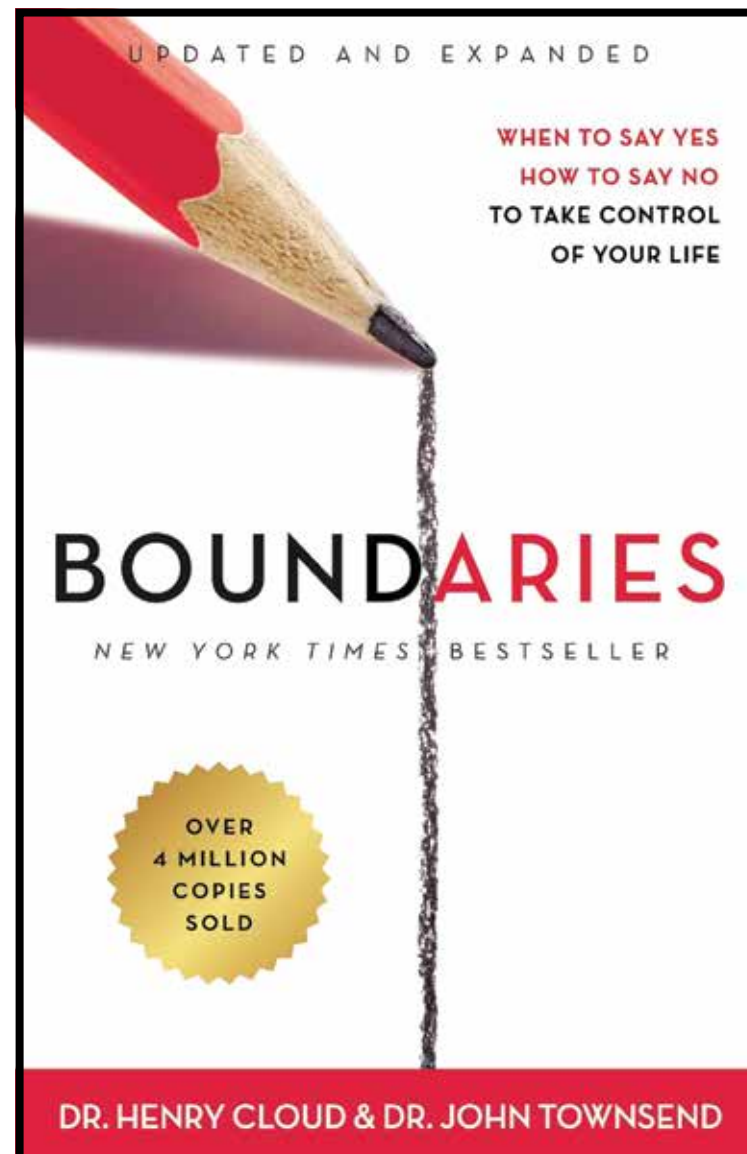
And, when it came to doing something that no one else has ever done, as in dying a gruesome death for us that He didn't have to do, He was still walking in boundaries. His personal boundary was that the only acceptable invasion of His life was that which had

been designed by His Father, and while it included a level of surrender that has never been matched, He said it all when He said, *No one takes it (My life) away from Me, but I lay it down voluntarily. I am authorized and have power to lay it down and to give it up, and I am authorized and have power to take it back. This command I have received from My Father. Amplified Version.*

This concept differs completely from the belief that He was a victim. Nothing could be further from the truth. He suffered unspeakably, for sure, but there was the most extraordinary purpose wrapped up in that pain, and He focused on the joy that was set before Him. That is essentially the message of *Boundaries*—to cultivate a relationship with God that is so intimate that you allow or disallow various "invasions" based on the purposes of the Kingdom. Will you make mistakes? You can bet on it. Will you at times be selfish? Yep. But, if you don't learn how to set healthy boundaries, **even with yourself**, you'll get worn down to a nub, and then you are no good to anyone.

Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend skillfully answer the tough questions:

- *Can I set limits and still be a loving person?*
- *What are legitimate boundaries?*



- *How do I effectively manage my digital life so that it doesn't control me?*
- *What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?*
- *How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?*
- *Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries?*

They also have updated the book to help people manage life in the digital age when people are screaming to be followed and wonder-

ing what's wrong with us if we don't "like" their cat video.

If you have never read the book, it's time. If it's been awhile, it's time again, and I will be more than interested in what you think.

Ali Elizabeth Turner

Ali Elizabeth Turner
Athens Now
Information & Inspiration
256-468-9425
ali@athensnowal.com
Website:
www.athensnowal.com



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Boots For Our Best

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



This is the first time in many years that the first edition of *Athens Now* for the month of July falls squarely on the 4th. As I was thinking about the topic for this *Soldier*, I kind of thought that it would be something about the birth of our nation, or perhaps some of the Independence Day celebrations we had in Iraq, but those topics are being covered carefully without. There was a touching story in *Military Times* about an unidentified former member of the Women's Army Corps who had disappeared and died a decade ago, and through improved DNA testing had finally been identified. She was buried with military honors, and members of her family who had never met her came for the ceremony. All of her siblings had passed away, and it was the current generation that came to remember her.

As interesting as was the

story of Miss Reba, who, by the way had been reduced to being known only as "Number 7," it was not the story that needed to be told. No, it was about something so simple, so fundamental to the safety of soldiers, and perhaps something no one had considered, and that was boots. What has happened over the years is that boots have been made overseas in places like China, and while they look good on the outside, they do not hold up.

I know that the term "a matter of national security" gets bandied around way too much, but when it comes to equipment, even something as simple as the quality of boots laced to the feet of those who are protecting the U.S. Constitution (and therefore, by extension, Americans) from all enemies, both foreign and domestic, boots need to be the best, for the best.

Interestingly, there is bi-

partisan legislation being sponsored at the federal level that would see to it that all boots for our service personnel would be made from start to finish in America, using only materials that come from the good ol' U.S. of A. Senator Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill is an Army combat veteran. Senator Duckworth said, "Ensuring our military's readiness means every part of our service members' uniforms must be functional, reliable, and safe — and that we can surge supplies in crisis or conflict." Certainly not being unnecessarily dependent upon an unpredictable supply chain in the "Time of Tariffs" makes good sense, and it is heartening to know that Republicans have joined the move to get footwear made here and here alone. "This bipartisan bill would help avoid supply disruptions in times of crisis, create more jobs and investment domestically, and better outfit our nation's



troops," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

The legislation is called the BOOTS Act, which stands for The Better Outfitting Our Troops, or BOOTS. The act mandates that all boots worn by troops, including optional boots that serve as alternatives to the military's standard-issue boots, are 100% made and sourced in the United States or are compliant with the Berry Amendment. The Berry Amendment was passed in 1941 in order to insure that the above scenarios never occur,

and the BOOTS Act would give the Berry Act new teeth.

Perhaps, then, this really is more of a 4th of July story than I had first thought. After all, wasn't it in the time of our own struggle to become a free nation that George Washington at Valley Forge had to deal with the dismay of having his men face down the cold of winter with their feet tied in bed-sheets? May we then, nearly 250 years later, determine that our best get the best in all things, including their boots.





Carissa's Corner

Our Freedom To Worship

by Carissa Lovvorn

Over the last several months, very large insects have invaded our living room—along with oversized flowers, pool noodles, hula hoops, glue guns, and endless bottles of paint. That can only mean one thing... it's Vacation Bible School season! Whether I'm building a beehive out of laundry baskets and brown packing paper or creating oversized mushrooms out of paper mâché and chicken wire, I always enjoy the task of making the theme come to life. This year's Magnified theme, focused on participants discovering the wonder of God in the smallest of things seen in His creation.

Our event went off without a hitch. The children gazed in wonder at the towering critters and larger-than-life greenery. They enjoyed crafts, games, Bible lessons, and singing praises to

our Father. Volunteers and church staff worked diligently to ensure the children had fun, but more importantly, a spiritually fulfilling time.

At one point during the week, I mentally stepped back from my task of helping my husband with pre-k recreation. I watched children giggling without worry, my husband acting like a big kid while leading their games, and fellow church members enjoying the company of other volunteers. Honestly, until that moment, I hadn't once considered our safety—thanks in part to the incredible security team surrounding us, but even more so because of the freedom we're blessed to enjoy in this country.

We have the freedom to study the Bible, meet publicly, and teach the next generation about our Lord. We have the



freedom to express our religious beliefs without fear of persecution. I think at times, we all take this for granted. Studying and sharing the Bible in some countries is considered a threat and can result in imprisonment, torture, or even execution. Governments consider Bible study groups and church services to be illegal. These secret meetings are often

subject to police raids and harsh penalties. Yet, they meet anyway—studying and sharing the gospel with conviction, unafraid of what is to come. It is because of this unfailing truth: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1 ESV)

Although religion is specifically addressed in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, I'm thankful our nation's Founding Fathers set the tone for religious freedom earlier in the Declaration of Independence. It states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (Jefferson).

Now to pack up my craft supplies and patiently wait for next year, when I will once again overload our home with random VBS decorations. As I do so, I plan to contemplate the freedom that we enjoy in this great country and how grateful I am to serve our Heavenly Father. I hope you had a safe and happy Fourth of July!

Many blessings,

Carissa



Calendar of Events

VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting

The VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting for July 7 has been canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 4.

2025 Kiddie Carnival

Now - July 19

The Athens Lions Club 2025 Kiddie Carnival is open every Thursday, Friday & Saturday night, (CLOSED JULY 3RD, 4TH & 5TH), 6:30pm-9:30pm. We have 10 rides that are best suited for kids ages 2-10 years. Free admission to the carnival and each ride is just a 50¢ ticket. We also have bingo and delicious concessions on site such as hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, chicken fries, funnel cakes, bottled water and soft drinks. Also served are cotton candy, sno cones and other crowd favorites. Bring cash as we do not accept Credit Cards or Debit Cards. For updates and additional information about Kiddie Carnival visit our Facebook page: Athens Lions Club Kiddie Carnival. The Athens Lions Club property is located at 309 E Forrest St. in Athens, AL, it is across the street from the current Athens Julian Newman School. Free parking for the Kiddie Carnival and other events is at a parking lot across the street from the Kiddie Carnival. We do not offer private party rentals.

Red, White And Boom

July 4

Red, White And Boom 4th of July Festival. Starts at 10am. Athens Sportslex, US 31 N, Athens. Join us for a spectacular 4th of July celebration at the Red, White and Boom festival. Get ready for a day full of fun, food and festivities the entire family can enjoy.

Limestone County NAACP Steps Reading Program Round Island Creek Mission Center

July 12

Attend summer reading sessions, complete reading assignments, book reports and present reports on time. Complete two STEM assignments given by the Limestone County NAACP Education Chair Dawn Martin. Virtual reading sessions are available. Card stamped by STEPS

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.

Reading Program instructors. Signed waiver by parent and/or guardian required. Round Island Creek Mission Center. 13829 Lucas Ferry Rd. Athens, AL.

Pink Lady Walk

Summer Line Dance Fundraiser

July 18

Classic line dancing and a live DJ to raise funds for the Pink Lady Walk and their fight against breast cancer. 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM. Eastside of the Limestone County Courthouse on Marion Street.

4th Annual Tomato Festival

July 19

Join us on July 19th as we celebrate all things tomatoes! Our 4th annual festival tickets will include all you can eat tomato sandwiches, a drink, dessert, LIVE music, Artisan vendor booths, & a car show. A portion of the car show proceeds will be donated to help benefit the Limestone County Children's Advocacy Center. Come enjoy touring the farm & garden, visiting the animals, face painting for the children, or just relax under a tree while you hear some great music and eat delicious food. We'll see you there! \$15 pre-purchased ticket REQUIRED. 14594 Zehner Rd, Athens, AL

Fiddlers Concert Series

July 24

The Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series, presented by Redstone Federal Credit Union, continues with a special performance from The Kody Norris Show. 7:00PM - 9:00PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan St., Athens, AL. <https://athensfiddlers.org/the-kody-norris-show/>

American Farm Heritage Days -

Antique Tractor Parade

August 1

The Annual Antique Tractor Parade will start at the Limestone County Sheriff's Rodeo Arena, south on Lucas Ferry, left on W. Washington, left on N. Marion, right on Pryor, left into the Veterans Museum for a brief visit, right on Pryor, left on Hines, right on Market, right on Lucas Ferry and back to the Sheriff's Arena. 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

The Square

August 23

Bands will entertain while volunteers accept donations from spectators for local charity. 5:00PM - 10:00PM. Eastside of the Limestone County Courthouse on Marion Street. 200 W. Washington St., Athens, AL. <https://www.facebook.com/p/Summerfest-Athens-AL-100093604150514/>



HAPPY 4th OF JULY



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What Makes Ronnie Roll

Building Up To The Boom

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Mayor Ronnie and I met on July 2 rather than June 30, and the hum of activity and preparation for celebrating the 4th of July could be felt in the atmosphere. "Red, White and Boom is being sponsored by the City of Athens, Limestone County Commission, and the Chamber," said the mayor. The fireworks will start when it's good and dark, and people will need to know that part of Hwy 31 and Hwy 251 will be closed off after it wraps up while APD directs traffic and gets us home safely. This year the festivities start at 4 p.m. at the Sportsplex. There will be a battle of the bands, food trucks, and just a good old fashioned 4th to be celebrated in a town and county that are trying to "build well for the boom," pardon the play on words.

The mayor also added that

things like this (having fireworks and celebrations) are so important because it speaks to quality of life. Over the years as I have watched, the mayor and the department heads field situations that almost always fall into the category of public safety, education, economic development, and quality of life. All of them are inter-connected, interdependent, and any other "inter" you may want to add in order to make a city thrive. You can't have quality of life if you don't have public safety, and you certainly can't have something as important as celebrating our country's birthday if you don't have an educational system that teaches people how to read and write so they can know their own history. "Later on, I want to take you to a celebration that is truly

patriotic," Mayor Ronnie said with a chuckle. He then added, "I have my red, white and blue tie on for the event." I guessed it -- the Activity Center was going to have a 4th of July party, and the "rule" was that you had to dress for the occasion. My red hat was going to have to do.

Jumping ahead, when we walked into the center, line dancing was going on in full force. I get emotional especially when I see veterans at events like this...most of whom served in Vietnam. I am hoping that more than a half century later they understand how appreciated they are, and how important their role was in making us a free and thankful country. Walter Miller, a Korea vet walked up and gave me a hug with tears in his eyes. Oh, how I love this town! We have lived



here for twenty-five years, and I am looking forward to twenty-five more, Lord willing. Some very young staff members at City Hall stood with smiles on their faces as they watched the smiles on the faces of everyone. It was a good, good day in Athens, AL, and I am looking forward to the rest of the festivities.

"Back at the ranch" the mayor and I discussed various topics pertaining to the city, one of which was changing back to stop signs from traffic lights at the intersection of Hobbs and Marion. Years ago, a request was made on the part of local shop owners and an experiment undertaken to see if stopping at stop signs gave time to observe local business and what they offered, without disrupting the flow of traffic. It has worked, and so that inter-

section is going to change to stop signs.

We moved on to a topic that I have missed writing about, and that is a current book being read by the mayor. Over the years we have read the works of coaches, business execs, Alabama's own Andy Andrews, public officials, thought leaders, and more. It has been a minute, and I am pleased to announce that we will be tackling two books soon; both written by the same group of New York Times best-selling authors. They are *Crucial Conversations* and *Crucial Accountability*, and I am looking forward to getting started.

There was just one thing left to do, and that was to pray and thank God for our country and its birthday, and then it was time for Ronnie to roll.

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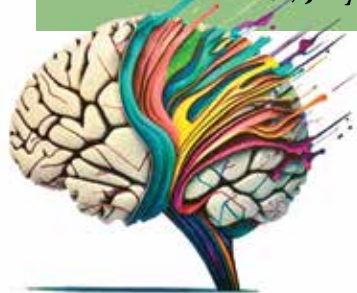
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Cooking with Anna

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Equipped*

by Anna Hamilton

Life often brings challenges that feel bigger than we are. Whether it's stepping into a new season, facing hardship, or trying to fulfill a calling, it's easy to feel unqualified, unprepared, or simply not enough. But the good news is this: God does not call the equipped—He equips the called. “Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good

that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-21).

God's strength is my supply. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” This means our limitations are not obstacles to God—they are opportunities for His power to shine. When I feel weak, God shows up with strength. When I feel

continued on page 24

Ground Chicken and Cabbage

Ingredients:

3 cups green cabbage, shredded
8 oz. ground chicken
2 Tbsp. yellow onion
1 Tbsp olive oil
½ cup carrot, grated
3 tsp tomato paste
1 tsp paprika
¾ cup chicken broth
½ cup cooked brown rice or cauliflower rice
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Heat half a tablespoon of oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and sauté once the oil is hot until it is almost cooked. Season with salt and black pepper. Set aside.

Lower the heat to medium, add more oil and sauté the onion until soft. Then, add the cabbage, paprika, and tomato paste. Stir well and pour in the stock. Cover with a lid and let the cabbage simmer for 20-25 minutes until it's soft and flavorful.

Return the chicken to the skillet and add rice and grated carrots. Stir everything together and



let it simmer for another 5 minutes until all the ingredients are warmed through.

We love to serve this sauteed cabbage with fresh herbs (green onions, parsley, cilantro) and a dollop of sour cream or plain Greek yogurt.

The CrossFit Prescription For Preventing Chronic Disease

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

If you look around our community, it's not hard to see a troubling trend: more and more people are struggling with chronic diseases like obesity, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure. These conditions often go hand in hand with fatigue, poor sleep, joint pain, and emotional stress—and most people assume they're just part of getting older. But they're not. They're symptoms of a lifestyle that can be changed, and the good news is, it doesn't take a miracle drug or complicated diet to reverse them. It takes movement, real food, and support. That's exactly what we do at **CrossFit Athens**.

At its core, CrossFit is a health prescription. It's not about lifting heavy weights or competing with others—it's about moving your body in

functional ways, eating real food in appropriate amounts, and doing it all consistently with the help of a coach and community. This isn't a gimmick or a quick fix. It's a sustainable way of living that has helped thousands of everyday people take back control of their health.

The medical world is catching up to what the CrossFit community has known for years: chronic disease is largely preventable—and often reversible—through lifestyle change. The CDC even states that physical inactivity and poor nutrition are two of the leading risk factors for chronic disease. CrossFit tackles both head on.

At **CrossFit Athens**, we meet you where you are. Whether you haven't worked out in years or you've tried every fad



diet out there, we help you rebuild the habits that support lifelong health. Our classes com-

bine strength training, cardio, and mobility into workouts that are different every day and scalable for any fitness level. You'll never be left on your own, and you'll never have to guess what to do. Our certified coaches guide you every step of the way, and our nutrition program gives you simple, real-world tools to start eating better without confusion.

We've watched members come off medications, lose dozens of pounds, and rediscover energy they haven't felt in years—not because of a magic pill, but because they started showing up and putting in the work. That transformation is available to anyone will-

ing to take the first step.

If you're tired of feeling tired... if you want to avoid the fate that so many people in our community are facing... then don't wait. You don't need more motivation—you need a plan, a coach, and a community. That's what we offer.

CrossFit Athens is here to help you move better, feel stronger, and live longer. Let us help you reverse the damage and build a life you're proud of—one workout, one meal, and one day at a time.

Ready to get started? Reach out today at info@crossfitathens.com and let's talk about your goals. Your health is worth it.



J.G. Ward And Operation Dragoon

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

on June 6, 1944, better known as D-Day.

J.G. also participated in the Battle of the Bulge which, next to Normandy, is considered by many to have been what turned the tide in the war effort in Europe and ultimately brought victory in 1945. He was part of the 517th Paratrooper Infantry Regiment in a war that used the tactic of “jumping out of a perfectly good airplane” for the first time in history. Not only did J.G. parachute, he also fought, and it was something that he never discussed. This was the case for many members of the Greatest Generation when they came home. They “sealed off” the whole experience except perhaps when they were around other battle buddies, and went on to build a life that left the fields of southern France far behind. Corporal J.G. ended up parachuting into five combat zones, including in Holland. He was highly decorated, and was a recipient of the Bronze Star.

Bill told me that his brother’s life, as it pertained to WWII, was very much like the now iconic 2001 dramatic miniseries, *Band of Brothers*, and that was about as close as things ever got to a real discussion. Bill said, “I would ask him, and he would laugh and change the subject. Then he would go and see his girlfriend, and I was heartbroken. He was my hero, and I wanted to be around him all the time. I wanted to hear what he did in the war. I was too young to unders-

tand what was going on, and it was hard on me.”

J.G. was attending the University of Alabama in 1942 when he was drafted, and told his little brother that he was glad to go and fight for his country. J.G. had always loved everything there was to love about aviation, and so becoming a paratrooper was a natural fit. Of course, no one could have anticipated what it would cost in terms of blood and treasure to liberate Europe from the grip of Hitler, but J.G. never expressed regret regarding what he and others helped to accomplish by marching “north into hell” in what was known as Operation Dragoon.

The original name for Dragoon was Operation Anvil, and it was launched ten weeks after Normandy, on August 15, 1944, and lasted until September 14 of that same year. It was primarily fought by American forces, but there were also French, British, Polish, and Greek troops joining in. The original plan was to launch Dragoon simultaneously with Normandy (also known as Operation Overlord), but it was considered to be too great of a strain on troops and resources to try and do both at the same time. It was also a controversial operation due to the fact that Churchill felt an invasion of the Balkans would better serve to cut off German access to oil, and Eisenhower held fast to the belief that liberating France was necessary for final victory.

Dragoon was a success, and served to set up the

Allies for the successful completion of the Battle of the Bulge. It was Hitler’s “last gasp” that to this day remains one of the costliest battle in terms of casualties of the entire war. The Battle of the Bulge lasted from December 16, 1944 to January 28, 1945, and J.G. fought in it as well. Years later he returned to France to pay his respects to those he lost in the war.

J.G.’s Band of Brothers was highly decorated, and considered crucial to the success of the Allies. Among them they received the French Croix de Guerre, Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts, and a Medal of Honor given to PFC Melvin Biddle. They

were known for being light on their feet, able to disrupt operations behind enemy lines, and developing special operations that later became standard to paratrooping in future wars. They were attached to other airborne units at times, including the 82nd, the 13th, and the 17th.

J.G. didn’t marry “the girlfriend,” but did marry a lovely woman named Mary with whom he had four children. He spent his career working in the oil industry, and lived a good, long life. But at the end of the day, he was, and still is, Bill Ward’s big brother and hero, and now you know “the rest of the story.”



J. G. Ward Home on 30 Day Furlough

J. G. Ward, paratrooper in Uncle Sam's army, is back home after several months of hard fighting in Europe. During his months of service he received the bronze star



J. G. WARD

medal and a citation for merit. He is the oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. F. S. Ward of Carrollton, and is but 19 years of age. He received the two following citations:

CITATION

Award of Bronze Star Medal
T. 5-grade James G. Ward, 34-805923, 460 Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, United States Army for heroic achievement in action near Les Arcs, France, Aug 16th, 1944. When an infantry patrol was assigned the mission of penetrating an enemy held town, Technician Fifth Grade Ward, radio operator of an artillery liaison section voluntarily accompanied an order to relay a request for artillery support should the necessity arise. Before reaching its objective the outnumbered patrol was compelled to withdraw in face of strong enemy forces. The enemy launched an attack in company strength, supported by intensely concentrated mortar fire. Technician Fifth Grade Ward, to obtain better observation, carried his radio set forward under the withering fire. Reaching a vantage point, he directed the artillery of his battalion on the enemy forces forcing it to retreat. Technician Fifth Grade Ward demonstrated efficiency and cool courage under fire in keeping with the finest traditions of his military service. He entered the military service from Carrollton, Alabama. (Signed)

E. G. CHAPMAN,
Maj. Gen. U. S. Army Commanding 13th Airborne Division.

This certificate of merit is awarded to T-5 James G. Ward, 34805923, 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, in recognition of conspicuously meritorious and outstanding performance of military duty.

CITATION

For meritorious service in Southern France from August 15 to November 17, 1944, and in Belgium from Dec. 22, 1944 to Feb. 8, 1945. During these two periods T-5 James G. Ward, radio operator with an artillery liaison section, demonstrated high technical skill and untiring energy in maintaining continuous radio contact with the attacking infantry. Carrying his SCR 609 radio, he accompanied forward infantry elements over varied terrain, often under direct enemy observation and fire. By his unique efficiency and initiative, Technician Fifth Grade Ward effected continuous radio communications between his battalion and the attacking infantry, thus contributing materially to the success of two major campaigns. (Signed) E. G. CHAPMAN, Maj. Gen. United States Army commanding 13th Airborne Division.

PALMETTO BOY SERVES IN HALSEY'S FLEET

Charles B. McGahey, Jr., seaman first class, USNR, son of Mr.



Clean, Green And Beautiful

A Better Way To Spend A Million And A Half Bucks

by Claire Tribble - Executive Director,
Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful

I know that we have all driven down the highways in Limestone County, and we have plenty of complaints about the quality of the roads. Guess what the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) spent \$9.4 million on last year instead of repaving the roads? Picking up litter. That's right, we could have had better highways, but instead, we paid people to pick up other people's trash. While I've always known that ALDOT spends funding on litter cleanups, I had no idea exactly how much until my dear friend Sally dropped off a retired teacher's newsletter with the stats from 2024.

The stats are broken down by region, and North Alabama's litter removal -- and remem-

ber this is highway and interstate roadsides only -- costs \$1,463,734.90. That's the second lowest, so I suppose it could be much worse. But then let's factor in the county and city roadsides. While I don't have an exact dollar amount, last year Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful removed 9,500 pounds of litter from Limestone County roadways at our events alone. And we can't work highways and the interstate. The Limestone County Commissioners run litter crews that are picking up anywhere from 900-1200 pounds of litter per week in their districts. And they can't touch highways or interstate either. Athens City is running a litter crew again, and boy, can you tell the difference. Think of the time and mon-



ey that we, the city and the county are spending on cleaning this up. There are so many better ways that this money could be spent. We could all be doing better things and offering more free services for everyone. The state could spend that money resurfacing, improving intersections, crosswalks, etc. I realize that we wouldn't see that entire amount spent

in Limestone County, but we would see some of it. Limestone County and the City of Athens could redistribute what they spend as well, but here we all are cleaning up the same spots and roads over and over.

And I get it, not all of it is intentional, but litter travels and it grows. Wind and rain move litter quickly. With all the rain we have had, I'm sure you've all seen trash floating in ditches and creeks, even floating down the streets into the drainage pipes. What is thrown on the sides of roads gets hit with lawnmowers and bush hogs, making many smaller pieces. When people don't bag the trash that goes into the outside garbage can, guess what? Most of it is so lightweight that it

blows out of the garbage trucks as they travel the roads. Even lightweight bags can fly out of the trucks. Take a look at the ditches on Hwy 72 West. And then think about how dangerous that stretch of highway is to have to cleanup.

Let's do better, Limestone County. Stop and grab that piece of trash as you walk by it and toss it in the trash. Bag your trash before you dump it in the can. Secure things in the back of your truck or on your trailer. Quit throwing stuff out the window. Quit just flat out dumping your trash. Let's spend money on improving Limestone County instead of picking up after people.



Become a Fan



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Award-Winning Devoted Health: Treating Seniors Like Family

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

could offer something better than what was out there at the time. The U.S. was spending more on healthcare than any other country, and was getting some of the worst outcomes of any developed country. Prior to Devoted, they had developed the first cloud-based billing and healthcare management system, which was called AthenaHealth. It went public and the Parks got to ring the bell on the NY Stock Exchange. Eventually they sold Athena Health for \$6 billion, and for a while, Ed continued to run it. Then the brothers came back together to start Devoted Health, whose mission statement is:

To dramatically improve the health and well-being of older Americans by caring for each and every person like they are family.

To the brothers, what that looks like is:

The right care, both clinical and non-clinical, delivered in the right place at the right time, in a highly consistent, coordinated proactive prevention- oriented way.

We listen to our members—really listen—so we can

support them in living the lives they want. That means we have to be more than a health plan. We have to deeply support member well-being with benefits, systems, and support designed for relationships, trust, and empathy.

It turns out that there is a precise formula to making this possible, and it is that formula that is causing Devoted to revolutionize the insurance industry. Two of the ways they are accomplishing their mission is through pioneering in tele-health, as well as having concierge-like “guides” who are assigned to each customer to be a true “face and heart” that sticks with them through every medical “thick and thin” that might be encountered along the way. Devoted also provides support for clinicians, reliable access to trusted providers, and a proprietary software developed by the founders that is designed to serve the members, and not just expedited billing or claims.

Devoted serves 20 states including Alabama, and has a true heart for veterans, which we’ll talk about in a moment. Devoted was chosen as one of four insurance companies by



Devoted's Alabama Director Eric Carney speaking at a coining ceremony held recently in Mobile.

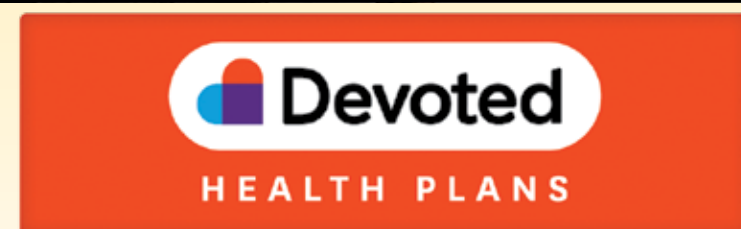
U.S. News & World Report's “Best Insurance Companies for Medicare Advantage in 2025.”

The following statements are from “raving fan” customers that are touching and spontaneous:

“Devoted Health has always been there for me through my battle with cancer. From Jan.2024, I always had friendly, courteous and knowledgeable help with any questions or problems that may have shown up.”

“I have been with Devoted for only six months but I am pleased to say that although I faced some challenges due to travel outside of coverage, the customer service representatives have been amazing. They provided solutions to my situation, links to digital forms and even a physical form through email just in case. I have been completely surprised at how quickly and clearly they have helped me.”

“I’m happy you’ve been so supportive of my attempt to regain my good health. I did not realize the root cause of my discomfort and the extent to which it adversely affected



my quality of life. After the procedure, I was a new man now looking forward to a productive life. I thank you for your support and cooperation.”

“Very caring, informative and thorough representative. I will continue using Devoted because they treat me like a human. This is the way health insurance should be.”

It should be noted that Grammy award-winning singer Lionel Richie is a compensated spokesperson for Devoted, and as far as employees are concerned, many talk about how satisfying it is to know that they are making a difference in the lives of their customers.

I spoke with Eric Carney, who is Devoted’s Director for Alabama. Eric is a former reserve law enforcement officer who has been involved with operations regarding human trafficking, search and rescue, and more. He enjoys Devoted’s corporate culture and the

values of the company -- especially its mission to treat every member like family. However, as the son of a Vietnam vet as well as a member of a family that is full of veterans, Eric takes great pleasure in participating in the coining ceremonies that Devoted has started to conduct for Alabama veterans. There is now a specially designed coin that shows all the branches of the military, and they make a point of finding veterans who have never been properly thanked for their service. When vets are presented with a coin, there is an impact that is hard to describe. Feeling honored and appreciated is only the start, and Devoted is going to come to Athens for the Coffee Call that will be held at the Veterans Museum on Saturday, August 2, at 8 a.m. for a special coining ceremony. So, save the date because you are going to want to be there!





Captain's Log

Home

by Brenda Wilkerson

"Hey, ma'am?" Hearing a soft voice behind me, I responded to the handsome new rider while keeping my eyes on the rainy street ahead of me. "Yes, sir?"

"Do you have a nice house?" My heart skipped a beat knowing I had to walk softly around this particular subject. You see, he and his sister had just moved in to what was known as a very disheveled, low-income set of small condominiums.

My mind raced as I realized that his careful question was pleading for some sort of validation. I glanced up into the large review mirror to meet the eyes who pulled that question out of his little raw soul. Those brown eyes were soft but intense looking for answers from questions presented to him by his peers.

I opened my mouth to speak, and it was like the Heavenly Father reached through my words to embrace this young man's heart sitting behind me.

"Do you have a warm bed?"... "Yes ma'am."

"Do you have food on the table each day?"... "Yes ma'am."

"Do you have people there who love you?"... "Yes ma'am."

I paused. "Then you have a lovely home!"

It was like his heart finally drew in a deep breath. I could feel the temporary relief. Seemingly satisfied, he sat back in his seat and stared out the window as the raindrops slid down like tears falling from a shattered heart. The rest of the ride was uneventful until we stopped in front of his house. As I flipped

the switch that opens the big double doors, he and several others filed off at this stop. Before I could close the doors and release the brake, he turned, looked me dead in the eyes, and without hesitation said, "I love you."

My heart ached and burst all at the same time. "Buddy, I love you too!" The bus doors closed and the brake was released. He continued to stand in that very spot for what seemed like a small eternity. My foot pressed the gas and we accelerated toward the next stop of the afternoon journey. Slowly he turned and headed for his door. His house. His home.

May God comfort and bless your heart today like no one else can, little sir.


Until the morning ...



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Dr. JOHN BOYLE

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Fax: (256) 828-4250
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hazelgreenchiropractic.com





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Slinkard On Success

“M” Is For Mission

by D. A. Slinkard

D.A. Slinkard would love your feedback. You can contact him at da.slinkard@gmail.com

For our series on the “ABCs of Slinkard on Success,” we have come to the letter “M” and the word is Mission. What is your mission in life? Can you clearly define what you want to do? Do you know how you want to go about achieving your life results? Have you even thought about it? When I use the word “mission” I am referring to what some would consider a mission statement, and to give an example of this, I looked up Coca Cola’s mission statement and found, “To refresh the world in mind, body, and spirit, to inspire moments of optimism and happiness through our brands and actions, and to create value and make a difference.”

I truly believe it is vitally important for every individual to create their own mission statement when it comes to how they are going to live their life. A personal mission statement is a little bit different from a company mission statement, but the fundamentals are relatively the same for both. I believe we would be hard pressed to find anyone who has taken the time to think about and then write out their personal mission statement. I believe this is because too many people do not want to work for their success, and they want to achieve success through the easy

way, but there is no such thing as the easy way.

Too often we look at the finished product and think to ourselves, “That person sure was lucky,” even though we never take the time to think about the hard work and extra hours these individuals put into practice to be successful. Thomas Jefferson once stated, “I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.” And it seems to me that luck always appears to be against the man who depends upon it. It seems we use the excuse of someone being lucky when we cannot explain the success of those we do not like.

The success in your life – has it been planned or has it been accidental success? I believe there are many people who have some success simply because of chance. These are the people who do not put in the necessary work to achieve success. I do believe that flukes do occasionally happen for people, and it reminds me of the old quote, “Even a blind squirrel finds a nut every once in a while.”

How does a person write their personal mission statement? It comes down to getting some matters settled such as identifying your core values, identifying your goals, and then taking the time to think about how you want to impact the world around you. This takes a little bit of



work, and I believe it is a contributing factor for why many people do not have a personal mission statement. It is much like the onion, in which it requires peeling back the layers and digging deeper to understand more about ourselves.

Take the time now to identify your core values that guide and direct your life. What values are most important to you now, and what values do you think will be important to you down the road? Over the years, my values have changed, but I can tell you I can at least identify what I believe in. What about you? Have you gotten your values settled or are you tossed to and fro with the blowing of the wind?

The next aspect is to identify your goals and how you plan on achieving these. So often people are too vague when it comes to their goals, and being vague is like not writing anything

down at all. Whatever your goals may be, that is great, but what are you going to do to obtain your goals? We tend to overestimate our abilities to get things done, and we underestimate the time it will take to achieve success. We have all been guilty of biting off more than we could chew because we thought a job or task would be easier than what it was.

This year is zooming by and will be over before we know it, but how are you approaching your days? Are you being active in finding success or are you passively living your life? A boat that merely drifts will never go anywhere, and we need to live our life with purpose. What is the mission that would give your life meaning and the purpose to succeed more each day?

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The Case For Mediocrity

Aka: FEAR – Part 3

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC

Watching the college baseball playoffs recently, I asked my husband who he was rooting for. He told me, and added, "I don't want the other team to win! They always win, I'm sick of them!" I must confess, I still don't fully understand that logic, but through the years, I have heard that same sentiment in one form or another, in many different situations.

It seems common in human nature to speak ill of those whom we consider less successful, less articulate, less educated than we are. That type of criticism often comes disguised as pity, sadness, or concern. However, because these critics seldom actually DO anything to help those people, their actions prove that they are merely empty windbags trying to make themselves look good by pointing out other people's faults.

Even more criticism is hurled on those who rise to the top in their careers, family life, or other personal relationships. Of course, seldom is this

criticism given directly to their face. This tells us that the idea is to criticize, not at all to actually help the one being criticized. What employee hasn't spoken badly about their boss – behind their back? What are the root causes of that kind of criticism? Envy is possibly #1. Jealousy a close #2.

The mediocre employee usually just goes unnoticed. Offends few. Impresses even fewer. They are just there, doing enough to stay employed but not enough to excel. To the timid that sounds pretty good.

Few of us take time to consider our future and come to the conclusion that our primary goal is to be mediocre. Most of us have some big dreams, some high hopes, some lofty ideas of how we want life to be in the future. Yet, it has been said that "most people die with their dreams buried with them."

Solomon said, "Where there is no vision the peo-

ple perish. Another version says, "Where there are no dreams, the people die" (Proverbs 29:18).

Depression, inertia, and even much anger, frustration, and hate can be attributed to dreams held close to the heart, but never pursued. However, pursuing your dreams, stretching your talents enough to actually DO what you dream of requires focus, determination, discipline, and facing failures along the way. Most of us aren't willing to do that. No one who has excelled has been spared some failures along the way. But, failure hurts, giving most a reason to stop. Too often people equate experiencing failure with being a failure. They are not the same.

Tell me, what would you do if you knew you could not fail?

So, once again we come to the point where we are reminded of the importance of making wise CHOICES. We all make many choices each day that di-

rect the day's outcome. Some have no visible consequences – like choosing the white shirt over the blue – but some affect the rest of our lives. It is wise to routinely consider – even ponder -- those choices, and ask, "Are the choices I am making today moving me forward toward the person I want to be? ... Am I stuck in mediocrity because I fear failure? ... Or do I fear success? ... Am I simply living day to day, or am I following my inner visions of who and what I want to be?"

The Case for Mediocrity? It is less painful, less work, and less criticism. "Only the mediocre are always at their best" is an old saying.

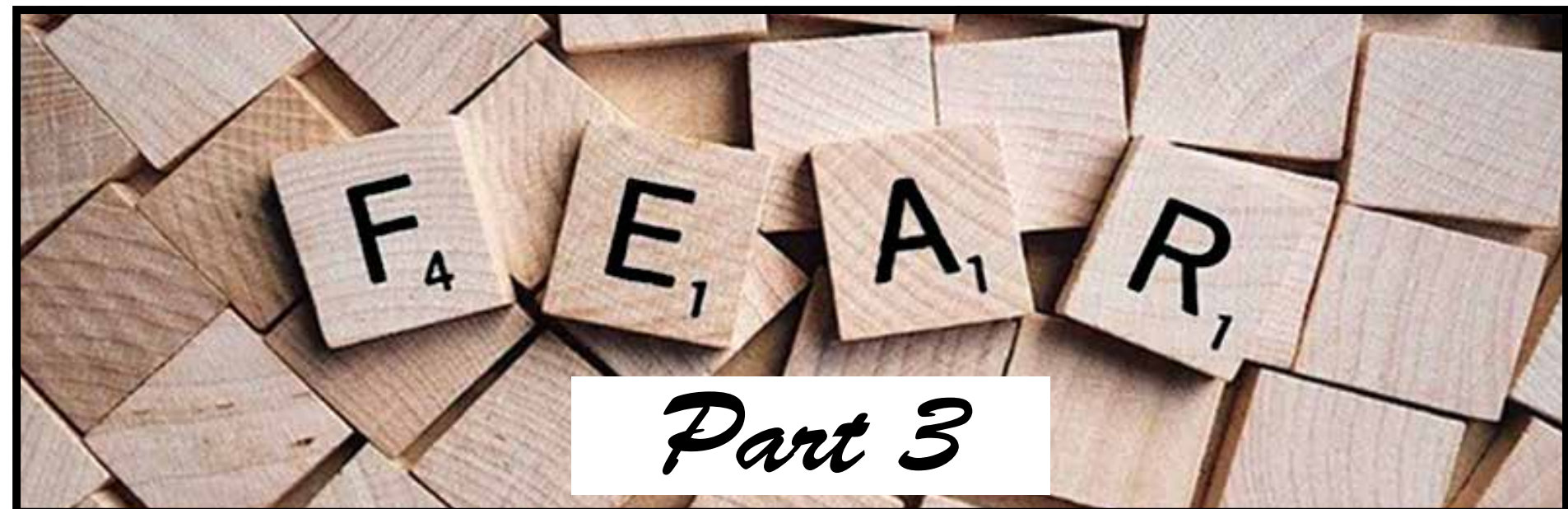
The Case for Seeking Excellence as I Pursue My Vision: Excitement, fulfillment, self-esteem, satisfaction of achievement, seeing your vision come to life because you CHOOSE to run with patience the race that is set before you!

Mediocrity can be overcome by striving for excellence. Never strive for perfection. Always strive for excellence, in all you do, great or small, and harvest the delicious fruit of your labor.

Blessings to each of you in this season of celebration for this country and the gift America provides us of supporting all who strive for excellence in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave!

God bless America, my home, sweet, home!

Detri would love to hear from you! How do you develop your EI? Especially your thoughts on how to handle criticism, worry, fear or problems you would like to get feedback on from others. Email: detrimcghee@gmail.com or Facebook: Criticism Management by Detri. Free outline for Criticism Management available at www.criticismmanagement.com



We're HERE! Part 2

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



Here are a few more tips to make the “houseguest” experience a great one for all involved.

1. Guests, ask your host when they get up and when they go to sleep. Then try to mimic that schedule. Even if you are used to partying to 2 a.m., if they go to sleep at 9 p.m., go to your room and party quietly. This is your time to explore different lives, different household cultures. Pretend you are filming an anthropological documentary (“This culture is so attuned to the rising and setting of the sun, they do not even need a clock to let them know the day has started. And they quickly retire after Jeopardy is over...”).

If you tend to get up in the middle of the night, inform your host/guest ahead of time. It is disconcerting as both a guest and a host to hear someone rustling about and not know if they are ill, hurt, lonely, an intruder, etc.

2. Hosts, some people get hungry in the middle of the night. Have paper plates/cups/bowls/etc. on the counter so the guests don't have to rummage through the cabinets and make noise. Before they go to bed, say, “There are these snacks in the fridge and in the pantry. Help yourself.” Stock some water and snacks in the guest room.

3. If you are a guest, be polite. Don't leave the kitchen a mess. Don't eat all the best food (unless it was placed in your room as a welcome gift).

4. If there is special food that someone in the host or guest household needs to eat, label it and tuck it away. Often people will see “Bobby's SPECIAL (gluten free, allergen free) cookies” and want to snack on them (they are new and delicious!), but that is all that Bobby has as a snack.

5. Hosts, it's a great idea to clear out the fridge of all science experiments and old condiments. Dump unmarked leftovers—the last thing you want is your guest getting sick because what they thought was bleu cheese salad was actually leftovers from 3 weeks ago! A great tip I got from a fabulous lady who goes to my church is that she uses blue painters tape to mark containers in her fridge so the guests know what is in the container.

6. Clear understanding of schedules, expectations, and desires is the key to a smooth visit. Guests often want to rest, sleep, visit, shop, explore, etc. A wise and thoughtful guest will understand that it is not up to the host family to just starve until the guest wanders back home. Let your host know ahead of time (the day before) if you will make it for supper.

And a wise host will plan meals that are expandable, such as “gourmet grilled cheese” with soup, pizza, burgers or steak, spaghetti, etc.

7. Guests, strip the bed, tidy the bathroom, take out the trash, and offer to treat them to the last meal before you leave. It is a



sweet kindness to your hosts to leave them little to no work when you leave.

Along with that, if work starts back on Monday, leave on Saturday. Give the host one FULL day to rest before they have to go back to their regular lives. They will be eager to have you again because they know they will get a little break too.

8. Hosts, have extra pillows, towels, and blankets available. Some people have scent allergies so consider not using dryer sheets, etc. Have a plunger in the bathroom (iykyk). Have extra chargers by the beds.

9. Guests, ask about any home rules such as shoes/no shoes, acceptable eating places, etc., then follow them.

10. Hosts, mind the pets. YOU love Fluffy, and I love Fluffy, but some people don't. Unless the guest invites your pet, don't let the pets in the bedroom or climb on the guests, etc. If you are a guest, do not as-

sume you can bring your pet. People have allergies, sometimes severe.

If you did get the “OK” to bring Fluffy, CLEAN UP THE MESS. I know at home we often just “wait ‘til the rain washes it away,” but when we visit, let's be thoughtful!

Lagniappe (“a little something extra” that shows a guest they are loved):

1. A welcome note and a piece of candy on their pillow
2. Bottles of water and snacks by the bed
3. A basket in the bathroom with travel-sized supplies they might have forgotten: toothbrush,

toothpaste, various over the counter medications (out of the reach of kids, though)

4. A few magazines at the end of the bed that you think the guest will love

5. Brochures of fun things to do (Hint, hint, come by Tourism!)

6. A few toys for the kids
Do you have any tips that you recommend? Send them in!

Don't forget our Red White & BOOM is happening on the 4th at the Sportsplex starting at 5 p.m.! Vendors, food trucks, a battle of the bands, then FIREWORKS. The view is GREAT from the Sportsplex!





Learning As A Lifestyle

The World Has More Than One Cook: *A Call To Expansive Leadership*

by Eric Betts
Assistant Director, Curtis Coleman Center for Religion Leadership and Culture at Athens State University

There's a well-known Kenyan proverb that says, *He who has never traveled thinks that his mother is the only good cook in the world*. At first glance, it may seem like a reflection on food or cultural pride, but beneath its surface lies a profound leadership principle. The proverb warns us of the dangers of limited exposure, of mistaking familiarity for excellence, and of allowing our narrow surroundings to shape an unchallenged worldview. In the same way that a person who never leaves home may assume their mother's cooking is the standard by which all others should be judged, a leader who never ventures beyond their

comfort zone may believe their way is the only way. Leadership as a lifestyle means constantly seeking growth—not just in knowledge, but in perspective. Just as travel exposes the palate to new flavors, new methods, and new ways of preparing the same ingredients, leadership is enriched through exposure to diverse voices, traditions, and problem-solving approaches. True leaders are those who are humble enough to admit that their experience is not the sum total of wisdom. They understand that what worked in one context might not be appropriate in another, and they value learning from people who look, live, and lead differ-



ently. This proverb also reminds us that proximity breeds

limitation when not paired with curiosity. A leader who never travels metaphorically—who never listens across difference, never asks new questions, never leaves their familiar echo chambers—runs the risk of leading in isolation. They may confuse comfort with correctness, tradition with truth, and local patterns with universal principles. Leadership that does not move, does not grow. And leadership that does not grow, cannot serve a world in constant motion.

So what does it mean to

live leadership as a lifestyle? It means embodying curiosity, cultural humility, and the courage to journey—whether that journey is geographic, intellectual, or spiritual. It means tasting other “meals” not to compare or compete, but to expand one’s appreciation for the richness of humanity. Great leaders know that their role is not to be the only cook in the kitchen, but to cultivate a table where many bring their gifts. And in that shared feast, we all become better—wiser, fuller, and more fit to lead.

Tennessee Valley Spotlight

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The Alternative Approach

Do You Eat At Least 5 Servings?

by Roy Williams

Roy, what in the world are you talking about? I'm talking about fruits and vegetables, preferably raw. Fruits and vegetables have become some of the least consumed foods in America, even though research has been published about the health benefits they provide. Even worse is the fact that the average child under age 16 eats less than two servings a week.

America has been sold a bill of goods concerning our diet. For years we have been taught that we get everything we need from the four basic food groups. At the top of the food pyramid are fruits and berries, followed by complex carbohydrates, then vegetables and last but not largest is protein. If we, as a nation actually followed that concept, making it a daily routine, we would be much healthier nation.

Over the last few decades, the powerful food industry along with the FDA have been able to switch people from eating whole, unprocessed foods to eating highly processed, cooked, and chemical-laden foods. During that same time span, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, autoimmune diseases, and cancers have become epidemic in America.

Please remember, the food industry makes money by selling food, not necessarily whole, healthy foods but in most cases, cheap, over-processed, sugar-laden, nutrient-deficient foods that taste good but have almost no nutritional

value. In order to maintain a healthy body, you must consume 16 vitamins, 74 minerals and trace elements, 12 amino acids, 3 essential fatty acids, and a lot of protein every day. Unfortunately, the standard American diet (SAD), contains less than half those nutrients.

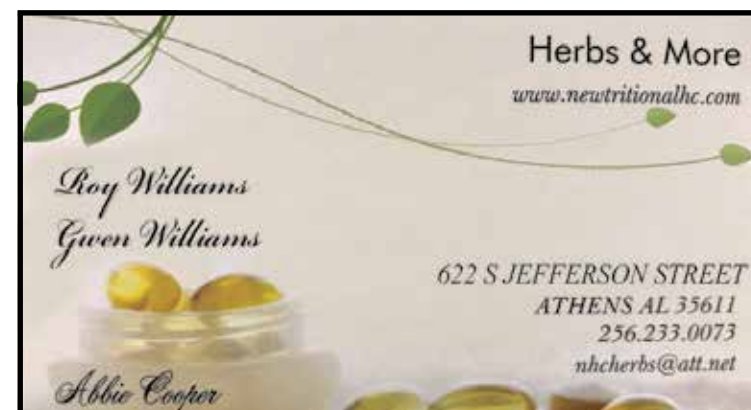
The result, America has become one of the sickest nations on earth. A list of the top 100 healthiest nations, 1 being healthiest and 100 being the sickest, America has slid down in the 60 range. We consume more prescription drugs than all the other nations on earth combined, yet we have more cases of the five top killer diseases.

You may ask yourself; how could that be the case? When you look at the five biggest disease killers in America and realize that all of them are now classified, deficiency diseases, you begin to realize that we are malnourished. I didn't say that we are not consuming enough calories. Americans consume more calories than any other nation. The problem is that most of the calories we consume are called empty calories. You cannot live on calories alone. Take a 20-ounce soft drink for example, which contains 240 calories, but when you look at the label, you can see that it has no vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids, or protein. Your body burns calories for energy to move but calories without nutrition will not sustain you. You

cannot manufacture new cells with only calories. You must consume nutrients.

That leads me back to the point of this article, do you consume at least 5 servings of raw fruits and vegetables a day? Why is that so important? Because they not only contain vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids, and protein, they also contain some very powerful naturally occurring chemicals that are beneficial. Some of them help you digest your food easier; others stop free radical damage, decrease inflammation, and strengthen our immune response. Many have proven to help fight disease and speed up the healing process, while others are shown to improve natural energy.

Another problem is that we have been programmed to believe that if anything goes wrong with our health, we can simply go to the doctor and get a prescription. One must remember that prescriptions only treat the symptoms of disease. They do not



stop or even slow down deficiency disease. Deficiency disease implies a lack of proper nutrition, and no drug will replace the nutrients that are missing from your diet.

That's why we encourage everyone to consider taking Ultimate Fruit & Veggie. This product provides the same as 5 servings of raw fruits and vegetables everyday by simply taking 2 with your first and 2 with your last meal each day. When you read the list of fruits, vegetables, and super foods contained in this product and learn that all of them are cold processed to maintain their integrity and that all of them are grown without pesticides or any chemicals, you will begin to understand that this is the

very best and easiest way to support your overall health.

Ultimate Fruit & Veggie is an exclusive product of NEWtritional Health Care LLC. What you read on the label is guaranteed to be in the bottle and our quality will never be compromised. For those reasons, I can personally guarantee that Ultimate Fruit & Veggie is not only superior to any competing product, it cost less. To learn more, go by Herbs & More in Athens or NHC Herbs in Killen, or call 256-757-0660 or visit our website at www.nhcherbs.com.

*Your Friend in Health,
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Rightside Way

Belly Up To The Scotus Buffet

by Phil Williams

The all-you-can-eat buffet is a singularly unique Americanism. Pay one price, and belly on up to fill your plate. Complete one serving, go back for seconds. Even thirds! I once had a restaurant manager tell me that a buffet restaurant in the South is hard to manage because people here love to eat!

Just as much as Southerners love some hot food, salad helpings, and serve-yourself ice cream bars, conservatives just enjoyed bellying up to the SCOTUS buffet this week for a heaping helping of landmark rulings!

The last week of June 2025 could well prove to be a fixed spot in time for those who love the rule of law. A week when rulings came down from the high bench at the Supreme Court of the United States that impacted how and why we do things with a decidedly conservative bent.

Much of the goals for the right side of the spectrum are vested in the Trump agenda which has been lodged squarely in the various federal courts whose decision-making processes have time and again seemed built on politics and not legal truism.

Then came the all-you-can-eat buffet of Supreme Court servings. A plethora of legal caloric intake. Entrees of procedure. High fiber, low carb, legalese. And some sweet opinions for dessert. We opened the week with Department of Homeland Security v.

D.V.D and a ruling that allows the Trump administration to send illegal immigrants to third-party countries other than their country of origin for detention. Suddenly the asylum claims that the Biden administration gave to everyone with a hangnail no longer requires the U.S. to build prisons to detain illegals in perpetuity. Serving number 1!

We quickly went back for seconds. *Medina v. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic* determined that states do indeed have a right under the Tenth Amendment to deny Medicaid funds to abortion providers like Planned Parenthood. Since the *Dobb's* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the outcome of this case should have been easy to predict. Yet it took the conservative justices entering the fray to serve up helping number two by setting the abortion industry back on its heels.

Then came Friday! And the legal eating really began in earnest!

By a vote of 6-3 in *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton*, SCOTUS upheld state law in Texas that simply required an age-verification requirement for online users of pornography. The porn industry screeched it would chill free speech rights under the Constitution. The conservative majority found otherwise, saying the law "only incidentally burdens the protected speech of adults." Kids are first. Porn is last. Serving number 3!

Then came a side of goodness to go with the robust

portions of conservative edibles. Christian and Muslim parents combined their efforts to press public school systems in Maryland to allow them to opt out of curriculum that promoted transgender and LGBTQ ideology. The school system argued "practicality" but the parents argued their First Amendment rights to religious freedom. SCOTUS agreed and *Mahmoud v. Taylor* affirmed a parent's right to have the final say in culture clashes in public schools, with Justice Alito writing in the majority opinion: "We reject this chilling version of the power of the state to strip away the critical right of parents to guide the religious development of their children." Perfectly cooked. Serving number 4!

The main course of the conservative buffet binge came with *Trump v. CASA*. This one case cracked open the legal stalemate on Trump's "America First" agenda.

Trump v. CASA began as a challenge to President Donald Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship for children of illegal aliens. It came to the justices of the Supreme Court as an emergency appeal with the Trump administration asking the question: Do federal district courts have broad power to issue "nationwide" or "universal" injunctions prohibiting the federal government from taking action anywhere in the country?

Once again, in a 6-3 majority opinion the Supreme Court restored order and served up a piping hot plate of sustenance for the conservative

cause. Rogue judges at the federal district court level have been directed to stay in their lanes and rule in such a way that matches their jurisdictional authorities. Writing for the majority Justice Amy Coney Barrett stated: "When a court concluded that the Executive Branch has acted unlawfully, the answer is not for the court to exceed its power, too." Serving number 5... with dessert!

The ruling in *Trump v. CASA* very clearly affords the Trump administration the ability to move forward without the concern that liberal activist attorneys will forum shop for liberal activist judges to obtain liberal activist nationwide injunctions. Generally speaking, barring the certification of a broad-based class action suit, a lower court in one state can no longer enjoin an activity in another.

I love the law. I respect the law. As an attorney, I also know that there is supposed to be one version of the law that is blindfolded so that justice may be served correctly, evenly, and expeditiously. For the past several years the abuses of our amazing system of justice have made an absolute mockery of the law. The left honed their craft of lawfare tactics. They used lawsuits, and nationwide injunctions like a bludgeon. The rule of law was not what the progressive left sought. Where the courts cannot be trusted to operate blindly there is no justice.

The preservation of a well-ordered society comes from having a judicial system built and maintained on the

premise that law is meaningful, necessary, and even indispensable.

Liberals can't get around the Constitution unless they can pack the Court with liberal justices who refuse to be bound by the doctrine of judicial constraint.

Our founders knew what they were doing. A tripartite form of government must be preserved by the support and maintenance of conservative caretakers, and in this case, conservative justices, who take the role seriously and fiercely interpret the Constitution as a document the lower courts have no right to change on their own.

Welcome to the all-you-can-eat SCOTUS buffet y'all. Eat your fill.

Phil Williams is a former State Senator, retired Army Colel and combat veteran, and a practicing Attorney. He previously served with the leadership of the Alabama Policy Institute in Birmingham. Phil currently hosts the conservative news/talkshow Rightside Radio M-F 2-5 pm on multiple channels throughout the southeast. His column appears weekly throughout Alabama. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this news source. To contact Phil or request him for a speaking engagement go to www.rightsideradio.org.





Cooking with Anna (continued from page 9)

My Identity In Christ: *God Says I Am Equipped*

by Anna Hamilton

lacking, He becomes my supply.

God doesn't expect me to be perfect. Instead, He invites me to rely on His perfect strength. He equips me not by removing my weaknesses, but by pouring His power into my life through them.

He equips me through His Word. God's Word is a training ground for the heart. In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, it says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." When I spend time in His Word, I am not just gaining knowledge, I'm gaining spiritual tools: wisdom, courage, patience, and discernment.

Each verse is a reminder that I am not alone, not forgotten, and not powerless. Through Scripture, God sharpens my faith and builds my readiness to do the things He's called me to.

The Holy Spirit is my helper. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit as a helper, comforter, and guide. In John 14:26, He says, "The Holy Spirit...will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." I'm not expected to figure life out on my own. The Holy Spirit gives me insight, direction, and even words when I don't know what to say.

When I pray for guidance, the Holy Spirit equips me with peace and clarity. When I feel confused or unsure, I can trust that God is working in me through His Spirit.

I am equipped for a purpose. Ephesians 2:10

reminds me that I am "God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." I was made on purpose, for a purpose. Every gift, every lesson, every experience—even the painful ones—are tools God uses to equip me for His work.

Being equipped by God doesn't always mean being the most talented or experienced—it means being available and willing. God fills in the gaps. He makes the ordinary powerful when it's surrendered to Him.

I am ready because He is with me. I am not equipped because I have everything figured out—I am equipped because God is with me. He is my trainer, my provider, and my strength. When I trust Him, I can walk boldly into the unknown, confident that I carry the tools I need for every situation.

Because God equips me, I am not afraid. I am empowered. I am ready.

This week's recipe is a delish one-pan dish. It is easy to prepare for those busy weeknights and is sure to please a crowd. This recipe calls for ground chicken, but feel free to use ground turkey, ground beef, or even sausage. As always, make the recipe work for your family.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ" 2 (Corinthians 10:3-5).

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