

August 1 - August 14, 2025

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Re-elect Mayor Ronnie Marks For Positive Leadership And Proven Results

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

On August 26, 2025, the people of Athens will be choosing a mayor. Ronnie Marks has served in that capacity since the late Dan Williams was elected to the Alabama State House in 2010. Marks was president of the Athens City Council when he was appointed, and then was elected to the position of mayor in 2012, 2016, and 2020. Mayor Marks had announced that he would not be seeking re-election; that is until everyone from family members, his pastors, business leaders, educators, civic leaders, and numbers of Athenians approached him and said, "Please run again. We need you." Ultimately, it was after a "whole lot of prayer" that he announced his decision, and as a result is asking for your vote.



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Publisher's Point

Read The Journey To More: A 50 Day Devotional Experience

Since the summer of 2003, I have had the great privilege of having Kathrine Lee as a mentor and friend. She has offered wonderful entrepreneurial training in the company for whom we both work, has created solid and transformational personal development courses, and for several years has allowed me to be a part of a great adventure as an ambassador for Pure Hope Ranch. Pure Hope is where women who have been trafficked recover marvelously and go on to live lives of purpose marked by true miracles.

Kathrine is also the author of a memoir entitled, *Interrupted: The Joy and Mystery of a God-Directed Life*. *Interrupted* is Kathrine's testimony of being pursued by Heaven, living a life of divine adventure and purpose, and then sitting down on a plane next to a man who made his living by dishing out hell in the form of producing and purveying porn. It was that conversation that birthed Pure Hope, and a decade into it, more than 100 young women have been helped. This is as a result of Kathrine, her husband Michael, and the PHR team's surrender and obedience. She will also be quick to tell you that all of the glory for all that has been accomplished goes to God Almighty.

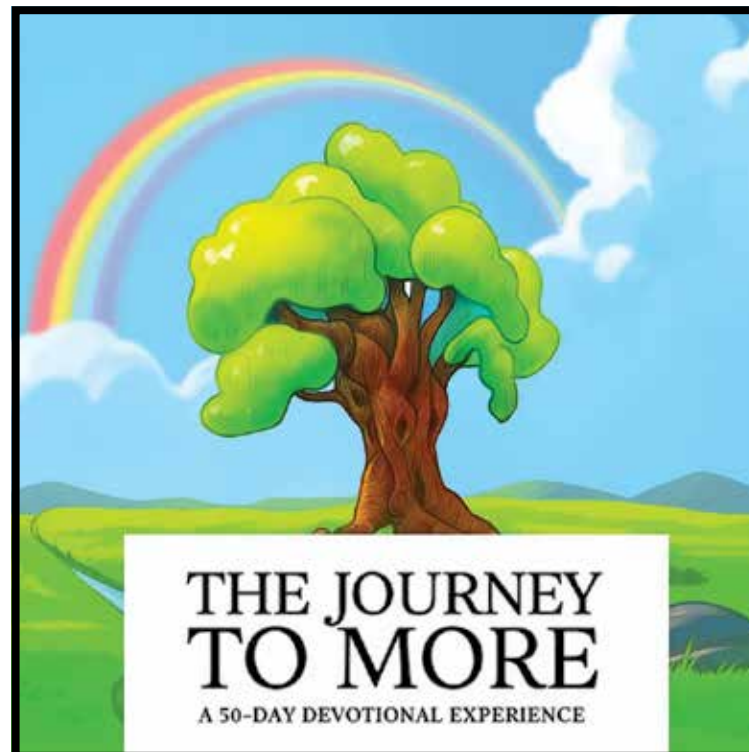
So, it is with great pleasure that I get to tell you that as of today, August 1, 2025,

Kathrine's newest work, *The Journey To More: A 50 Day Devotional Experience* is being launched, and it is well worth your money and your time. There are 50 chapters, each marked with a Scripture, a story, and something I have never encountered: a song.

I have chosen in this *Point* to talk about three entries: Day 1, Day 28, and Day 37.

• Day 1 - the title is "Identity Theft." It deals beautifully with the topic of being wounded by people who name the name of Christ but absolutely do not reflect His character. More importantly, it is about how to truly forgive such individuals, and they are everywhere. The scripture is Hebrews 12:2, which says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..." And the song is "Take It All Back" by Tauren Wells. I cannot describe just how much the including of a "Reflection Song" serves to cement the theme of the day.

• Day 28 - the title is "Joy In The Midst Of Trauma." This is one of my favorites, because it discusses what Kathrine went through when she "hit the wall" over the darkness she was encountering, and how God let her know that there would be legitimate, powerful joy to be experienced even in the midst of dealing



with trauma. To have joy break out even amongst the young women as they "journey to more" is the proof in the pudding. The Scripture is "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). The Reflection Song is "Joy of The Lord" by Maverick City Music & Naomi Raines.

• Day 37 - "You're Not Broken, You're In Pain." This one has been transformational for me. I have spent the last 50+ years of my Christian life looking at certain places of my soul as well as those of others as "broken," largely out of a desire to be humble and accountable. However, I am finding that if I deal in a scriptural manner with the pain that is on top (or

underneath, as the case may be), I can then better deal with the behavior that doesn't exactly manifest walking in the victory. The Reflection Song is "You're Not Broken" by Rachel Schroeder.

While much of the content has been born out of the lives of the young women at Pure Hope, I can guarantee that it applies to those who have had the most "normal" of lives. There is a journey, there is more, and you need to get *The Journey To More* to nourish you as you travel. Enjoy!

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Jared Hudson - *From SEAL To Senator?*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Monday night I had the chance to attend a town hall meeting at Movement Church in Madison which was sponsored by Moms for Liberty. The event gave the attendees a chance to hear from United States Senatorial candidate Jared Hudson. Jared is a retired Navy SEAL who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, and I had heard him speak several times on Phil Williams's *Right Side Radio* show. I like Jared, and while this is not intended to be a political piece per se, I want you to know *why* I like Jared: It's because he is a trained member of Naval Special Warfare. Why should that matter? I don't know exactly how to explain it, but it was something about which I became comfortable as a result of spending three years in Iraq amongst honorable warriors from all the service branches.

I lived amongst the SEALs on a base known as Radwaniyah, and it had at one time been the haunt of Uday Hussein. The SEALs faced down some of the worst that could be dished out by Al-Qaeda, come back, and always treated me with a level of respect that, quite frankly, spoiled me. So, how does that apply to a U.S. Senate race?

Speaking for self, if I am in a position where there are two good candidates that both have integrity, faith, transferable skills, and are excellent leaders, all things being

equal I will lean toward the one that has been in combat, and most certainly one that has special forces training and experience. The reason is that this level of warrior has been trained to be in a position time after time where snap decisions have to be made and actions taken quickly on a repeated basis. Most often the stakes are literally life and death.

In Jared's case, his specialization is being a sniper, and there is no job on earth that requires more patience. Combining those two qualities and sets of experiences could easily be parlayed into being a senator that gets things done, and gets them done right.

Mr. Hudson is well-known in our fair state as the co-founder of Covenant Rescue Group. CRG has led the charge nationally with regard to going after human traffickers, while working with law enforcement, and in 2024, alone their operations led to over 90 felony arrests.

In addition, Covenant Rescue Group trains law enforcement groups with SEAL-style operations, and they believe that the joint operations are one of the reasons they have had such success.

However, a well-planned op that is tactically solid is no good if you can't build a case against the offender that will stick. The members of Covenant Rescue Group, while not lawyers, have



learned over the years what kinds of things need to be in place ahead of time in order to build an actionable case with admissible evidence that will serve to land him or her behind bars for a long time.

At the town hall, I had a chance to talk with Jared for a moment. I asked him what kind of anti-

trafficking legislation he would sponsor if elected, and his answer both surprised and delighted me. "None. We don't need any more legislation; we just need to enforce what we already have. Just run the ops."

I also learned from SEALs, while in Iraq, that they are to the man willing to die to protect

our right to vote, and I have no doubt this applies to Jared Hudson. However, I would encourage you now to do your due diligence and find out which candidate most clearly resonates with you and your values. Then when the time comes, please vote your well-informed conscience.





Carissa's Corner

Faith After Injury

by Carissa Lovvorn

We made a big decision in our house a few days ago— it's time to finish the treehouse! For those just now joining the Lovvorn treehouse saga, I'll provide a little summary. Last November, I sustained a serious ankle injury after one of the treehouse walls fell on me while I was on a ladder. I underwent a very complicated reconstruction and bone graft surgery with a recovery that included nine weeks of non-weight bearing orders, countless hours of physical therapy, two shots, and an immense amount of pain. Let's just say, it's been a life altering experience, but I am very thankful that I can walk.

Up until this past weekend, the treehouse remained untouched. Just a 2x4 frame that served as a constant reminder of a scary accident that left me permanently scarred and, in all honesty, could have killed me. On many occasions, my husband contemplated tearing the whole thing apart and forgetting the idea completely... but he didn't.

While at Lowe's over the weekend, I somewhat laughed at the notion that I was still in pain and slightly limping but shopping for plywood to finish the project. Then it occurred to me, this is faith in a nutshell—hurt but still striving for the end goal.

We live in a fallen world, and not one of us is immune to trials. Illness,

injuries, death, financial hardships, and relationship difficulties are just a few of the issues that we'll face during our time on Earth. The Bible mentions the concepts of suffering and persevering through pain on several occasions. Fortunately, it also talks about God's constant presence when we go through these difficulties and the strength that we receive when we remain faithful. Take this verse for example, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Peter 5:10 NIV).

Romans Chapter 5 contains one of my favorite verses to dwell on when faced with hardship, "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).

Hope— such a comforting and reassuring word. It represents feelings of trust, confidence, and assurance that the negative things that we experience here on earth will not compare to the glory we

will experience once we reach our heavenly home.

My husband made a few rules for my continued participation in the treehouse project. The main one, no ladders! I can

build furniture, paint, and decorate. I look forward to the day when giggles and happiness surround the treehouse project instead of sadness, fear, and regret. After all, if faith can

move mountains, it can handle this treehouse— especially if I stay on the ground.

*Many blessings,
Carissa*



Calendar of Events

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

VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting August 4

The monthly VVA/AVVA Chapter 511 meeting is scheduled for Monday, Aug. 4, 2025, at the Alabama Veterans Museum, 114 W. Pryor St, Athens. Meal at 5:15pm and meeting at 6pm.

Limestone County Master Gardeners Workshop - Water you Thinkin'? August 16

10 AM – 11AM , In the Technology Center at the Athens-Limestone County Public Library, 603 S. Jefferson St., Athens. . This presentation focuses on water quality and quantity when it comes to caring for ourselves and our plants. Creating water features to enhance your landscape is also discussed. So, “Water you Thinkin’?” to keep your plants’ thirst quenched? The instructor for this workshop is Master Gardener Norris Johnston. Free and Open to the Public. For further information call 256-714-0611.

2025 August Chamber Coffee August 19

The Chamber Coffee is a monthly gathering where members of our community come together in a relaxed, friendly environment to mingle, connect, and strengthen relationships. This informal event offers a great opportunity for both new and existing members to network, share announcements, and celebrate the success of local businesses. During each meeting, we take time to recognize and welcome new members, helping them feel a part of the vibrant chamber community. It's a chance to catch up on the latest happenings, exchange ideas, and build valuable connections that can help grow our businesses and strengthen the local economy. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM. Athens-Limestone Hospital. 700 W. Market St. Athens.

Fiddler's 5K September 20

6:00 AM - 8:00 AM. The 5K will start going south on Beaty Street, left on South Street, right on Julian Newman Street, cross Forrest Street onto Box Street, take a right on Memorial Drive, right on Maryville Drive, continue into the school parking lot crossing Christine, turn around and head back out of the school parking lot, cross Christine onto Maryville Drive, take a left on Memorial, left

on Box Street, cross Forrest onto Julian Newman Drive, left on South Street, right on Beaty Street, right into Athens State entrance on Bryan Street and then finish at Sandridge Hall.

4th Annual SummerFest on The Square August 23

Bands will entertain while volunteers accept donations from spectators for local charity. 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM. Eastside of the Limestone County Courthouse on Marion Street. 200 W. Washington St., Athens, AL.

2025 State of the State Address August 27

The Chamber of Commerce is delighted to provide the Governor a forum to present The State of the State Address. Governor Kay Ivey will use this opportunity to highlight the State's progress and challenges from the past year and an outlook for the year ahead. 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM. Alabama Veteran's Museum. 114 W. Pryor St., Athens.

2nd Annual Summer Sippin' Festival August 30

3-7pm. Modeled after Athens Main Street's Sippin' Cider event in December, Summer Sippin', presented by Dream Key Real Estate, will allow merchants to get involved during Culinary Month. Participating merchants will provide patrons with a special summer drink while they visit their stores to shop for summer deals. Event participants compete for patrons' votes to be the summer sippin' champion. Supporting Sponsor: Listerhill Credit Union. A DJ will provide music on the steps of the Courthouse from 4-7 PM. There will also be live music from 5:30-7 PM at Merchants Alley.

Fiddlers Concert Series September 4

The Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series, presented by Redstone Federal Credit Union, concludes with a special performance from The Seldom Scene. 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan St., Athens.
<https://athensfiddlers.org/the-seldom-scene/>

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.

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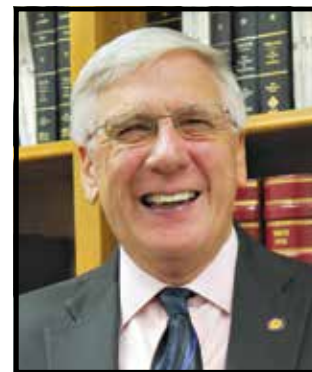
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What Makes Ronnie Roll

Crucial Accountability -- “Never Grow A Wishbone Where Your Backbone Ought To Be”

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



As we met during our usual time, two City of Athens employees and graduates of the Crucial Conversations/Crucial Accountability workshop joined us: Erin Tidwell and Paige Parker. Erin is our City Planner for Athens and holds a degree from Alabama in geography with a concentration in urban, regional and environmental planning. Her master's is from Alabama A & M, and is in urban and regional planning, housing and community development. Erin is originally from Rogersville. Paige graduated from Athens High School, and was one of the first to be a part of the May-

or's Youth Commission. Paige graduated magna cum laude from Auburn with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science, and holds a Master's of Engineering in Sustainable Smart Cities from UAB. She is the Senior Planner for the City of Athens.

Recently, Erin and Paige conducted a survey in Athens with regard to the 2040 Vision Zero campaign, which is a nationwide initiative to eliminate traffic deaths. The survey was the Safe Streets for All, and Erin told me, “We had close to 1400 responses to the survey, which is more than Memphis.” Paige added, “Our peo-

ple care, and this document is the first step.” The point of the survey is to first “identify concerns and countermeasures,” and then “prioritize data and feedback.” The project will focus from Cambridge Lane to Lindsay Lane and Brownsferry. “Our people show up,” said Mayor Ronnie, and the planners noted that the average response to this survey is between 400 and 600.

Much is in the works as far as planning and preparation for the increase in traffic as we grow explosively. I chuckled inside as I thought about what a good idea that these two capable women had been through the trainings they have just received regarding difficult conversations and crucial accountability. They both mentioned that they had enjoyed the workshop.

With regard to the book, Mayor Ronnie keyed off an insert from chapter seven in Crucial Accountability which is entitled, “Agree On A Plan And Follow Up.” The insert is a quote by Clementine Paddleford, and it says, “Never grow a wishbone where your



Athens City Planner, Erin Tidwell, (l) and Athens Senior Planner, Paige Parker

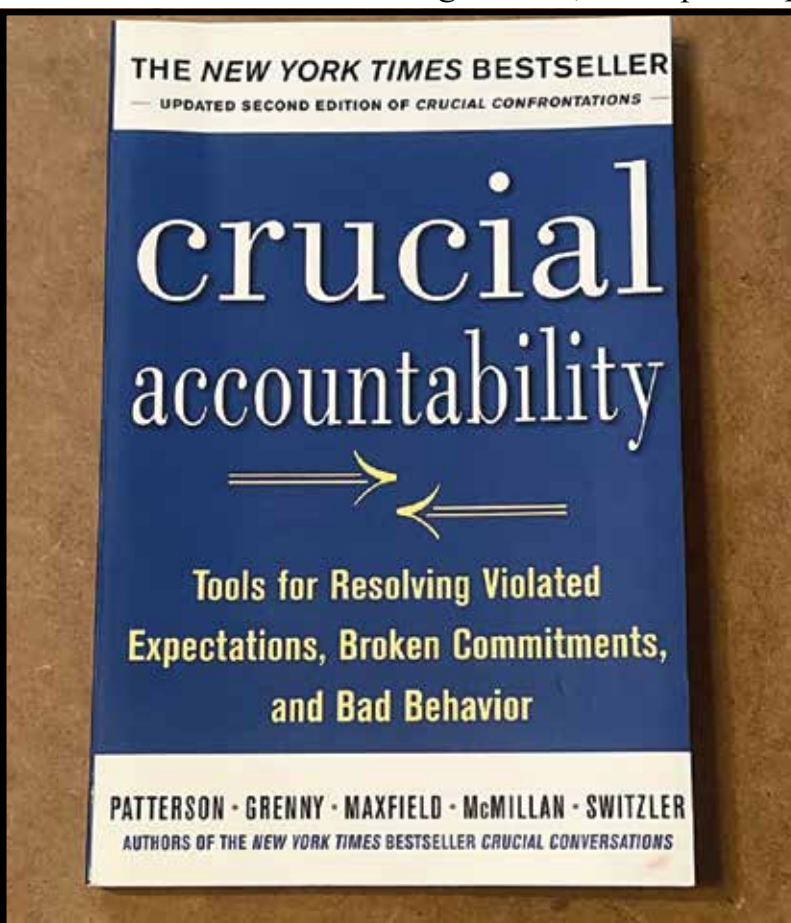
backbone ought to be.” The focus of the chapter is “How to Gain Commitment and Move to Action.” I had to admit, I was getting a chance to discover that I had several “wishbones” and “backbones” in the wrong location, and this book is excellent at showing how just a few communication “tweaks” can make a huge difference.

For example, most of us use the term ASAP regularly and never think that “as soon as possible” means different things to different people, and can end up functioning as a “do-it-

yourself-ulcer kit.” So does “I need it yesterday.” Playful term, but not specific. The plan that gets it done is described first as:

- *Who*
- *does what*
- *by when*
- *Follow up*

The follow-up is where the communication skills and commitment are brought to bear, and we talked about how we need that in every part of our lives as Americans and Athenians. So, we prayed about that and more, and then, once again it was time for Ronnie to roll.



Mediterranean Bean Salad

Ingredients:

*1 1/2 cups chopped, grilled chicken
1/2 cup red onion
1 bunch of parsley
1 bunch of cilantro
3 ounces green olives
1 (14.5 oz) can of chickpeas
1 (14.5 oz) can of white beans
8 oz of chopped mozzarella or mozzarella balls
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tsp Dijon mustard
1 clove of minced garlic
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
Salt and pepper to taste
Juice from 1 lemon*

Directions:

Chop cooked chicken and place in a large bowl. Finely chop your red onion and add it to the same bowl. Add in your chopped parsley and cilantro.

Drain your olives, chop them up finely, and add them to



the bowl. Drain and rinse both cans of beans and add them to the bowl. Add mozzarella to the bowl.

In a separate bowl, combine your olive oil, red wine vinegar, garlic, Dijon, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Pour over salad and toss well.

Store in the refrigerator until ready to serve.



My Identity In Christ: God Says I Am Renewed

by Anna Hamilton

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are not simply improved versions of our old selves, we are made new. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." This is not a small change; it is a complete renewal of who we are in Him.

What does it mean to be renewed? To be renewed in Christ means that our sins are forgiven. We are given a new heart and a new spirit. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone

and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Our old identity tied to shame, fear, and guilt is replaced with a new identity rooted in God's love. We are no longer defined by our past mistakes but by Jesus' righteousness. God does not simply clean up your old life; He gives you a new identity as His beloved child.

We are renewed in mind and in spirit. Romans 12:2 tells us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This renewal happens daily as

continued on page 24

Health and Fitness

No Gym? No Problem: A 10-Minute Workout You Can Do Anywhere

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

When it comes to getting fit, one of the biggest myths out there is that you need a fancy gym, expensive equipment, or hours of free time. The truth? All you need is your body, a small space, and 10 minutes.

Whether you're just getting started on your health journey or looking for a way to stay active at home, this workout is for you. It's short, effective, and requires no equipment at all. Just move at your own pace, stay consistent, and you'll be surprised how quickly you start to feel stronger and more energized.

The 10-Minute AMRAP

This workout is in an "AMRAP" format,

which stands for *As Many Rounds As Possible*. Set a timer for 10 minutes and cycle through the movements below as many times as you can, resting only as needed.

Workout:

- 10 Air Squats
- 10 Sit-Ups
- 10 Push-Ups
- 10 Alternating Reverse Lunges

Movement Breakdown

1. Air Squats

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, toes slightly turned out. Push your hips back like you're sitting into a chair, keeping your chest up and your heels on the floor. Lower until your

thighs are parallel to the ground, then stand up to full extension.

Modification: Use a chair behind you to tap your bottom for balance and depth.

2. Sit-Ups

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat. Reach your arms overhead, then sit up and touch your toes. Lower back down with control.

Modification: If full sit-ups are tough, try crunches—lift just your shoulders off the floor and reach toward your knees.

3. Push-Ups

Start in a plank position with hands under shoulders and body in a straight line. Lower your



chest to the floor, elbows tracking slightly out, then push back up.

Modification: Drop to your knees while maintaining a straight line from shoulders to knees.

4. Alternating Reverse Lunges

Stand tall. Step one foot back and lower your body until both knees are at 90 degrees, back knee gently touching or hovering above the floor. Push through the front foot to return to standing. Alternate legs.

Modification: Hold onto a counter or wall for balance if needed.

Tips for Success

- **Move with control** – Speed will come with practice.
- **Breathe steadily** – Don't hold your breath, especially during squats and push-ups.

- **Track your rounds** – Write down how many rounds you complete, and try to beat it next time!

At CrossFit Athens, we believe fitness should be accessible to everyone—no matter your age, background, or current fitness level. That's why we teach functional movements, scaled for all abilities, in an encouraging, judgment-free environment.

If this workout inspires you and you're ready for more structure, coaching, and accountability, our *Fit for Life Nutrition*, *ROAR*, *Spin*, and *CrossFit* programs are open to anyone looking to make a real change. Reach out to us at info@crossfitathens.com to get started.

**You've got
10 minutes. Let's
make them count.**





Clean, Green And Beautiful

Whatcha Gonna Do About It?

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

While I was scrolling through Facebook the other day, I came across a meme that said, "It's always 'Wow, your car is such a mess' and not 'Wow! You don't litter'." That's what we call BIG FACTS. According to Keep America Beautiful, people under 30 are most likely to litter, the reason being that they don't want trash in their car. Looking on the sides of roads, that's easy to see. We know that the Alabama Department of Transportation spent \$9.4 million cleaning up litter along highways and interstates alone. And you can barely see the difference.

Keep America Beautiful's most recent litter study was conducted in 2020. They found that there are more than 50 billion pieces of litter on the ground in the United States. That's 152 pieces of litter for every person in the U.S. That's also absolutely ridiculous in my opinion. Did anyone notice the amount of trash that was left after

Fridays After Five? We can do so much better.

Did you know that studies suggest that the presence of litter can decrease property values by around 7%? Litter detracts from the aesthetic appeal of a neighborhood, making it less desirable to potential buyers and residents. A large percentage of homeowners, realtors, and property appraisers believe that a littered neighborhood would lower their assessment of a home's value.

Not only can litter affect your personal property, the presence of litter can deter businesses from locating in an area, potentially leading to job losses and reduced economic activity. Most new industries are dedicated to environmental sustainability, and take pride in their roles in the community. If we want more companies to invest in our community, we need to improve our local environment. I'd be embarrassed to have business partners visit and see litter lining the roads on the way here.



Both the city and the county spend significant amounts of money cleaning up litter, diverting funds from other projects. By the time you factor in labor, vehicles, trailer, supplies, and tipping fees, it adds up. This money

could be better spent on new playground equipment, a restoration project, anything really. If people could just learn to pick up after themselves, or wait until they get home to throw it away, life could be so much better.

Feel free to stop by my office and get a litter bag for your car. They can strap on the back of a seat and

make it so much easier to keep all of the little stuff contained. They are made from recycled water bottles, and they are even washable. If you're a smoker, we have car ashtrays. Cigarette butts won't break down, and it can help keep fires down since we've reached the dry part of the summer.



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Re-elect Mayor Ronnie Marks For Positive Leadership And Proven Results

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

There are five things that are the continual concern of the mayor. They are:

- Public Safety
- Quality of Life
- Education
- Economic Development
- Improvement of Government

All of these components need to be in place in order to make a city thrive, and Ronnie’s leadership experience (which comes from the high school classroom, the jungles of Vietnam, working for DHR and being visibly involved in our community for decades) has been tested and proven for the last 15 years.

He was “boots on the ground” with several years of tornadoes, including the “killer twist-ers” of 2011. He dealt with Pilgrim’s Pride up and leaving Athens, and negotiated to get a good price for the land, oversaw the “deconstruction” of the plant, and the renewed property will soon open as Sunrise Park. A new high school has been built, along with a new Sportsplex, and literally millions of dollars of economic development and employment opportunities have been poured into our city and county. All of it has served to strengthen every aspect of our lives.

There is careful planning in place for the future of Athens. This includes revitalizing the downtown core and beyond, as well as the 2040 Plan, which will focus on roads, highways, and excellent, safe, efficient traffic management. He smiled as he said, “Growth is wonderful, and it also has its challenges.”

When COVID hit, our mayor, as did every mayor in America, wondered what the best course of action for our city was, and sought the best medical advice available at the time to deal with a complete unknown that was affecting the whole planet. “We got through that, and there came a time when we could all say, ‘OK, let’s go.’ Athens is back. The energy is high, people are involved, and we have made progress. There is



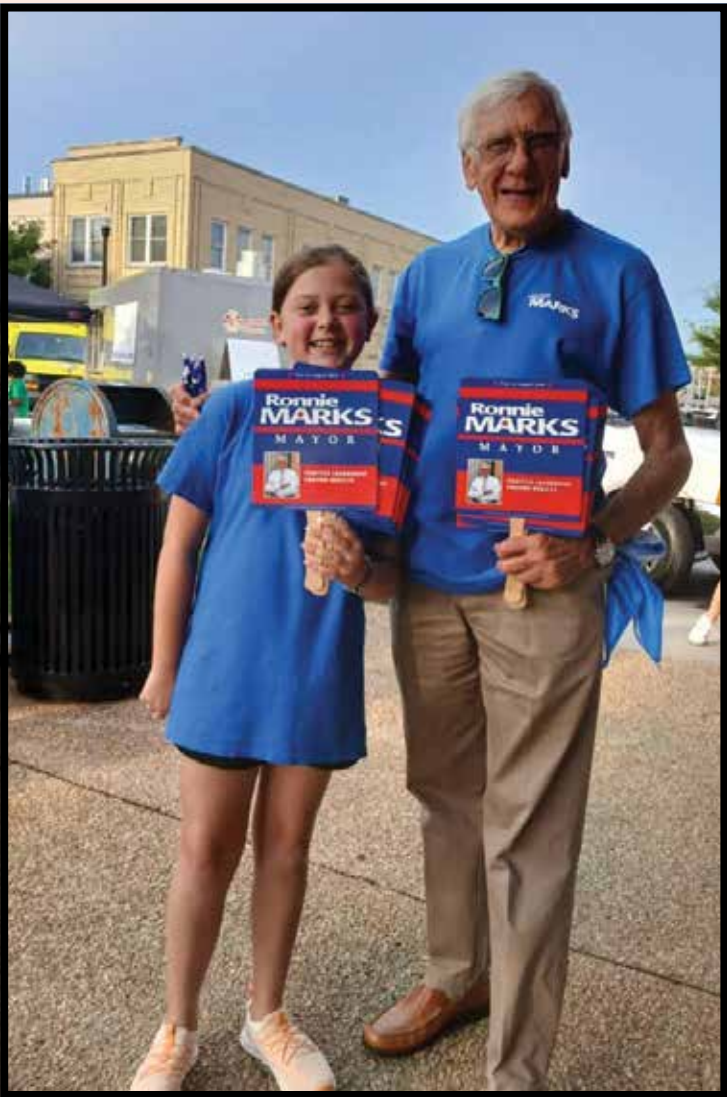
much still to be done, and we can be thankful for what our team has been able to accomplish,” he said. Then he added, “This is about us, not any individual. This is about Athens. Let’s keep things

positive and keep going. In Vietnam, we called it ‘esprit de corps,’ being part of a team that gets things done.”

One of the things about which Ronnie is most proud with regard to his

time in office is the creation in 2012 of the Mayor’s Youth Commission. Since that time, he and his staff have made a difference in the lives of high school students as they have learned about





city government and how to be engaged citizens. "I am extremely proud of this program because we have been able to pair students with community service projects, teach them about our city departments and give them the responsibility of overseeing a community grant program," he said. He added, "These students are learning to take ownership in our city and share their ideas and concerns. In return, they are teaching us to be open about giving youth a voice and challenging them to use their talents to make a difference." Since that time, other mayors of cities in Alabama have asked him to help them start a similar program in their towns through the League of Municipalities, of which he has been president. As Mayor Ronnie con-

tinued to think about his "why" as it pertains to seeking re-election, he said, "I want to make Athens better for future generations. I want the people who call Athens home, and the ones who are moving here because they understand how special it is, to experience for generations what we as a city have been privileged to accomplish together." And about his love for Athens, the mayor said: "To me and my family, Athens is more than a home. It is also our heart. I love serving this city and am honored to serve as her mayor. By working together and with positive leadership, Athens will have an awesome future!" If this is the type of leadership and the results you want to see continue in Athens for another four years, VOTE MARKS for MAYOR!

★ Vote on August 26th ★

Ronnie MARKS

MAYOR

A portrait of Mayor Ronnie Marks, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a white dress shirt and a red and white striped tie. He is standing with his arms crossed in front of a brick wall.

**POSITIVE LEADERSHIP.
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Paid For by Friends of Ronnie Marks - 17822 Remington Drive, Athens, Alabama 35611



Captain's Log

Gotta Throw Up!

by Brenda Wilkerson

The internal numbers on the dash read 110° as the kids, some fresh off the playground, climbed aboard for their ride home. Knowing the AC wasn't working well, I chose to let all the windows down, pop the top hatches for sips of circulation, and run what was left of the AC full blast so as to not bake the children.

Among the rowdy 62 nestled onto Old Yeller, was a kindergartner named J. He told me he felt like he was going to throw up. Knowing the buses were about to depart, I quickly glanced around looking for something he could use -- just in case. I found a quart-sized Ziploc bag and told him to let me know if he needed me.

About 1/4 into our route, I began to hear the panic

sounds I know all too well. With the help of an older student, we got the kids around him moved and the announcement was carefully declared to keep their belongings off the floor. Thankfully, J was feeling MUCH better after the incident. Within a few streets, the word had got to me that the vomit was 'traveling.' With that urgent info, I safely stopped to lay some paper towels on the spreading mess to keep it from traveling too far. From what I can gather, this little guy did throw up in the bag and apparently had zipped it up. He fell asleep and... Dropped. The. Bag. Of. Puke. Aaannd KA-BOOM!



Bless it! I got on the mic to check on him often. Every time, his tiny little thumb would shoot up behind the seat signaling he was okay. It seemed like an eternity, but we got him delivered home

with no additional incidents. After finishing the call to the school to request some janitorial assistance upon my return, we carried on.

My relief was brief.

Within moments my eyes locked with a first grader who claimed that he had "to go real bad!" He was my very last stop! Talking him through to make sure he didn't pee himself, I knew the deserted and wooded cul-de-sac we were going to make a pit stop in. With tears in his eyes, he bolted off the bus and stood close to the front tire, out of sight from any students as I instructed. What seemed like hours, he climbed back up those three big steps as a brand new kid. I gave him a squirt of hand sanitizer and away we went for the last eight stops.

Whew y'all!

*Note to self - buy smelly good cat litter and better bags for throw-up emergencies!

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Slinkard On Success

“O” Is For Obsession

by D. A. Slinkard

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

We are to letter “O” in our series and the word is “obsession.” I believe that for anyone to have success they need to become someone who is obsessed with achieving their dreams and their goals. Too many people falter, and when it gets the slightest bit difficult, they want to tuck and run for cover. When a person has an obsession to succeed, you will see them fight through the battles and accomplish whatever their goal may be. Even when things get tough, they are going to stick it out.

How does a person become obsessed with achieving their goals? It is not easy, and it will take some work, but the very first thing you must know is what you want to accomplish. I am surprised how many people go about life not knowing what it is they want to be when they grow up — but the problem is that these people are well into their adult years. Decide what you want to do, and then you must think about everything you must do to accomplish your goal.

If you want to become obsessed about something, it is going to require you to think about it all the time. You need to consume your life with the thought process being about what or who you want to become. Most people only think about the ideal situation when it comes to accomplishing their goals; they

do not take the time to think about the negative obstacles that will arise and, yes, they will arise. Too many people want to envision a picture-perfect scenario while failing to realize what struggles can exist.

When the concept of who you want to be becomes what you eat, what you breathe, what you sleep, you will become obsessed with achieving your results. This obsession is going to breed a certain hunger that is lacking in many peoples’ lives today. We live in a society in which not many people struggle for the necessities. We live in the greatest country known to man, and because of the first-world problems we have, not as many people are as hungry for success as our grandparents were in the

past. This is why we see so many people who still live at home with mommy and daddy because they have not become obsessed with achieving success.

If you take any entrepreneur, you will find someone who is not afraid of making mistakes because making mistakes is how we learn, yet those who do not act because they do not want to make a mistake are the very people who fail in life. We need to be prepared to make mistakes. We need to be prepared to mess up. Life will not be picture perfect and it will be hard, but we must learn how to achieve the positives in life when faced with negatives.

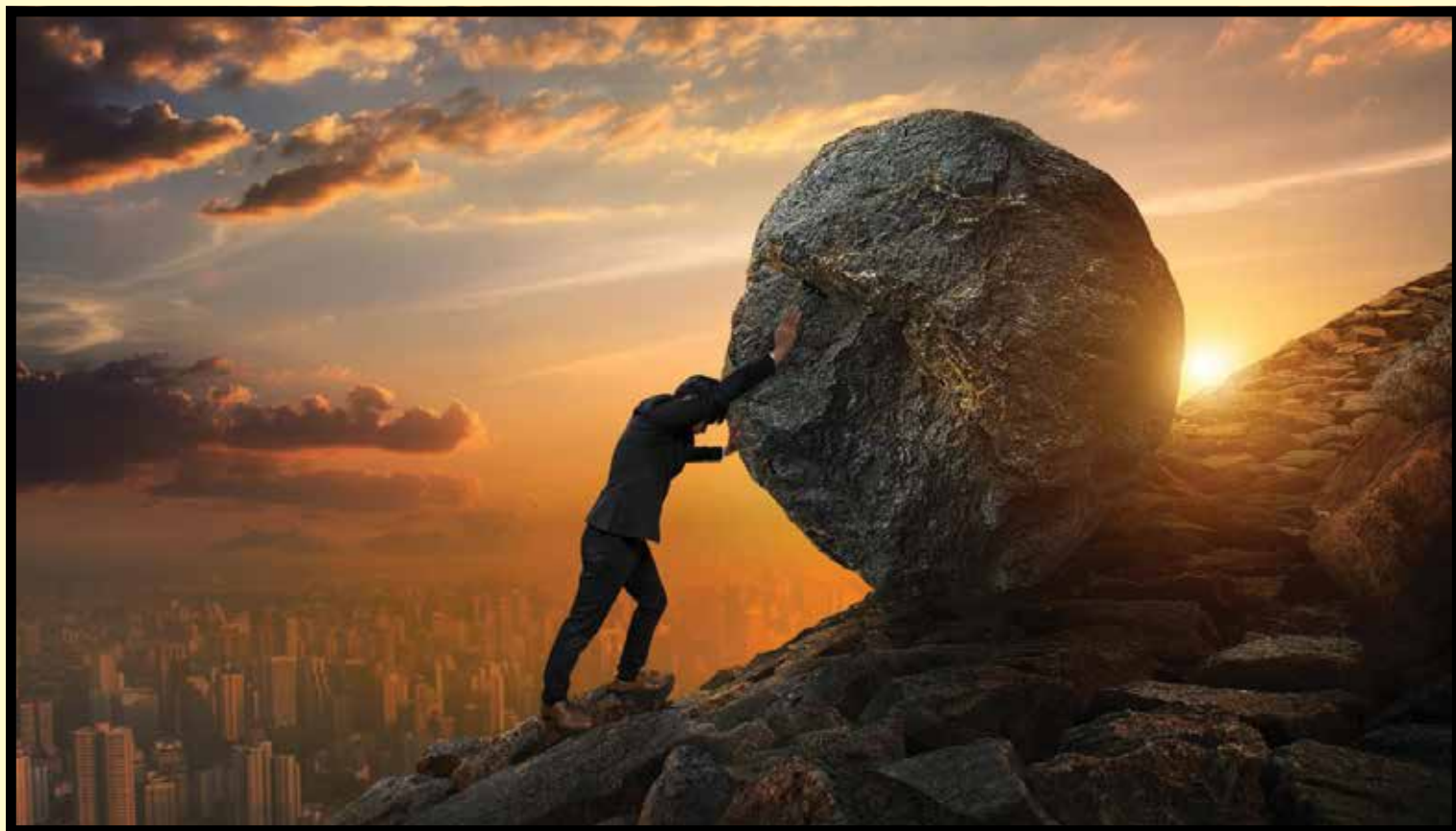
These helicopter parents that only want the best for their children are not helping but are hindering the potential success of

their children. We have too many kids in society who do not worry about whether they mess up or not because they know they have their mom or dad to bail them out. If this is who you are as a parent, shame on you. You are part of the problem in society.

So, you know what you want, you know what you need to do, and the next part is to turn these things into actionable steps. Start brainstorming what you need to do to accomplish the steps that need to be. Make yourself a little checklist and start working each day or each week to drawing yourself closer to being able to complete one of these actionable steps, and you will find your success rate increasing. Also, you will find your obsession level el-

evating because success breeds success. When you begin to taste victory in your life, you are going to want it more, and the hunger will begin to swell up inside of you.

Can you imagine what our society would look like if more and more people had the intense hunger that this country was built upon? Our forefathers built this nation from an obsession to achieve freedom. We live in the land of opportunity, but we must possess an obsession to achieve greatness. We must instill these values into our kids, into our grandkids, and into our public schools to show that obsession brings about a hunger to succeed over failure. Obsession is a good thing.





The Power of ACTION

by Detri McGhee - CLU, ChFC

When pondering the many words of wisdom heard throughout the decades about The Power of ACTION, it was immediately apparent why so many words have been penned on this – from ancient times to today. So, for many, there will be nothing new here. However, sometimes the most helpful words are those that remind us of the deeper things we learned in the past but have not recalled lately yet are exactly what we need now. I hope you see something useful today.

Gaining EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI) requires choices, diligence, and work. Work is best accomplished with a plan. But the best plan is worthless without action.

When sharing the three-step C-A-T (system) that tames the Dragon (of criticism) to develop our EI strengths, we find the “T” stands for “Take

Action.” We will consider three potential actions used to deal with criticism.

- A. Ignore it.
- B. Get angry, get even, get ulcers
- C. Wisely take fact by fact and...
- a. Discard or
- b. Use for profit

A. Ignore it. And, yes, this IS an action. Many choose this path. Yet, when I interviewed the more seasoned successful people, not one of them thought this was the best path. With maturity and increased wisdom appears to come the ability to take criticism at face value, analyze it, and use valid criticism as a call to correct, change, or add something to their work and world. I question that we even can actually ignore criticism when it is directed at us. It appears that

the more strongly a person tends to ignore all criticism, the more negative they are in other areas, and the stronger their attitude of “Everyone is against me!” Personally, I suspect that deep inside, little if any of it is truly ignored. It merely seeps into our psyche and at some point will resurface as Point B.

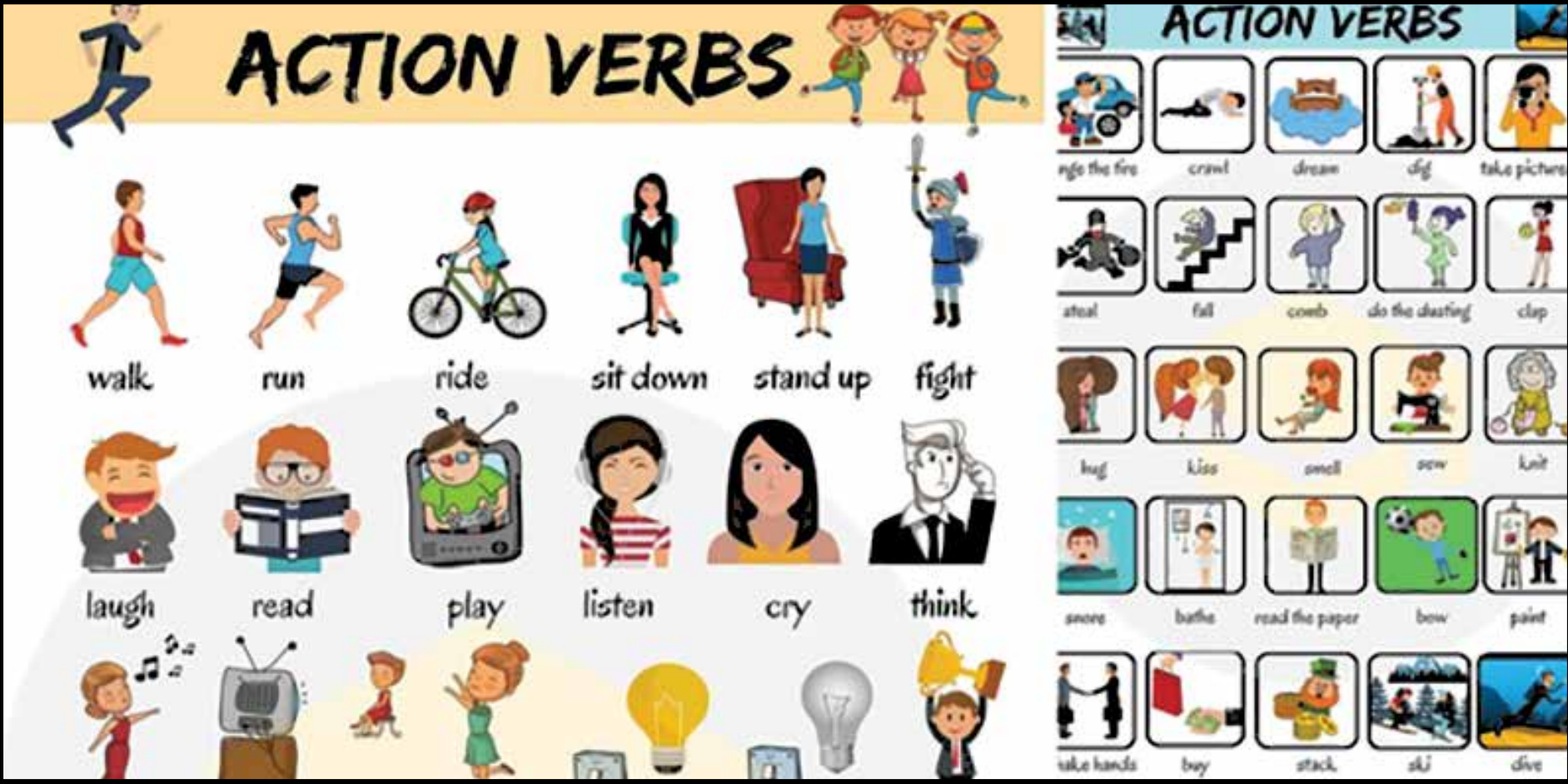
B. Get angry, get even, get ulcers. As with all other problems, criticism does not merely evaporate if we refuse to deal with it. It abides somewhere and like poison, it festers until it boils over in negative ways. **Get angry?** Just remember the first two words of this sentence: “I LOST my temper.” Anyone who learns to control their temper possesses one of the strongest powers on earth! It is a Power worth seeking diligently, consistently, and throughout our life. **Get even?** This is prob-

ably the most personally destructive choice to be made. What we choose to do at the moment of anger or frustration might actually feel really “good” at the time...but seldom does it feel good on hindsight. If something you want to do is NOT something you want to have done, then it is wise to avoid it. This is where learning to ACT rather than REACT is invaluable. You see, the “act” takes but a short time, but what you have done abides forever. Think of your life regrets. Could they have been avoided if you had kept your emotions in check? THAT is the power behind developing mature Emotional Intelligence. **Get ulcers.** I have heard it said, “There are only two kinds of people in the world: People who get ulcers and people who give ulcers.” There seems to be some truth in that. Neither sounds inviting.

C. Wisely take fact by fact and... (a. Discard or (b. Use for profit. Next visit we will explore this option more fully. I’ll share some When-How-Why ways to truly deal with criticisms from various sources, and examples of the successes and failures of others. ‘Til then, stay cool in the summer of the South!

How is your life moving along?

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: detrimghee@gmail.com or Facebook: Criticism Management by Detri. Free outline for Criticism Management available at www.criticismmanagement.com



Trails Are Green Every Season

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association



Do you want thousands to millions more dollars in your community? Build a trail

Do you want more jobs in your community? Build a trail

Do you want better mental health, less anxiety, less depression in yourself and your community? Build a trail

Do you want less burden on the healthcare system and a reduction of financial burden on individuals, families, and the healthcare system? Build a trail

Do you want 24/7/365 advertising for your town? Build a trail

Do you want kids who are off their phones and have better eye health, less weight gain, reduction of diabetes, greater lung health, and greater mental health? Build a trail (then take your kids on it)

Do you want less pollution? Build a trail

Do you want more business in your store? Build a trail by your store

Hello, my amazing folk! I just had the opportunity to do a webinar entitled, Trails and Economic Development: Showcasing Impact. It was so much fun! The Rails to Trails Conservancy who held it was amazing to work with and my fellow panelists were fabulous!

Now, this might sound like a boring topic for a webinar, however, it is anything but. I mean, “trails” and “money” are both very fun things to talk about, right?

Here are facts from the first panelist, Emily: Trails and outdoor rec brought in \$9.5 billion (with a B) to Utah. Their Division of Outdoor Recreation awarded over \$23 million in grants across 142 rec projects statewide. They have installed dedicated ATV and trail bike tracks in the state (with BATHROOMS!)

WOWOW! I would love some of that money for our county, wouldn't you?

The next panelist, Kennedy, was from Wisconsin where outdoor rec generated \$11.2 billion (again, with a B) to the state GDP and supports 96,867 jobs.

Folks, when you hear people brush off trails as a luxury please understand that is nonsense. Billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs are not “luxuries.” They put food on the table; build roads; and support families’ physical, financial, and mental health. Just because there isn't a cash register at the trail head doesn't mean that the trail isn't bringing thousands or millions of dollars in every year.

Emily focused on the statewide programs, then Kennedy zoomed in a little closer to a city—Eau Claire, a city with a population of 80,000. Through their paved and unpaved trails programs, users of those trails support \$4.1 million in local business activity. Imagine that much influx of revenue to Limestone County!

Then it was my turn. Instead of focusing on the



state or county, I chose to focus on Elkmont. Why? Because it is the town that has the Richard Martin Trail running right through the center. It is smaller than Athens and easier to see the impact of individuals on the trail.

I also took a different tack. It's fun to talk big money and grand studies, but what about the impact on the PEOPLE, the individual business owners? That is the pulse I wanted to take, so I interviewed some of the amazing people of Elkmont to see how they felt about having the Richard Martin Trail running right through their town and how it affected their businesses. There wasn't one person I talked to who didn't love having the trail through town.

My favorite quote came from the mayor, Tracy Compton: “Nobody comes from 40 miles away to see your new sidewalk, but they will come for the trail.”

And right he is. People from across the state, across the nation, and even across the continent have come to spend beautiful days on the trail. This is “weightless revenue” for our area. They eat, shop, sleep, fuel, spend time on the trail, and then head home. Horse people especially tend to travel farther, with more people, and have more disposable income. We want to make the trails welcoming for them and for the walkers, runners, and bikers. Plus, trails really are “green” every season—people go on trails all year round. Many venues and attractions don't have that sort of pull.

But it's not just about revenue (though that is significant), it is about your life and the quality of it. Time outdoors is proven -- PROVEN -- to decrease blood pressure, anxiety, depression. In fact, there was a study that shows that people recovering

from gall bladder surgery healed more quickly if they were by a window looking out at nature than those who were not by a window (seriously, you can Google it)!

Money, physical health, mental health—all benefits of having trails, and the more trails the better. We are partnering with many trail organizations in the state and nation to build more and connect those we have for the good of all. I want to make the entire state walkable -- “A pack, a snack, and a long way back” is my motto.

So what can you do? First just go on a trail! Find your favorites! Come see me in the tourism office, and I will help you find your perfect trail!

Then talk them up. Talk to your legislators, your neighbors, your medical offices. Ask for more. The more “buzz” we can get for the trails, the more we can build and all, each one of us, benefit from them.



Trusting The Ethical Process

by Eric Betts

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

In the quiet moments between meetings and deadlines, teams begin to sense when something isn't right. Questionable shortcuts and ethical compromises—whether in decisions, communication, or handling responsibilities—don't stay hidden. They settle like dust on everything a leader touches. While some may rationalize expedience in the name of strategy, the long-term cost is profound: a loss of belief in shared purpose, a fading sense of collective mission. People begin to withdraw, not because they lack ability, but because their moral compass is spinning without a true north to follow.

What a leader models is what a team often mirrors. If compromise becomes habit, so too does disengagement. But when integrity is visible—even when it's hard, misunderstood, or unpopular—it plants seeds. A leader who chooses the longer route, honors the inconvenient truth, and embraces accountability, even in solitude, is laying tracks



for communal resilience. Those watching begin to internalize that uprightness isn't weakness; it's strength tempered by purpose. The echo of principled leadership can rouse dormant courage in others.

Integrity rarely announces itself with fanfare. It moves quietly, like water through rock—slow, persistent, undeniable. Over time, the outcomes of honest leadership emerge not only in metrics, but in morale, creativity, and cohesion.

Teams who see their leader hold the line begin to understand that success built with character is not only possible, it's more durable. Misunderstood at first, the ethical path gains clarity and honor when the results prove meaningful and lasting. Vindication comes not only through achievement, but through the legacy of restored trust. In the end, ethical leadership is about more than cor-

rectness; it's about crafting a spirit. The spirit that says our work matters, our people matter, and how we win is just as important as winning itself. That spirit begins in one individual who chooses not to cut corners—and soon, it finds form in the culture of a whole team. Integrity is not naive; it's revolutionary. And its influence, when nurtured, can shape not only an organization's success, but its soul.



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The Alternative Approach

Solving The Problem

by Roy Williams

A family of four in the U.S. can expect to spend an average of \$1,168 to \$2,960 per month on health insurance premiums, with total healthcare costs potentially ranging from \$440 to \$2,500 or more monthly depending on factors like plan type, coverage, and location. That is why I have been saying for years that our modern day medical system is unsustainable.

If you've got joint pain, skin problems, acid reflux, or you just don't heal like you used to, it's not your age. It's toxicity and deficiency. What if the solution isn't a drug but a mineral that's no longer in your diet?

The fact is, your body was designed to heal itself. But if your colon is clogged, your blood is acidic, or your cells are inflamed, nutrients can't get in, and toxins can't get out. You could eat all the right food, and STILL be starving at the cellular level. That's because your body doesn't just need minerals and vitamins, it needs to be able to absorb them. **MSM Plus C** doesn't just add nutrients...it opens the gates so you can absorb them.

MSM stands for **methylsulfonylmethane**—it's organic sulfur, and it's critical for detox, healing, elasticity, and absorption. When paired with **vitamin C** and our patented pH balancing **bioflavonoid formula**, MSM becomes a transport system. It softens your colon wall so nutrients can finally get into the blood stream and

be absorbed at a cellular level and toxins can finally get out.

After 25 years on the market and tens of thousands of satisfied customers, **MSM+C** has helped with so many functions of the human body, such as:

- Heartburn and acid reflux relief
- Joint and collagen health restored
- Skin, hair and fingernail improvements
- Cleared brain fog and fatigue
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The best news of all, almost every customer sees these results in just 3 weeks. Why? Because **MSM Plus C** restores healing by fixing the cause. It literally fuels the body's repair system—don't even need to call the doctor.

And here's the kicker: when taken as instructed on the label, **MSM increases protein absorption of amino acids by over 300%**. That means more muscle, better recovery, and faster healing.

It even helps with nutrient absorption from the foods you eat and the supplements you take; so every dollar you spend on a healthier diet and supplementation actually brings about better, more noticeable results. It can literally save you thousands of dollars by eliminating many

medications that do have side-effects.

I've watched customers with low energy, hiatal hernias, autoimmune flare-ups, slow wound healing, joint pain, and brittle hair and nails come back to life on this one formula alone.

This is the foundation of the entire **NEWtritional Health CARE** system—because without it, nothing else works as it should. That's why we believe everyone should be on it from birth to death. It is so safe, with the same toxicity level as water, it can be taken with any prescribed medication and is also totally safe for children.

You were made in the image of God. That means your body is intelligent, and it knows how to heal... but it needs the right fuel. **MSM Plus C** is that fuel. It's not hype—it's a principle.

Give your body the raw materials it needs. Detox, repair, and absorb. I promise, in three weeks you will be glad you did.

Order a two-month supply in the next 24 hours and save a full 15%. We simply can't continue this special any longer so allow me to encourage you to order now.

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Try it for 60 days and watch what happens when your body finally gets what it's been missing.

You're not broken; you are toxic and deficient. Now



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*Your Friend in Health,
Roy P Williams*



“If You’re Happy And You Know It”

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor



“Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.”
- Nathaniel Hawthorne

In both my private practice and at Athens State, I often hear the phrase, “I just want to be happy.” The pressure in our society today to always feel happy can be particularly intense for those living with depression or anxiety. We don’t want to simply count our blessings and be satisfied. The definition of happiness has been extended to include finding deep meaning and fulfilling our purpose in life. At the core of “being” happy is the desire to thrive. After all, we know that happiness is a predictor of health

and longevity. If you struggle with mood disorders or stress, it is easy to ignore the good and focus on the bad. Or not see the good at all. This can lead to a habit of cognitive distortions, which are thinking patterns that reinforce negative thoughts or behaviors. If we define happiness as the freedom to experience life the way you choose, then we can move toward recognizing the emotional discomfort that accompanies our periods of unhappiness. For example, maybe you were never given any tools growing up to deal with negative emotions. So, you developed a social reward system based on being positive and present for others. Unfortunately, this strategy often suppresses your own needs.

One approach to cultivating happiness is to focus more on the future than

the past. If you begin by thinking about how you want to feel in a couple of months from now, you can come up with some sort of goal you want to achieve. Then, focus on how you will feel when you achieve that goal. The idea is that when you go to the happy emotions in your head, they will change your mindset in that present moment. And the more you live in that mindset, the more you will attract experiences that support it. Therefore, happiness is tied to being in the present moment. The objective becomes less about the pursuit of happiness and more about the moments that are normal or even less desirable, which can then deepen the recognition of those positive emotions related to happiness: joy, gratitude, calmness, contentment, hope, inspiration, and love. Being able

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to name these emotions helps us to pause and reflect on the many uplifting moments of our day that usually go unappreciated.

Gratitude journaling has become popular in recent years as a way to boost happiness. In my opinion, writing in a gratitude journal daily may not be the best plan because it can become stale and may even end up “desensitizing” you to the things for which you are grateful. It may be better to write down once a week, before bed, three positive events. This needs to be done regularly to establish the habit, but over time you become better at noticing the good things that happen to you. Which is the point... you become happier over time and through incremental modifications. Lasting happiness is not produced through one huge life-changing event. It is the small, regular mental and behavioral changes that end up being the most effective. Can you guess what has been determined to be the biggest factor that contributes to our happiness? A Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has been tracking issues of aging

to learn more about what leads to health and happiness, has determined that close relationships by far have the most influence on our ability to be happy -- more than money, fame, social class, IQ, or power. Our relationships protect us the most from life’s challenges.

Let me conclude with some suggestions on how to increase the amount of happiness in your life. First, magnify a positive experience. This can be as simple as eating an ice cream cone slowly, savoring the flavors, instead of gobbling it down. Second, avoid suppression. Stop trying to hide the negatives and accept that life brings with it the good and the bad. Third, take time daily to meditate or pray. This can create space between the negatives and your reactions to the negatives. And finally, know your gifts. Do what you are good at and you feed your soul something it craves and needs.

Lisa Philippart is a Licensed Professional Counselor, who divides her time between her own private practice in Huntsville and providing personal counseling services at Athens State University.





Rightside Way

Bulletproof Influence

by Phil Williams

I coined a phrase a few years ago that I use often at Rightside Media: "Operating with 'Bulletproof Influence'!" We've even gone so far as to have custom merchandise made with the catchphrase. It is part of who we are.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Bryan Dawson of 1819 News for an extended podcast and found that his team has a very similar motto: "We're going to do what's right even if they shoot bullets at us!" It's part of who they are.

Bulletproof Influence... let's talk about that for a minute. Let's talk about it in terms of who we want to be as a people. As a state. As a nation.

We are in the primary season for elections. Men and women are throwing themselves into the public square for the opportunity to lead, guide, and direct at every level. It doesn't matter whether they are running for dog-catcher or senator. We need people who walk, talk, and lead with Bulletproof Influence.

It is a comprehensive thing – this concept of Bulletproof Influence. It involves courage, messaging, conviction, personal experience, and the ability to stand up under pressure – even when it means standing alone. There is the sense that right is right, and therefore right is worth doing... even when they

shoot bullets at you.

"In every age there comes a time when a leader must come forward to meet the needs of the hour," Prime Minister Winston Churchill said. "Therefore, there is no potential leader who does not have an opportunity to make a positive difference in society." Churchill was right. But all too often the potential for leadership is swallowed up by the fear of being wrong, of not being liked, of negative consequences. Fear debilitates. Fear is the enemy of achievement. The fear of fear is the loss of influence.

Bulletproof Influence is that ability to speak to an issue, act upon a position, or direct other people from the well-earned sense of being so right that it is more than a mere thought - it is a conviction. A conviction, matched by a deep and intentional understanding of the "why" of that conviction, and not just the "what." Those who operate with Bulletproof Influence spend time intentionally researching and preparing the grounds for their principles. They speak from a base of knowledge.

Bulletproof Influence can only happen if you consider who it is you are hoping to influence and how best to convey your convictions. I've known a lot of people who were well-intentioned, with strong beliefs, but no ability to message those beliefs. The Apostle Paul said, "I have



become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul wasn't a chameleon changing his opinions to fit which way the wind was blowing. Paul, was in essence saying, "I have a conviction and I've got to tailor the presentation of it to the people I'm talking to or they won't understand it." Bulletproof Influence is conviction paired with quality messaging.

Bulletproof Influence is also based on the very fabric of one's experiences. It combines conviction with testimony. No one can deny your personal story. You were there. You saw it, you felt it, you overcame it, you learned it the hard way, you got the t-shirt, and you have the scars to prove it. Bulletproof Influence combines personal conviction, well-studied thoughts, and intentional messaging, with the very life of the person. It is Acts 4:20 personified as you stand in the face of

opposition and speak influentially of that which you've seen and heard.

Bulletproof Influence is also earned. It is possible to be promoted into a position in which leadership is supposedly automatic. A job title or rank can be important. But real influence... Bulletproof Influence...is earned. Time is spent. Relationships developed. A position is researched. A claim is aptly spoken. No amount of negative naysaying can rock you. Protestors may rally outside the door and scream their epithets. Chuckleheads sit on Mommy's couch in their underwear summoning keyboard courage to type mean things with their keyboard courage, and you really don't care. You may love working on a team, but you're willing to stand alone.

Watch those who are called leaders. Are they able to shake off and walk in the courage of their convictions? Are they working with Bulletproof In-

fluence? We need more of them. We need more people who will stand up and say I saw this, I experienced that, I believe, I know, and I will make a difference, as they wield Bulletproof Influence in whatever space God has called them to.

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 Renewed*

by Anna Hamilton

we walk with Jesus. We begin to think differently, see ourselves differently, and desire what God desires.

Your renewal in Christ means that you have new desires to love God and others. You have hope for your future no matter what your past was. You are empowered to overcome sin through the Holy Spirit. You are invited to see yourself the way God sees you: chosen, loved, and equipped for good works. "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken" (Psalm 62:5-6).

When we are renewed by God, we learn to let go of the old. Sometimes, we struggle to let go of who we used to be. We may still feel the weight of past failures or labels others placed on us. But God's Word reminds us that in Christ, you are no longer that person.

You are renewed to walk in freedom. We are free from condemnation. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). In 2 Peter 3:18, it tells us we are free to grow in grace, "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

We are free to live with purpose. Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Living as the renewed you brings you hope, peace, and joy in this life. The freedom of being renewed by Christ gives you a chance to fully live your life and show others around you the joy and

peace that Christ gives. "I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

Because you are renewed in Christ, you can forgive yourself and others. You can stand firm in God's promises. You can walk with confidence in your God-given identity. You can embrace each day knowing His mercies are new every morning. Lamentations 3:22-23 says, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

You are not stuck in your old patterns. Christ's renewal empowers you to grow, change, and walk in the light. Your identity in Christ is not based on your feelings but on God's unchanging truth. You are renewed, redeemed, and deeply loved. Walk in the freedom and joy of your new identity, allowing your life to reflect the renewal Jesus has given you.

This week's recipe is a delicious salad that is packed with protein. Chickpeas and white beans together make this salad feel hearty, and the addition of grilled chicken bumps up the protein even more. If your family prefers, you can substitute the chicken or grilled shrimp or grilled steak tips. It is perfect for all of those end-of-summer parties because it doesn't have any mayo. It keeps in the refrigerator beautifully and is a crowd pleaser. I hope you enjoy it as much as my family does.

"The Lord your God wins victory after victory and is always with you. He celebrates and sings because of you, and he will refresh your life with his love" (Zephaniah 3:17).

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