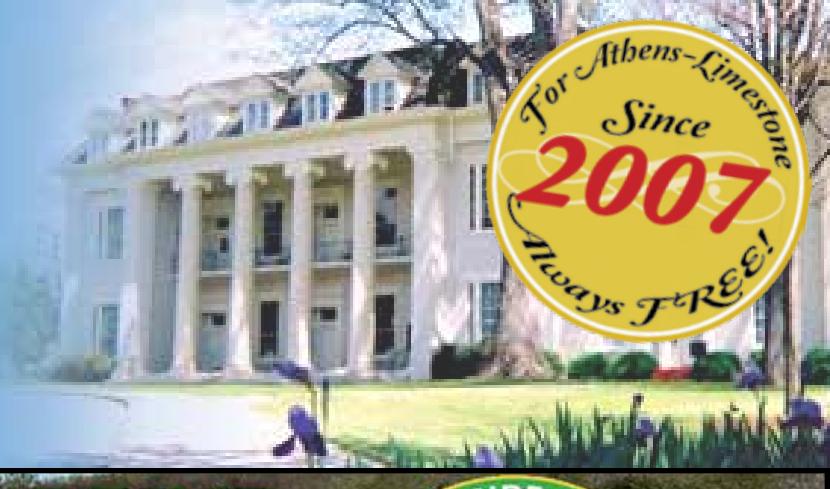


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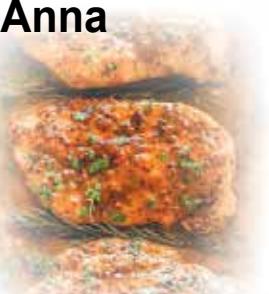
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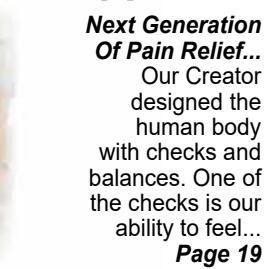
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Getting To Know Your Limestone County Commissioners: *LaDon Townsend*

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

West Limestone native LaDon Townsend has been the Limestone County District 4 Commissioner since 2020. LaDon's family goes "way back," in Limestone County history, and he has worn several hats, including farming and driving a truck for

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Mimzie's Coffee & Curiosities, Rogersville: Food, Friendship, And Now Flowers

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

In 2023, when Amanda Prather and her family were invited by an extended family member from the Carolinas to come and check out life in the Southeast, she did not know what to expect.



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**Publisher's Point**

Landing On Your Stubs

In the past couple of weeks of this brand-new year, I have had two very different conversations with two people who are smart, attractive, giving, talented, accomplished, have a measure of "brand recognition," and have been through hell with their bodies. Out of a desire to protect their privacy as well as my own hide, I am not going to divulge anything past that. That's *their* story, and it's my job and privilege to honor that.

What struck me in the conversations, however, was the vast difference in their approach as to how they view their circumstances. Neither was in any way exaggerating their physical pain or their experience. There had been genuine and severe loss, to be sure. In both cases there had been a huge reduction in their ability to travel -- something they both love and have done extensively. Both had been athletic and adventurous. There was about a three-decade difference in age, and it was surprising to me as to *who* seemed determined to still grab life by the horns and wrestle it to the ground now that they were ridin' in a whole new rodeo in a whole new arena.

I have thought long and hard about limitations. Lord knows I have sabotaged myself 'til the

cows come home with the things I have allowed myself to think about others and myself, and the cessation of that thinking is something I am determined to keep after, even if progress most often seems microscopic. I will, by crazy grace, "grow a new brain" until I head Home. I have done what we all do—make excuses instead of progress: wash, rinse and repeat. I have purchased several one-way tickets to Self-Pity City flying first class, and then reluctantly hitched a ride back home to face down my stuff once again. And then, I came face-to-face (on Facebook) with a young woman who is a gymnast, an accomplished one at that, and she literally *has no legs*.

Jen Bricker-Bauer not only was born with no legs, she was left abandoned at the hospital at birth. She was adopted by a family who loved her dearly and challenged her to be and do her best, whatever that was. So, she went on to become someone who could do long floor-exercise tumbling passes with back hand-springs being the centerpiece. WITH NO LEGS. LANDING OVER AND OVER ON HER STUBS. She is also a mind-boggling aerialist in the style of Cirque du



Soleil, and her physical strength and grace are dazzling.

In a true twist of fate, the kind of stuff that you just can't make up, Jen found out much later in life that her biological sister was Dominique Moceanu, who happened to be--wait for it--an Olympic gold-medal winning gymnast, and had been Jen's inspiration since childhood. I think it's safe to say that we have found the walking fulfillment of the long-standing "nurture/ nature" debate, and I'll leave you to decide which side you are on.

Jen has gone on to be a NYT best-selling author

of *Everything Is Possible: Finding The Faith And Courage To Follow Your Dreams*. She is an in-demand speaker, a believer, a wife, and a mother. And while I cannot determine how other people should navigate their setbacks, what Jen did for me was breathe in a whole new commitment to "land on my stubs," and "stick" that landing in 2026.

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Focusing On Foss

by Ali Elizabeth Turner



Sometimes I find comfort (especially when it seems like the planet and its people are pitching to and fro) in learning about impossible feats of courage that were exemplified during WWII by the Greatest Generation. This edition of *Soldier* is to give hope that a life of service that was well-lived and full of outrageous, courageous adventure can inspire us long after the hero has breathed their last.

Such was the life of Joseph Foss who, before he died in 2003, became a general in the United States Marine Corps, a Medal of Honor recipient, president of the National Rifle Association, the first commissioner of the National Football League, a two-term governor of the state of South Dakota, had his own television show, was director of public rela-

tions for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, and was a sought-after public speaker.

Joe was born in South Dakota in 1915, and his father was killed in an electrical storm when he was 18. Joe and his brother helped their mom keep things together, and then WWII began to threaten to roll in. In 1940, Joe hitchhiked 300 miles from his home to Minneapolis in order to join the Marines who participated in the Naval Air Corps training program. He completed his training in March of 1941, just a few months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Joe was sent to Pensacola to complete his training, and became a flight instructor. He became a first lieutenant in April of 1942, and shipped out to Guadalcanal in September of 1942.

Joe's squadron was in what



was known as the "cow pasture," due to the amount of mud there, and the airfield saw a lot of strafing. They had 19 Wildcats and 12 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers. Joe's first

contact with an enemy airman was in October, and while he was successful in shooting down the Zero, his plane had been hit and Joe plummeted 22,000 feet and managed to do a dead-stick landing.

Joe was back in the sky the next day, and began to be considered an "ace" real quick. He shot down plane after plane within the first few weeks, and then he got hit. He was headed to the water, and things did not look good. As Joe's biographer, Michael Hull tells it:

When the Wildcat hit the sea, the impact slammed the canopy shut. Struggling desperately with the latch as water rose to his chin, Foss was finally able to pop it and rise to the surface, buoyed by his parachute pack and Mae West lifejacket. He started swimming toward Malaita, two miles distant. Sharks circled him and darkness fell.

"I did more praying that afternoon out there than

I ever did in my life," Joe remembered. When the sharks came closer, he tore open a pouch of chlorine powder and sprinkled it into the water to repel them.

It was the "aquatic aviation adventure" that earned Joe the Medal of Honor which was presented in the Oval Office by FDR. Ironically, just after 9/11, General Foss was flying out of Sky Harbor in Phoenix on his way to a speaking engagement at West Point when he was not allowed to board the plane with his medal around his neck. He had to ship it home at his own expense. No one recognized him or his medal, but he was unfazed. His only concern was that the symbolism of the medal was not recognized 60 years later, and he was not interested in his own fame. He died not long after from a brain aneurysm, and I am more than happy in this new year of 2026 to re-introduce a generation to a true hero of the Greatest Generation, Joe Foss.

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The Clock Struck Midnight

by Donna Clark

...and immediately another year had passed and a new one lay before us. Many celebrations took place with all the hoopla one could afford. The ball dropped in Times Square, and an endless sea of people were rejoicing, looking forward to new adventures, great opportunities, and fresh beginnings.

I've never been one for New Year's resolutions, but I usually feel a bit of relief to see a new year unfolding before me. It's a time for me to mentally wipe clean the prior year slate -- worn, dirty, and crammed full of all the demands, thrills, struggles the year had held -- envisioning a fresh, clean slate now before me, a time to start over. I see Father Time, exhausted and worn, on his way out, presenting us a newborn, sporting his sash representing the year he's ushering in, innocent and peaceful, bringing new life. This new child stirs a hope and energy inside us.

In some ways it seems a relief to see the old go, but in reality, the clock just ticked one more second, another page flipped on the calendar, one more day came. The things that were present in the old year have rolled over into the new. The health issue still exists, the pain of a struggling relationship remains, the debts have not been canceled, and the demands of life did not disappear. No magic wand was waved and all became new. I don't want to dampen any excited spirits over the beginning of a new year; I'd like to do the complete opposite. I want to give those

who have seen all the old year's woes rolling into the new a fresh perspective. Let me remind you there is hope for all the unknowns. That hope will come from a source that is true and steadfast, no matter what the burden may be.

As a believer in Jesus, we are promised a life covered under the protection of God in which NOTHING can separate us from His love. Rest knowing that no matter what hardship you face, God is your provider and protector! For the believer, God has given us so many promises, words that are true and unchanging. In Psalm 46:1 we are given this assurance, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The refuge, the protection, is found in God and His strength and He enables us with that strength to endure the difficult situations that we face. I love the later part of that verse, "...a very present help in trouble."

Many times, when facing hardships, we reach out to others and the Bible encourages us to do just that, reach out to those who are strong in their faith in God. However, there is only so far one can go with us and only so much one can do when we are struggling, our ultimate help comes only from God. He is all knowing, full of wisdom, sees and understands us better than anyone can, even better than we understand ourselves. And He is always present. He doesn't have other commitments to take His focus from us. He doesn't distance Himself from us because the problem we're facing is too

complicated. He never tires of hearing our cries. He is there, always present, never leaving. We must place our full trust in Him.

As much as we want our problems solved, to just totally disappear, sometimes God protects us in the form of peace and strength in the middle of despair. As humans, we want to see God as a magic force field that keeps us from all harm. Yes, God can prevent any evil or destruction, but we must remember that we

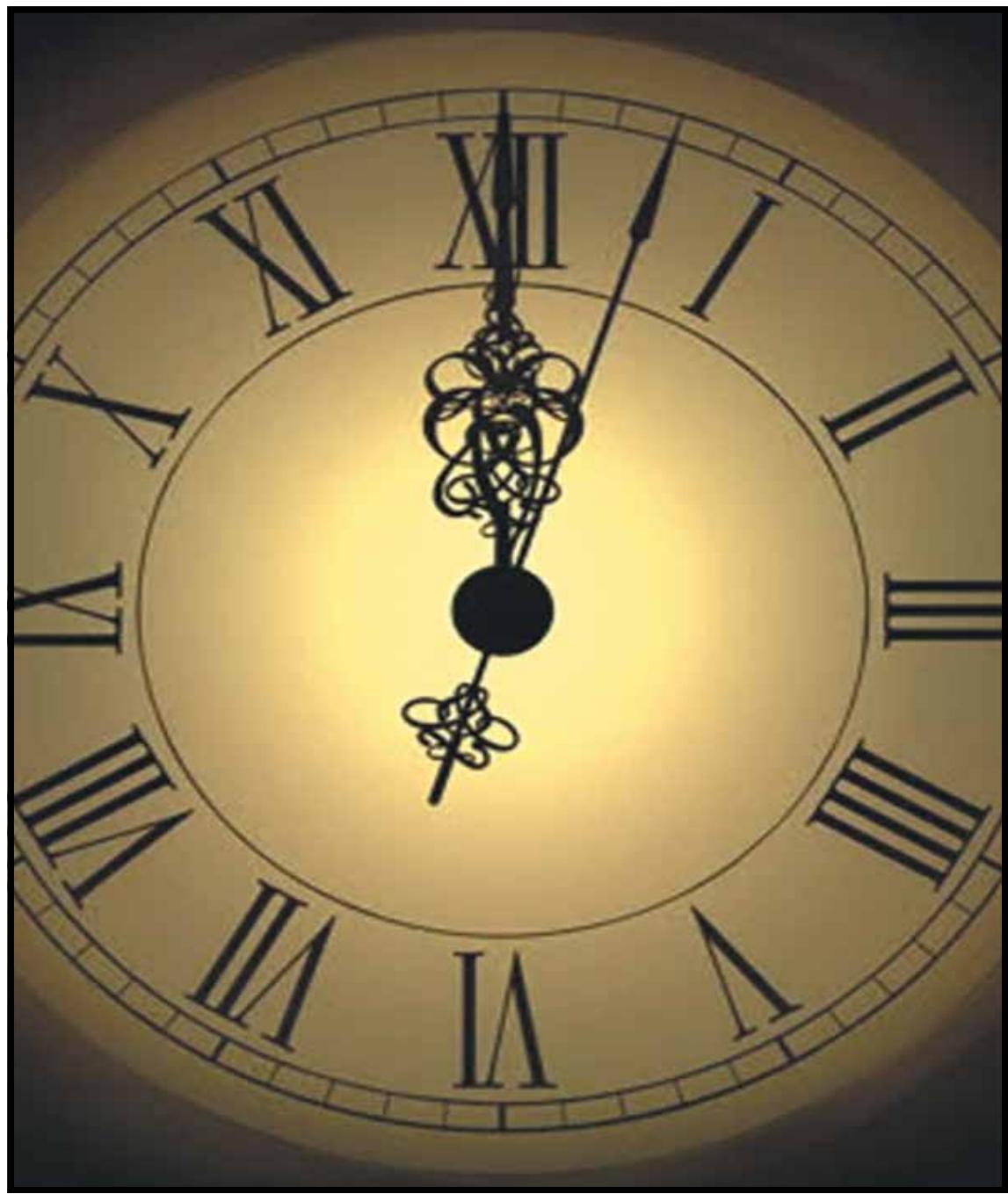
live in a fallen world where evil abounds. Many times, God works in ways that we do not understand. Other times, God's protection comes as an ending because he sees something on the horizon that we cannot see. However God chooses to work in our difficulties, we must know that He is working all things for our good, according to Romans 8:28. We are reminded to commit our ways to Him, trust in Him, and He will act on our behalf. We are to find our happiness, joy, in

Him (Psalm 37:4-6).

In saying goodbye to the year of 2025 and all it held for us, let me leave you with this prayer for the new upcoming year of 2026. *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace* (Numbers 6:24-26).

Blessings,

Donna



Calendar of Events

Candlelight Concert at McCandless January 17

Come join Athens Arts League for a night of elegance with Blythe & Brandon Banks. Enjoy opera, jazz, blues & spirituals with a candlelit backdrop at historic McCandless Hall. 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan Street, Athens.

Quarterly Meeting January 18

The Limestone County Historical Society will hold its quarterly meeting Sunday, January 18, in the Rodgers Center of the First Presbyterian Church in Athens. Refreshments will be served at 2:30 p.m. with the meeting to follow at 3:00. Jim Swanner, Limestone County native, will speak about his love for horses and the history of mules and horses. Everyone interested in Limestone County history is invited to attend.

Chamber Coffee January 20

Chamber Coffees are once-a-month, Tuesday morning networking events where you can sip coffee, eat a bite, and chat with fellow business owners and employees. At each Chamber Coffee, members will get the opportunity to make announcements about upcoming events and have announcements made by Chamber President, Pammie Jimmar. Members and anyone else are encouraged to attend, so don't miss out! 9:00 AM at Trustmark Bank.

Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series January 22

The 2026 Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series kicks off with special performance by The Jim Hurst Band on Thursday, January 22 at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 7:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University, 300 N. Beaty St., Athens.

The Jim Hurst Band January 22

7:00 PM. Athens State University, 300 N Beaty St, Athens. Please join us for a special performance by The Jim Hurst Band on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall



at Athens State University. Jim Hurst's unique picking style on guitar sets him apart from most of his contemporaries.

Girl Scout Cookies Go On Sale February 6

Girl Scouts will be selling cookies for \$6 a box. For more information: Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama, 7705 North Lake Drive, Trussville, AL 35173. girlscoutsnca.org | customercare@girlscoutsnca.org | 800.734.4541

Athens Main Street 13th Annual Chocolate Walk Returns February 7

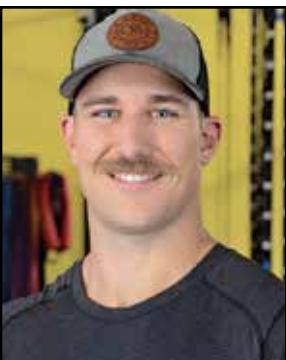
Get your tickets the moment the "box office" opens at evenbrite, because there is a total of only 350 available, and when released, they sell out in 5 minutes. There will be 3 opportunities to purchase tickets: Thursday, January 22, 2026, at Noon; Friday, January 23, 2026, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, January 24, 2026, at 9 a.m. They can ONLY be purchased online through Eventbrite. Tickets are \$10 (plus processing fee)—limit to five tickets per purchase. The Walk is self-guided, and participants will be entered into a drawing for \$500" worth of "Love Bucks from Chocolate Walk merchants. For more info, go to the Athens Main Street social sites.

Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Concert Series March 19

Please join us for a special performance by The Gibson Brothers on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 7:00 PM in historic McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM. McCandless Hall at Athens State University. 302 Bryan St. Athens, AL.

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.



The Transformative Power Of Fitness: *How It Makes You A Better Person*

by Nick Niedzwiecki - Owner, CrossFit Athens

In today's fast-paced and demanding world, the importance of physical fitness extends beyond just looking good; it plays a crucial role in shaping our overall well-being and character. Engaging in regular fitness activities goes far beyond the physical benefits; it has a profound impact on various aspects of our lives, contributing to personal growth, mental resilience, and overall happiness.

Physical Health and Energy Boost:

Regular exercise is synonymous with good physical health. It strengthens the cardiovascular system, improves muscle tone, and enhances flexibility. When our bodies are in peak condition, we experience increased energy levels, allowing us to tackle daily challenges with vigor. This newfound vitality spills over into other areas of our lives, enabling us to be more productive and efficient.

Mental Clarity and Focus:

Exercise is not just a workout for the body; it's a workout for the mind. Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, neurotransmitters that act as natural mood lifters. This surge in feel-good chemicals is linked to improved mental clarity and enhanced focus. Individuals who engage in regular fitness routines

often report increased productivity and sharper cognitive abilities.

Discipline and Goal Setting:

Achieving and maintaining fitness requires discipline and commitment. Setting fitness goals, whether it's completing a marathon or mastering a challenging yoga pose, instills a sense of purpose and direction. This discipline spills over into other areas of life, fostering a proactive and goal-oriented mindset. The ability to set, pursue, and achieve fitness goals translates into a heightened sense of achievement in personal and professional spheres.

Stress Reduction and Emotional Resilience:

Life is filled with stressors, and how we manage them can significantly impact our overall well-being. Exercise acts as a powerful stress reliever by reducing levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, and promoting the release of endorphins. Regular physical activity helps build emotional resilience, allowing individuals to navigate challenges with a calm and composed demeanor.

Self-Confidence and Positive Body Image:

The physical transformations that accompany regular exercise often lead to improved self-esteem and body image. As individuals witness the positive changes in their bodies, they de-

velop a sense of accomplishment and self-worth. This newfound confidence extends beyond the gym, influencing how individuals perceive and present themselves in various social and professional settings.

Social Connection and Community:

Many fitness activities are inherently social, providing opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals. Whether it's joining a sports team, participating in group classes, or

simply having a workout buddy, the social aspect of fitness fosters a sense of community. Building relationships within a fitness community enhances interpersonal skills, communication, and teamwork.

In conclusion, the transformative power of fitness goes well beyond the physical realm. Engaging in regular exercise contributes to personal growth, mental resilience, and an overall positive outlook on life. By incorporating fitness into our daily routines,

we not only invest in our physical health but also nurture qualities that make us better individuals – disciplined, focused, emotionally resilient, and confident. The journey to becoming a better person starts with a single step on the treadmill or a yoga mat, paving the way for a holistic and fulfilling life.

- Coach Nick
Owner
CrossFit Athens
www.CrossFitAthens.com



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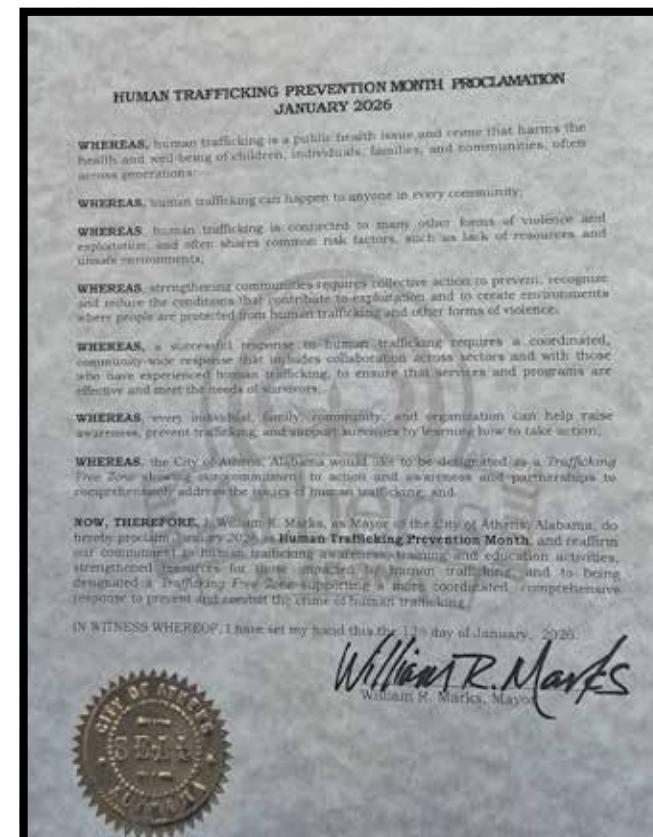


Being Part Of The Dream

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

When I walked in for my usual Monday morning meeting with Mayor Ronnie, there were signs on the door to the conference room in City Hall that made it quite clear that the room was going to be occupied for a while...like maybe a few days. Why? The art work for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Essay & Art Contest was being judged, and I can tell you that this year there are some outstanding creations from every grade level.

Several years ago, the essay contest was started as part of honoring the legacy of Dr. King, and it has always garnered some thoughtful written pieces. But then original art was added to the contest because "a picture is worth a thousand words." Mayor Ronnie said, "Art can sometimes express what words can't." He continued on by simply saying, "I am so proud of our kids." The annual MLK Day celebration will be on the Square with a march starting at 9 a.m. that will end up at the Alabama Veterans Museum. Then, the attendees will be able to look at the art work, including the winners and hear the essays. "This



is an important part of our young people being a part of the dream, and in fact the theme for this year is *Together We Can Be The Dream*." Speaking of young people, the members of the Mayor's Youth Commission will be going to Trinity/Ft. Henderson to learn the history on January 21.

There are always so many outstanding quotes made by Dr. King, and it is strange to consider that in three more years, had he lived, he would have been 100 years old. For this year, it seemed appropriate to illustrate

this year's theme with the following quote: *Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.*

Athens City Council met on Monday night, and Mayor Ronnie issued a proclamation with regard to human trafficking and the fact that January is Human Trafficking Awareness

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MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2026

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- Veterans Museum
- 114 Pryor St W, Athens, AL
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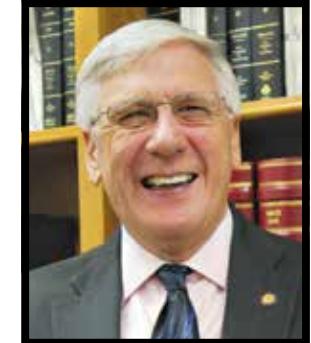
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Month. It says, in part:

Now, therefore, I, William R. Marks, as Mayor of the City of Athens Alabama do hereby proclaim January 2026 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and reaffirm our commitment to human trafficking awareness, training, and education activities strengthened resources for those impacted by human trafficking, and to being designated a Trafficking Free Zone supporting a more coordinated, comprehensive response to prevent and combat the crime of human trafficking.

In keeping with the proclamation, Mayor Ronnie said that seeing the film *Still Hope*, which comes out on February 5, is an excellent way to strengthen Monday's proclamation. And, on a completely unrelated note, the mayor wanted people to know that on February 17 there would be a solar eclipse.

There was just one thing left to do, and that was to pray about everything above, so we did. And then, it was time for Ronnie to roll.

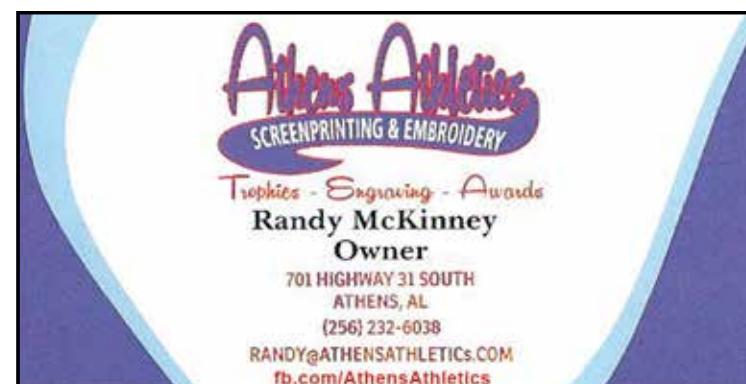


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The Power Of A Planted Faith

by Anna Hamilton

What does the phrase “faith as small as a mustard seed” mean to you? If you had asked me this question a few months ago, I would have explained it as encouragement for people who feel their faith is weak or tiny, a reassurance that even a little belief is enough. While comforting, this explanation has never fully made complete sense to me. I found a simple pin on Pinterest that blew my simple mind, explaining what “faith of a mustard seed” would have meant to the people of Jesus’ time.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells His disciples,

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20). At first glance, this statement seems almost unbelievable. How could something so small accomplish something so great? Yet that is precisely the heart of Jesus’ message.

In the ancient world, mustard was not admired for being neat, manageable, or polite. It was known for being aggressive. Once planted, mustard spread rapidly.

continued on page 22

Honey Mustard Chicken

Ingredients:

*1 ½ lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breast
¼ cup Dijon mustard
¼ cup yellow mustard
¼ cup honey
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
1 tsp garlic powder
½ tsp paprika
Salt and pepper to taste*

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Lightly grease a baking dish and place the chicken breast into the prepared baking dish.

In a medium bowl, whisk together Dijon mustard, yellow mustard, honey, olive oil, apple cider vinegar, garlic powder, paprika, salt, and pepper.

Pour the honey mustard sauce over the chicken, making sure to coat every piece. Marinate for at least 15 minutes or longer in the fridge for more flavor.

Bake for 20 -25 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through. Enjoy with roasted potatoes and green beans for a complete meal.



New You? WOOGHOO!

by Stephanie Reynolds, Athens-Limestone Tourism Association

Are you Camp “Resolution” or Camp “No Resolution”?

Some people recognize that a new year, a new month, even a new Monday is a great time to start a new habit.

Some folks are a little bit wary of jumping on the “new” bandwagon and prefer to not make resolutions. They might see it as silly—if they aren’t going to change in March, why would they change in January (or maybe they’re perfect just the way they are)?

Both are fair, I think. Psychologically, a new year really is a good time to start a new habit because the brain registers a new year more significantly than a random Thursday in August. It’s also why we (re)start diets on Monday, though on a smaller scale. Get it?! Diets on a smaller scale? HAHAHA! Oh. Apparently, honing my terrible puns needs to be moved up on my list of resolutions for 2026.

For now, let’s let the “No Resolutions” crowd just keep doing their fabulous things and you and I can chat. I have two (... three?...um...five?) ideas to help you and me make sure we end 2026 slightly better than how we found it.

We all know the idea of SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). Make goals that you will do, make them specific, don’t reach beyond your grasp, know your “why,” make them

something you can track. You can read any self-help book for more info on making SMART goals, but I have something different in mind...

Our biggest problem, I think, is that when we mess up once, we bail on our goal. Perfect or terrible. We failed, right?

Not at all! Life is life! It isn’t 0% or 100% and that’s okay! We need to get comfy with 46% and the 73% and even the 0.582%. Doing our resolution 0.582% of the time is better than none of the time. Doing it 46% of the time is better than 0.582%. When you start getting into the 70%, you have made a good lifestyle change!

So instead of, “I failed today, might as well just fail bigger and restart in the next new year,” stop and say, “Yeah, I am not at 100% of my goal today, but I am at 64%. And 64% is awesome. Let’s hold at

64% right now and try again tomorrow.”

Every day, do just a little bit better. Every day is your new year.

My next secret weapon is “back-up plan.” I’m training for long race in March. My expectations are realistic—I am slow as molasses in January. However, I just need to go 30 miles, which means exercise.

But sometimes I don’t sleep well or don’t feel good. That happened yesterday. I was supposed to run for two hours at 4:30 a.m. It absolutely didn’t happen. I didn’t even get out of bed. Sorry, not sorry.

But I had a backup plan: do some squats, calf raises, etc. at work in my fancy clothes. It took less than 15 minutes. It was fine to miss my daily goal because I still helped my long-term goal. Substitutions are great ways to keep your momentum.

Anything is better than nothing.

Now, here is my really big idea for keeping a resolution: Make it FUN! No one said resolutions must be miserable. Yes, I want you to make sure you are healthy and well because I want you around a long time.

But why not make fun resolutions? If you like food, how about “Try

one fruit per month that I have never tried before”? Or “Find the most colorful dessert in Limestone County”?

What about things like “Get on Google Earth and virtually explore one new foreign city every Thursday evening”? Or if you want to get exercise as well, get on a treadmill and pull up a tour video for that city and explore it that way, like you are actually walking it.

What about “With only \$5 (or \$10 or whatever) each month, find the best

gift in Limestone County”? This will also give you a drawer full of gifts by next Christmas, which will make that season a little easier.

What about “Try one new skill,” “Explore one new trail,” “Go to one new store,” “Learn one foreign greeting,” “Write one new song,” “Draw one new picture,” “Pet one new dog”?

How about “Taste test the mocha lattes in every coffee shop in Limestone County and rank them?” (Oohh...invite me to that one.)

You could: Find a new pair of weird socks every month. Ask a store worker to take a selfie with you. Try all the candy in a specific line (I recommend Haribo). Find the best steak in our county. Find one new concert or event to go to each month.

You might say, “These aren’t doing anything for your betterment.” Aha! You are mistaken! Every new thing builds actual new mental connections. You are working out your brain, which will help with mental, emotional, and cognitive stuff.

But mostly it’s fun. And life can be fun. It’s okay to have fun.

So, my Resolutionists, let me know what you choose (call, email, or drop by).

We might find that we even convinced a “No New Resolutions!” person to join us! I hope so. There are plenty of socks/candy/dogs/coffee/selfies/events/fruit/trails to go around.



Getting To Know Your Limestone County Commissioners: *LaDon Townsend*

by Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

10 years. He grows row crops, chicken, and hay. While a student at West Limestone, he played football and baseball, and he married his high school sweetheart, Lisa. They have two daughters, a son, and a recently added son-in-law. He beamed with pride when speaking about his little spitfire of a granddaughter, who is "the apple of her granddaddy's eye." Lisa received her degree in education from Athens State University and taught at Brookhill Elementary. LaDon not only coaches at West Limestone, but he also works the chains on Friday nights, and even did a stint helping to maintain the football field.

As Limestone County continues to grow quickly, LaDon has found that he gets calls from all over the country from people who are planning on moving here or have just

moved here and want to know all about the quality of life, schools, local culture, and of course, the number one priority: public safety. Because the Limestone County Sheriff's Department is under the jurisdiction of the county, it is super important to LaDon to make sure the Sheriff's Department has what it needs to run well. He said, "We work hard to get Josh (McLaughlin) what he needs—deputies, corrections officers, and safety equipment. We've got to take care of them because they take care of us." We celebrated the fact that recently the Sheriff's Department had gotten its first conviction as part of Operation Millstone, the anti-trafficking coordinated effort with other law enforcement agencies that has been so successful.

As is the case with the other commissioners and districts, taking care of the roads is crucial to everything -- business, commerce, quality of life, educati-

on, and public safety. "In District 4 we have 330.4 miles of roads, and we have been working on getting the roads paved. In 2022, we were able to do 14.76 miles of paving. In 2023, it was 16.06, and in 2025, it was 23.55. We are going to keep going until it is all done," said LaDon. He then added that he has a goal of getting as many secondary roads paved within the next three years as possible

Being a coach, LaDon knows how important it is for young people to have leaders and mentors that they can look up to in life. He's received multiple opportunities to be part of school projects and even was a guest on his niece's podcast, answering questions about his role both as commissioner and as a farmer in Limestone County. Overall, he just wants to leave a lasting impact in the lives of the people he serves and show up for the community he loves. He said, "We want to make a difference,



LaDon Townsend

one life at a time."

District 4 has always been involved in the clean-up projects sponsored by Keep Athens-Limestone Beautiful. Especially daunting as well as satisfying is the Elk River Clean-up which is held every spring. For some reason, people who choose to litter really "go big or go home" when it comes to littering in the rivers. Sometimes there are cars in there, sofas, all kinds of stuff, and getting it cleaned up so it can be enjoyed by everyone in the county is important, both for quality of life as well as public safety.

LaDon is aware that the challenges of growth in our area are great, and that planning well for growth is non-negotiable. He asked, "How do we keep our small-town feel, and the charm that makes Athens-Limestone so special?" I replied, "That's the million-dollar question." He talked about how "alive" the courthouse square is, and how much newco-

mers to Athens-Limestone enjoy it. "I want us to always keep that," he said. We talked about what a beautiful historical building the Commission office on Washington Street is. "I love this building," he said, as we sat at the boardroom table. And, everyone knows that, at some point, there is going to have to be a new building constructed to accommodate our needs as a county. Several ideas have been discussed, and perhaps there will be one that has a one-stop shop approach so you don't have to go to several offices.

Lastly, LaDon wanted to talk about how much he appreciates his crew. "They are out in storms in the middle of the night to take care of us. Without our guys, there is no way we could do "it." By "it," he means everything in District 4 that makes and keeps it beautiful for now and years to come.



LaDon Townsend's District 4 crew



Clean, Green And Beautiful

In Case You Missed It...

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

Back to RECYCLING. Recycling in Limestone County has been very busy the past couple of months. From the temporary suspension of curbside services in the city to the expansion of Limestone County Recycling, there is a lot of information floating around. As usual, some people know what's going on, some people are confused and some don't know anything. First off, the City of Athens has resumed their curbside recycling services. On Monday, January 5, curbside recycling resumed its normal schedule. If you have overflowing bins, be sure

to take your excess to the Limestone County Recycling drop-off at 1301 North Jefferson Street.

The Limestone County Recycling program is about to be booming! They are so close to finishing the new facility and working with the new brazier. Some things will change as they progress, some will stay the same. They will still have the drop-off trailers inside of the fence for now, and will accept cardboard, mixed paper, steel cans, aluminum cans, plastics #1 & #2, motor oil and electronics. For now, electronics will only be accepted at 100 Cherry Street, which is across the street



from the drop-off site. The office is located at the back of the Sheriff's Office; it's the first building on the left when you enter the gates. You can drop electronics at

the ramp. Please, do not drop off old tube TVs. They are only accepted at the Household Hazardous Waste Collection in May.

For the next few weeks at least, some of the County Commissioners have green trailers for cardboard only at their sheds. This is a great start to getting easier recycling services closer to your homes. Please, only leave cardboard in these trailers. And please break down the boxes -- it creates more space in the trailers. And please remove all plastic, trash, and Styrofoam from the boxes. Styrofoam is a nightmare when it gets smashed and travels everywhere. We'd love to recycle it, but for right now, there is no viable option within reason. Hopefully, if these

trailers are used correctly, they could become permanent and even expand the items accepted at the sheds (fingers crossed!).

We want nothing more than the Limestone County Recycling Department to flourish, but we need your help. We need for people to acknowledge the requests made -- don't dump trash in the trailers, breakdown boxes, throw the Styrofoam away. Once those things start happening, maybe we can get trailers back out all over the county. There just isn't enough manpower at the moment to keep up with sorting trash, so that is the first step. Help us by keeping it simple so there can be growth!

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Mimzie's Coffee & Curiosities, Rogersville: Food, Friendship, And Now Flowers

By Ali Elizabeth Turner

continued from page 1

They knew they wanted out of California, and soon found that a place that was welcoming and friendly to their values was waiting for them in North Alabama. They bought Mimzie's from the previous owner, and set out to "add to" a place that welcomed its customers in the same way they had been welcomed to Rogersville. The newest addition to the Mimzie's line-up is ready-to-go flowers, and more on that in a minute.

Amanda is a self-described "jack-of-all-trades," having done everything from working with horses and equine therapy to being a veterinarian tech to hospitality to 30 years in the florist industry. She loves it all, and knew that if they were going to run Mimzie's, somehow she was going to have to get her "flower fix" and bring it to the shop for others.

When you walk into Mimzie's, you have the feeling that someone just opened their front door and said, "Come on in and rest yourself." Amanda loves peacocks, and they show up in the shop often. The furniture (most of which is for sale) is eclectic, and there are all kinds of whimsical, dear, and at times laugh-out-loud-

funny wall hangings throughout. You can also have a consignment booth within Mimzie's, if you so desire. There are books to read while you sample the wares, and if Amanda and her crew have an actual moment, they'll sit down with you and will genuinely want to know how your day is going. More than likely, after your first visit, they will know and use your name, greet you when you come in, and say, "Bye, hon," when you leave. I always enjoy getting the chance to deliver the latest edition of *Athens Now* during business hours for that very reason.

Let's talk first about the food and beverages. At the time of this writing, it was pretty chilly in North Alabama, so being able to get something hot was just the ticket. In the world of coffee, there is everything imaginable—lattes, mochas, hot chocolate, et al, and seasonal drinks such as pumpkin spice or cranberry white chocolate mochas. If you are in the market for just-plain-ground-on-the-spot coffee with all the fixin's, it's yours. Continuing on with what will warm you up, there are soups du jour, homemade chili, kolaches that are stuffed with sausage, cheese, and if you like, some jalapeños. They also have sweet kolaches from time



to time. There are artisan breads, such as rosemary and sourdough, as well as quick breads, such as lemon and banana nut, along with muffins, cookies, and cupcakes. Cinnamon rolls are made by Dutch Oven Bakery in Falkville, and custom waffles are served piping hot. Amanda has taken a frittata and turned it into a sandwich, and please understand, "This is not fast food," she said. However, you are able to place an order online or by phone, and come to the shop to pick it up for take-out. They also use Door Dash if you would like it delivered to your home. Cookies, cakes, strawberry pretzel salad, are all yours, and then, there is Baked By Logan, which is Logan

Easterling's custom in-house "cakery."

One of their signature offerings is the chicken salad, which can be served as part of a sandwich on fresh-baked bread, a salad, or as a scoop with crackers on the side. The chicken salad has grapes, pecans, some secret ingredients, and just the right amount of mayo.

And now for the flowers. Mimzie's is going to feature fresh, made-in-the-shop, ready-to-go flower arrangements that you can get out of one of the recently installed coolers. These are florist grade arrangements, which are just better all the way around than those you find for a "bargain" in a super-market. Amanda wanted to emphasize that Mimzie's is not going to become a florist in the traditional sense. Based on the idea of "designer's choice," quality floral arrangements will

be available at a fair price. Mimzie's will SELECTIVELY do special orders on a very limited basis. They are also offering SOME delivery service through Door Dash. Valentine's Day is coming soon, and Mimzie's will be ready with savory warmth, home-baked sweetness, and beautiful flowers all in one place in Rogersville, Alabama. Come by today and "taste and see." And, be prepared to leave with a full heart, a full tummy, some beautiful flowers, and a "Bye, hon."

Mimzie's Coffee & Curiosities

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Captain's Log

The 'HONK' Heard Around The World!

by Brenda Wilkerson

Every day, twice a day, the hour route on our school bus takes a brief visit through a major highway intersection. Most days, we sit for at least three minutes waiting for our 'green.' That is when my designated counter buddy grabs that 'counter clicker thingy' and begins pushing that silver button for each wiggly brother and sister with plenty of time to safely return to his seat before we get our chance to go.

This particular day, a large dump truck pulled up almost nose-to-nose beside us. I heard a

giggly commotion and glanced into that big mirror above my head. There they were, arms flailing as they made the 'honk-your-horn' motion over and over and over.

Behind my mirrored glasses, I looked to my left to catch the eyes of a cautious truck driver torn between indulging his young audience or possibly scaring the snot out of their poor driver. In a single moment, we both turned into school kids as I gave him a smirk and a nod. His eyes grew wide and then lit up like



Christmas lights as he reached up for that infamous horn-honking pul-

ley with his left hand. HONK! HONK! Our hollow metal bus reverberated with the equivalent happy noise level of the cheers at a college football stadium -- for six long and exhilarating seconds. Ahhh, so many days made in an

instant by 7:05 a.m.

May you all find those six seconds that make your day today! And don't forget to relax and try to have a little fun every day.

~Brenda

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Slinkard On Scriptural Success

The Self-Image Reset: *Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life*

by D. A. Slinkard

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

Do you ever feel like you are drifting about in life? Each day you are going with the flow and being reactive to what life throws at you? You do your best to get through each day; you do your best to make sure you give your best efforts. But the reality is that you know you have become complacent in living your life. Does this ever happen to you? Am I the only one? How does a person break out of this trap? –and, yes, it is a trap that catches many people. I have found the one way to escape this is to make the decision to create actions which will enable you to get out of your funk.

There are people walking around living their life, and they are in a funk and do not even know it. They get up and go to work; they come home and then go to bed, only to repeat the same process the next day. The wheel is spinning, and we are out of control when it comes to our life. Too many people fail to realize they are out of balance, and this leads many people to live life without any significant meaning to it.

Life is precious. Life is short. The Bible tells us in James 4:14, "... For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Too many people never start living their life because they never make the conscious de-

cision to make a difference in their own life. The biggest lie I hear people say is they do not have enough time. This is a convenient lie too many people try to use as their mantra for why they cannot achieve things in life.

Reality – We ALL have 168 hours in our week. Reality – We ALL have 24 hours in our day. Reality – How we choose to spend our time is up to us. If something is important to us, we will make it happen; if something is not important, we will make an excuse. Are you making things happen in your life or are you making excuses? My next question: When you think about yourself, what do you picture? If you had to describe yourself, what words would you use?

Our self-image plays a larger role than what we realize. I have seen people who had everything going for them, yet they had a poor self-image; thus, they came up short. I have also seen the other end of the spectrum in which you see someone and think to yourself, how are they able to achieve success? Self-image is vitally important to a per-

son's success.

Change your thoughts and you'll change your world

If you want to break the funk, if you want to make positive changes in your life, I would like for you to change the mental process of how you see yourself. Henry Ford said, "If you think you can or think you can't, either way you are right." Take the time to change your thought

process and you will take the time to change your life. Think positive thoughts and positive things will happen; think negative thoughts and negative things will happen. The choice is yours to make.

I want you to picture the self-image of who and what you want to be. Hold that image in your

mind and start to concentrate on what actions you would need to take to become what you imagine. Make sure that when you do this, you have a pen and paper nearby because you are going to need to take notes. If you are honest with yourself, you will be able to properly identify who you are and where you are versus becoming who you want to be and where you want to go.

The sad reality is that too many people do not want to take the necessary time to mentally think about who they want to be. This mentality is how and why someone begins drifting about in life. They get tossed in every direction but never go anywhere. This is how you stop that from happening. Take the time right now to picture who it is you want to be. Picture how you want to be. Really think about the changes you need to make in your life, and then write these down. Be descriptive in the actions you need to take, and then take the actionable steps to make this self-image a reality in your life.

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Wise Ways to Handle Criticism

by Detri L. McGhee - CLU, ChFC, B.Min

Today we are looking at wise ways to deal with criticism. I hope you have pulled the Criticism Management outline from the website and refer to it as we begin working through steps to profitable use of criticism and its "relatives" (www.criticismmanagement.com). Do you remember some of the relatives of criticism? Complaints, correction, bullying, suggestions, belittling, instructions, counsel, negativity, rebuke, rules, questioning, laws, and more. It is anything that others do or say or even imply that makes

you angry, depressed, sad, or gives you negative, destructive feelings, thoughts, and desires.

In developing a higher Emotional Intelligence (EI), it is our goal to take all negativity and properly deal with it, so that the result makes us a more balanced individual, more capable of handling any situation with self-control, and results in a positive outcome for ourselves. We thrive when we develop skills that enable us to ACT in difficult situations, rather than REACT to them. Acting allows us maximum possible control

over the outcome. Reacting gives the control of the situation over to others.

Suppose the criticism you just received is mostly correct, deserved, unsolicited from an "enemy." Now, by enemy, I mean someone who has reason to see you stumble, fail, or look bad. Our first response (depending on our temperament and developed response habits) is often "fight" or "flight." We get so angry that all we think of is revenge or retribution for making us look bad, or else we get so embarrassed, depressed, or ashamed that we become incapacitated. Either extreme is not in our best interest.

Consider a different method of handling this: Think through every situation to its logical conclusion. Delay your first instinctive response until you can evaluate the whole scenario. Keep the control of your response in your control! Anger blocks your mind. Incapacitation blocks your actions. It takes practice and intentionality to develop this invaluable tool of EI growth, but the resulting power and profit is immeasurable. Paying the price to develop this discipline now results in exponential growth in your professional and personal life.



First: Deal with the deserved criticism. As you analyze what was said, how can you make it right?

New insight brings new opportunities. Sometimes our dislike of who delivered the criticism can keep us from wanting to admit it is true/right. That would be like not taking the cure because we dislike the people who created it. And, after all, the best revenge

against an enemy is when what they try to do "to" us becomes something they have done "for" us! We do not have to seek revenge or let other people determine how we will respond. We have choices in every single instance to decide who will control us internally.

We may be captive in prison like the Biblical Joseph, but we can be totally free within that prison to be the best person we can be, regardless of our outward circumstances. You can control YOU. Choose to. Or, if you do not choose to, the default choice will be made for you – and this

usually is not in your best interest.

Do whatever is right to correct any damage from your mistakes. Who do you need to apologize or make amends to? What is the best way - for them - for you to do that?

Second: Assess how you can use this criticism to become better: How can you improve your product, productivity, thoughts, or deeds? What is this situation capable of improving in your world? Implement any wisdom received and magnify the good that can come from every difficulty.

Third: Deal with any emotional, mental, or physical garbage that problems, unhealthy stress, failures, and frustrations can leave behind. USE what is profitable. Irrevocably DISCARD any thing that has been dealt with and made right to the best of your ability. One profitable thing that can come from remembering failure is that we can use it to give us strength and wisdom not to do the same thing again. More next visit...

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Thankful For God's Whispers

by Jackie Warner

Career Development Facilitator
"Impact, Engage, Grow" Community Matters

A new year often brings fresh goals, renewed motivation, and the familiar language of "new opportunities" and "new beginnings."

For many of us, stepping into a new season comes with the pressure to fix, manage, and hold everything together. Family members may call it "being controlling," and if we're honest, we know there's some truth in that. We get used to standing in the gap, being the strong one, the dependable one, the one who keeps all the plates spinning. But that load gets heavy. And eventually, no matter how hard we try, we start dropping the very things we're juggling.

That's when grace steps in.

There are moments when we think we've handled everything, only to get a nudge — a thought, a memory, a conversation — that reminds us of something we completely forgot. It's humbling, but it's also comforting. It's a reminder that we are not the all knowing ones. We are not meant to rely solely on our own strength or our own understanding.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

Recently, a late night call from a family member didn't fully make sense in the moment. But the next morning, the conversation resurfaced with clarity — almost like a gentle whisper from God — revealing

something important that needed attention. It wasn't on my mind. I had not planned for it. Yet the message arrived right on time.

That's how God works. Sometimes He whispers. Sometimes He brings the noise. But either way, He knows how to get our attention and guide us toward what matters.

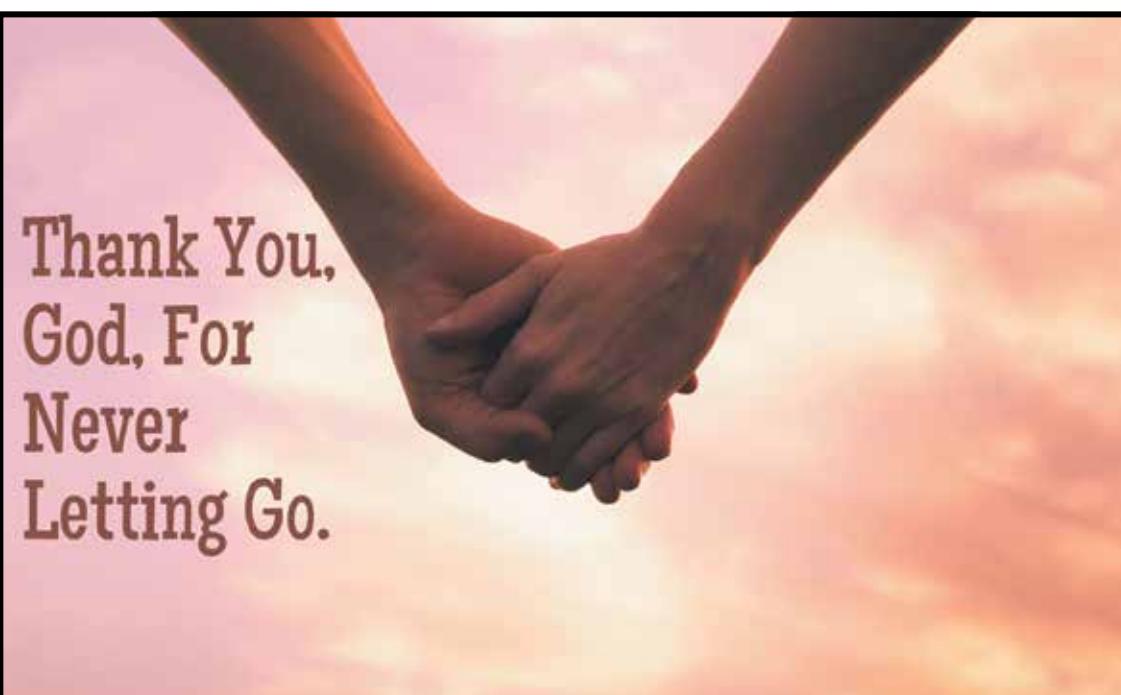
"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

There are times when someone crosses our path unexpectedly with a word of encouragement, a reminder, or a warning we didn't even know we needed. People call it coincidence, but many of us know better. It's God placing the right person, the right moment, or the right thought in our lives to keep us aligned with His purpose.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalm 37:23).

Staying Humble When Life Turns Quickly

Life has a way of shifting in an instant. One moment everything feels steady, and the next, something unexpected pulls us right back to a place we thought we had already mastered or moved



beyond. It's a reminder that growth isn't a straight line — and that humility is not optional.

In a moment's notice, life can bring us back to where we started. Not to punish us, but to ground us. To remind us that we still need God, still need guidance, still need grace. These moments call us to stay humble, stay teachable, and stay rooted in faith.

"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor-

inthians 15:58).

When we remain steadfast in faith, we're not shaken by the unexpected. We're anchored. We're reminded that even when life circles us back, God is still leading us forward.

As we move through this new year, maybe the real opportunity isn't in doing more, controlling more, or carrying more. Maybe it's in releasing the pressure to be everything for everyone. Maybe it's in trusting that God will bring what we need to our remembrance, guide us when we're unsure, and surround us with people who help us stay on

track.

"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22).

God is our gap filler.

He whispers when we're quiet enough to hear.

He sends reminders when we're too overwhelmed to notice.

He places people in our path when we need support the most.

And in those moments — the whispers, the nudges, the unexpected conversations — we're reminded that we are guided, loved, and never left to figure it all out alone.

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Vision Begins With One, But Grows With Us

by Eric Betts

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

A new year always invites leaders to lift their eyes again — to remember that vision is not a luxury but a responsibility. Vision is the spark, the first light that breaks into a new season. But a leader's vision is never meant to remain a private dream or a solitary ambition. It is the starting point of a journey that calls others forward. In a moment when communities are hungry for clarity and courage, leaders must begin the

year by naming where they sense possibility, purpose, and promise emerging.

Yet vision alone is not enough. The most transformative visions become shared visions — not because leaders surrender their convictions, but because they invite others to see themselves inside the picture of what could be. Shared vision is born when people recognize their fingerprints on the future

being described. It grows when commitment is cultivated, not demanded. And in a new year, when people are already reflecting on who they want to become, leaders have a unique opportunity to help communities imagine who we can become together.

This is why consultation is not about seeking permission; it is about seeking partnership. Leaders who engage others early are not weakening their vision — they are strengthening it. They understand that we are not islands, and that wisdom multiplies in community. When leaders open the door for dialogue, they allow others to refine the edges, deepen the



meaning, and expand the reach of the vision. The goal is not to dilute the dream but to enrich it, so that the community feels ownership rather than mere observation.

As this new year unfolds, leaders have the chance to model a different kind of leadership — one rooted in clarity, humility, and collaboration. Vision may begin with one person, but

its fulfillment requires many. When leaders invite others to help shape the path forward, they cultivate a community that is not only committed to the destination but invested in the journey. And that is how visions move from aspiration to reality: not through isolated brilliance, but through shared commitment, collective wisdom, and the courage to build the future together.



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Next Generation Of Pain Relief

by Roy Williams

Our Creator designed the human body with checks and balances. One of the checks is our ability to feel pain. Pain in and of itself is not a negative thing, instead it is a signal that lets us know that something is wrong. You touch the hot eye of a stove and in a millisecond, you know to move your hand. You begin to feel pain in your abdomen, which grows worse every hour. Eventually, it becomes so painful that you go to the doctor and find out that you have appendicitis.

Yes, pain is uncomfortable but can it also be beneficial? In the athletic arena there is a saying, "No pain, no gain." One might say that type of pain is helpful. However, in today's world some types of pain can become chronic and quickly destroy one's quality of life. Arthritis, migraine headaches, fibromyalgia, curvature of the spine, and a twisted ankle are types of pain that can be very hard to live with and degrade one's quality of life. So, what do we do with these types of pain?

Modern medicine would suggest nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve), and prescriptions such as celecoxib (Cele-

brex), diclofenac (Voltaren), and meloxicam (Mobic) can be used to temporarily ease those types of pain. One should remember when taking over the counter or prescription drugs, they are not recommended for long term use due to the side effects, which can cause digestive issues and permanent liver or kidney damage.

In this article, I am going to focus on two powerful supplements that I believe will become the wave of the future for pain relief. These two products have and are changing so many people's lives due to their ability to address the root cause of pain, which is inflammation. By choosing to use these all-natural supplements you may be able to reduce your pain and open the pathways for healing without any of the side effects of the drugs mentioned above.

MSM + C, over the last 25 years, has become the go-to that helps the entire human body to heal faster without interfering with medications. **MSM+C** is so safe that if a child got into a bottle and swallowed every capsule, you would not need to take him or her to the doctor because it has the same toxicity level as water. What is **MSM+C**? It is the raw sulfur required for cellular repair,



detoxification, collagen synthesis, and nutrient transport. It functions as the base layer that makes all other supplements work more effectively. Note: this is not the drug that many people are allergic to. If you can eat tomatoes, apples, watermelon, or grapefruit you can take this all-natural type of sulfur.

Sulfur is required for over half of the body's enzymatic reactions. It strengthens cell membranes, increases permeability of intestinal walls, improves transport of amino acids and minerals, and supports detoxification pathways in the liver. Vitamin C is required for collagen formation and for stabilizing sulfur in metabolic reactions.

Primary purpose:

- Dramatically improves absorption of all vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and fatty acids
- Supports collagen production for joints, skin, ligaments, arteries, and organs
- Reduces systemic inflammation through cellular repair rather than suppression

preserving immune function, unlike NSAIDs which block healing pathways. We have found that when you combine all of these synergistic ingredients together, you receive a much more profound result.

Primary Benefits

- Reduces joint, muscle, and cardiovascular inflammation
- Improves circulation by decreasing arterial swelling
- Allows tissues to heal by restoring normal oxygen flow
- Supports faster recovery after workouts or injury
- Lowers pain without suppressing immune or digestive function

Best Use Cases

- Osteoarthritis, degenerative joint disease
- Chronic muscle soreness, repetitive stress injuries
- Cardiovascular inflammation, poor circulation, blood flow restriction
- Migraines, tension headaches linked to vascular inflammation
- Systemic inflammatory conditions affecting mobility or endurance

When you combine **MSM+C** with **Relief**, you have the most powerful anti-inflammatory on the market today. We call these the **Health Pain Relief Combo**.

Take this article to Herbs & More in Athens, NHC Herb Shop in Killen, go to our website www.nhcherbs.com or call 256-757-0660 for shipment and save 15%.

*Your friend in health,
Roy P. Williams*



Horse Whispering

Parasites

by Deb Kitchenmaster

Let's venture into an equine lab, look under a microscope, and learn some facts about parasites. Oh, come on now; it's not that creepy. All horses are vulnerable to these organisms that live in or on an organism of another species (its host) and benefits by deriving nutrients at the other's expense. There are many varieties such as roundworms, tapeworms, strongyles (large and small), and stomach bots. Internal parasites can be a health threat to horses.

So, what are some of your horse's signals to you to bring about awareness your horse may have internal infestation?

- >> Weight loss
- >> Dull and rough coat
- >> Potbelly
- >> Coughing
- >> Diarrhea
- >> Tail rubbing
- >> Colic
- >> Decreased stamina and lethargy

It's important to understand the life cycle of

these parasites; in doing so, you can interrupt their life cycle. This is what you want. The internal parasites causing health problems for horses are large and small strongyles, roundworms, and tapeworms.

- Roundworm - A very large yellow-white worm. The female may be up to 15 inches long! This worm may pass in the feces of foals and young horses. Most adult horses develop immunity to these parasites. Roundworms primarily infect horses less than 2 years of age. The life cycle of the roundworm starts when the foal or yearling consumes grass or feed that is contaminated with the roundworm eggs or comes in contact with contaminated surfaces such as feeders, stall walls, or water. Adult females pass eggs into the horse's feces, where they spend about 10 days in the environment before being capable of infecting a new host. With the correct temperature (77°-95°F/25°-35°C) the egg develops to second-stage larvae. These har-



dy larvae can persist for 5 to 10 years. The eggs hatch larvae that burrow into the small intestines. Once in the small intestine they mature to egg-producing adults, completing the life cycle. The life cycle takes about 3 months.

- Strongyles (large and small) - The eggs are found in the manure. The adult form of all strongyles lives in the large intestines then passed in the feces which contaminates the environment. These eggs develop into larvae that exist on the pasture grasses. The larvae molt three times before it is ready to infect the horse. The larvae use moisture on grass to crawl up the blades of grass to be more readily ingested.

These larvae are very resistant because of a protective sheath. These parasites can survive freezing weather, but a hot and dry environment not so much. Larvae can survive up to 31 weeks at winter temperatures, compared to up to 7 weeks at summer temps.

Strongyle larvae can only survive in the environment for around one year. Now that's a good thing because it makes it easier to control through good management practices. The adult parasite will lay several thousand eggs each day, completing the life cycle. The entire life cycle takes 6 to 7 months.

- Tapeworms - The adult equine tapeworm is a flat worm around 3 inches long. The life cycle of

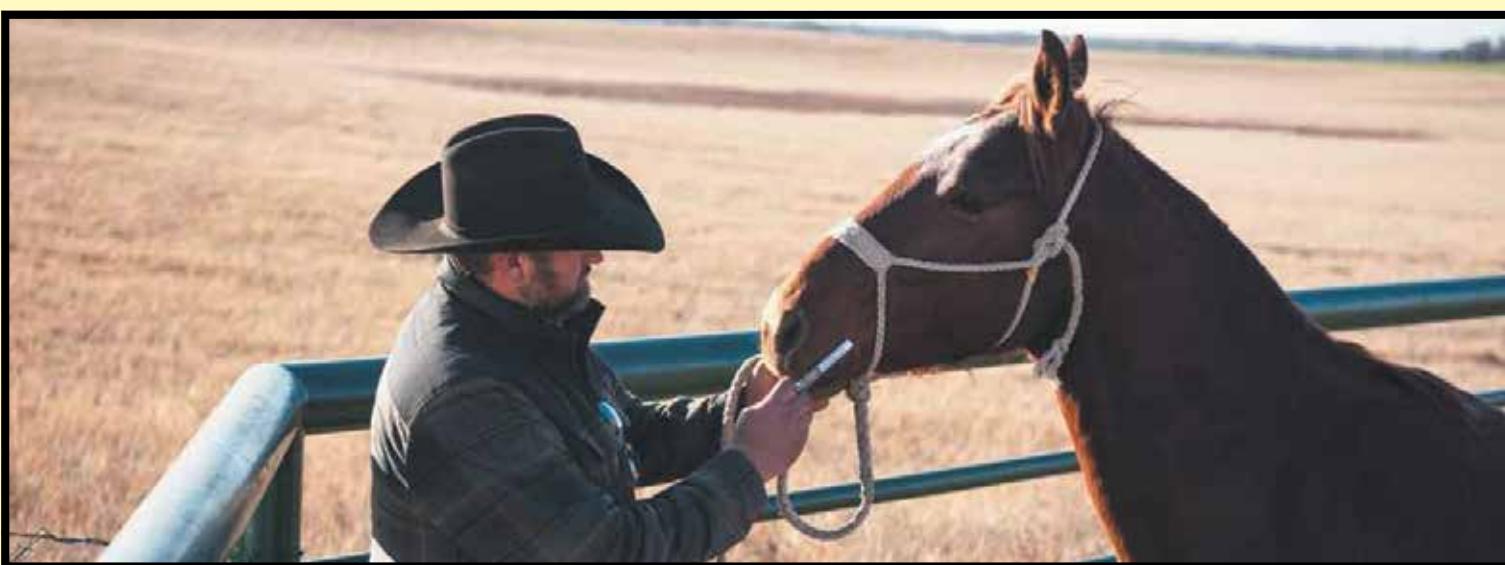


this parasite requires an intermediate host, a tiny pasture mite that feeds on horse feces. This mite carries the eggs of the tapeworm. When the mite consumes tapeworm eggs in infected horses' feces, the egg will develop for several months inside the mite until the infective stage of the tapeworm cycles. Another horse can then become infected with tapeworms by consuming grass or hay contaminated with mites containing this infective stage.

A simple and cost-effective approach dealing with parasites is to send a feces sample (1 tbsp.) to a lab to be checked. We mail our samples to be tested to The Natural Vet with Dr. Dan Moore (thenaturalvet.net). This is a safe way to know when to worm and when not to worm because the count in the feces indicates this. By locating the equine section of his website, you will find WORM CHECK. You can receive all the information you need for a parasite exam. You will also find an herbal equine supplement (satisfaction guaranteed) at www.thenaturalvet.net P.O.Box 429 Unicoi, TN 37692, phone 1-877-873-8838.

Please note that parasites are the most active during a full moon. So work with this time for worming.

*Your NEIGHbor,
Deb Kitchenmaster
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A True Insurrection

by JP Plott, Co-host of *Rightside Radio*



Last week, there was an incident involving an ICE officer and a protester in Minneapolis. This came at a time when the presence of ICE in Minnesota was rising drastically in response to the unprecedented fraud uncovered involving Somalians in the state.

The protester drove her car directly towards an ICE agent and was shot and killed. Besides the fact that ICE cannot conduct its lawful business without the threat of being attacked, the response to this incident from Democratic leaders nationwide was beyond troubling. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani condemned the ICE officer and said, "When ICE attacks immigrants, they attack every single one of us across this nation," while also vowing to keep New York City a sanctuary city. The mayors of both Minneapolis and Philadelphia told ICE to "get the f out" of their respective cities, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey deciding to be more vulgar in his statement. Perhaps the most troubling, and yet predictable, response came from Minnesota Governor Tim Walz. Governor Walz effectively decided to declare war against the federal government, calling on citizens nationwide to rise and support their fight against federal agents.

That is a declaration of war.

There's been a rising tension in America over the last several years, which has caused many to be fearful of an imminent civil war. I am an optimist and have refused to let my mind wander down the path of doom and gloom when it comes to my fellow Americans. However, I can't help but become extremely concerned when I see governors like Tim Walz and mayors like Zohran Mamdani ever so bravely defy the federal government. What they're effectively saying is: "We will not follow federal law, and we will empower our citizens to attack federal agents if you send any here to enforce the law." All that's missing there is: "We are hereby seceding from the union." The Constitution clearly states in the supremacy clause that the federal law is the law of the land. States have their own rights, obviously, but you can't just decide to deliberately disobey federal law if you're going to remain a part of the United States. We've already fought a civil war over that exact issue, and I would prefer we don't fight another.

However, even in 1861, we had more in common as a nation than we do now. At the start of the Civil War, we were still a Christian nation with the same traditional worldviews as one another. The men who fought each other



had a mutual respect for each other. Ulysses S. Grant once called Stonewall Jackson a "gallant soldier and a Christian gentleman." General James Longstreet was actually at General Grant's wedding before the war started, and accepted a position under Grant's presidency after the war. Now, if you're a Democrat and don't publicly call President Trump a Nazi at least once a week, you're a traitor.

If you travel the nation from progressive cities to conservative towns, it's almost like you're in two different countries. There's almost nothing in common between the residents of Portland, Oregon, and the residents of Athens, Alabama. That's where a civil war starts to bubble, when you no longer see your fellow American as an ally and instead as an enemy. When governors choose to stoke these flames

rather than recognize the supremacy of the federal government, they must be quashed.

President Trump has a responsibility right now. A responsibility to put down this insurrection with the full force of the federal government. Protesters will not impede ICE from doing deportations, and anyone who tries to do so will be dealt with accordingly. Trump must send in however many officers are required to be sent into Minnesota to accomplish this. If the federal government waivers one bit in their response to defiant state and city leaders, they will see that as a win. Those who are here illegally will be deported swiftly, especially if they have been caught stealing billions from the American taxpayers.

What Tim Walz is doing is irresponsible, reckless, and downright disgusting! President Trump and

the federal government have supremacy over you, and you will obey as well as call on your citizens to obey the law. This is a pivotal moment for President Trump and his presidency. Rogue and defiant leaders cannot be allowed to obstruct any longer, and perhaps we can avoid another civil war in the process.

Justin "JP" Plott is the production manager for Rightside Media, and Producer for Rightside Radio. JP joined the Rightside team in late 2024 after working at WVNN in Huntsville, Alabama. He quickly became a top-notch, multi-media producer and a voice of Gen-Z conservatism.



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The Power Of A Planted Faith

by Anna Hamilton

It crowded out other plants, dominated the soil, and was extremely difficult to control. Farmers often feared it because it didn't stay in its place, it took over entire fields. What began as something small quickly became uncontrollable. So, when Jesus referenced the mustard seed, His listeners likely didn't picture something fragile or insignificant. They would have thought of something uncontrollable, invasive, dominating, unstoppable. Think of the mustard plant like the kudzu that has taken over much of the Southern landscape.

A mustard seed is one of the tiniest seeds known, easily overlooked and seemingly insignificant. Held in the palm of a hand, it hardly appears capable of producing anything meaningful. Yet, when planted, it grows into a large, sturdy plant, sometimes even described as tree-like. Jesus chose this example intentionally, reminding us that faith is not measured by its size, but by its presence and its willingness to grow.

Faith of a mustard seed teaches us that God does not require perfect, unwavering confidence from us. He does not demand that we understand every step of the journey or see the full picture before we trust Him. Instead, He asks for a beginning—a small act of belief, a quiet prayer, a moment of surrender. He requires us to take that tiny mustard seed of faith and plant it firmly in our lives. Once planted, it spreads into every part of our lives. It is unshakeable and unwavering. That type of faith does not politely coexist with fear or doubt. It overtakes, uproots, and destroys the lies that the devil tells us every day. Faith of a mustard seed takes full authority and establishes God's kingdom in our life. Even the smallest spark of faith, when placed in God's hands, carries the power to transform lives.

Often, we believe our faith must be strong before God can act. We wait until we feel brave enough, confident enough, or worthy enough. But the mustard seed reminds us that faith grows through obedience, not certainty. It is planted in moments of doubt, fear, and weakness. It takes root when we choose to trust God despite unanswered questions or heavy burdens. And when we allow it to fully take root -- when we water it daily, prune out any bad parts, and truly nurture our mustard seed of faith -- it will grow to be uncontrollable faith! Strong and treelike, invasive, taking over every single part of our life.

Mountains in our lives may not always be literal, but they are real nonetheless—illness, grief, financial strain, broken relationships, anxiety, or uncertainty about the future. These mountains can feel immovable. Yet Jesus assures us that deep-rooted, mustard seed faith can shift what seems impossible. Not always instantly, and not always in the way we expect, but always with purpose.

Faith of a mustard seed is also an invitation to patience. Growth does not happen overnight. Mustard seed faith is not like the story of “Jack and the Beanstalk,” it doesn’t spring up overnight, reaching to the sky. Seeds must be nurtured, watered, and given time. In the same way, faith deepens through prayer, Scripture, community, and experience. God honors the process. What begins as a small belief can grow into a steady trust that withstands storms and seasons.

Ultimately, the message of the mustard seed is one of hope. You do not need great faith—you need living faith. Faith that is willing to be planted. Faith that trusts God to do what only He can do. When we offer Him even the smallest measure of belief, He meets us there and brings growth far beyond what we could imagine.

Do you have faith of a mustard seed? A deep rooted, invasive, unstoppable, and overtaking faith? The kind of faith that the world doesn’t understand, but in the kingdom of God will move the mountains in your life? Faith of a mustard seed is not about just being small. It is about being so rooted, so forceful, and so unshakable that nothing else can stand against it.

This week’s recipe is one of recovery! After a long holiday season, I need a good reset and something, fresh, light, and filling. Something that is both delicious and healthy. This honey-mustard roasted chicken is perfect for a flavorful and healthy dish. Plus, it features mustard, appropriate for today’s article. I hope you love this recipe as much as my family does. As always, feel free to swap out the protein to make this recipe your own, or try the mustard sauce over potatoes to make a delicious side dish.

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12).



Mental Health Minute

The Story Of Narrative Therapy

by Lisa Philippart,
Licensed Professional Counselor

"We need to look hard at the stories we create, and wrestle with them. Retell and retell them, and work with them like clay. It is in the retelling and returning that they give us their wisdom."

- Marni Gillard

"We need to look hard at the stories we create, and wrestle with them. Retell and retell them, and work with them like clay. It is in the retelling and returning that they give us their wisdom." - Marni Gillard

I love words, and writing, and stories. I always have. When I was in elementary school, my favorite time of the day was creative writing. We would be given a topic, or a sentence, to get us started, and then we were to just write. Because I tend to be more introverted, (although I do believe we are all ambiverts depending on the situation... topic for another time!) words and writing quickly became my

favorite venue. I could take the time to think about exactly what I wanted to say and how to say it. And if it didn't sound right, I could erase and start over. I didn't have to be quick on my feet as in the verbal world. Nothing gave or gives me greater pleasure than to discover the perfect word to describe a feeling or an object or an event. I am a believer in the power of words to harm or soothe, to encourage or degrade, to transport or to stifle. So, it only makes sense that there would be a therapy technique that uses stories. Narrative therapy is a method of mental health counseling that separates the person from the problem through the stories we tell ourselves.

Narrative therapy is a positive and encouraging way for people to rely on their own skills to minimize problems in their lives. For all of us, our personal experiences become our personal stories. And for better or worse, these stories develop meaning for us and help shape our identity. NT uses the power of these sto-

ries, our life stories, to help us discover our life purpose and direction. I believe, and NT believes, that each of us is the "narrator" of our own story. The basics of NT are rooted in the role of the therapist to empower and collaborate with the client. By separating the person from the problem, people can focus on using their skills and expertise in guiding change in their lives. My goal, as the therapist, is to externalize the issue/problem. I love the idea that telling your story is a form of action toward change. How does this work?

As a narrative therapist, I have three goals: to help objectify the problem, frame the problem in a larger social and cultural context, and then teach my client how to make room for other stories. The idea is for us to identify and build on an alternative or more preferred storyline for life. Your best life. Take a moment and think about something that is causing distress in your life. Is the real problem the story you have been telling yourself? Your storyline is

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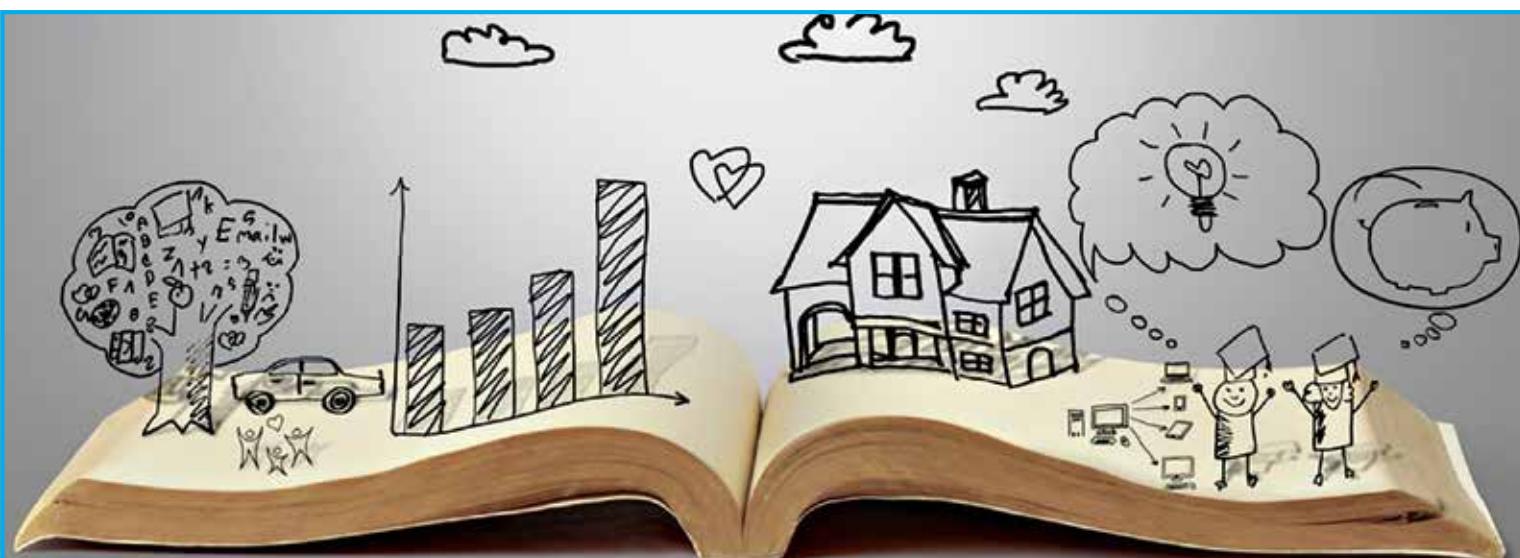
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separate from the problem, which allows you to rewrite your story! You are writing your story every day. And if you are in the present moment, you are writing in pencil, with a big eraser on the end of it! What is the impact of your problem? NT helps the client to identify what is valuable in a broader context...beyond just the problem itself. It probably goes without saying (but I'll put it in writing here) that there is always a connection between your actions and your choices. If we can connect our pattern of choices to life experiences, we gain insight into how to address problems going forward.

What I truly love about NT is that my goal is not to transform my client. (No one can do that but you!)

My goal is to transform the effects of the problem...to make space between you and your challenges. And this can help you develop greater self-compassion. "I'm not the problem. The problem is the problem." On your own, I encourage you to journal. Whatever that means for you. Some people enjoy blogging. I started a private blog several years ago, documenting the interconnectedness of my life with my grandchildren. Some people prefer pencil and paper and the actual process of writing. And now you can even write your story on your phone! If you have trouble getting started, there are journals that have daily prompts. And if you aren't a "writer," then please just take a few minutes each day to jot down three things you are grateful for, or one thing you learned, or one act of kindness you showed. Your book is being written, with or without you. This new year is waiting for you to share your story.



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.

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