



the ENCOURAGER magazine

October 2019



LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CHURCH



ON THE COVER

Congregant Kristen Radford radiates with the joy of the Christmas season during her photo shoot at The Mall in Columbia on 12/21/19.

Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2019

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A WORD FROM **THE WORD**

PASTOR REGINALD L. ELLIOTT

"the law of God...commands one to **act in love**
Pastor Reginald L. Elliott

Are We Loving Our Neighbors AS OURSELVES?

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OT

he effect of sin on mankind is often hidden by the blindness sin causes, and this blindness is the reason for the conflict we see in our world. This blindness impacts man's perception about all of life, particularly his interaction with his fellowman. This is the reason why many statements made by Jesus about our interaction with others often seem strange. Consider Matthew 5:44 (NIV), "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you"; or "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather out of humility, value others above yourselves..." (Philippians 2:3, NIV).

The teaching of the cited verses emphasizes the following truths about our interaction with our fellowman. First, they teach that we are to respond to others based on who we are, not what they do or have done. Secondly, we are to avoid viewing ourselves as superior to others. These truths are central to fully understanding the message of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.

The story begins with a lawyer asking Jesus what is required to have eternal life. Jesus asked him what is written in the law and he correctly says to love God with all thy heart, soul, strength and mind and

to love thy neighbor as thyself. Then to justify himself, he asks for Jesus to define neighbor. Interestingly, rather than asking Jesus more about what is involved in loving God, the man immediately went to the question of who is my neighbor.



Responding to the man's question Jesus tells a parable in which each participant reveals the depth of their relationship with God by how they treat their neighbor. The choices as to how one treats his neighbor are always the same: be guided by how one thinks they should act, or be guided by the law of God which commands one to act in love.

As is often the case in life, the Priest and the Levite (those representing God) did not respond to the situation based on love for their neighbor. The Samaritan, in spite of the history between the Jews and the Samaritans, responded in love for his fellowman/neighbor. He responded based on what was in him – compassion/love for his neighbor.

In closing, the parable Jesus told the lawyer to go and do what the Good Samaritan had done. How we relate to our neighbor helps us discover if we really love God, and highlights the depth of our relationship with God. God has commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves – are we doing it?



CHRISTIAN COMEDY **CORNER**

CAROLYN JACKSON
COLLIN DUNLAP

REMEMBER

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"

Proverbs 17:22 (KJV)

The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people. (G.K. Chesterton)



I have reviewed your case very carefully the court judge said, and I decided to give your wife who is also my neighbor,

\$775.00 a week.

"That's very fair your honor" said the husband "and every now and then I'll try to send her a few bucks myself."

I used to believe when my neighbor said she sleeps standing up, but lately she's been lying!



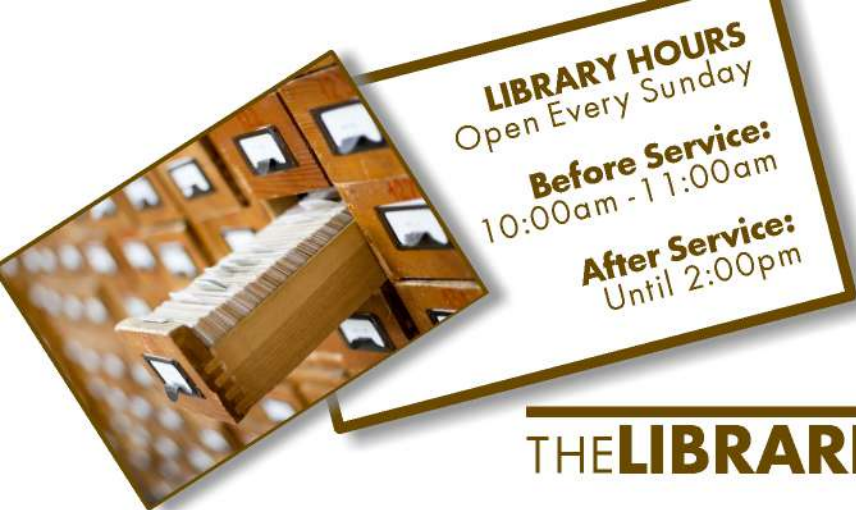
So my neighbor sees me very busy working in my garden and asks what I'm doing.

"I'm alphabetizing all my plants"

"Really?! I don't know how you find the time!"

"It's right next to the sage!"






THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK

DESIREE COLLINS

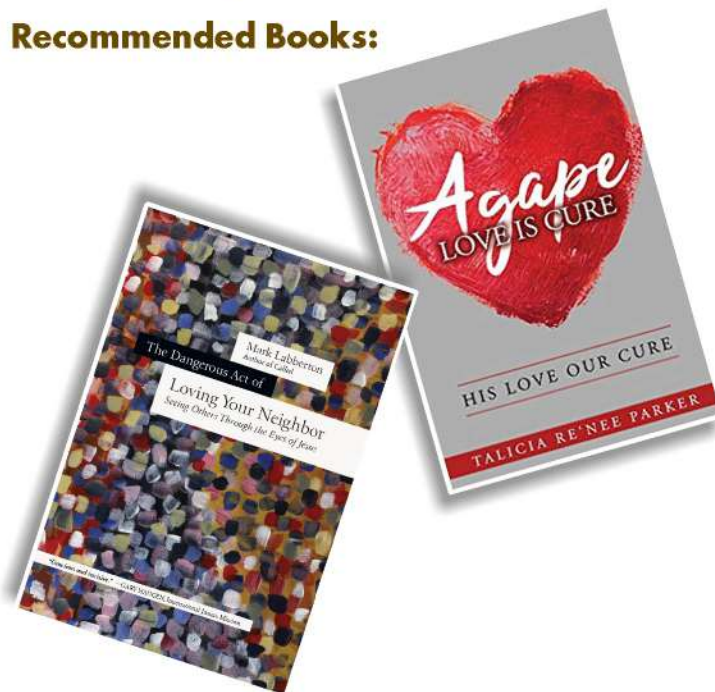
"But to those of you who will listen, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you...If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same...But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked men" (Luke 6:27-28, 33, 35).

Ean you wrap your head and heart around those Scriptures? Something to think about isn't it? It is easy to love someone who loves you back, but to love someone who does not have your best interest at heart takes some "doing", and the "doing" is something you can't do in the "natural", the "Holy Spirit" is required!

This "love" Jesus is talking about is not about "feelings". This "love" is an action word. Jesus requires us to choose love. Neighbors and enemies are worthy of love because they are made in God's image. Love is for all human kind, not just for those we pick and choose, we don't have that discretion. "Christianity does not give us permission to dishonor or disregard those whom we perceive as enemies" (*Christianity Today* exert from article "Loving Your Enemies"). Loving your enemy also, does not require you to agree with your enemy.

Sometimes we convince ourselves that we have forgiven someone who has wronged us. Then something organic happens and you realize in your heart of hearts that the bitter feelings still linger. This is when you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Ask the Holy Spirit to perform heart and mind surgery to set you fully free from the unforgiving spirit and give you peace. Ask to be shown the errors of your ways. Pray for the one who has wronged you and pray for yourself. We all want God to hear and answer our prayers, but if we are harboring bitterness or hate in our heart, God cannot hear our prayers -- we must come with a clean heart. We don't have to pretend it didn't happen, but we can't hold onto the grudge either. Ask God to "guard" your mind and heart, and choose to dwell on thoughts of forgiveness and reconciliation. 

Recommended Books:



LET US BREAK BREAD **TOGETHER**

CAROLYN FLEMING, RN

"...the disciples came together to break bread..."

Acts 20:7

We have all experienced times when we have "eaten on the run". A much better way to cultivate healthy eating habits is to spend more time eating meals, not less. Eating with family and friends is a valuable way to spend time together and can be beneficial to our emotional and physical health.

Eating Together Releases Positive Emotions


When we spend time with friends and loved ones, positive hormones – endorphins, are released in our brains. Moods are boosted and the brain receives messages of happiness and safety. Quality time spent breaking bread with friends and loved ones allows us to share meaningful conversation, exchange ideas, and catch up on significant life events. **Table Rule:** *Put away the cell phones and talk to each other!*

Eating Together Can Lead to Healthy Eating Habits

When we eat with others, we tend to eat more slowly. Taking time over our food helps us to feel full more quickly, contributing to eating less. Studies have shown that "adults tend to make healthier foods choices when dining in a group"

("Social Influence on Eating" 2015 – Suzanne Higg, Jason Thomas)

Eating Together Can Lead to Learning New Food Choices

When we eat with others we often share new recipes which might lead to new ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables and grains into our diets. Breaking bread together is good for our mental health. It provides a time to share experiences, bond, relax and sometimes provide an opportunity when anxieties can be expressed and listened to. 

"Happiness is Sharing Good Food with Good Friends" [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)



I ♥ MY NEIGHBOR

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CAN'T CHOOSE YOUR NEIGHBORS

WINNIE LaFRANCE-CHAMBERS

When you decide to move, you have control over a lot of factors. You pick the location, the style of the home, and the amenities, but you have absolutely no control over who your neighbors are. The same can be said about life. You cannot choose your neighbor. You've simply been given the instruction to love them, whoever they are. Your neighbor may be homosexual, atheist, and could even be a person who is disrespectful to you. Still it is up to us to follow God's Word and to love. Love is not a word to be used lightly, some feel like tolerating a person is enough. To love is to have good intentions, to pray for them, and treat them how you would like to be treated regardless of the circumstance.

When thinking about how to love, I look at these verses:

Romans 15:2, ESV

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

Romans 13:10, ESV

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Matthew 7:1-2, ESV

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

Luke 6:35, ESV

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 🐦



The Image and Likeness of the **HOLY TRINITY**

FAMILY FOCUS

CRYSTAL A. HOOD



In the beginning God created Adam and Eve in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity (Genesis 1:26-36). Being in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity refers to their spiritual nature. Adam and Eve held a unique physical and spiritual connection to God and each other (Genesis 2:15-25). They walked and talked with God face to face. Adam acknowledged and accepted Eve as flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

The problem that occurred was that after Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, their spiritual nature changed from the likeness of the Holy Trinity to that of Satan. Their spiritual nature became one based in discord.

As descendants of Adam and Eve we have the same sinful nature within us. Due to our sinful nature it is a challenge for us to love regardless of whether it is a family member or not. The slightest offence or assumed offense from one person to another can cause emotional division (mentally holding on to anger; being less loving toward the person, withdrawal of heartfelt affection or kindness.) It can also cause physical division (divorce, war, abuse, neglect).

What shall we do? How can we show love toward our neighbor (**all people**) as God commands (Mark 12:31)?


We start by loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind. The only way to do that is through Jesus. Jesus prayed, "Righteous Father, although the world has not known You, I know You, and they know that You sent Me. And I have made Your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love You have for Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:25-26 Berean Study Bible).

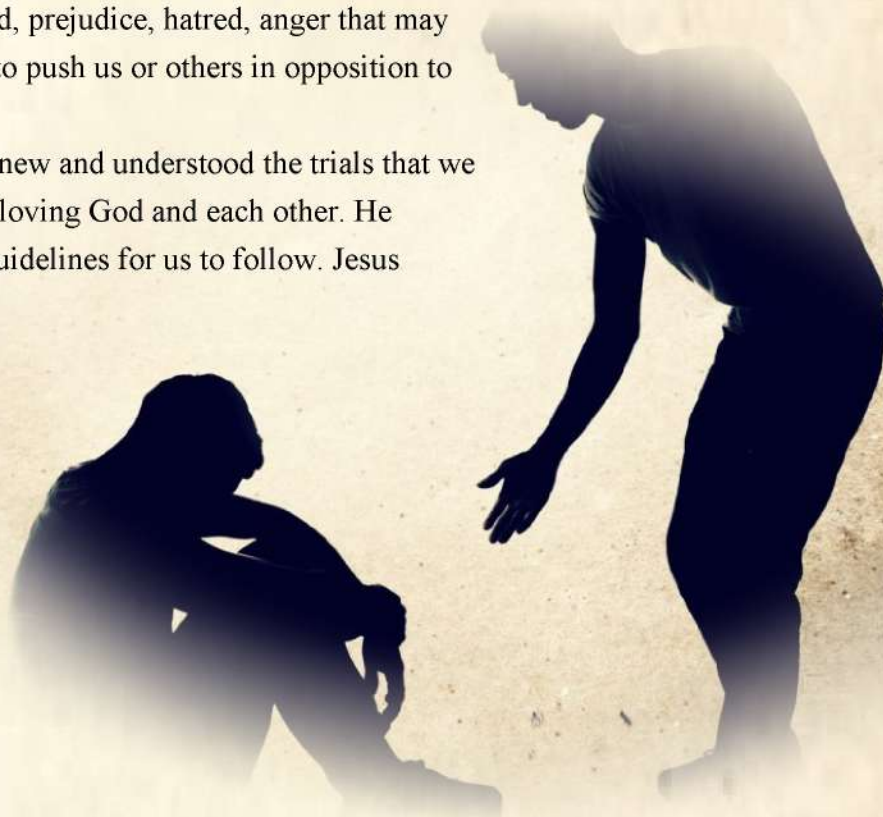
We need to accept Jesus as Savior and have faith in Him as the Son of God, who was born, died, buried and rose again. It is through salvation that we are made new. We are born again. We are no longer held captive by the sinful nature with which we were born. Our sins are forgiven and we are restored to God (John 3:1-21).

When we receive Jesus as Savior we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He gives us the ability to love others in the way that is in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity, but we have to choose to yield to the urging of the Holy Spirit. We still have our own will. Like Adam and Eve we have the right to believe and obey God's Word or choose to reject it and follow Satan. We also have the adversary Satan along with his demons that press against us. As with Eve, thoughts, beliefs and ideas are presented before us in a way that can influence us not to obey or believe God. Although we may know what we do or say is unloving we will feel justified and righteous in our own eyes.

In order to push down our old self and yield to the direction of the Holy Spirit we need to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The more we pray the more opportunity the Holy Spirit has to work on our heart. We need to repent from sin (2 Chronicles 7:14), and recognize like the prophet Isaiah, that “I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5-8, KJV). We should pray for God to create in us a clean heart (Psalm 51:10). We should anoint our tongue and head with oil and daily ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with His Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Finally, when praying we should rebuke Satan and bind him in the name of Jesus Christ. Bind the spirit of discord, prejudice, hatred, anger that may be attempting to push us or others in opposition to God’s love.

Jesus knew and understood the trials that we would have in loving God and each other. He provided the guidelines for us to follow. Jesus

stated, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:9-11 Berean Study Bible). When we yield to the Holy Spirit and walk as Jesus commanded we can love our neighbor and will show love in a way that reflects the image and likeness of God. 



KRISTEN Radford

GETTING TO KNOW

MINISTER LINWOODCHILDS



The great Apostle Paul in the New Testament wrote to a young pastor, Timothy, and charged him with many things. Among those charges was that he was not to despise his youth, but to be a full example of a believer, in faith and word and practice. For every Christian this is a challenge, but arguably none more so than a young believer today. It was my privilege to speak with Kristen Radford, a young Christian, about her walk with Christ in these challenging times.

Linwood Childs: Tell me about Kristen the Christian!

Kristen Radford: We're in a world now that there is so much destruction, death and pain. Just knowing the hope that we have through Christ makes a difference! Christ gives the light; He shows you things like, this is not the way you have to be living! Yes, like it's said all the time, you're in the world but you do *not* have to be of the world. Christ can give and lead you into a life of abundance, a life that He would have you to have.

LC: How did Kristen come to this conviction?

KR: Well. Whoever said that your 20's is *the* time of your life, they lied! It's tough. Who are you? Whom do you follow? Do you follow the things

you're passionate about or something else? Do I do the safe things or do what this person or someone else tells me I should do? When I graduated from Morgan State University in the Business Honors Program, everyone was tracking the graduate's job placement. Words like, "What top company did you get into? How long did it take you to land that position?" People were posting top Fortune 500 companies. So, I felt pressure to do the same. A year after I graduated college I was working at Morgan Stanley, the financial institution. I was told that that's where you wanted to be, to get into one of those big companies. They touted the security, money potential, career advancement and retirement.

LC: Okay. (I heard something in her voice that gave me pause)

KR: But I was miserable! I *hated* what I did. Every day was miserable. I would pull up to work and drive onto the parking lot, and instantly get a migraine headache! I first thought, okay, I'm just dehydrated, I need to drink more water. But each day I would be fine, until I was about to park my car and before I got out my car, yup, instant migraine.

LC: You didn't have migraines otherwise?

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*M*y prayer
is always:

**LORD
LET YOUR
LIGHT SHINE**

through
me

Kristen Radford





LC: You didn't have migraines otherwise?

KR: Nope, none. It got to a point that I really knew that this was not where I was supposed to be. So honestly, I just quit. I worked there about two months.

LC: What was your major again?

KR: Business major.

LC: There is a quip in some academic circles that if you don't know what to do go to college. Kristen's voice rose a complete octave and without a moment's hesitation

KR: If I could go *back* through college, I would have a *completely* different major! So *many* things would be different.

LC: What was hardest part about leaving Morgan Stanley?

KR: I really wasn't concerned at all about the people within the company. They would have my spot filled within two weeks. My immediate concern was explaining to people outside. It was hard to *express* to others and explain how I felt, what I was going through, and why.

LC: Her voice and cadence dropped back to normal.

KR: Yet, I cannot tell you how much freedom I felt when I got out of that place. I had that freedom and enjoyed it, yet at the same time I had this feeling that I was on some deadline. I did not create that deadline and God didn't give me that deadline. But others were telling me, I was supposed to be doing this or that. But I knew I needed that time to figure what *God* wanted for me. So honestly, I just quit.

LC: Really?

KR: Yup! I...just...quit! I didn't have a back-up plan.

LC: This was not a calculated business plan?

KR: Nope. It was during this time without a steady job, that I focused, really focused, on my relationship with God. I really needed to answer who I am and who God would have me to be. I really got into the Bible and began to work through those struggles. I'm still working through some.

LC: Tell me one of your most recent accomplishments?

KR: I work for Enterprise Rent-A-Car. I started



working for them last June. You usually go through their training program, and then get appointed to various branch locations. What is so funny, I actually interviewed for a smaller branch office position that I didn't get. Other employees thought I would get that smaller office position. The day after I found out I didn't get the spot I thought I was more likely to get, I got a notice to interview at this larger spot, a main branch office.

LC: How did that work that you got another interview so quickly?

KR: Oh, I was told that there were several positions available and to apply for several that were available. Literally the day after I found out that I didn't get the one I thought I would get, I found out that I had an interview with the main branch.

LC: How did you feel about *not* getting the first one?

KR: I was really disappointed. I did feel like it would be a perfect transition; it seemed like this was where I was supposed to be. But when I didn't get it, to be honest I was hurt a little. I didn't have much time since I hadn't prepared for the larger branch interviews because I thought I would get the

other smaller one, but not the larger branch. So, I just really went on the interview to do it for the experience and decided to do the best I could, not really prepared and not expecting anything really. The next day they told me I got it! It was kind of unexpected. The position I'm in was more so for a person who had more tenure than me. But I ended up interviewing and getting that spot. I'm in a flagship branch with a larger fleet of vehicles and a 7-days-a-week operation. These are usually held for existing assistant managers to move to after they have been there awhile. I got promoted to assistant manager, back in August.

LC: Did you think the second interview went well?

KR: It was hard to gauge, because I thought the first interview went very well. Each interview was with a different set of areas-managers. I did the interview. The next day when my manager told me I got the spot, I said "What!" I almost couldn't believe it!

LC: Wow! What do you enjoy about your job?

KR: I enjoy the customer interactions that I have. Honestly, when they rate our performance, outcomes, and sales numbers those really don't tell the whole story, or mean that much to me. I take
(Continued on Page 13)

pride in making someone have a good experience, which is mostly what our job is about. Even moving to an assistant manager was something I kinda didn't really want to. I was happy where I was. At the end of the day, the company I work for is not my passion!

LC: You mean you don't dream about your company?!

KR: Never. Honestly, when I see car commercials sometimes it makes me want to gag! Next commercial please!

LC: Why did you apply for this next position?

KR: I have a group of advocates that were pushing me to apply. Saying something like, "Yeah you should go ahead and see what's out there." So, I did and here I am.

LC: Here's a scenario. A person walks into Enterprise, after a previously bad experience, but he doesn't really mention it, but has an attitude. He is pointing out to whomever, that you guys are *going* to do this, and you're going to take care of that. Generally, making you the deciding factor if he keeps his business with your company? What's your approach? How is your tactic better than your competitors?

KR: Although I hate the phrase it does seem

*My goal is to be
aware and prepared
for those attacks
when they come!*

Kristen Radford





appropriate here, I kill them with kindness. Some customers come in and they can stink-up the whole office environment with their attitude. So, I'm going to be nice and get them out of the office as quickly as possible. Make sure we give them what they need and that they don't have to come back in for anything!

I was so comfortable in doing what I was doing, I was happy, I was content; but now I'm responsible for a team and have to add to their success! Sometimes the issue comes up because I don't always know what I'm doing. So how am I going to teach you what you're supposed to be doing if I don't know what I'm doing.

LC: Hmm? How do you deal with that?

KR: I'm...I'm honest. I tell them I don't know. But let me find out for you. I think people appreciate that. On Friday I had our career development meeting with our service agents. They're not customer-facing agents and may be a little rough around the edges. I was told that it is usually hard to get them to talk and open up about things. So, I met with them.

LC: As a group?

KR: No, I talked with them individually. I learned so much about them individually. They were so open with me about what they needed from us. I was able to tell management from all the notes from what they said. They could not believe I got all that from them. Later, an assistant who has been with the company I guess 20 years, said that he was comfortable coming to me, that I listened, and I have this energy that was approachable. He said, you're a real person. I feel proud that I can be that person who can bridge that gap.

Historically, the service agents are young black men, whom others feel are unapproachable, and aren't seen as intelligent and able to bring something to the business table. Yet, one service agent told me that he wanted to work toward becoming a customer-facing agent. He had *never said that before. I told him I was going to help him and told others in management that he wanted to work up front with the customers and what could we do to make that happen. That is one thing that is super important to me.*

LC: What about your rough days?

KR: I really don't have a specific incident basically because I have a short attention span and tend to get over things really quickly. That's just me. I can get

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into an argument with someone and as far as I'm concerned, it's over, right then. Sometimes others may feel like lingering over it a day or so later, but nope, I'm done with it.

LC: So, it's been since last August that you've been in your new position, what have you learned about your new job that you did not know until you got in it?

KR: Honestly? (Lol).

LC: Please!!

KR: I don't like managing people!!

LC & KR: [ROFL: Rolling on the Floor Laughing)]

LC: What are some of those issues you're facing that caused you to want to help prepare the next generation to handle?

KR: Many things. Social media and the internet. You have access to any and everything. So, I think it's important to be honest saying things like, "When I was your age I fell into this trap or that issue so, avoid this because here is where it leads me. So, to avoid the same things, this is what you

need to do."

LC: There is this real challenge who to listen to!

KR: Exactly!

LC: Online, it can be incredible what people actually put out there. Things where none of what is said is true. How do you see yourself helping people see who they really are and can be?

KR: I think a lot of times a person can be passionate about something or care about something, but because of the way the world is, they can feel stifled. I'm passionate about singing, acting and dancing. If that could be my career, I would do it. There is also that battle of concerns, that that's not a stable position, you never know what you'll walk into (onset or studio) or traps you could fall into in that industry. All of these very true, but I know the gifts that God has given me and that He would not put me into a position to fail or fall into those things. The Pastor talked about God giving Satan permission to test us and those tests will come. My goal is to be *aware* and *prepared* for those attacks when they come.

LC: For they will come and continue.

KR: Absolutely.



LC: The devil wants to use those opportunities to make one think his offer is better than God's power and His promises.

KR: I have pursued some acting roles which looked good until I saw the nudity requirement in the fine print. I flat out rejected it. In the time that I have been pursuing that, it was like God said to me, "You don't have to do all that; you can be successful without all that". I know God, was telling me, I can go out there and represent Him in that industry, an industry that so many people see as evil and see the negativity in it. But you can go and be that light that is missing. It's tough sometimes, because I can go on a set with all kinds of people. People who don't care about sharing their beliefs and are upfront with it.

LC: How do you deal with that?

KR: I don't let it get to me and don't allow it to frustrate me. At the end of the day, I know I'm walking in as a representative of God. Hopefully at the end of my encounter with that person they can see that also. That's all that I can hope for. If they can see that, then fantastic. If not, I'm not going to stop the way I'm living and who I'm trusting in.

LC: Sounds like you're not afraid to say no to

whomever and walk away.

KR: Absolutely!

LC: Often, people are confronted with a struggle of integrity versus opportunity!

KR: My struggles were not as intense or life-shattering as maybe some others, but my goal is to represent Christ.

LC: Why do you do the many things you do in the church.

KR: I enjoy working with the dance ministry, the young adult choir, the young adult ministry. I sometimes teach on Sundays with the Middle School and High School ministry. Right now, sometimes I have to work the weekends so I'm not always available.

LC: During the summer, you'll find Kristen also teaching Vacation Bible School.

KR: I love it. It comes from my parents; the way that they are, the way they are willing to be open with people. They're willing to be open and serve. A lot comes from me just being a participant and then someone saw something in me and said, okay
(Continued on Page 17)

this is yours now.

LC: Like when?

KR: C-Cubed was preparing songs for a New Year's Eve service and I was asked if I could come up with something for the dancers for the New Year's Eve service. Praise the Lord, then after that someone asked me to work on something for the Easter production.

LC: The young adult choir?

KR: C-Cubed? This group is a dedicated young group who are committed to singing as the Holy Spirit prompts us, not singing just because they can! Not just to make sure the harmony is good but making sure it's something that is glorifying to God. I also love the ability to be creative within the group. We mash-up songs, we rearrange sections. One thing that is special is that many of us grew up together.

LC: How comfortable are you in front of people?

KR: (silence) I'm pretty comfortable. Naturally, I'm quiet and reserved; keeping to myself. But if I'm mentally prepared to be in front of people then I'm fine.

LC: When you come up against challenges inside or outside of church how do you face them?

KR: I think a lot of times, in the moment I can let it get to me. But when I take myself out of it, I can see which way to handle it. Taking a step back, I can see, how we need to refocus the challenge.

LC: How does your faith affect your crises?

KR: Just remembering what we face, the



challenges are all temporary. God is going to pull us out of whatever dark period we're going through, even if it is extended over a period of time. Just put your head down and keep moving, there is light on the other side. This light comes from God's promise that He will bring us through.

LC: So, you actually believe that?

KR: Absolutely.

LC: You've shared that you're involved in a few things! Acting, dance, CCC choir, youth sessions during Sunday, VBS, Praise and worship, young adult ministry. What's the vision.

KR: The gifts that I have I know they come from Him and I want to give them back to Him. I just want to give people hope...my prayer is always: LORD let your light shine through me, through whatever ministry I'm a part of. Whatever message He would have for people, that that message would come through. I see myself as someone who is relatable and non-judgmental, but someone who helps someone work through their problems with them. I think especially for people in my generation, people in their 20's, that millennial in-between thing. A lot of issues we have to deal with, previous generations did not have to deal

with, so we generally have to pull each other up to help each other through. But I see my focus on younger generations to help make sure they don't have to deal with those issues the same way we have had to.

I have noticed that many Christians, when it comes to their Christianity and the Word, they just take other people's word for things. They do this instead of sitting down and studying it for themselves. This is one thing that really helps me grow in my faith. For the longest time, I would just listen to what other people said, I would read say this passage. Alright, cool. But once I finally graduated from high school Mr. Rodney Samuel gave me a study Bible (I think he still does this). I had it for the longest time. I would open it here and there. But I finally took the time to start studying. I would read through the chapter, then read through the notes, again. A lot of times people would say that the Bible contradicts itself, but you cannot understand it until you read and study the Bible in its culture. Then you can tell the difference between the cultural norms and the message, then you're able to pull out the real truth of the passage God wants to bring out. I kind of felt that everything was alive. Study provided more clarity. Someone will say one scripture and someone else will pull out another scripture and it feels like that one contradicted the first one. But it really helps to

(Continued on Page 19)



understand what is really going on in one time and what was the meaning *then*. That's my message to people... Christians will say they saw this on the internet so how is this *and* this both true if this is how nature works? You have to read it and study for yourself to learn what the Word means to you as an individual.

LC: What encouraged you to study?

KR: Honestly, it was when we started to do the young adult Bible study. I love those sessions. It's very much an open conversation.

LC: It shows.

KR: When Mr. Greg started those sessions, he would break down certain things in the Bible. I was shocked, I didn't know the Bible even said those things. It made me want to go through it and go back to the beginning to see what all of this was. To make it make sense.

I'm not sure what the actual conversation was about, but someone mentioned that the Bible was not as interesting as the Game of Thrones. I said, "What! Have you read the Old Testament? Really! Have you read some of things that goes on in the Old Testament?" Sometimes it's so engaging, that I have to cover up the bottom of the page, so I don't read ahead to the end! People don't realize how much is in there and how much is in there for you!

One thing that I think is good that we're doing now

is the sessions we're doing with the young people during service. I really want to provide access to the stories of the Bible. We read and talk through them. We even challenge them to find the story reference in the Bible without any help. We'll give them the book, chapter and verse and see if they can find it. They now see who can find it first. This builds a good foundation for what else is in the Bible.

Through it all I had to remind myself that God has something greater. He has shown me a portion of the vision He has for my life and just to trust Him. He has shown me that it's impossible to fail doing what He wants you to do. Yes obedience. I used to despise the word, but now I see it's not just for kids.

LC: In wrapping up, what's your favorite scripture or a favorite scripture and song.

KR: It depends of the day. A favorite verse is Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord; plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." My favorite song, right now, is "Make Room" by Jonathan McReynolds.

LC: I had not heard that song yet, so I listened, and the words talked about giving God permission to move all things over in order to make room for Jesus. My Number One! 🙌



Bear One Another's Burdens

page 20
the ENCOURAGER magazine

LET US PRAY
ANGELA HUNT BONITTO


James 5:17 really resonates with me during this season because the “Holiday Blues” are real. Expectations are high, stress levels are high, and many people feel lonely and sad. Believers are commanded in that scripture to “pray for one another.” Intercede for each other that we may be healed. Did you know when we as believers **bear one another’s burdens**, we **fulfill the law of Christ**. **Bear** means carrying with endurance, and **burdens** is from the Greek word *baros*, which means heavy loads that are difficult to lift and carry. As believers we are to continue to spend time in prayer for our burdened sister or brother and provide good counsel and encouragement. Notice I said good counsel and encouragement not stand in judgment.

How many times have you been in a position to pray for someone when they tell you their burden, but you didn’t do it? You say, “Girl I’m going to pray for you!” But you never do. The next time that opportunity arises, stop! Pray right there. Just do it!

On the flip side of carrying one another’s burdens. We can’t do it if we don’t let anyone know. Too many times we don’t tell someone we need prayer because we think they may gossip about it, or you feel you don’t want to burden anyone with your troubles, or either you are embarrassed about what you need prayer for. Pride makes us want to go it alone. Pride makes us want to keep it to ourselves, BUT pride is of Satan!!

Although, God is our ultimate source of strength, and on Him we are called to cast our burdens (Psalms 5:22) and our cares (1 Peter 5:7), He uses fellow believers as His agents on the ground to help carry the **burdens** of His children. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you” (John 13:34). **The law of Christ** is the law of love, which fulfills all the rest of God’s law (Galatians 5:14; Romans 13:8, 10). Be the change agent God wants you to be on this earth...love your neighbor as yourself, bear one another’s burdens, and pray for one another that God may be glorified.

Let Us Pray...

Father God, we come to You in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, using His life and legacy as our example to love one another and bear one another’s burdens. Jesus had compassion for people and went around healing the sick, delivering people from oppression and depression, sharing the Good News that He came so that we may have an abundant life. Father, help us to carry the burdens of others in prayer. Open our eyes to see those who struggle and give us compassion and empathy to step in and pray for them. We ask according to the working of Your great might, that You worked in Christ when You raised Him from the dead and seated Him at Your right hand in the heavenly places. Amen. 

Loving -- All or Nothing

FEATURED **ARTICLE**

KIM **ODOMS-BOLDEN**

In freezing, subzero temperatures in Venetie, Alaska a five-year-old child reportedly wearing only socks and light clothing carried an eight month old child about half a mile to a neighbor's house. It was reported that these children left where they were because there was no power in the residence. No information was given regarding how long they had been in the home without power or how the five-year-old young girl dressed and managed to carry an eighteen month old (approximately twenty-five pounds) a half of a mile (approximately 1,000 steps) wearing no shoes and no winter gear. I am reminded of the scripture, "...do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you -- better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away" (Prov 27:10b, NIV). Often times we, as people, tend to rely on family relationships near and far and we do so mentally, physically, and emotionally.

I am also reminded of the story about a person who was stranded due to extreme flood conditions and was waiting to be rescued. After several attempts by authorities, emergency services personnel, and

rescue volunteers via land and air the flood victim chose not to partake of the rescue services provided. It is believed the services were rejected because the help the victim expected did not come by means they expected. Leaning on our own

understanding will keep us on crooked paths. Relying alone on what we think we know is pride. Pride blinds and causes us to be critical of others and robs us of a teachable spirit. Imagine a five-year-old analyzing and determining the detriment of staying in a home in subzero temperatures and without overthinking it made an executive decision to abort.

Jesus, "called a little child to

him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-4, NIV). It is heartbreaking to offer someone help, and the help is rejected because the help did not appear as someone may have expected -- the results may ultimately be life threatening. Sometimes being like a child requires humility, taking a lowly position



and humbling ourselves to receive the full blessings of deliverance, and salvation from the Lord. It is also equally heartbreaking to live next to our neighbors and when an issue or problem arises people tend to never consider reaching out to their neighbor. James warns we have not because we ask not. Would this be different if we practiced one of two of the greatest commandments provided by Jesus, “Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31, NIV). For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:14, NIV).

After being notified, Alaska State Troopers chartered a plane and it took between 14 to 16 hours for the troopers to reach the children in Venetie, Alaska. The Troopers stated they believed the children were safe and in good hands with the neighbor who took the children into their home.

Loving our neighbors can be somewhat challenging. As much as it depended on her small body, finite wisdom and limited resources the five-year-old was not about to die in her winter or let her immediate circumstances overrule her destiny. It was all or nothing! Like little children we must move beyond ourselves, remain teachable, and choose not to die in our winters. If we or someone we love needed the

help of our neighbor could they, would they be in a position to receive the same or similar help these young children received?

Surely it is God alone that provided for the children as He will for all who are called by His Name. Will you, do you, have you considered LOVING your neighbor as yourself? Love is never done half-heartedly it's all or nothing! 🕊️





NAVIGATING LOVE'S ROADMAP

TAYLOR LANDRUM

*I*f there is one singular theme that runs throughout the entirety of Jesus' message in the New Testament, it is to love -- unequivocally, and unconditionally. Jesus' ministry itself was an embodiment of the message of true love, which is never-ending and powerful enough to conquer. By showing us through His words and deeds what love is really like, He has empowered us and commanded us to spread that message throughout the world.

However, despite the fact that almost all of us think we know what love feels like, *how* do we know? Although there are many kinds of love, the only way for us to truly understand its power, depth, and importance is to understand its source. Thus, when asked which of the commandments was greatest, Jesus first named the commandment that we love God. Why? Because without a love for God, who is the creator of Love, how can we love anything else? God's initial love for us is the foundation for all love, and it only takes a quick survey of the world around you to realize how great that love is. God created everything that exists in our world -- the heavens and the Earth, the people and the animals. Each of these He created with loving care, evidenced by the uniqueness of every blade of grass, every human, and every animal. Psalm 84:3 (NIV) says, "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself..."

God's love for us is so all-encompassing,

passionate, and forgiving because without the perfect example of love we would have no roadmap on how to please Him and, therefore, no way to live the fulfilling life He has called for each of us. God would never expect us to love one another without showing us how to do so, and the Bible is full of examples of God's love for His people -- from His protection of David, Moses, Elijah, and the Old Testament heroes to his issuance of Jesus Christ to pay for the remission of our sins. God has shown that He is forgiving, kind, patient, and all of the things that we know in our hearts represent real love.

When Jesus said that the second most important commandment was to love thy neighbor as thyself, He was in essence adding an addendum to God's first "most important" commandment. If we love God as we ought, we will inherently love all that He has created, most of all our fellow man. God's call to love thy neighbor does not merely extend to our physical neighbors or friends, either. It extends to every single human being in the world. When we think of Jesus, do we think of any people He did not love? Even those who crucified him He loved and forgave. Whether or not it is realistic for us to achieve that level of *perfect* love notwithstanding, the commandments to love both God and thy neighbor sum up all of the others. True love does not lie, steal, or kill. God wants us to love thy neighbor because He IS love, and through doing so we please Him and secure eternal joy for ourselves.





ON THE INSIDE COVERS

Inside Front: Long-time congregant Debbie Smith is literally on the edge of her seat as she absorbs a Christmas message passionately delivered by Pastor Elliott during Sunday Service on 12/22/19
Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2019

Inside Back: CCC pillar Carolyn Jackson can hardly contain her joy as she receives a bouquet of flowers presented by Assistant Pastor Juanita Elliott for her dedicated service to Columbia Community Church's daily prayer line
Photography By: Michael R. Spry © 2019

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

8516 Thomas Williams Way
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

EVERY SUNDAY:

10:00 AM Church School (All Ages)
11:00 AM Meditation & Prayer
11:15 AM Morning Worship

COMMUNION SERVICE:

1st Sunday of Every Month

EVERY WEDNESDAY:

Noon-Day Prayer 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Noon-Day Bible Study 12:00 PM - 01:00 PM
Evening Prayer 07:30 PM - 08:00 PM
Evening Bible Study 08:00 PM - 09:00 PM

1st & 3rd WEDNESDAYS:

Youth Bible Study 07:00 PM - 08:00 PM

GENERAL INFORMATION

CARE & COMFORT MINISTRY

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CHURCH CONTACTS

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Church Website: www.columbiaccmd.org

CHURCH LIBRARY

Open Every Sunday 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM and after service until 2:00 PM