

Just keep breathing

A few years ago I crossed an item off of my bucket list, and it is an item that has been on the list for probably 30 years or more - I am now a certified scuba diver.

Even in the dark waters of the quarry, it was amazingly interesting to see a Volkswagen Bug, bounce a bowling ball on a metal platform 30 feet deep, and reach out and touch fish who are so used to humans that they are not at all afraid. I am looking forward now to going into some warm, clear blue waters to swim around coral reefs and with salt water creatures in their habitat. I learned, though, that Scuba is not at all like it is portrayed in the movies.

For starters, it is hard to simply dive down or sink down into the water. You actually have to weight yourself down to make yourself able to sink.

But I learned that air in the lungs is compressed at depth, and expands as you rise to the top. Thus, a person doing what is seen on the movies would have the unfortunate problem of having his lungs literally expand and explode if he tried that.

And that brings me to the first rule of scuba diving: never stop breathing.

My wife, Dana, and I actually got Scuba certified together. And while I love water, she is a bit claustrophobic, and the depths seemed to close in on her. She survived by holding my hand very tightly and repeating to herself, "All I need is air, and I have that. Just keep breathing."

As long as a person breathes, he or she will be fine. It is instinctive to hold your breath once you go under water, but following that instinct will kill you.

This knowledge leads to a beginning scuba diver repeating to himself over and over "just keep breathing, just keep breathing." And that brings me to a very important, maybe even life-saving thought.

In the book of Job we find a man in utter, suicidal despair. In Job 3:20-22 he said "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?"

Job was as despondent and hopeless as a human could ever be. He lost his children, his wealth, his health, his reputation, his closeness with his wife, he lost most everything.

But though he himself claimed that he wanted to die, look at how the story ended in Job 42:12-17: "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters... After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days."

Job, in his lifetime, went from despair to delight. And though there are many spiritual reasons given in the book as to why, there is also one very practical reason: he just kept breathing.

Many times we have helped

people through divorce and other gut-wrenching events. Many times dear members of our church have experienced the sudden, unexpected, tragic loss of a loved one. Each time we have held them tightly in a hospital conference room, and in answer to their question "What am I going to do?" we have answered, "Just keep breathing."

When you are going through unspeakable darkness and anguish, just keep breathing. When your world is caving in, just keep breathing. When your heart is shattered into a million shards of glass, just keep breathing. You see, if you are still here, then God still has a purpose for you, and you still have a future. You may not be able to see it, but Job could not see it either.

There are still people that you can help, there are still days of happiness ahead of you. One of the dear people that we held in the hospital went on to welcome a precious grandchild into the world, and now she has almost too many to count, and they are her world. She just kept breathing.

If you need some help, get it. Talk to a pastor, a counselor, a friend, someone. But whatever you do, just keep breathing. Good things eventually happen when you breathe for one more day, then another, then another...

Bo Wagner is pastor of the Cornerstone Baptist Church of Mooresboro a widely traveled evangelist, and the author of several books. His books are available on Amazon and at www.wordofhismouth.com. Pastor Wagner can be contacted by email at 2knowhim@cbc-web.org.



REV. BO WAGNER
The Word of His Mouth

Bring on the mess

Spring is a wonderful time of the year.

Winter's frigid grip has been broken and it signals a renewed cycle of growth. Blooms and blossoms begin to paint a beautifully-colored portrait to what has otherwise been a colorless muted pallet of bleakness for the preceding months.

As the spring temperatures rise, so do our spirits and the anticipation of outdoor fun, activities and hobbies. However, along with all of the practical and perceived benefits of spring, also comes a significant drawback. For several days many people lament the onset of pollen season.

The pesky yellowish dust seems to blanket everything. Attempts to clean it off seem futile. Washing your vehicle during this time of year will only lead to frustration. The moment you finish cleaning your car, the pollen immediately begins to reappear. It is relentless in its efforts to reach everything outside, including your car.

Others dread this time of year for a different reason. Many suffer significantly from the adverse effects that pollen has on their bodies. Allergic reactions are very common and can pose nu-

merous discomforts that range from mild to severe. Despite the irritations and inconveniences, it is imperative to understand the critical role pollen plays in our lives.

Without pollen, we have no reproduction of flowers, fruits, vegetables, plants, trees and the list goes on and on. The few days of the pollen invasion are an absolute necessity for the survival, sustainability and longevity of the planet, including mankind.

Pollen, like other irritants in our lives, are not only better tolerated, but can actually be appreciated when put into proper perspective. The things that seem to be such a temporary hassle, often are working a much bigger and better purpose in our lives.

The passage of scripture in Proverbs 14:4 gives some practical insight to this issue. Proverbs 14:4 (NLT) says, "without oxen a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest."

We would love for all the areas of our lives to stay tidy, clean and in order. However, as the verse points out, oxen were necessary to work the ground in order to reap a large harvest. Better to have a messy oxen stall that has to be periodically cleaned out than to keep a clean stall without an ox. No oxen equals no harvest.

Pollen is an example of a modern-day application to this oxen principal. Occasional messes are necessary for a large harvest.

Relationships, whether it be friendships, marriage or raising children, can all be messy but well worth it when we consider the great harvest associated with the process.

The next time something or someone seems to be a messy irritant in your life, think of the potential good that can come from the situation and focus on the future harvest rather than the current mess and the occasional irritant. Remember, no oxen, no mess but no harvest. With that in mind, bring on the mess and the pollen.

Pastor Jay Rivenbark is Pastor of Open Door Church - Bertie Campus. He can be reached via email at jay@visitopendoor.com.



REV. JAY RIVENBARK
Be Still

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard,
planted by the waters;
it was fruitful and full of branches
by reason of many waters.
It had strong rods for the scepters
of those who rule.
And its stature was exalted
above the clouds,
so it appeared in its height
with the multitude of its branches. EZEKIEL 19

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Judges in the Old or New Testament or neither?
 2. From 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is ...?" Independence, Freedom, Patriotism, Liberty
 3. Which scripture contains, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death?" Ruth 4:10, Job 7:2, Psalm 23:4, Amos 1:1
 4. Though lame on both feet, what descendant of Saul continually ate at King David's table? Mephibosheth, Methuselah, Micah, Mephibosheth
 5. Under what type of tree would the children of Israel come to Deborah for judging? Palm, Sycamore, Fig, Cypress
 6. From Matthew 8, who was the first woman that Jesus healed? Paul's sister, Naomi, Peter's mother-in-law, Deborah
- ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Liberty; 3) Psalm 23:4; 4) Mephibosheth; 5) Palm; 6) Peter's mother-in-law
- Visit Wilson Casey's Trivia Fan Site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

Special Events

Church announcements are published each week in the Bertie Ledger-Advance. The deadline to submit news items for this listing is 10 a.m. each Monday. Submissions may be emailed to twhite@ncweeklies.com.

May 1-2

Revival Services

WINDSOR - Revival Services continue May 1-2 at St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church.

The services will begin nightly at 7 p.m.

The guest speakers include the Rev. Purcell Whitaker of Peterson Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Merry Hill (Wednesday) and the Rev. Samuel Fields (Thursday).

The Pastor, the Rev. Kennedy L. Barber, and congregation invite the public to attend.

May 2

National Day of Prayer

COLERAIN - There will be a National Day of Prayer gathering at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, May 2 at Colerain Elementary School.

The gathering will be at the flag pole, and will serve as a time of prayer for the country and schools.

The event is sponsored by Colerain Baptist Church.

May 3

Plate Sale

WINDSOR - A plate sale consisting of chicken or fish and sides will be available from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Friday, May 3 in the old Dominos parking lot.

The plates, which are \$8, are sponsored by St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church.

May 5

Deacon, Deaconess and Trustee Day

MERRY HILL - The annual Deacon, Deaconess and Trustee Day will be observed at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 5 at Peterson Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.

The guest speaker will be the Rev. David E. Moore of Indian Woods Missionary Baptist Church. His congregation will accompany him.

Women's Day

LEWISTON WOODVILLE - Women's Day will be observed at 11 a.m. Sunday, May 5 at Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.

The theme is "The Spirit Filled Phenomenal Woman."

The guest speaker will be the Rev. Margaret Barber, Pastor of St. Elmo Missionary Baptist Church in Windsor.

A tribute to the women will be given by Trustee Muriel B. Hoggard of Cedar Landing Missionary Baptist Church, and a musical tribute will be offered by Penelope Powell of Koinonia Christian Church in Greenville.

Breakfast will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 4 as well. The church is located on Governor's Road between Lewiston Woodville and Windsor.

The Pastor, the Rev. Samuel K. Shaw, and congregation invite the public to attend.

Youth Day

WINDSOR - The annual Youth Day Program is planned for 11 a.m. Sunday, May 5 at St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church.

The guest speaker will be Javian McMillian of Robersonville.

The Pastor, the Rev. Kennedy L. Barber, and congregation invite the public to attend.

May 7-9

Revival Services Planned

AHOSKIE - Revival Services are planned May 7-9 at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

Services begin nightly at 7 p.m.

The Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jerry V. Moody, will be the speaker on Tuesday. On Wednesday and Thursday the guest speaker will be the Rev. Taurean Walston of Oxley Hill Baptist Church in Merry Hill.

Special music includes the Piney Wood Chapel Male Chorus (Tuesday), Calvary Male Chorus (Wednesday) and Oxley Hill Choir (Thursday). The church is located at 600 Catherine St. in Ahoskie.

Pastor Moody and the congregation invite the public to attend.

May 11

Rescheduled Concert

WINDSOR - The Four Stars of Ahoskie and The Gospel Five of Oak City will be in concert at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 11 at St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church.

The Pastor, the Rev. Kennedy L. Barber, and congregation invite the public to attend.

Youth Fundraiser

AHOSKIE - The youth of Carpenter's Shop International Church will host a fine arts fundraiser Saturday, May 11 at Hwy 55.

Tickets for a pancake and sausage breakfast are available online at www.csicministries.com. They are \$7 each.

Breakfast will be served by the youth from 7:30-10 a.m.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Availability of the 2018 Collection Performance Annual Report

The Collection Performance Annual Report is available for public viewing at the Office of the Town Clerk, in the Town Offices Building, 119 S. Commerce Street, Aulander, North Carolina. The public is welcome to stop by the Town Hall during temporary business hours (which are 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday -Friday) to review the report.

Renee' B. Benton
Town Clerk