

Jan./Feb. 2025

Bethel

Colony of Mercy

Breaking the chains of addiction

Since 1948



New Life Emerges

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

This verse is one of the favorites among our students, both men and women, at Bethel. It is quoted many times in their testimonies and used often in the teachings they receive. We can all understand why. It describes a change that is hard to explain without the Grace of God intervening in our life. How do you tell someone that sinful desires that you have given place to and participated in for years no longer appeal to you? How does someone that has been hurt by those previous actions have some belief that the change is real? These expressions have been abused; "I will never do it again or hurt you again" for too many years. This verse describes a change that is amazing, exciting, and hard to communicate as one who has received this new life in Jesus. Hopefully, if you have been touched by the transformative love of Jesus, you understand. "The Message" paraphrase says it this way: **"The old life is gone; a new life emerges!"**

I think there is some unique correlations between this verse, what our student receives, and all of us looking into a New Year - 2025!

New starts mean something if we are intentional with them. If we treat them like the last 5 years and last year's gym membership, they will lose their meaning. As a people who get tired of the same thing, the hurt, the lack of purpose we can't afford to leave it to temporary things. We are not temporary. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, **"...He has put eternity in their hearts..."** In I Corinthians 5:17, Paul says **"therefore"** and I was always taught that I need to understand what it's *there for*. Context helps us get a clearer picture. Paul just

finished sharing in Chapter 4 that we don't focus on the things which we see because they are temporary. **We put our trust in the unseen and walk by faith.** The Lord did not hold those temporary things that we practiced against us but gave us reconciliation through Jesus Christ. That is mercy - we are not getting what we deserve. As we look at 2024 in the rear-view mirror, we can probably all agree that there were tough things this past year. I also had some choices that didn't fare as well. Hopefully the Lord opened our eyes to the ways we did things. It proved to not change and seemed insane to do it for another year. I hope we all take time to do what Paul said in 1 Corinthians. Examine ourselves. **It is good to do an honest, objective look at our walk.**

Notice after "therefore" He gives the believer's present position, **"In Christ"**! No longer in the old, no longer in the past or yesterday. That is a reality that we all have to understand and get acclimated to. Changing the thinking, not reacting, and not holding people hostage to their past. **Walking out the forgiveness, the trust and our salvation with trembling.** Neil Anderson in his book, Victory over Darkness, said that **"we will never go any further than what we believe about ourselves."** We can't hold onto the trapping of the grave clothes. We have been clothed in His righteousness and are children of God, those who have been born again. Scripture has much to say about who we are in Him. John 1:12 - I am God's child, Romans 5:1- I have been justified, Philippians 3:20 - I am a citizen of heaven, 1 Corinthians 3:16 - I am God's temple, and I could go on... Knowing the truth sets us free to live in His righteousness. **As you turn your focus off of yesterday, look at your present Help...it is in the Lord! Where/how does He want you to grow this year?**

Old things have passed away. The Greek word has the idea of something that is absolute going by to completion. That

is where we have made the declaration. There is a stake in the ground and it is done. Disregarded. That book is finished, starting anew. It's not that we can just will ourselves into a different passion or desire; it is because our position is no longer in sin but in Jesus. **New life emerges.** Paul said in Ephesians 4:22-24, *"that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."* As we put the old behind us. I think if we keep this in perspective it will keep us grateful. Grateful, knowing He did it and that we are not there anymore.

As we continue to walk with Him and talk with Him, we will see **He makes all things new.** He shows us immediate glimpses. He gives us peace that helps us for the present and we grow in confidence as we continue to walk it out in

obedience. The original meaning is better than the former and different. I know those who knew me before recognizing I am not the same person they use to know. **I am different and He has made me better. I want to keep growing, how about you?**

Looking forward to this new year, Bethel has some new things coming in our growth. At the Men's Campus, we have a new autoshop going up and a house remodel to complete. We will start building a new home at the Women's Campus. We will be looking for a new team member to expand in our discipleship counseling. We are looking to our Lord to make things better. We pray the Lord will bless you in this coming year as you grow in Him!

Pastor Paul and Stacy Pruitt
Executive Director

BETHEL COLONY OF MERCY, INC. OPERATING BUDGET
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CAMPUSES
Combined Budget
2024-2025

INCOME			
10- Contributions	\$900,186.40		
14- Sales Tax Rfund	\$15,000.00		
15- Fund Raiser	\$40,000.00	51- Media	\$3,150.00
16- Pay Phone	\$29,000.00	52- Floral	\$300.00
18- Estates & Foundations	\$100,000.00	54- Computer	\$12,000.00
19- Entry Fee Donation	\$10,000.00	56- Misc. Items	\$300.00
20- Canteen	\$43,000.00	57- Off Campus Work	\$13,500.00
22- Edward Jones	\$80,000.00	58- Work Projects	\$200.00
23- Entrance Fee	\$130,000.00	59- Heavy Equip	\$10,000.00
24- Other & New Const.	\$13,000.00	60- Housekeeping	\$10,500.00
25- Lawn Care	\$67,500.00	62- Maintenance	\$23,000.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$1,427,686.40	64- Property & Lib. Ins	\$50,000.00
EXPENSES		66- Auto Insurance	\$8,000.00
26- Utilities	\$138,000.00	68- Lawn & Garden	\$5,500.00
28- Vehicle	\$48,000.00	70- Pest Control	\$600.00
30- Food Services	\$36,000.00	72- Equipment	\$4,000.00
32- Telephone	\$8,500.00	73- Other Construction	\$64,000.00
33- Pay Phone	\$300.00	74- Remodel	\$65,000.00
34- Public Relations	\$46,000.00	75- New Housing	\$50,000.00
36- Office Supplies	\$8,000.00	76- Property Taxes	\$1,970.00
37- Web Donation Fees	\$2,500.00	77- NC Sales Taxes	\$15,000.00
38- Postage	\$8,070.00	78- Land	\$0.00
40- Medical	\$7,400.00	80- Salaries 33 (employees)	\$627,696.40
42- Homecoming	\$4,500.00	82- Social Security	\$36,000.00
44- Christmas	\$5,700.00	84- Treasurer Exp	\$7,500.00
46- Conference & Travel	\$400.00	86- Staff Insurance	\$91,000.00
48- Chr. Ed.	\$6,000.00	90- Internet	\$3,400.00
50- Recreation	\$2,700.00	92- Benevolent Fund	\$3,000.00
		TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$1,427,686.40

*WHERE GOD GIVES
VISION HE
ALWAYS MAKES
PROVISION*

From November 1, 2023
to October 31, 2024

Bethel Colony Men's Campus:

Serviced 413 men
Served 91032 meals
Held 156 worship services
Held 364 teaching sessions

Bethel Colony Women's Campus:

Serviced 111 women
Served 17607 meals
Attended 156 worship services
Held 364 teaching sessions

**Dual Campus Cost Breakdown
(w/o construction, housing, remodel & land)**

\$31.26 per day (per man/woman
x's man days here)
\$3,100.74 per day
\$21,764.81 per week
\$94,314.17 per month
\$1,131,770.00 per year

Two testimonies...One from our Women's Campus and One from our Men's Campus

Two Become One

Living with unhealed childhood trauma left me growing up with crippling shame, confusion, insecurity and anger. Alcohol and drugs became a part of my life when I was a teenager and it was the answer to all the negative feelings I had inside of me. Or so I thought.... 2 Cor. 11:14 says; ***"And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."***

I lived as a functioning addict for years. Ultimately all of my sin and choices landed me in a meth addiction and an extremely abusive relationship. By this point my family, including my daughter, had cut me out of their life. My mother texted only to make sure I was alive and to tell me she loved me.

After a suicide attempt and a couple of arrests, I finally left that life behind me. On January 10, 2022, First Contact Addiction Ministry drove from Hendersonville, NC to Myrtle Beach, SC to bring me back to Hendersonville to be admitted for 2 weeks into detox/

psych treatment. From there I entered Bethel Colony of Mercy on January 24, 2022.

With their direction and love I have learned how loved I am by my Lord and Savior. I have learned how to forgive and how to take responsibility for my life. I used to hate myself and now I just simply love Jesus Christ with all of my heart. The Lord has healed my soul and I have been made whole. He has restored my family back to me, given me a position here at Bethel Colony of Mercy telling women how loved they are by Jesus Christ.

And, just this past year, He blessed me with a godly man that, as of November 9, 2024, I now call my husband. I am blown away daily by all the miracles surrounding me.

Becky Dawn Lessel

January, 2025



Mark 10:8

And the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.



I came to Bethel Colony of Mercy in 2017. At 43 years old, my life was completely broken due to my poor choices. Saved at the age of seventeen, I had lived a defeated Christian life for most of my adult life. It wasn't until I came to Bethel that I understood what it meant to be a follower of Christ. Through the teaching of biblical principles at Bethel Colony, I realized that the only way to live a Christian life is to die to self daily and let Christ have full control. While trying to live life on my own, I lost relationships, family and friends, due to alcohol and drugs. My life was completely out of control. Having accepted the lifestyle I was living I didn't really see a way out.

But God had a plan for me. I had no idea the restoration God was going to do in my life. Since giving Christ full control in my life, He has restored my relationship with my two daughters and their husbands. I now also have

three beautiful grandchildren that love their "Pops". Working for Bethel Colony of Mercy as the Project Manager since November of 2021, I am privileged to minister to hurting and struggling men daily - just as someone once did for me.

God has also blessed me with a beautiful godly woman who is the love of my life. We were recently married on November 9, 2024 in Bethel's Worship Center. Becky is also a graduate of Bethel Colony and now works at our Women's Campus. What an awesome God we serve!

Isaiah 43:19 says: "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

I thank the Lord for the newness in my life every day. May the Lord bless you as well.

Barry Lessel, Project Manager



Ramah Reflections

Prayer and the Turn-Around

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path."
Proverbs 3:5-6

It is a vital part of the Christian walk and of ministry to choose not to lean on our own understanding. Not everything I see and understand is everything that matters, and because of that, decision-making as a believer requires prayer before thought and action. The reason for this is simply because what is the case in the natural world is not necessarily the case in the spirit, and my natural reasoning does not take into account what God can do with a circumstance. In this ministry, I have seen God act on prayer and turn things completely around for good in spite of what naturally looked like an impossible situation.

There have been situations that have required uncomfortable conversations and major decisions. Normally before these encounters, I pray and ask God to move. I especially have to do this in the moments when the conversation I am about to have may conclude in a student being dismissed from the program. Recently, I had to speak to a student who, if all I was hearing was correct, had a hard heart and would need to be dismissed if something did not change. I could not be sure until the conversation was had, but from all the evidence, it looked like the student would not change. Before the conversation, I prayed and asked God to guide the conversation and help shed light on the situation. Sure enough, when we sat down, the Holy Spirit guided our conversation to some deep things that the student had not been able to process, making her completely receptive and soft-hearted to what needed to happen for

her to grow. At the end of the session, I left my office feeling humbled, because I had all but written off this student as being dismissed. My own understanding would have cost someone their breakthrough if I had not trusted God over my own perception.

This is just one of several times I have seen God laugh at my attempt to act on information that is incomplete without Him. God delights to lovingly remind us that we are not smarter than Him. Even when we are given information, we can trust our own interpretation of that information apart from Him. And even when we have an accurate interpretation of information, we cannot assume that the circumstances will not completely turn around when submitted to Him in prayer. For every time I have submitted something to God in prayer and seen Him change it, there are probably a dozen times when I have tried to handle something myself, assuming that I understood it all and had to act on my understanding to get the job done. But God is so merciful. He teaches us to depend on Him by showing us that when we do, the impossible happens, which transforms our expectations. What a beautiful increase when we depend on Him, and what a mediocre disappointment when we think we can do things in our own strength. Jesus was clear about the outcome of leaning on our own understanding: ***"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in Him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"*** (John 15:5).

Blessed beyond measure,

Mrs. Regina Kelly

Women's Campus Co-Director





Associate Director/Pastor Zac Starnes

Thermometer or Thermostat?

Wintertime is upon us and that means colder weather is coming as well. Most of us have a device in our homes that gets utilized more during these winter months. The device being a thermostat/thermometer and it has two functions. One is to read the temperature and the other is to adjust the temperature.

The thermometer is part of the device that measures the temperature and has two main parts to it. It has a temperature sensor that detects the changes in temperature, and it has a display where it converts the temperature into a numerical value that can be read. A thermometer does not have any use other than reading the temperature and displaying it. There is not much effort needed for the thermometer to do its job.

The thermostat controls the temperature of a space by regulating the flow of hot or cold air. A thermostat will send signals to turn on or turn off different mechanical parts in the HVAC unit. A thermostat influences its surrounding environment. It is set to a desired degree by the owner and its job is to actively work to create the owner's desired temperature. A thermostat must respond to the temperature of the room, and it takes consistent and persistent work to do its job.

Spiritually speaking I believe that followers of Christ are called to be thermostats not thermometers. At times we can even find ourselves faulty in operating as we are called to do. **A faulty thermostat** will struggle to maintain a consistent setting and can waste a lot of energy. It can run constantly with no effect on the temperature due to a faulty signal or even lose their programmed settings. We can become faulty thermostats if we behave as our own religious rules are as important as God's standards for living. If we try to force others to live up to standards that we cannot meet ourselves. We can be so convinced by our own interpretation of Scripture that we ignore God's message of grace and mercy. We can be more concerned with looking good than being obedient to God.

Someone in Scripture that I consider to be a great example of a thermostat and someone we can relate to is John the Baptist. **Matthew 3:1-17.** John was a miracle. His mother and father were beyond childbearing years and so by fleshly standards, he should not have been born. Many of us are miracles because the lives we lived in our sin or even by unforeseen accidents should have taken us out of this world, but God has a plan for each one of us. John had an urgency and a message. His message was a message of repentance that he delivered with an urgency to prepare people for the coming Messiah. Preparing for the coming of Christ can only happen through repentance.

John was the one that Isaiah prophesied about, and his calling was to make way for the coming of the Messiah. To make the paths straight. Back in those days it was customary for a king to send his servants ahead of him before he traveled to make sure the road was passable and clear of any debris to ensure smoother travel. The path referred to here in this passage is the one leading to people's hearts. For Jesus to reach people they need to turn from being selfish, repent of their sins, seek forgiveness from God, start a relationship with Him, and bear fruit birthed from obedience.

God uses His children to speak to people who have been on a journey or path that is leading them away from God

and then He speaks to them or draws them. We are here to deliver the message of repentance and share in their joy and excitement. If we are not teaching and showing others what it means to follow Christ, then who is?

John calls out the Pharisees and Sadducees and calls them legalistic hypocrites. At times we can operate as hypocrites or even be legalistic. The fact of the matter is that we are not going to live a sinless life in these flesh tents, but we can find encouragement from the apostle Paul. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 states **"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (HCSB).

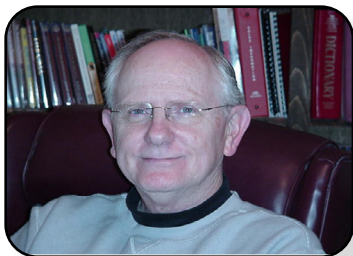
God is the One who sanctifies us, the Owner who sets His desired temperature for our lives. We are not going to be sinless, but we can be found blameless. Blameless means to handle and deal with our sin correctly. Without repentance there is judgement. Repentance is the only way to escape God's judgment and to draw close to Him. Our repentance will be seen, there will be evidence in our actions and our character. NO change=No repentance. Don't just talk about it, be about it. We must ask ourselves, **"Do my actions match my words?"** An unproductive, unrepentant life will be judged. A fruit tree is expected to bear fruit and if it does not, it is cut down and cast into the fire.

How much use does God truly have for a person who claims to be a Christian but is inactive and unproductive in the church? Our calling is like John's and our message should be one of repentance. But I ask the question; do we have the same urgency in delivering the message to people who need to hear it? Are we preparing people for Christ's second coming? Are we being obedient in our walk and producing fruit worthy of repentance? Are we adjusting the temperature around us or are we conforming to what is socially accepted by the world?

John had faith in the Messiah, and he knew his position in the kingdom of God. John 1:22-26, **"Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?" He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said." Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know Him. He is the One coming after me whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."** **John operated in his calling out of humility** because he knew that his place was to serve Christ and prepare the way for Him. Matthew 3:14, **"But John tried to stop Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and yet You come to me?""** (HCSB). **John acted out of obedience** when he was unsure about baptizing Jesus.

Followers of Christ must have evidence that love is being exercised and evil is being defeated. John gives us a great example to follow by faith, humility, and obedience. I believe these three qualities will help us operate in the manner that God has called us to operate and will make faulty operation less likely. First, we must know where we presently stand with Christ. I close with a final question; **are you a thermostat or a thermometer?**

Pastor Zac Starnes
Associate Director



Counseling Corner

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Men of fortitude view God as a mighty fortress. We remember the great hymn written by Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God".

Upon hearing the song sung at his church, Eric Costanz posted on August 11, 2011 an article on Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". He wrote, "The song is often called 'the battle hymn' of the Reformation as it has been important to Lutherans and other Protestants for the last 500 years. As the authorities sought his life, a friend Prince Frederick hid him in Wartburg Castle. It was also likely in Wartburg Castle, which had become a 'fortress' of sorts for Luther, that he wrote the hymn A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. It would seem that Luther's faith in the castle walls paled in comparison to his trust in the fortress that was His God." He continues, "Remember, Luther wrote this not for a soloist, but for singing in community as a corporate confession of faith."

The heading for Psalm 60 in the NKJV is Urgent Prayer for the Restored Favor of God. The description of the Psalm is: "To the chief musician. Set to 'Lily of the Testimony'. A Michtam of David for teaching, when he fought against Mesopotamia and Syria, and returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt." King David describes the Lord as setting a banner over Israel. "**You have given a banner to those who fear You. That it may be displayed because of the truth.**" (Psalm 60:4) At the end of the Psalm David proclaims his trust in the Lord and the valor that is given to him in fighting his enemies. "**Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless. Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies.**" (Psalm 60:11-12)

Our enemies may be men or the powers of darkness. "**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**" (Ephesians 6:13) In warfare King David relies and trusts upon the Lord as his Mighty Fortress. "**In You, O Lord, I put my trust. Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in your righteousness. Bow down your ear to me, deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me. For You are my rock; therefore, for your name's sake, lead me and guide me. Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me. For you are my strength.**" It is important for us to pray this prayer of David. I memorized Psalm 31:1-6 to do just that.

From Psalm 60 we know that David fought against pagan enemies of Mesopotamia, Syria and the Edomites. But we also know of a spiritual warfare. "**Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people. Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring the number to me that I may know it...Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to David. All Israel had one million one hundred thousand who drew the sword, and Judah had four hundred and seventy thousand who drew the sword. But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's word was an abomination to Joab. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel.**" (I Chronicles 21:1-7)

Being in the front line of spiritual warfare myself for over 40 years, I know that Satan seeks to devour us. "**Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.**" The Tempter continues his war to take us captive. We need our armor for warfare against his wiles. "**Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**" We also can count on our God to be a mighty fortress. It would behoove all of us to be able to sing the hymn A Mighty Fortress is our God in adversity, temptation, tribulation, as a weapon of warfare. "**For the weapons of warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.**" (II Corinthians 10:4)

Below is a portion of the lyrics:

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. Our Helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe. His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.
Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing. Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He! Lord Sabaoth His Name,
From age to age the same. And He must win the battle!*

Where the Grace Blows,

Pastor Don Loss

Director of Counseling



Fill out and mail your prayer requests to us.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

II Chronicles 7:14

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Prayer Request: _____

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New Bethel Shirt



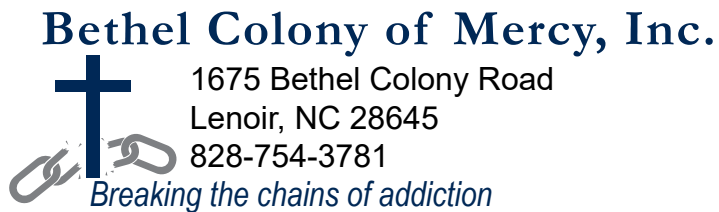
To schedule lawn care service,
and check prices, contact
Zach Davis, Lawn Care Manager
828-754-3781 ext.245
or opt.3 for lawncare

Bethel Firewood

Now you have a friend in the fire business... Firewood that is! Bethel Colony Lawn Care has expanded into tree removal and woodcutting. We have timber that has been curing since last fall and is ready for you to take home today! At \$5 per bundle or \$75 per truck load (standard pickup bed), allow us to help keep you warm this winter while supporting the amazing work that's going on at Bethel Colony of Mercy.



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Bethelcolony.org