

# FAVORITE VERSES

• STEWARDSHIP DEVOTIONAL •



**BANNER ELK**  
**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

PC(USA) Congregation

*Dear Friends,*

*“Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” These are words we know by heart and have sung many, many times. And they speak a very important truth.*

*Our theological tradition teaches us that God can be clearly seen in Creation. The psalmist declares, “The Heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” The order, intricacy, and wonder of creation testifies to the existence of a powerful and glorious Creator.*

*Yet, as wonderful as the universe is, it does not reveal everything we need to know about God in order to be His people. Knowing this, God chose to reveal Himself to special people and in special ways. And of course, God’s most special revelation is in Jesus, the Christ.*

*The Bible is our treasured witness to God’s very special revelation; without which we would never know of God’s justice, mercy, and will for His world. And without which we would not know that Jesus loves me, you, and all of his children.*

*In these devotions, members of Banner Elk Presbyterian Church share their favorite Bible passages and what these passages tell them. We hope that in them you will find inspiration for your walk with the Lord.*

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# 1

By Ann McConnell

## **Psalm 91:1, 5**

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

## **Why Is It a Favorite?**

The first time I became aware of this psalm was when the choir at my previous church sang “On Eagles Wings”. This piece of music was composed by a Minnesota Catholic priest named Michael Joncas. He wrote the song for a friend who lost his father and sang it at the funeral service.

The psalm and music elicit a strong emotional response in me, both the beauty of the music and the meaning of words. The psalm is a reassurance to all believers that God is always with us. “He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark”. The psalm speaks to the evils of the world, and yet tells us not to be afraid because God and His angels will guard and protect us. It is a Bible passage that I find comforting and reassuring when our world starts to overwhelm me.

## **More About Me**

I grew up in rural central Florida, lived in Maryland for four years, and then moved to eastern North Carolina. With husband, Tom, I worked for 31 years at East Carolina University; retiring to Seven Devils in the summer of 2021. I am a lifelong Presbyterian, joining BEPC in 2022. I currently serve on Session and as chair of the Fellowship Committee.

**Isaiah 43:1**

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

I love the comfort that this scripture provides. The Lord reassures us not only that we are important to him, but that he knows us and cares for us individually. We are his chosen people. He has named us and redeemed us and we belong to him. He reminds us that we should not fear, but should trust in God. Better not to waste our time worrying about things that may never happen or that we are powerless to change. Isaiah 43 reminds us to count not on ourselves, but on the Lord. There is another reason this scripture speaks to me. Inspired by Isaiah 43 my friend, Carol Metzger Haven, wrote a beautiful song, "I Have Called You By Your Name." As a singer and a listener, I love the way that music connects us to God's word and to our friends in Christ.

**More About Me**

I grew up in the Pittsburgh suburbs and attended college in central Pennsylvania. I worked in Washington, DC, until meeting and marrying my husband, Roger. We spent two years in Maine before relocating to North Carolina to be closer to family. I worked as a computer scientist for DuPont, and Roger as a fisheries biologist for ECU before we retired to Banner Elk several years ago. Our daughter and her husband are App State grads who reside in Wilson with their two little boys, while our son, my mother, and my sister and her family live in Charlotte. I am a life-long reader and musician and still enjoy dancing with the Green Grass Cloggers.

By Allison and Wayne Roquemore

**Deuteronomy 16:17**

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

As we have grown older and have seen more of the world, it has become increasingly apparent to us that we have been extremely blessed. Although we did nothing to deserve it, God placed us in loving faith-filled families and churches that gave us opportunities to experience His love and grace.

He has continued to bless and teach us through our participation in the life of BEPC where sharing the Gospel, putting others before self and supporting those in need are exhibited daily. We are grateful for the strong sense of servanthood that BEPC models and we rejoice that we are able to support and participate in it.

**More About Us**

We are retired, live in Winston-Salem and are summer residents in Banner Elk. We both lost spouses to cancer a number of years ago, and Feild married them almost seven years ago! Our ties to Banner Elk and BEPC run deep.

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**Isaiah 55:12**

For you shall go out with joy and be led out with peace; the mountains and hills shall break forth into singing before you, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

Having grown up in the mountains, for most of my life my favorite scripture was Psalm 121:1, I will lift up my eyes unto the hills. After my husband's death, Isaiah 55:12 really spoke to me as it was read at Bill's memorial service. After 62 years of marriage, my joy was in short supply. We had spent so much time hiking and enjoying the beauty of God's creation.

Now I was alone and now I had to recreate. This scripture brought me so much joy as I searched. And then spring came. The green leaves started coming out, the first spring beauty was spotted on the Appalachian Trail, the birds were singing, and my joy was returning. I could feel God filling me with joy.

God reminds us to be joyful always. Joy is one of the fruits of the spirit. The joy of the Lord is your strength!

**More About Me**

I grew up in the small town of Newland in Avery County. I met my late husband Bill the summer before our senior year in college, and we were together for 62 years. I still enjoy hiking and being outside where I feel closer to Bill and to God.

**James 1:5**

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask of God, who gives to all people generously and does not reproach, and it will be given to you.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

This verse is a promise that we can keep in our hearts and bring out often. Think of the many times in daily living, and in making major decisions, when we desperately need wisdom.

The answer to “Holy Spirit, please give me wisdom in this situation” comes in many forms. It may be an instant intuition or it may be after a night of trusting sleep. It could be heard in a sermon or the melody of a hymn. It might also come from a line in a movie, a phrase in a magazine, some words in a song— “Let it be, let it be.” Sometimes the wise word comes from a friend or from a bird singing to our open hearts. God’s Spirit has unlimited ways to speak to us. It’s important to ask for this wisdom and to be expectantly aware when God gives it to us.

Whether or not there is an answer telling us exactly what to do or say, we will receive a surge of strength and understanding about the issue at hand. The Spirit, who lives in us, gives wise counselling when we listen. How can we ever resist asking God for Wisdom?

**More About Me**

I have been an active member of BEPC since 1964. I am an Elder, teacher, writer, reader, happy great-grandmother. And I’m still growing spiritually.

By Nancy Owen

**Proverbs 3:5**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

This verse of Scripture has given me reassurance in life many, many times. We are often faced with unknown situations. And rather than worry about what might be or will be, we are encouraged to trust in the Lord to guide us.

Give him your problems and situations and ask him for help. Listen to him for his guidance. Open yourself up to be lead and guided by the Lord. Completely trust in him and his timing as he knows the plans he has for us and what the future holds.

**More About Me**

I have been a member of BEPC for 24 years. I am currently serving my second term on session and as a member of the Pre-school Board, Christian Education Committee, and Fellowship Committee. I work for the Town of Banner Elk as the Director of Tourism. My husband Rick and I have one son, Hampton, who is a sophomore at LMC.



**Micah 6:8**

He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

Micah 6:8 ties the Old and New Testaments together through the teachings of Jesus. He taught lessons on each of these precepts. In Luke, Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow who convinced a judge who neither cared about God or men to give her justice. In John, He challenges the Pharisees and teachers of the law who bring an adulterous woman to Jesus. They were trying to trap Jesus into contradicting Jewish law regarding stoning of adulterers. Instead, Jesus challenged them, "If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." When only Jesus and the woman were left there, Jesus told her "neither do I condemn you. Go and leave your life of sin." Jesus also admonished His disciples who were arguing among themselves about who was the greatest: "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and servant of all."

This passage has been my instruction manual on how to be a Christ follower. It reminds us to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, be merciful and remember that even Jesus came to serve. And do all these with love.

**More About Me**

I am a member of Banner Elk Presbyterian Church. I purchased a home here in 2006 and moved here in 2016. I sing in the choir and play handbells. I live with my partner Gary Ticknor and our cat Oreo. We split their time between Banner Elk and Asheville.

By Jim and Dee Ferguson

### **Galatians 5:20-22**

Cappadocia, Turkey. It's 4:30 AM. The first glow of light is just breaching the horizon. Within just a couple of moments a fire-like orange glow fills the entire junction of earth and sky. As the sun slowly rises, the fairy chimneys start to come into view and become more and more visible with each passing moment.

These are the tall projections from earth resulting from thousands of years of geologic evolution. For about 300 years the caves within them served as shelter from the Romans for the Christian community in Galatia ( now known as Cappadocia.) The Galatians main goal was survival. But when Paul wrote to them he highlighted issues that are current today. Imagine being a cave dweller and reading Paul's words. "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, hatred, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like." Galatians 5:20-21. He warned that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

They might have thought, "Look, Paul. We are trying to stay alive. Get off our backs." But Paul will not relieve them of respecting and caring for each other. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22. He reminds them that no matter "the works of flesh" that surround us, we are to implement and exhibit the "fruit of the Spirit" and bear one another's burdens. No easy task that in today's world. But with God's help it is doable for us each and all.

### **More About Us**

We are long time seasonal residents in the Banner Elk area and have been active at Banner Elk Presbyterian during that time.

Jim is a retired ophthalmologist having been Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology, University of South Carolina School of Medicine. After leaving that position, he had an active private practice in Richmond, Virginia. In addition, he served on the Board of Union Presbyterian Seminary and is currently serving on the Board of the High Country Charitable Foundation. Dee has overseen the progress of our four wonderful daughters and seven fabulous grandchildren while serving in numerous community and church positions. We are both elders in the PCUSA.

## 9

By Debbi Hagna

### **Philippians 4:13**

I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength.

### **Why Is It a Favorite?**

This verse has ALWAYS been my source of strength. It is also my mom's! She taught me that no matter how difficult the future seems, Christ is ALWAYS there guiding and supporting all who believe in Him!

### **More About Me**

I moved to Avery County in 1982 and have been a member of BEPC for nearly 40 years. Though originally from Vermont, I've been here long enough to consider herself a southern girl. I spent my career serving as a Registered Nurse in the Emergency Room. Now retired, I continue to do private duty nursing. I traveled to Guatemala with our church years ago, and it changed my life. My grown son, Will, now lives in California, but spends every available moment in these beautiful mountains.

By Rev. Murry Haber

**Luke 15:20-21**

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

Repentance and Reconciliation: I grew up afraid of my father. So, when I had the first opportunity I moved as far away as I could. My father finally spoke the words "I love you" to me when he was 95 years old. Then in our last conversation before he died, he said: "You are the son I have always wanted." Wow, this was pure blessing.

My favorite passage is from the Gospels' parable of "The Prodigal Son." Just prior to these verses the son decides to make a change in the direction of his life. He has been running away from home up until this time in his life journey. Now he decides to return to his home and his father. In making this choice to change the direction of his life, he is participating in the act of repentance. And in this story, repentance leads to forgiveness and reconciliation between father and son.

In many family stories, repentance that leads to reconciliation can occur in a single event, and in other families it can happen over time in a variety of interactions. In my life story my father worked on his repentance and I worked on mine; and our faith journeys lead to our reconciliation. I still celebrate this blessing of our reconciliation to this very day. Our Lord continues to act in various ways to accomplish His purposes.

## **More About Me**

I have been a member of BEPC for 8 years, serving two terms on Session, as a member of the Mission and Personnel Committee, and now as a member of the Pastor Nominating Committee. My wife, Sharon, and I have one daughter and two grandchildren.

# 11

By Pam Hardin

## **Luke 12:48**

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

## **Why Is It a Favorite?**

Our blessings and what we have been entrusted with are no accident. Love your life and be a good steward of what you have been given. Choose thoughtfully and with purpose. Practice forgiveness for yourself and others. No one is perfect. Embrace your challenges and opportunities as a way to serve the glory of our Lord. Show up as your best and your best will always be enough.

God will not give you more than you can handle and know He loves you. Be grateful for your blessings and use what you have been given to humbly serve.

## **More About Me**

Husband Phil Hardin and I live in Matney with our two fur kids, Jake and Elwood. We been involved with BEPC for two years. We lived in Asheville for more than 30 years prior to calling the High Country home.

**Jeremiah 29:11**

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

Those of you who know me are well aware that I like to have things organized and well planned. I often make lists of daily tasks to be done and take great joy in marking them off as I complete the activity or chore. Sometimes, I even add an item that wasn't on the original list just to check it off when it's done. Smile if you've done this, too!

With a personality like this, it's sometimes hard for me to remember to ask God what He has planned for me each day. When things aren't going exactly as I thought they would, I remind myself that what I see as being "sidetracked" is often what God has in mind for me at that time. This thought gives me great peace and determination to invite God to help me as I create the next list.

I pray that we can all seek God's guidance and wisdom each day as we make our plans. We may even find ourselves in situations we never would have imagined, doing good things for Him and our neighbors. Remember that He has big plans for us!

**More About Me**

I and my husband, Bill, have lived in Banner Elk for over 50 years and we have been members of our church for almost that long. My career was spent in teaching elementary age children; both as a classroom teacher and a school librarian (my favorite job!). I have enjoyed serving this church in many ways and "have plans" to continue. We are blessed to call this place home.

**Luke 1:46-55**

And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things...'"

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

Mary's Song bursts from her soul after she learns she will be mother of the Messiah. She is so excited and overwhelmed! Did she sing this Song with instruments? Did she dance? I can imagine the verses rushing out one after the other as she is overcome with gratitude and thanksgiving. What a cause for celebration! But, do I celebrate my many blessings, sing, dance?

Not only does Mary recognize the wondrous things God has given her, but she recounts the honor God has given to those thought of as lowly. He's lifted them up, given them a seat at the table, a voice in the conversation, strength. Do I trust that God will undergird me when I feel weak?

The powerful are brought low by God. He does this to turn their eyes away from themselves and their accomplishments so they can be awed by God and be saved from themselves. Am I prideful or self-absorbed? Mary's Song magnifies the works of God that always provide a world where no one uses power to harm, where we can believe we are lovable. Her celebration proclaims our Lord who makes all creation whole.

**More About Me**

I am an elder in the Presbyterian Church, sing in the choir, travel (now that I'm retired), and am married to Feild Russell. I am a mother to four and a grandmother to four.

**Galatians 6:9**

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

This was our church founder, Edgar Tufts' "theme," and it speaks to so many issues. We can easily slip and slide down a slope where we are met with:

- Those who upset us with their thoughts and beliefs.
- Those who ought to know better but live a difficult life due to their choices.
- Those who don't "get" us, and don't care to try.
- Those who experience insurmountable pain, seemingly unreachable by us.

Weariness can sap our energy, and we must resist the temptation to succumb to it. God calls us to roll up our sleeves and go to work.

**More About Me**

I taught for over 40 years in university and college settings and am currently the Artistic Director of Lees-McRae Summer Theatre. I am an elder serving on session and the chair of our Worship Committee.



By Susan Carter

**Romans 8:38-39**

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Why Is It My Favorite?**

These verses from Romans 8 have reassured my adult life through times of grief and fear, leading me to times of joyfulness and thanksgiving while in the midst of navigating challenging life events. To know that God is with me during difficult situations, gives me strength to pray and to continue with the assurance God is with me. Nothing can separate me from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**More About Me**

I was born a child of BEPC. When John and I were married, we were blessed in our choice to live, raise a family, and work in Banner Elk. Lynn, a high school friend, and I were married following the death of both of our spouses. I have a daughter and son-in-law, three grandchildren, two step-sons and one step daughter-in-law. My teaching included early childhood education and preschool special education. I have been nurtured in my faith journey on many committees of BEPC. A remarkable joy in my life is being able to share my faith by participating in the Adult Choir and the Handbell Choir.

**Isaiah 45:9-12**

Does a clay pot dare argue with its maker, a pot that is like all the others? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does the pot complain that its maker has no skill?

Do we dare say to our parents, “Why did you make me like this?” The Lord, the holy God of Israel, the one who shapes the future, says: “You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do!

I am the one who made the earth and created human beings to live there.

**Why Is It a Favorite?**

Art is a form of personal expression by its creator. I have to admit (and my husband Norm will attest to this), I have more pieces of pottery than I can display. At holiday times, my family members might be thinking, “Uh oh, Eric went to the pottery show last weekend; what might be under the tree?” I love the uniqueness of each piece of pottery as there are no exact duplicates. Each is made by a sculptor’s hands and the outcome is up to its creator. In this passage from the Prophet Isaiah, we are asked not to question our creator, as to why did you make me this way?

In a world where social media is all around us, sometimes giving us messages that we are not good enough, not bright enough, or we don’t fit it, perhaps this message to **value how you were made** is even more needed now.

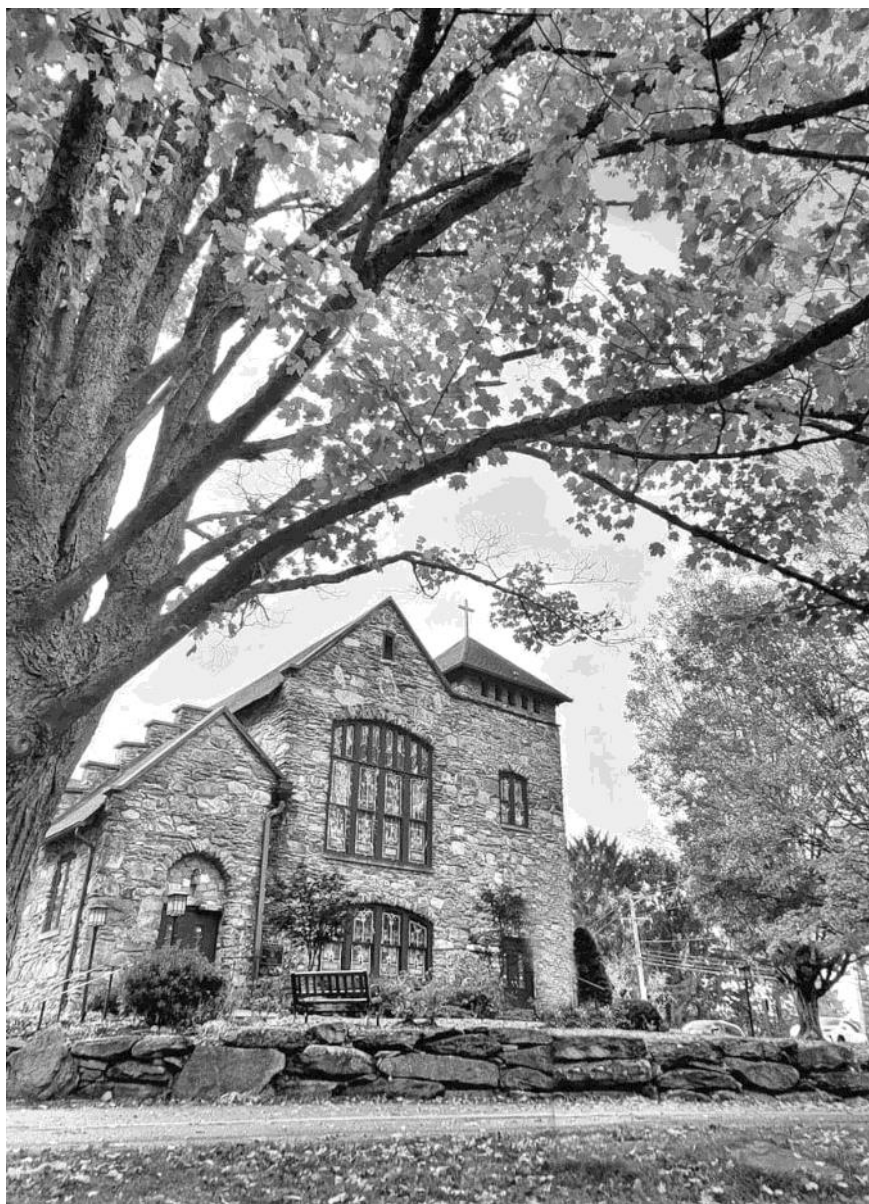
As a young adult, I often struggled as I didn’t feel like I always fit in with the societal norms. In this passage however, it is pretty evident that our creator made each of us as He saw fit.

We are each a valued piece of pottery and are one of God's unique earthen vessels created to glorify our Creator and to serve the ones around us. So maybe our piece of pottery isn't exactly symmetrical and the color on one side doesn't match the other.

Did you ever think that perhaps through our flaws and imperfections it enables each of us to reach out to others when we see someone around us who might be struggling? Because of your unique gifts, you may be the one who can see the piece of pottery next to you that needs some glue for a small piece that broke off and an encouraging word, and when you do this, your Creator, your sculptor, smiles!

### **More About Me**

I live in Charlotte, NC, with my husband Norman Reid. We enjoy our bungalow on Sugar Mountain and love being part of the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church community. I work in the accounting field, but my favorite job was Director of Older Adults for 4 years at Hills Chapel United Methodist Church in Denver NC, where I met many life-long friends.



## **Banner Elk Presbyterian Church**

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