

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1/8 Bryant Byrd  
1/10 Libby Atkins  
1/21 Linda Shue  
1/25 Mirta Rodriguez, Ryan Vaughan  
1/27 Michelle Patrum

## JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 1/17 Alvin & Peggy Brooks  
1/19 Gary & Teresa Moran

Our December Fellowship Luncheon was at La Fiesta in Mebane at 11:30.

On January 3rd, 2024 we will meet at Cracker Barrel in Mebane at 11:30. This seems to be the meeting place that most enjoy.

This will be our 14th year of getting together for wonderful food and fellowship. Hope to see you on Wednesday, January 3rd.

Libby Atkins  
919-563-6271

## THE GREAT FLOOD

B I R D E S T R O Y S R I A P  
E L A M E F O O D N I K N A M  
W A T E R S S E N D E K C I W  
M E H S F L C O V E N A N T F  
R S T T S I S E N E G M A H O  
M N E K N V W T N S R M F A R  
A E H R S E T A G D O O L F T  
S V P A U S M N N R A U O A Y  
L A A I O T D G E I A N A F L  
A E J N E O A U D P M T T A P  
B H O B T C Y E O U H A L S I  
E C L O H K S D R L J I L A T  
V T I W G N O A H C C N L S L  
O I V V I O L E N C E S R I U  
D P E F R U I T F U L E T A M

Altar, Animals, Ark, Balsam, Bird, Clouds, Covenant, Creatures, Days, Descendants, Destroy, Door, Dove, Female, Float, Floodgates, Food, Forty, Fruitful, Genesis, Ham, Heavens, Japheth, Judgment, Livestock, Mankind, Mate, Mountains, Multiply, Nephilim, Noah, Olive, Pairs, Pitch, Rainbow, Righteous, Roof, Shem, Sons, Violence, Waters, Wickedness, Wife

After you have found all the words, put the leftover letter in correct order to form the *mystery answer*.

**(Last month's answer: TRIBULATION)**

## A Prayer to Keep God First This New Year

Dear God, Thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives this past year, the good and the hard things that have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence filling us every day.

We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you will guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else. We ask that you open the doors that need to be opened and close the ones that need to be shut tight. We ask that you help us release our grip on the things to which you've said "no," "not yet," or "wait." We ask for help to pursue you first, above every dream and desire you've put within our hearts.

We ask for your wisdom, strength, and power to be constantly present within us. We pray you will make us strong and courageous for the road ahead. Give us ability beyond what we feel able, and let your gifts flow freely through us so that you would be honored by our lives and others would be drawn to you. We pray that you'll keep us far from the snares and traps of temptations. That you would whisper in our ear when we need to run and whisper in our heart when we need to stand our ground.

We pray for your protection over our families and friends. We ask for your hand to cover us and keep us distanced from the enemy's evil intent; that you would be a barrier to surround us, that we'd be safe in your hands. We pray that you will give us discernment and insight beyond our years to understand Your will, hear Your voice, and know Your ways. Amen.

Don't Cling to the Firewood

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

They're just a young couple, I can tell. These mouseholders who have taken up residence in the woodpile are just starting out in life. They've built a nest under the pile of oak firewood I am loading into the back of our station wagon.

We had our first frost a few days ago, and had spent several days winterizing our house. So had this mouse couple. At the bottom of the woodpile their nest would be dry and warm in all but the wettest of storms, ready for the young ones that would surely be coming soon. I think of my wife and me in our first apartment many years ago. So excited, so optimistic.

These are tiny mice, equipped with miniature jumping legs, their little bodies only 2-1/2 inches long -- if you don't count the tail. I must seem like a huge giant as I deconstruct their carefully built lives, one log at a time. I feel sorry for them. Such cute little creatures, so hopeful for the future, yet so filled with terror at what is happening to them.

"What's going on, dear?" the mouse bride cries.

"I don't know," her husband answers. "Nothing like this has ever happened before."

He's wrong, of course. Change happens -- constantly. But, thankfully, it's not too often that our entire lives are altered forever by external events.

A few weeks after my bride and I had moved into our first apartment, I received a draft notice: "Greetings from the President of the United States." Yes, greetings to you, too, Mr. President. Our carefully constructed lives suddenly took a sharp turn.

You've had some of those turns, too:

The death of someone very close to you.

Divorce.

Loss of a job.

Failure of a business.

An illness or injury.

Suddenly, life is not the same and never will be again. Everything's different. And we try to cope -- sometimes in healthy ways, sometimes in self-destructive ways. I keep loading the firewood into the back of the wagon. I'm about to stack it higher yet when I see one of the tiny mice clinging to a piece of firewood in the back of the car. Another few seconds and he would have been crushed. I pick him up by his long tail, set him on the ground, and go back to get more logs. When I return he

is still at the same place on the ground where I put him -- stunned by these events, barely able to get out of harm's way.

We're so mouse-like sometimes.

Life goes on. The props change, sometimes all too often. We're so tempted to cling to the props as they are being dragged off the set. And sometimes we're hurt because of our inability to let go, so attached to the accouterments of the past that it's impossible for us to welcome the future.

Change requires courage, great helpings of it. My mind goes to Joshua in the Bible. For nearly forty years he has been an understudy to the great leader Moses. Now Moses is dead and leadership is thrust fully upon Joshua. Ahead is the Jordan River running at flood stage, and beyond that the fortified cities of Canaan -- the "Promised Land" that seems so elusive. Talk about change? Joshua has change swirling all around him. And God speaks to him a word: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Our mouse couple looks up as their world is trembling.

One by one the logs that comprise their shelter are disappearing, and soon only open sky is above. What do you do?

Do you cling to the firewood and risked being crushed by it? Or do you cling to God's promise to you?

God has promised to be with you wherever you go. He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. What he asks of you is faith to overcome your terror. Courage to meet your discouragement. And confidence to draw on his strength.

Change is a constant. No part of our lives will endure unchanged for more than a few years, a few decades at most. But the Lord our God is unchangeable. He is forever. You can put down your roots into him, knowing that in this way you will never be utterly uprooted again.

I think of Mr. and Mrs. Mouse. My heart goes out to them. I've been where they are, and so have you. And I hope that, even as I am writing these words, they are dragging their nest into another shelter in the woods to keep them dry and warm this winter. I hope that Mr. Mouse has finally got over his shock and got with the program. Older now, and wiser they are.

And if I could offer just one word of advice for them and for you -- and for me -- it would be this:

Don't cling to the firewood.