



BIBLE Passages

Journal



A wedding reunion of Bear Valley grads! Clayton Westbrook now ministering in Ruston, LA; Parker LaGrange ministering in Dripping Springs, Adam Warnes ministering in Blooming Grove, TX, and Aaron Johnson, ministering in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Dear Supporters and Friends,

I have always found Genesis 32:22-32 fascinating. It's the story of when Jacob sends his family across the fords of the Jabbok River in hopes of appeasing the anger of his brother Esau. That night Jacob wrestles with God, is injured, and then God changes his name to Israel. Jacob's name is often interpreted as "schemer or grabber" and indeed Jacob's early life could in many ways be characterized as one who was always manipulating things in his favor to affect his own desired outcome. In the story of Genesis 32, Jacob learns to depend on God instead of his own schemes, and so his name is changed to Israel, which means God prevails. In some ways I can identify with Jacob. I have my own "schemes"

of what I think I should be doing, and sometimes those things are in harmony with God. At other times I think I may be wrestling with God, or even running away from what He may want me to do. Counseling others through some of their own challenges in life is one of those things that I tend to fear, or at times am reluctant to embrace. Like Jacob, I tend to stay on this side of the Jabbok, and send others ahead to solve the problem, but God, it seems, has other plans for me.

Upcoming Schedule:

January-March: (J&C) Bear Valley Bible Institute

February 4-6: (J) Freed Hardeman Lectureship

March: (J&C) Studies Tours
March 1-14 Bear Valley Students, Staff, Friends - Athens and Israel
March 15-27 BLPT - Israel and Rome

April: (J) World Video Bible School projects

May 1-3 (J): Middle Tennessee Men's Leadership Retreat

May 18-June 15 (J&C) Edification and Evangelism program in Brandon, England

When it comes to counseling others, I would much rather be teaching a class on church history or geography, or exploring an archaeological site so as to show others the accuracy of scripture. Both of these are important works, and are things God has allowed and encouraged me to do. However, He has continually reminded me that ministry involves much more. It often involves getting down in the trenches where people live and hurt. It involves helping them to bear a burden (Gal. 6:2), listening to them confess their faults (James 5:16), and showing them the wisdom and power of God. I'm not a licensed professional counselor, but I do have a Master's degree in Education with a major in Counseling and Psychological services, but I am often ill-equipped and unqualified to address many, many things in the psychiatric arena. It appears, however, that God wants me on occasions to continue to use what I have been blessed to learn—perhaps because I believe so much in His power to overcome our own personal schemes of working things out our own way.

Carla and I have both been very busy during the month of January in helping others who are hurting. We have used our (God's) home as a place of respite for those who are hurting and just needed a place to convalesce. Carla and I are far from having our own lives together, and quite often we have to counsel ourselves and obtain advice and strength from others. Nevertheless, we do know Him who has the power to help us in all things. We also know that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). We mention these things only as a means of accountability to you who financially support us in our work. God has kept us very busy in things that aren't always quite so visible, and require confidentiality.

In January we have likewise been blessed to serve in other ways. Through God's power and strength I have been allowed to teach a short course on the books of Thessalonians and Philippians. Currently, we are in the middle of the 3rd quarter of classes at Bear Valley Bible Institute where I am teaching a course on Church History (which I am thoroughly enjoying), and another called "An Introduction to Biblical Counseling." I am blessed to teach 42 students on a weekly basis. Each week, the class meets for a total of six hours. In between class sessions, we stay busy with class preparations, grading and crafting exams (my least favorite), and meeting with students concerning assignments and needs. In addition to classes, I have also had the privilege of organizing all the daily chapel services for January and likewise provided the theme for all of our speakers: "Equipping the Saints for Ministry." Each speaker was responsible for sharing with students effective programs that would help congregations with evangelism, edification, and benevolence. During the last chapel service for January, I had students craft a fictional news article which summarized their work in ministry five years from now, and which employed some of the principles and ideas discussed in chapel. Carla and I have also enjoyed auditing a class together at Bear Valley, called Ministry Tech, which mainly focuses on how to use the Bible software program called Logos. Michael Hite is an excellent instructor and an expert on the use of this program. His knowledge is helping us to incorporate this powerful tool into our own personal study as well as into the classes we teach.

Finally, our dear brethren, we want to say thank you so very much for your support and love. Without you this work would not be possible. We are so humbled and overjoyed by your contributions to the work of Bible Passages. Thank you again from the bottom of our hearts! Please continue to pray for us that we might glorify God and guide precious souls to Jesus! In Him, *John*

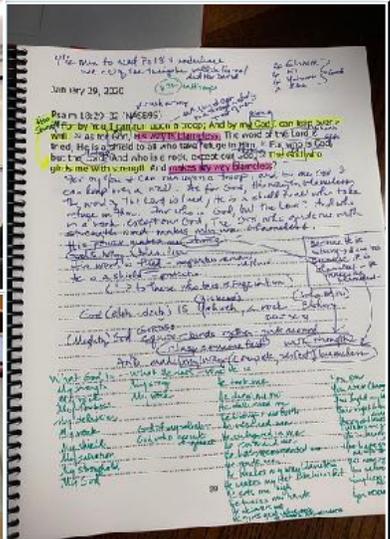
Would you **please** let others know about **Bible Passages?**

In the three years we have been working through Bible Passages, we have not met our budget, but through some of you, God has provided for our needs. But if He allows, there is more that we need to do if we are financially able. It is humbling to ask, but could you, someone you know, or your congregation possibly help to support the work of Bible Passages? If you'd like to know more about what we do, go to our website, and click the "[Work and Ministries](#)" tab.

Thank you!



We'd love to have you join us for a Bible Land Passage Tour! We are in the beginning stages of planning for 2021 - a Mediterranean Cruise! Interested? Let us know!



L-R: We enjoyed dinner together before the marriage retreat... Edmund and Christiana Sarpong.. We met Sam and Julie Dilbeck for some Texas barbecue in Denver...rehearsal for Adam & Gabby's wedding...Mike Vestal taught in chapel for a week....our Scripture Writing 2020 book...Carla with Ting Hu and her son Joshua - they are from Wuhan, China...we love Facetimeing with the grandbabies... we loved meeting Jake and Lys' friends Hunter and Kelti.....Teri Autrey (right) teaching "Women of the Bible" (standing by Melody Sawyers, dean of women at BVBI)...marriage retreat at the little house!



Gordon and Garrett Sawyers have such sweet servant hearts!

Carla's Comments

I love the holidays, but I sure have been thankful for January. I've been able to slow down the crazy schedule and end the inevitable holiday eating binge (mostly!) It's been so good to narrow my focus onto more important goals - like growing spiritually instead of physically! One attempt toward that goal is something Mom and I are doing. For her Christmas gift, I thought it would be neat to "do" something together every day even when I was away from home. I put together a printed spiral-bound book that has several scriptures on each page, with lines to copy them each day of 2020. We'll be writing through many of the Psalms for most of the year and then in the fall we'll be writing New Testament passages. Each day we e-mail each other a photo of the scriptures and notes we've made on that day's page. I've loved seeing her wise thoughts and it has reminded me over and over what a great student of

God's word she has been for so many years. I thought others might want to join us, so I shared a link on Facebook with the file that people could download. I ended up having nearly 300 email requests for the file before a friend suggested just uploading it to my blog, where people could easily access it themselves. It was downloaded from there close to 600 additional times. I love that all it is - is scripture. I've loved seeing how so many were interested in "Writing the Word" in 2020! It can be as simple as writing the scriptures each day, or you can dig as deep as you want to, with word studies, or learning Hebrew definitions, or looking for repeated words and lists and important words. Some days I have time to really dig in and other days I can only write the verses. I have been so encouraged in my personal study, and by Mom's study and comments, and by the others who have been writing! If you'd like the file yourself (it's never too late to start!) you can download it too, here: <https://walkingwherejesuswalked.com/2020/01/03/writing-the-word-in-2020/> .

We've been back in Denver for all of January (and no snow almost the entire month!) I've been taking Michael Hite's "Ministry Tech" class - for the third time! The "Logos" Bible program is a fantastic tool for Bible study. I've also been sitting in on Teri Autrey's wonderful class for the BV women's program, called "Women of the Bible". Other happenings in January: John and I hosted eleven BVBI couples for a weekend marriage retreat. We had supper together at Chuy's on Friday night, and then came back to the little house for a couple of sessions, and met again all day on Saturday. It was fun, and we especially enjoyed the more informal feel, with lots of input and discussion and "coaching" with some conflict-resolution and communication suggestions. One of the couples who participated was Edmund and Christiana Sarpong, originally from Ghana, who have been married for 58 years! They had some wonderful advice to share.

We traveled back to Texas one weekend, staying with Jake and Alyssa (John performed the nearby wedding ceremony for dear friends, Adam and Gabby Warnes.) We are missing our family but we hope to see most of them soon—John will be preaching for the Dripping Springs congregation on February 16. Then we will be

leaving for a month in Israel with two separate tours in March. We ask for your prayers! We are so thankful for each of you and for your prayers and support!



Some of the Bear Valley students and faculty - January 2020

Love, *Carla*