



News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lorin Cranford

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Family Events:

Wonderfully cool, crisp fall weather has arrived in western NC. The highs are in the 70s and the lows in the 40s. This is Claire's and my favorite time of the year, especially since moving to NC in 1998. We are planning our annual excursions into the mountains to take photos of the gorgeous fall foliage during October and early November. Hopefully the leaves will be as beautiful as in past years, as these pic-



tures of Taylor and Clay last Oct reflect. The forecasts are looking positive. The abundant rain combined with the beginning temperature etc. indicate that we should get to enjoy a spectacular fall season. Claire is getting really skilled with the new digital camera she received last Christmas. I go as her driver and stop for pictures whenever she tells me to.

We have more fun together doing this.

My health picture is looking a little brighter. Dr. Klein, my neurologist, at the last visit on Sept. 15 concluded that the neuropathy condition is stabilized and not deteriorating, although I've experienced increased pain over the past couple of months. This seems to be stemming from the [osteoarthritis](#) that extends from the base of my neck to my feet. We decided to begin a series of physical therapy sessions to see whether this would help stem the growing pain. Thus I began a twice weekly therapy session at the [Cleveland Physical Therapy Associates](#) in Shelby on Sept. 23. So far they have worked miracles. My body is already freer of pain than it has been in a long, long time. The treatments will continue on a month to month basis as long as needed. Of course, this hasn't impacted the diabetic foot pain, but the other pain is greatly diminished. Hopefully we can continue this pattern. I'm so grateful for every bit of progress that can be made.

As Claire's Musings indicate, we need your prayers for wisdom and strength to be able to help our kids works through this horrific time of difficulty.



University Happenings:

One of the great delights in being a teacher is the joy of seeing former students succeed in their life's chosen career. When those students take time to visit you and stay in touch with you, no greater honor is possible. On Sept. 2, Preben and Liselotte Vang stopped by for a short visit and lunch. They were on their way to eastern NC to visit their 'American' parents, Gene and Martha Garrison, as well as numerous other friends during a short vacation trip. Preben studied with me at SWBTS in the PhD program and now is [professor](#)



[of Christian Theology](#) at [Ouachita Baptist University](#) in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. This Baptist school has one of the nation's largest religion departments and over 300 religion majors in their undergraduate program in the [Pruet School of Christian Studies](#). Several [former students](#) now teach there, and I couldn't be prouder. Natives of Denmark, Preben and Liselotte have adjusted well to life in the U.S. and are making a significant contribution to the cause of our Lord. What a delightful time we had visiting together.

The fall semester at GWU has gotten off to a good beginning for me. The lighter teaching load is enabling me to concentrate on the three subject areas, along with doing course development on the [Synoptic Gospels course](#). I'm enjoying working with the students, and they seem to be interested in learning. This is a winning combination! The work in the university class room, along with the teaching of the Sunday School class at [First Baptist Church](#) in Shelby, is keeping me busy, but it's a good busy. One that provides immense satisfaction.

The immediate challenge is the completion of a series of book reviews that will appear in future issues of the scholarly journal *Review and Expositor*. I'm down to the last one, and hope to have that one completed within a week or so. Doing book reviews for publication accomplishes several things. It helps one keep up better with current publications in your specialized field of study; skills of critical evaluation are sharpened; you get to keep the book after reviewing it. Hopefully, your review can help others better understand the content and potential value of a possible purchase for their library.

Work is already beginning on the courses for the spring semester. That's a part of the academic world pattern of things.

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Claire's Musings:

October, 2003

We have been going through some extremely hard times lately and it has to do with family.

Both our daughters have left their husbands at about the same time. Carrie, the youngest left her husband of 2 ½ years and has moved back here from Jacksonville, Florida. I was sorry that her marriage to Daniel did not work out.

Even harder to deal with is that the oldest daughter, Angie, has left her husband, Brian after 11 years of marriage. Clay, eight years old, and Taylor, three years old have been missing their mom so much, because Angie left Brian and the children. Angie and Carrie are at least together in an apartment in Spindale nearby.

Lorin and I have been trying to help Brian by keeping the kids when he is working later in the evenings. It's a little difficult to keep up with my studies with Taylor sitting in my lap, but it is more fun. She is a precious three year old and gets cuter all the time. When I pick up the kids after school and bring them here, she loves running in the house and calling for her Papa. She knows exactly where to find him in his computer room. She really has him wrapped around her finger and it is hard to resist her. Grandpapa also helps Clay with his homework, although Clay would much rather be outside playing.

What Angie has done has hurt many people who love her so much. I have cried and prayed and feel so lost. But, the people most hurt are Brian, Clay, and Taylor. Brian has gone through so much and has tried to hold the marriage together. We are very proud of Brian through all of this turmoil. Even as hard as all of this has been for him, he is taking care of the children. I am delighted in how he is there for both of them. His work hours make it difficult sometimes to do everything, but he spends as much time as he can with Clay and Taylor. What a great dad! He has even learned to curl Taylor's hair. How many dads can do that? One afternoon Taylor buttoned her sweater and I asked her who taught her how to do that. She very proudly answered, "My Daddy."

I am so proud and grateful for Lorin. Lorin has helped Carrie and I go through some tough times before when she was a rebellious teenager. Now he is again the Rock of Gibraltar, being there for Brian and I. I am very fortunate to have such an understanding husband. It's hard to imagine how people go through difficult times without a loving family and especially without God.

Angie and Carrie were brought up in a Christian home with parents who loved them very much. Before I had the girls I used to worry that I might favor one child over another. Angie and Carrie were opposites in many ways, but I always loved them both dearly, and never felt any favoritism with one over the other. I have always said that the best time of my life has been in being a wife and mother. I have wonderful memories that I will always cherish. I have been extremely fortunate in my life.

As hard as it was when Don died after 28 years of marriage, it was not as bad as this is now. When he died, I knew that he was a Christian. With Angie's new chosen life-style, there is not that reassurance. Please pray for our family, especially for Angie who has chosen a life-style that goes against everything that she has been taught by her family and church. But as a loving Christian mother I will always be there for her no matter what.



Lorin's Musings:

In our continuing exploration of the various ways that ideas were presented in [the letters of the New Testament](#), we come now to the literary form called [Paraenesis](#). This genre refers to moral exhortation type expressions in the ancient world. This Latin term is often anglicized with the spelling 'parenesis.' Although [the term](#) has been around for a long time, it hasn't been used extensively in NT studies but for about two decades.

Various patterns emerge in the NT under this category. There are generalized types of admonitions, but also very distinctive forms clearly surface as well in the letters of the NT. These include Vice/Virtue Lists; *Haustafeln* (Family Relations); *Gemeindetafeln* (General Duty Codes); and Judgment Forms.

One basic issue in studying this type of material is the nature of moral exhortation in the NT over against similar materials in both the ancient Jewish and the Greco-Roman cultures. These will stand often in sharp contrast to one another, as well as to contemporary modern cultures, especially in western societies. The ancient Greco-Roman culture did not place great importance on standards of moral behavior, especially as viewed from a Judeo-Christian perspective. The surviving literature from the ancient Greek theater provides a fairly helpful window into patterns of daily behavior, and the picture in general is very depressing. Brutality, sexual infidelity, homosexuality, lack of respect for the value and worth of another human being, a preoccupation with the accumulation of power and wealth particularly for males -- these were the norms of the day. For example, the ancient Greek idea of masculine macho was determined by how many young, innocent boys the man 'took down,' more than by how many women he slept with.

Part of the reason behind this was that religion and morality were two completely separate traditions with little or no connection to one another. Typically, to be religious in that context had nothing to do with how well one behaved himself. When the two did connect up, it usually was that religion reinforced the immoral life-style. Most of the ancient Greco-Roman [mystery religions](#) had a male and a female deity as the focus of worship, such as Isis and Osiris. Typically, the relation between these two deities was both that of mother/son and also of lovers. The fertility basis of most of these traditions made sexual orgies between male worshippers and female priestesses a major center piece of worship. In the classical Greek and Roman state religions, the pantheon of gods contained beliefs that the gods up in the skies above the clouds were always fighting and killing off one another, as well as behaving in immoral ways. Mortal man worshipped these gods only to appease them and keep them at arms length so that the human didn't get caught up in the violence among the gods. The only ancient religious tradition that did incorporate ethical standards of behavior into its tradition was the male-only cult of [Mithraism](#). Yet the standards of behavior were very different from Jewish and Christian traditions. Most of the focus was on male self-control and self-discipline, along with unquestioned obedience to authority. This made Mithraism very appealing to the Roman military leaders, and thus it was promoted through the Roman military at the beginning of the Christian era.

One important lesson from this is the disaster that comes when religion and morality get separated from each other.