



## When God Sighed

Two days ago I read a word in the Bible that has since taken up residence in my heart.

To be honest, I didn't quite know what to do with it. It's only one word, and not a very big one at that. When I ran across the word, (which, by the way, is exactly what happened; I was running through the passage and this word came out of nowhere and bounced me like a speed bump) I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't have any hook to hang it on or category to file it under.

It was an enigmatic word in an enigmatic passage. But now, forty-eight hours later, I have found a place for it, a place all its own. My, what a word it is. Don't read it unless you don't mind changing your mind, because this little word might move your spiritual furniture around a bit.

Look at the passage with me.

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought a man to him who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. (Mark 7:31-35)

Quite a passage, isn't it? Jesus is presented with a man who is deaf and has a speech impediment. Perhaps he stammered. Maybe he spoke with a lisp. Perhaps, because of his deafness, he never learned to articulate words properly.

Jesus, refusing to exploit the situation, took the man aside. He looked him in the face. Knowing it would be useless to talk, he explained what he was about to do through gestures. He spat and touched the man's tongue, telling him that whatever restricted his speech was about to be removed. He touched his ears. They, for the first time, were about to hear.

But before the man said a word or heard a sound, Jesus did something I never would have anticipated.

He sighed. I might have expected a clap or a song or a prayer. Even a "Hallelujah!" or a brief lesson might have been appropriate. But the Son of

God did none of these. Instead, he paused, looked into heaven, and sighed. From the depths of his being came a rush of emotion that said more than words.

Sigh. The word seemed out of place.

I'd never thought of God as one who sighs. I'd thought of God as one who commands. I'd thought of God as one who weeps. I'd thought of God as one who called forth the dead with a command or created the universe with a word ... but a God who sighs?

Perhaps this phrase caught my eye because I do my share of sighing.

I sighed yesterday when I visited a lady whose invalid husband had deteriorated so much he didn't recognize me. He thought I was trying to sell him something.

I sighed when the dirty-faced, scantily dressed, six-year-old girl in the grocery store asked me for some change.

And I sighed today listening to a husband tell how his wife won't forgive him.

No doubt you've done your share of sighing.

If you have teenagers, you've probably sighed. If you've tried to resist temptation, you've probably sighed. If you've had your motives questioned or your best acts of love rejected, you have been forced to take a deep breath and let escape a painful sigh.

I realize there exists a sigh of relief, a sigh of expectancy, and even a sigh of joy. But that isn't the sigh described in Mark 7. The sigh described is a hybrid of frustration and sadness. It lies somewhere between a fit of anger and a burst of tears.

The apostle Paul spoke of this sighing. Twice he said that Christians will sigh as long as we are on earth and long for heaven. The creation sighs as if she were giving birth. Even the Spirit sighs as he interprets our prayers. (Romans 8:22-27)

All these sighs come from the same anxiety; a recognition of pain that was never intended, or of hope deferred.

Man was not created to be separated from his creator; hence he sighs, longing for home. The creation was never intended to be inhabited by evil; hence she sighs, yearning for the Garden. And conversations with God were never intended to depend on a translator; hence the Spirit groans on our behalf, looking to a day when humans will see God face to face.

And when Jesus looked into the eyes of Satan's

(Continued on page 11.)



## New Year's 2019

New Year's resolutions are a tradition mainly in the western hemisphere. They are a desire to change an undesired trait or behavior to accomplish a personal goal or otherwise improve their life. About 60 percent admit to making New Year's resolutions. Less than 10 percent are successful in achieving them.

Here are some interesting facts about New Year's resolutions:

- \*Saving money is one of the top 5 resolutions and also one of the most commonly failed.

- \*Over half say that they fail their resolution before January 31.

- \*71% say they want to diet or eat healthier.

- \*65% want to exercise more.

- \*26% want to learn a new skill or hobby.

- \*21% want to quit smoking.

- \*17% want to read more.

- \*16% want to find another job.

- \*15% want to drink less alcohol.

- \*13% want to spend more time with family and friends.

Whether or not you made a New Year's resolution, I wish for you a healthy, prosperous New Year.

I hope you will enjoy today's recipes. They can help you get rid of some of that leftover holiday candy. Thanks for reading.

### BUTTERFINGER OATMEAL COOKIES

- ¾ cup shortening (I like to use the butter flavor)
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup water
- 1 ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 3 cups uncooked quick-cook oats
- 1 (10 oz.) bag Butterfinger baking bits (or chop up Butterfinger bars to equal about 1 ½ cups)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line baking sheets with parchment paper; set aside. Beat shortening and sugars until fluffy; add egg, water, and vanilla and mix well. Combine salt, flour, and baking soda; gradually add to batter and mix until smooth. Stir in oats and Butterfinger bits until thoroughly incorporated. Us-

ing a medium cookie scoop (about 2 Tbsp.), drop onto prepared sheets and bake for 12 minutes or until edges are browned. Let cookies cool on baking sheet for 2 minutes and remove to wire racks to completely cool.

### BABY RUTH COOKIES

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 1/3 cups flour
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 (2.1 oz.) Baby Ruth candy bars, chopped

In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy; beat in egg and vanilla. Combine flour, baking soda, and salt; gradually add

to creamed mixture. Stir in chopped candy bars. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls onto a parchment lined baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.

### REESE'S PIECES PEANUT BUTTER OATMEAL COOKIES

- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup peanut butter, smooth or crunchy
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup uncooked quick-cooking oats
- 1 ½ cups Reese's pieces

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line baking sheets with parchment paper. Cream together the butter, peanut butter, sugars, and vanilla until light and fluffy; add egg and beat well. Gradually add the flour, baking soda, and salt until just combined. Stir in the oats and the Reese's pieces;

combine and drop by table-spoonfuls onto prepared baking sheets. Bake for 10 – 12 minutes and cool on wire racks.

\*Lee Ann Fleming is a Holmes County native, food columnist and has garnered fame for her recipes featured in the film, *The Help*. Fleming can be reached at [lafkitchen@hughes.net](mailto:lafkitchen@hughes.net).

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Please include all pertinent details, dates, location, name of the event or occasion, all associated people, organizations or groups, reason for event or occasion and **NAMES OF ALL PEOPLE PICTURED IN ANY PHOTOGRAPH.**

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

**-Holmes County Herald Staff**