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# CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES

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JULY 5, 2026

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH  
3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC 28741

## I. SERMON RECAP

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Pastor Gary's Fourth of July message was less a traditional sermon and more a heartfelt national prayer. Looking back over 250 years of American history, he honored the courage and foresight of the founders, while honestly acknowledging our nation's flaws and vulnerabilities. His burden was clear: if the first 250 years were marked by a remarkable unity and shared sacrifice, then the next 250 years will require a fresh move of God, expressed through godly leadership ("statesmen") and a clear, courageous, biblical voice in the wilderness of our current culture.

Drawing from Matthew 3 and 11, Pastor Gary showed how God raised up John the Baptist as a "voice crying in the wilderness" to prepare the way for Christ. In the same way, he called the church to rediscover and refine its voice today—a voice that calls for repentance, models humility and sacrifice, resists corruption and compromise, and points people not merely to love their country, but to build the Kingdom of God. His pastoral heart was not political but prophetic: pleading with the church to pray, to speak truth to power, to call all people (including ourselves) to repentance, and to seek a deep spiritual "cleansing" in our own hearts and in our land.

Above all, Pastor Gary reminded us that "righteousness exalts a nation" (Prov. 14:34) and that God has tied the healing of a nation to the humility and prayers of His people (2 Chron. 7:14). Loving America, he said, cannot be separated from praying for America and sharing the gospel. We are not powerless spectators. We are "the people," the ones entrusted with a voice. And in Christ, we are called to be part of the solution: praying, repenting, speaking, and living in such a way that prepares the way for the Lord in our generation.

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## II. STUDY GUIDE

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### Key Points

- Praying for statesmen, not just politicians
- Our calling: regularly pray that God would raise up such leaders in every sphere (government, church, marketplace, home).
- Rediscovering our voice in Christ
- Every believer has a voice; the question is how we steward it.
- Repentance and identity
- Our culture is confused about identity and worth.
- Our nation doesn't just need surface-level tidying; we need a "deep cleanse."
- The church's responsibility for the nation's future

### Key Scripture (Used or Referenced in the Sermon)

- Matthew 3:1-6, 11-12 - John the Baptist as a "voice crying in the wilderness"; call to repent; baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire; winnowing fork and threshing floor.
- Matthew 11:7-11 - Jesus' description of John the Baptist: not a reed swayed by the wind; more than a prophet; greatest among those born of women.
- Proverbs 14:34 - "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 - "If My people who are called by My name...then will I hear from heaven...and heal their land."

- 1 Timothy 6:10 - “The love of money is the root of all evil [all kinds of evil].”
- Psalm 51 (alluded to as a model for a “deep cleanse” in personal repentance).
- John 14:6 - “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”
- Romans 1:16 - “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation...”

#### Other Relevant Verses (Thematic Reinforcement)

- Isaiah 40:3-5 - “A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God...’”
- Directly fulfilled in John the Baptist; deepens understanding of our calling to prepare the way for Christ in our own culture.
- Ezekiel 22:30 - “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before Me in the gap on behalf of the land...”
- Expounds the intercessory role of God’s people—praying and “standing in the gap” for a nation under judgment.
- Philippians 3:20 - “But our citizenship is in heaven...”

### III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL (DAYS 1-5)

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#### Day 1 - "A Voice in the Wilderness"

##### Reflection Question

Where has God placed you as a "voice in the wilderness," and how are you currently using that voice?

##### Reading

- Matthew 3:1-3
- Isaiah 40:3

##### Devotional Content

In the first century, Judea was under Roman occupation and spiritual confusion. Many Jews longed for political liberation, yet God sent a prophet not to the palace, but to the wilderness. John the Baptist dressed simply, ate a poor man's diet, and stood far from the centers of power. Yet from that barren place, his voice shook the nation.

The wilderness in Scripture often symbolizes places of testing, barrenness, or cultural confusion. Israel wandered there after Egypt; Jesus was tempted there before His ministry. It is striking that God chose the wilderness as the launching pad for the greatest spiritual revolution in history. God did not need an official office or a powerful campaign. He needed a faithful voice.

Our cultural "wilderness" today is filled with noise: social media, polarized news, identity confusion, and moral relativism. Yet God still works the same way. He doesn't simply look for people with large platforms; He looks for people whose hearts are wholly His. Your "wilderness" might be your workplace, your extended family, a broken friendship circle, or even the quiet loneliness of your own doubts. But it is precisely there that God may call you to prepare the way of the Lord.

## Application & Closing

Ask yourself honestly: Am I waiting for a “better platform” before I speak and live for Christ? Or am I ready to be faithful right where I am?

- Identify one arena (home, work, neighborhood, online) where you sense God nudging you to be a clearer voice for Him.
- Today, begin with Adoration: thank God that He still chooses and uses ordinary people as His mouthpiece.
- Then move to Confession: admit where fear of people or desire for approval has silenced you.

Challenge: Before the end of this week, intentionally share one piece of biblical encouragement or the gospel with someone in your “wilderness,” trusting God to work through your voice.

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## Day 2 - “Repent: Changing How We Think”

### Reflection Question

Where have you allowed the culture, media, or “thought police” to shape your thinking more than the Word of God?

### Reading

- Matthew 3:2
- Romans 12:1-2

## Devotional Content

John's first and primary word was not "be inspired" or "feel better." It was "Repent." The Greek word *metanoia* literally means a change of mind: a deep, internal shift in how we think, perceive, and value things. John's call cut across the grain of both the religious elites and the everyday crowd. Repentance was not just for "those people"; it was for everyone.

Living in a digital age, we are relentlessly catechized by our feeds, not just by sermons. Algorithms nudge us, headlines provoke us, and repetition normalizes ideas that may have little to do with Christ. When Pastor Gary spoke of "thought police," he highlighted how easily we surrender our God-given capacity to think biblically and prayerfully and instead absorb whatever is most amplified around us.

Paul's words in Romans echo John's: do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Repentance is not just sorrow over behavior; it is a Spirit-led reorientation of our thinking around God's truth. For a nation to change, its people must first think differently about God and that begins with the church.

## Application & Closing

Invite the Holy Spirit to show you where your thinking has been subtly disciplined by the culture rather than by Christ

Challenge: Choose one media input (a news source, social feed, podcast, or show) to fast from for the next seven days, and replace that time with Scripture reading (start with Matthew 3 and Psalm 51). Keep a brief journal of how this affects your thoughts and heart.

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## Day 3 - “Statesmen, Not Reeds”

### Reflection Question

Who are the “reeds swayed by the wind” in your life and culture, and who are the voices of statesmanlike integrity that you can learn from and pray for?

### Reading

- Matthew 11:7-11
- Proverbs 14:34

### Devotional Content

In Matthew 11, Jesus asks the crowd what they went into the wilderness to see: “A reed swayed by the wind?” In the Jordan Valley, reeds were commonplace, easily bent and shaken by every breeze. Jesus’ question was rhetorical; John was nothing like that. He was firm, unbribable, unimpressed by status, and unafraid to call sin what it was, whether in the public or in the palace.

This is what Pastor Gary meant by statesmanship. A statesman is not defined by office, but by character: courage, consistency, a willingness to sacrifice for the good of others. Our public life over recent decades has often been dominated by “reeds”. But the Kingdom calls for men and women who fear God more than they fear people.

Proverbs 14:34 reminds us that it is righteousness, not clever politics, that exalts a nation. The health of a people is ultimately a moral and spiritual issue. That means the church’s role is crucial: we must pray for leaders, model integrity in our own spheres, and refuse the temptation to applaud corruption simply because it aligns with our preference.

### Application & Closing

Evaluate the voices you admire and follow. Are they stable, principled, and truth-filled? Or are they reeds swayed by the wind?

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## Day 4 - "A Voice of Sacrifice and Humility"

### Reflection Question

Where is God inviting you to die to self so that Christ's life and power can flow more freely through you?

### Reading

- Matthew 3:4-6, 11
- Philippians 2:3-8

### Devotional Content

John's clothing of camel's hair and his diet of locusts and wild honey were not random lifestyle choices, they signaled a deliberate simplicity and refusal to be entangled with the comforts and elitism of his day. His message included baptism: people confessing their sins and going under water as a sign of death to the old life and rising to a new one.

Then John makes a staggering statement: "I am not worthy to carry His sandals." Carrying or loosening someone's sandals was the lowest servant's job in a household. John, considered the greatest of the prophets, placed himself below the lowest servant when comparing himself to Christ. True spiritual authority always walks together with deep humility and a willingness to embrace hidden, costly obedience.

In a prosperous culture like ours, sacrifice is often misunderstood. We may give generously, but Pastor Gary reminded us that many believers in the world understand sacrifice in far deeper, daily ways. In America, the danger is that our resources and comfort begin to possess us. A nation full of self-preserving Christians will struggle to produce the kind of prophetic voice that John modeled.

Challenge: Choose one specific, costly act of obedience this week, Something that stretches your comfort:

- sacrificial financial generosity,
- an inconvenient act of service,
- confessing a hidden sin,
- or reconciling with someone you have avoided.

Offer it to God consciously as a way of saying, “I am not my own; I belong to You.”

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Day 5 - “A Deep Cleanse: Holy Spirit and Fire

Reflection Question

If God were to do a “deep cleanse” in your life right now, what areas would be hardest to surrender? Why?

Reading

- Matthew 3:11-12
- Psalm 51:10-12

## Devotional Content

John contrasts his baptism with water and Jesus' baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire." In agricultural terms, the winnowing fork was used to toss grain into the air so that the wind could blow away the lighter chaff, leaving the heavier, valuable wheat to fall to the threshing floor. The "unquenchable fire" speaks of God's holy judgment against what is worthless, corrupt, or opposed to His purposes.

This is not merely about end-time judgment; it also describes the refining work of the Spirit in believers and, by extension, in nations. A culture consumed with vanity, drama, self-adoration, and greed needs more than behavior tweaks, it needs a deep cleanse. Pastor Gary's farm illustration captured this: surface cleaning rearranges dirt; deep cleaning reaches hidden places that are rarely touched.

Psalm 51 gives a window into a heart undergoing that kind of thorough cleansing. David, confronted with his sin, does not offer excuses. He asks God to create in him a clean heart, renew a steadfast spirit, and restore the joy of salvation. True revival in a land always begins with this kind of honest, Spirit-empowered repentance among God's people.

### Application & Closing

Set aside intentional time for a "deep cleanse" before God.

- Find a quiet place and read Psalm 51 slowly, perhaps aloud.

Challenge: Schedule a 2-3 hour retreat in the next two weeks: no phone, no interruptions. Bring a Bible and a journal. Work through Psalm 51 and Matthew 3 again. Write out what God highlights and any steps of obedience He suggests. Share one key takeaway with a trusted believer and ask them to pray with you for perseverance in that area.

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## IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

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### Opening

Welcome everyone warmly and acknowledge the unique context of this week reflecting on our nation's birthday and Pastor Gary's call to prayer.

Invite someone to open the gathering in spontaneous prayer, asking God to:

(Remind the group this is not a time for political speeches, but for seeking the Lord together.)

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### Thematic Recap

Pastor Gary called us to look honestly at our nation's history and present, and then to respond as the people of God: with prayer, repentance, and a renewed voice. He highlighted the need for statesmen, not just politicians; for a prophetic, humble church voice that speaks truth to power; and for a deep spiritual cleansing beginning in God's people.

### Core Highlights:

- America's first 250 years were marked by costly unity and shared sacrifice; the next 250 will require a fresh work of God.
- God always uses a voice in the wilderness (like John the Baptist) to prepare the way for His movements.
- The church's role is central: prayer, repentance, truthful speech, and living as salt and light.
- Patriotism without prayer, repentance, and gospel witness is incomplete.

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## Icebreaker (5-15 Minutes)

### Question:

Share a moment in your lifetime when you felt particularly aware of God's hand on our nation (or deeply burdened for our nation). What was happening, and how did it shape your prayers or your faith?

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## Scripture Exploration

Passage 1 - Matthew 3:1-6, 11-12

Read Together.

### Discussion Prompts:

1. What stands out to you most about John the Baptist? Why?
2. In what ways does John's message of "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" confront both our culture and the church today?
3. What does it practically look like for God to "baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire" in a believer's life? In a local church? In a nation?
4. How might the imagery of the winnowing fork and burning chaff apply to current cultural issues in America?
5. What is one area where you sense God inviting you personally to let Him "burn away" chaff?

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## Passage 2 - Matthew 11:7-11

Read Together.

Discussion Prompts:

1. Jesus contrasts a “reed swayed by the wind” with John’s firm prophetic role. Where do you see “wind-swayed reeds” in our current cultural leadership (including religious spheres)?
2. What qualities do you see in John that you would associate with statesmanship (courage, sacrifice, integrity, humility)?
3. How does Jesus’ high praise of John (“among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater”) impact how we think about our own calling to be faithful voices?
4. What might it look like for an ordinary believer to embody this kind of unwavering, statesmanlike faithfulness?

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## Passage 3 - 2 Chronicles 7:14 & Proverbs 14:34

Read Together.

Discussion Prompts:

1. According to 2 Chronicles 7:14, whose repentance and prayers are the condition for God healing the land?
2. How does this verse challenge the tendency to place all hope (or blame) on political leaders or systems?
3. Proverbs 14:34 says “righteousness exalts a nation.” What forms of righteousness do you think most honor God in our current cultural moment?
4. Where have we, as the church, been tempted to seek national change through means other than righteousness and repentance?
5. How do these verses both encourage and sober you when you think about the future of our country?

## Grand Synthesis Prompt

Looking at all three passages together, how would you summarize God's strategy for blessing a nation?

- What is His part?
- What is the church's part?
- What specific role does your small group (and you personally) have within that?

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## Application: Strengthening Personal & Communal Prayer

As a group, brainstorm practical steps to deepen both individual and corporate prayer.

### Personal Prayer Ideas:

- Practice the A.C.T.S. pattern this week:
  - Adoration: Start prayer by focusing on who God is, not what you need.
  - Confession: Name specific sins, including apathy toward your nation and neighbors.
  - Thanksgiving: Thank God for blessings, freedoms, and His faithfulness to His church.
  - Supplication: Pray for leaders, revival, the next generation, and for a clear, courageous voice in the church.
- Set a daily 5-10-minute quiet window where you are simply still before God (no requests at first—only listening and waiting).

### Group / Communal Prayer Ideas:

- Dedicate the final 15 minutes of each group meeting for focused intercession:
  - For national and local leaders (regardless of party).
  - For pastors and spiritual leaders to be statesmen/stateswomen.
  - For a move of repentance and revival beginning in the church.
- Organize a monthly prayer evening (even brief) focused solely on praying for:
  - Your city
  - Local schools and families
  - The next generation
  - Global mission and the persecuted church

Invite group members to choose one personal and one group prayer step to commit to for the next month. Hold them accountable for who they pick.

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### Closing

#### Prayer Needs:

Give space for each person to briefly share:

- One personal area where they need God's refining or courage as a "voice."
- One national concern that especially burdens them.

Closing Prayer Prompt (for a group member to pray spontaneously):

- Thank God for His grace over our nation and His faithfulness through history.
- Ask for humility and repentance in the church, starting with your own hearts.

- Ask God to raise up statesmen and stateswomen in government, churches, schools, and homes.
- Ask for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit—a “deep cleanse”—that exalts Jesus and draws many to salvation.
- Ask for courage and clarity for your group to be faithful voices in your daily spheres.

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## Leader Notes

- Set the tone: Gently remind the group that this discussion is about spiritual response, not partisan politics. Encourage people to speak from Scripture and personal conviction more than from news headlines.
- Foster safety:
  - Model vulnerability: briefly share your own areas of conviction and need for repentance.
  - Encourage listening without interrupting or correcting each other's stories.
  - If conversation gets heated or partisan, respectfully redirect back to: "What does Scripture call us to as God's people?"
- Honor different backgrounds: Some may feel deep patriotism; others may feel disappointment or pain related to our nation's history. Make room for both, emphasizing that our primary citizenship is in heaven and that lament and gratitude can coexist.
- Guard time: Allow the group to wrestle with Scripture but also protect time at the end for prayer. This week especially, prayer is the "main event."
- Encourage follow-through:
  - At the end, invite members to share one concrete step they will take (in prayer, repentance, or voice) this week.
  - Plan to briefly revisit these commitments at your next meeting.

Let this week be a time when your group not only talks about national renewal but stands in the gap before God on behalf of the land.