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Most people would say they have goals and want to make progress in life. It's a natural desire, and there's nothing wrong with wanting promotion in various areas. But we need to realize that anytime we ask God to promote us, or use us in greater ways, we're going to have to go through a time of testing and preparation to get there.

It's important to understand that God will never tempt us with anything evil, but He will allow — and even sometimes arrange — for things to happen in our lives that will challenge us and help us develop the character we need to successfully handle greater privileges and responsibilities.

James 1:2-3 (AMPC) says, "Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience."

When we go through trials with a good attitude, trusting God to use them for our good, then they will work things out of us — immature behaviors and ungodly mindsets — and cause us to grow in our faith.

There are different kinds of tests that get us to the point where we learn how to do things God's way. One of the most common tests is the forgiveness test.

Forgiving people who hurt you, disappoint you, do something you don't like, or maybe even betray you is not easy. It's one of the most challenging things we have to learn to do as Christians because it can seem so unfair to just let someone get away with the injustice they've done.

I understand this very well because I felt that way when the Lord spoke to my heart

Passing the 'forgiveness test'

about forgiving my father for the years of abuse that he put me through. But I came to realize that holding on to my anger was really just continuing to hurt me. I needed to be more concerned about myself and my relationship with God, rather than trying to make him sorry for what he had done.

The truth is when you choose to forgive people, you're doing yourself a favor.

In Matthew 5:8, Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (NIV). And Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

It's so important for us to keep our heart right with God. When we do, we can hear Him more clearly, be a lot more sensitive to His presence and enjoy close fellowship with Him. And there is nothing we need more than the presence of God in our lives.

God is the source of every good thing, and Psalm 16:11 (NKJV) says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." I love Psalm 17:15, which says, "...I shall be fully satisfied, when I awake [to find myself] beholding Your form [and having sweet communion with You]" (AMPC).

If we are not pure in heart, we're sacrificing an intimate relationship with God because we'd rather harbor anger, bitterness and resentment toward others in our heart.

Everyone experiences offenses at times, and when we do, we have to be determined to do something about it with God's help. The Bible says in Proverbs 4:23 that YOU need to guard your heart... not that He'll send an angel to miraculously do it for you. So when you recognize that you're offended by something, you need to quickly take action, doing what God tells you to do to overcome it.

Mark 11:25 says, "Whenever you stand praying, if you have

your life.

Spirituali-Tea group to discuss life after death

On Monday, March 6, at 6:30 p.m., everyone is invited to join a group from varied spiritual paths to discuss life after death.

The Baha'i writings say: "The soul has its origin in the spiritual worlds of God. It is exalted above matter and the physical world. The individual has his beginning when the soul associates itself with the embryo at the time of conception ... The soul does not belong to the material world, and its association with the body is similar to that of a light with a mirror which reflects it. The light which appears in the mirror is not inside it; it comes from an external source ... there is a special relationship between it and the body, and together they form a human being."

Please bring information you may have about this subject to share with the group.

The gathering will end at 8 p.m. with prayers for the requests left in the Prayer Pole in the garden of the Florence Playhouse and those shared by the group.

For more information, call 541-590-0779.

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FUUF service to discuss ways to access prosperity

This Sunday, March 5, from 10 until 11 a.m. at the Florence Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, the Rev. Dr. Marcia Pearce will lead a worship service titled, "Prosperity: Five Cost-Free Ways to Begin the Journey."

"Real prosperity has little to do with acquiring and accumulating money," said Pearce. "Money is just one of the many ways that life prospers us as we evolve into new and more caring ways of looking at the world. There is

a richer experience of life available to us all. We're here on a spiritual journey and we can, and should, accept all the universe has to offer."

The UU Fellowship is located at 87738 Highway 101 at Heceta Beach Road and is wheelchair accessible.

Each service concludes with refreshments and a dialogue circle to explore the questions that come up during each service.

For more information, visit FUUF's website at www.florenceuuf.org

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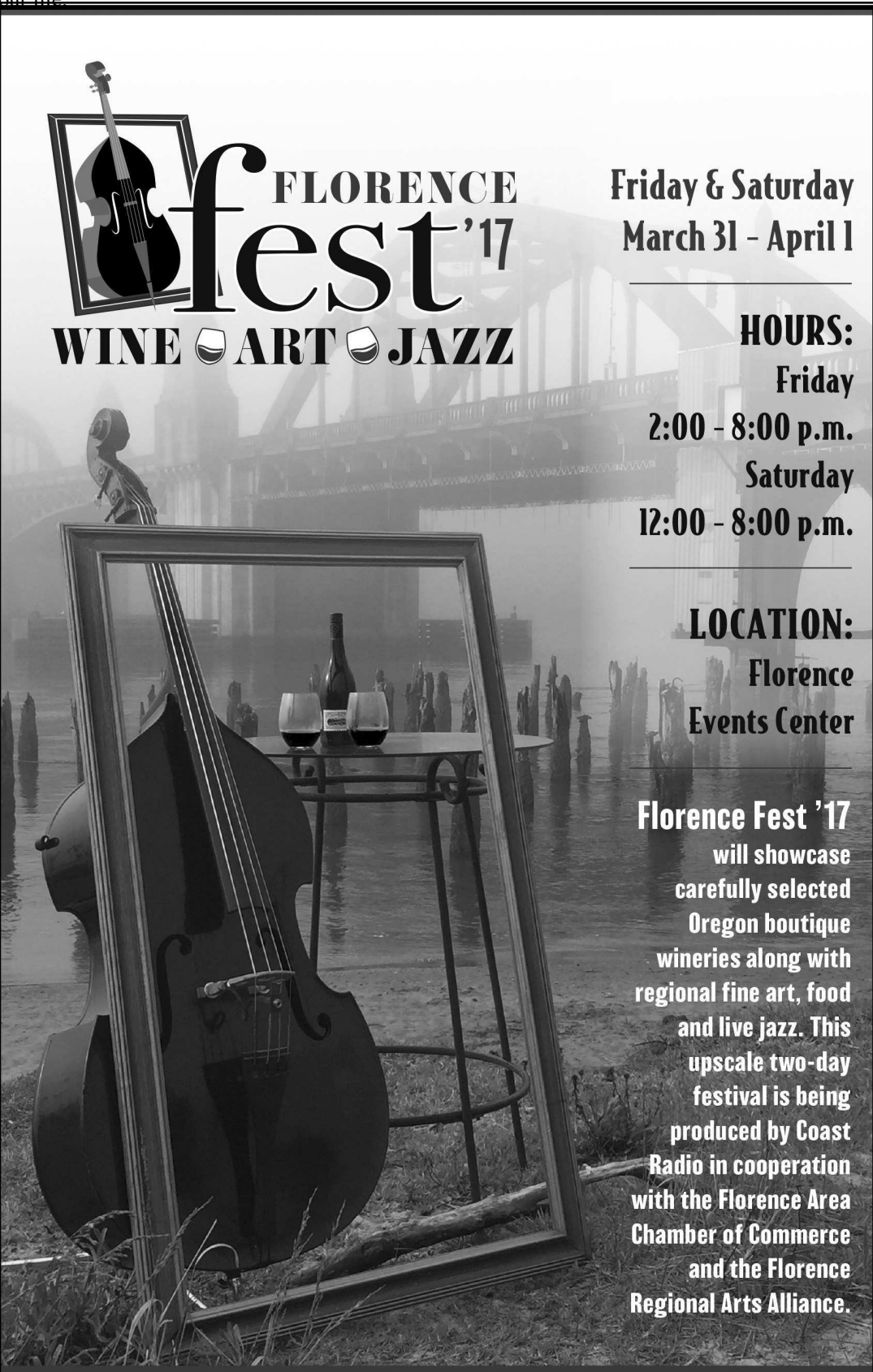
Meet Debbie



Hi, my name is Debbie. I like to be held, and I'll even give you a hug. Come in and visit, and when you do be sure to see my sister. We look and act very much alike. We're both very friendly and affectionate. We can't wait to meet you.

If you would like to meet Debbie or any of her friends, please visit us at:
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