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RNS photo

Supporters of gay 'marriage' rally outside the U.S. Supreme Court as justices hear a challenge to the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act.

Marriage debate

Questions, answers about Supreme Court, gay 'marriage'

Following are commonly asked questions about the Supreme Court's two days of arguments in the gay "marriage" cases.

Q: What issues were the justices deciding?

A: The constitutionality of two laws: the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and California's Proposition 8. Passed and signed into law in 1996, DOMA has two main sections: 1) It gives states the option of not recognizing gay "mar-

riages" from other states and 2) it defines marriage for federal purposes and federal benefits as being between a man and a woman. Only the second section of DOMA was in front of the court. But even though the court did not deal with the DOMA section that affirms states' rights, it nevertheless could get to that issue with the Prop 8 case. Prop 8 is a constitutional amendment adopted by California voters in 2008 that defines marriage as between a man and a woman. California is one of 30 states that define marriage within the state constitution in the traditional sense. Another 11 states define it that way via statute. Nine states recognize gay "marriage."

Q: What are the possible outcomes of the cases?

A: If the court strikes down both DOMA and Prop 8, then gay "marriage" could be legalized in all 50 states. But there are other possible outcomes, including the

upholding of both as constitutional. Based on the oral arguments heard by the court, though, that type of sweeping victory for social conservatives seems unlikely. If the court arguments are any indication, it seems more likely that the court will overturn the DOMA section at issue while at the same time not even ruling on the constitutionality of Prop 8, thus keeping the issue — for now — a state matter. Predictions, though, can be tough, as proven in 2012 when most court-watchers thought the justices would overturn the historic health care law, only eventually to see the court uphold it.

Q: If the court avoids ruling directly on Prop 8, what happens to the issue nationwide?

A: A ruling that skirts the constitutionality of Prop 8 would limit the lower court's overturning of Prop 8 to California. Under one scenario, the court could rule that
(See 'Where's,' page 7)

Opponents of gay 'marriage' say they're no bigots

They are moms and dads, authors and activists, a former police officer and a former single mom. They're black and white and Hispanic. One's a Roman Catholic archbishop, another an evangelical minister. Many have large families — including gay members.

They are among the leading opponents of gay "marriage," or as they prefer to be called, defenders of traditional marriage. And they're trying to stop an increasingly popular movement as it approaches making history at the Supreme Court.

At times, it can seem a lonely battle. Outspent and lately out-hustled by highly organized gay rights organizations, opponents have struggled to get their story out. They're portrayed as bigots, likened to the racists and sexists of yesteryear. Some have been compared with hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

'Live and let live'

For men of the cloth such as Roman Catholic Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, nothing could be further from the truth.

"Those who believe what every human society since the beginning of the human race has believed about marriage, and is clearly the case from nature itself, will be regarded, and treated, as the next class of bigots," he said. "That's untrue, and it's not kind, and it doesn't seem to lead to a 'live and let live' pluralism."

From his new post in San Francisco, a bastion of gay and lesbian activism, Cordileone chairs the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on the defense of marriage. He's one of the nation's leading opponents of gay "marriage" and is buttressed by a diverse crowd:

At the tip of the spear is the National Organization for Marriage, led by Brian Brown, a father of eight who
(See 'Diverse,' page 5)

COMMENT

Reflections on a Moment

It was a week before Good Friday sometime between noon and one o'clock in the afternoon. Together with 31 other Alabama Baptists, I had spent the morning walking the Via Dolorosa or Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. We had started at the Antonia Fortress where Jesus was tried before Pilate. We had stepped on stones believed to be from Jesus' day; stones marking the place where Jesus was whipped with the cat-of-nine-tails and mocked by soldiers as "King of the Jews."

We had stopped where Jesus stumbled under the weight of His physical burden and other sites marked along the way to Calvary.

Our group had climbed the steps that cover a rock outcropping where tradition says Jesus was crucified. We had looked through glass at that rock on either side of the marble altar erected atop the crucifixion site, touched the very place where the cross was said to stand and even noticed a split in the rock caused by the earthquake following Jesus' death, at least according to tradition.

All of us had stood in line to enter the marble enclosed tomb from which Jesus was raised. Now only a single piece of original stone remains at the entrance for visitors to see. The rest is what crusader aristocracy thought fit for a king's burial when they rebuilt the church in 1048 after it was torn down by a Muslim ruler.

Where Jesus died

Both Calvary and the empty tomb stand under the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. According to early church fathers, the first believers in the Jerusalem church venerated this spot as the place where Jesus died. But Roman Emperor Hadrian so despised Christians that he destroyed their worship places and in 135 AD built a temple dedicated to Venus atop the place they worshipped.

About 200 years later (326 AD), Emperor Constantine tore down the pagan temple and



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

constructed the first Christian church there. Since that time, Christians have been worshipping at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre almost continuously.

On this day I was preparing for a worship service later in the day at the Garden Tomb. The Garden Tomb, also known as Gordon's Calvary, does not have much historical support as the site of Jesus' tomb but it is much more spiritually satisfying to me and most other evangelical Christians than all the marble and incenses associated with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — but that is another story.

My wife Pat and I had sat in the courtyard outside the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre trying to shelter from the strong gusts of wind that made havoc of displays outside the countless shops in the Old City of Jerusalem. After a while, we decided to escape the winds and went inside the church.

To the left of the entrance we found a stone bench where I continued my Bible study reading from John 11 where Jesus told Martha that He was the "Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."

I read from Matthew 28 about the stone being rolled away from the tomb and the angel's an-

nouncement that "He is not here. He has risen just as he said." I read from 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 6. I read 1 Peter 1:3-4, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."

It was only then that I looked up and realized I was looking directly at the site of the crucifixion. There was almost a straight line between me and the mosaic display of Christ hanging on a cross, which hangs just in front of the silver star placed over the stone marking the crucifixion site.

Instinctively I looked to my left and found I was looking at the entrance to the traditional empty tomb.

Seeing the empty tomb

Can you imagine the impact of reading about the hope of every believer because Jesus paid the price for sin on Calvary's cross and was raised from the dead by the power of God, providing hope for eternity to all who accept His free gift, and then looking up to realize that you are looking at the place where it happened; to turn your head and see the empty tomb?

As if to add impact to the moment, the organ in one of the Roman chapels was playing softly and its melodious sound echoed off the ancient stone walls.

The moment was simply overwhelming. I was not the tourist I had been earlier that day as we explored the alcoves of the church. Now I was a worshipper caught up in the Bible, God's Holy Word, and overcome by the sites of Calvary and the empty tomb in such proximity to one another. All I could do was bow my head and thank God for His steadfast love and abundant mercy.

That afternoon we visited the Garden Tomb. All of us took turns entering a tomb hewed out of the side of a stone cliff. We were surrounded by trees and flowers. It was more of a garden; more of a first-century feel than the marble slabs of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We had a worship service there, prayed, sang and read Scripture. It was a good time.

Personally I wish Constantine had not moved those tons of rock and dirt in order to make a site for a church. I wished he had left it alone so believers could get a first-century feel at the more authentic site. But if he had, there might be a big box store sitting on the site instead of a church.

But no matter the condition of the place, I will never forget the moment of startling awe when I looked up from studying God's Holy Word and saw both Calvary and the empty tomb.

Thank you, God, for that moment.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

CALVINISM MOVEMENT

In the March 21, 2013, edition of *The Alabama Baptist*, I have to take issue with the story titled, "Mahaney Leaves Sovereign Grace Ministries." You stated that the Calvinism movement was popular among Southern Baptists.

I take offense to that.

It may be popular with some, but not with me nor many other Southern Baptists.

Dale Morgan
Jack, Ala.

DISAPPOINTED

After everything that our president has stood for the past years against biblical principles, I do not know how anyone can write an article concerning the National Prayer Breakfast and put him out front about him "searching the Scriptures" concerning his family and decisions he makes.

This should not have been the main attention of that article when the keynote speaker, Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, spoke out for biblical principles. The article barely mentions Carson. What

a disappointment.

Loraine
McDonald
Mulga, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE — The article "Obama talks about faith at prayer breakfast" in the Feb. 21 issue reports what the president said during his remarks at the Feb. 6 national event. This is the typical way *The Alabama Baptist* covers the National Prayer Breakfast each year.





"If ye continue in my word,
then ... ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you
free." John 8:31-32

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In the public square

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission names Russell Moore next president

Russell Moore has been elected as the next president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). The ERLC's board of trustees approved Moore, currently dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in a special, called meeting March 26 at a Nashville hotel.

Moore, 41, a native of Biloxi, Miss., will be the eighth president of the entity charged by Southern Baptists with addressing moral and religious freedom issues. With a background in government, the pastorate and seminary training, he already is well-known as a commentator from a Southern Baptist and evangelical Christian perspective on ethics, theology and the culture.

"I am honored and humbled to be asked to serve Southern Baptists as ERLC president," Moore said. "I pray for God's grace to lead the ERLC to be a catalyst to connect the agenda of the kingdom of Christ to the cultures of local congregations for the sake of the mission of the gospel in the world."

Moore's election means he will be only the second ERLC president in the last quarter of a century. He will succeed Richard Land, who will retire upon the completion of 25 years leading the entity.

"I am delighted that the Holy Spirit has led the ERLC's trustees to Dr. Russell Moore as the commission's next president," Land said. "Dr. Moore is a godly Christian minister, a devoted husband and father, and a convictional, committed Baptist. His excellent academic preparation, combined with his keen mind and his tender heart for God and His people, make him a person uniquely suited to serve our Savior and Southern Baptists in this crucial role at such a critical moment in our nation's history."

"I join the trustees and ERLC staff in committing to pray for Russell and his dear family as he prepares to assume the tremendous responsibilities of the ERLC presidency," Land said.

Moore will begin his new responsibilities June 1. At that time, Land will become the entity's president emeritus, an honor bestowed on him by trustees in September.

The ERLC trustees' seven-person presidential search committee, chaired by Barry Creamer of Criswell College in Dallas, recommended Moore to the full board after a seven-month process.

"After praying, planning, meeting and work-

ing for months to find the man we believe God would have lead the ERLC, we are blessed by the board's election of Russell Moore today and confident that God will use his message to impact churches and the public marketplace of ideas for what is right, true and desperately needed today," said Creamer, Criswell's vice president of academic affairs.

Moore has served since 2004 as dean of the school of theology and senior vice president for academic administration at Southern Seminary. He joined the faculty in 2001 as professor of Christian theology and ethics and continues in that role.

He was preaching pastor at a campus of Highview Baptist Church, Louisville, from 2008 until 2012. While a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Moore was associate pastor at Bay Vista Baptist Church, Biloxi, Miss.

Before attending seminary, Moore served for four years as an aide to pro-life Democratic Congressman Gene Taylor of Mississippi.

Moore and his wife, Maria, are the parents of five sons.

Moore is a leading voice in the growing pro-adoption movement among evangelicals. His 2009 book — "Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches" — has played a significant role



BP photo
Russell Moore

in that cause and he is a frequent speaker at adoption conferences.

On his blog, in written commentaries, in speeches and in news media interviews, Moore comments frequently on a range of issues and the Christian gospel's impact on them. These include abortion and other sanctity of life matters, race relations, marriage, pornography, politics and popular culture.

In addition to his book on adoption, Moore has written two other books, "Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ" and "The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective." He has three other books scheduled to be published, including one on marriage and one on abortion. Moore also has edited and contributed to other books.

He has served four times on the Resolutions Committee at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting, including as chairman in 2010.

Land, who was 41 when he became head of the entity in 1988, led the transformation of the ERLC during the convention's theological resurgence, moving the commission in a more conservative direction on such issues as abortion. He announced his retirement as ERLC president in July 2012.

In addition to its Nashville office, the ERLC has an office in Washington. (BP)

Alabamians say Moore 'wise' choice

The role of the ERLC in this changing culture has never been more critical. Russell Moore is a man of clear and measured thinking, and he is winsome, yet with the ability to land a hard-hitting truth. His convictions are unmistakably clear. I affirm the wisdom of this choice for Russell Moore to serve as president of this institution and anticipate wise leadership in face of radical cultural shifts."

Ed Litton, pastor, First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland

In these days where the church seems to be losing ground amidst such significant cultural issues, we as Southern Baptists must think carefully and creatively about how we can most compassionately, wisely, humbly and boldly bring the gospel to bear on the culture around us. In light of this, I have full confidence in Dr. Moore's abil-

ity to speak grace-filled, gospel-saturated truth clearly and biblically ... to a variety of different people. I also have full confidence in his ability to lead others to do the same as he organizes and directs the entire ERLC for maximum impact in our culture and ultimately in God's Kingdom."

David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham

Russell Moore is a believable man. Every time I have been in his presence I was convinced that he was both a Christian and a gentleman. He is the personal epitome of the needs required by the head of [ERLC]. In all my conversations with him, the spirit of compassion for all people has exuded out of the pores of his being. I endorse him with the highest confidence.

Robert Smith, professor of Christian Preaching, Beeson Divinity School



Joyful noise

Why don't we sing Psalms?

By Ray Van Neste
Union University

Why don't Baptists sing the Psalms? Some Baptist churches do, but by and large the singing of the Psalms is not common practice among us. Why is that? Psalm singing has been a staple of worship for Christians from the very beginning of church — a fact widely acknowledged. Among the reasons for this widespread and longstanding practice of Christians is, no doubt, the direct command of Scripture that we sing the Psalms. Paul explicitly exhorts us in this practice in both Ephesians and Colossians: “be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph. 5:19).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16).

I am not convinced by the arguments of those who argue that we should sing only the Psalms, but I'm even less convinced by the common practice of singing anything but the Psalms.

Found in Scripture

The singing (and praying) of the psalms is seen throughout Scripture. Significantly we find Jesus and the disciples singing psalms together as they conclude the Last Supper — “After singing psalms, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Mark 14:26). The common Jewish practice was to sing Psalms 113–118 before, during and at the close of the Passover meal. Thus Jesus, having just said His body would be broken and His blood spilled, knowing His betrayal, arrest, scourging and crucifixion were just ahead, closed this meal singing with His disciples Psalms that include these words: “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of The Lord” (118:17).

“Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me” (Ps. 118:5–7).

“Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar” (Ps. 118:27b).

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:21–23).

No surprise then the significance of this Psalm was

not lost on apostles. In Acts 4 when asked by what authority they preached and healed Peter cited Psalm 118:21–24.

Also when Paul and Silas were imprisoned they found comfort in “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25). Most scholars suggest “hymns” here refers to Psalms as this word was commonly used to refer to the Psalms.

With the Psalms being a part of regular singing, their words were available to the mind for praying, which we also see represented in Scripture. As Jesus hung on the cross He used the words of the Psalms as His own prayers (Mark 14:34, citing Ps. 22:1; Luke 23:46, citing Ps. 31:5). Later the first recorded prayer meeting of the early church would use Psalm 2 as their prayer (Acts 4:23–31).

Given that the Psalms show up often in context of trial and suffering, it is not surprising that in the later history of the church, the singing of the Psalms has been a mainstay for suffering Christians. Stirring accounts abound of faithful believers steeling themselves in the face of persecution by the singing of the Psalms — from the Scottish Covenanters and French Huguenots of the 16th and 17th centuries, to Dutch Christians under Nazi occupation, to Hungarian believers under communism in 20th century. Of these Hungarians someone recently stated, “It can be justly argued that psalm-singing carried them through four decades of communist tyranny.”

With such biblical command and precedent as well as historical example, would we not do well to revive this historic practice? As we see our culture darkening and the pressures against faithful Christian practice and witness increasing, ought we not avail ourselves of this time-tested resource? If God has given us these songs and prayers, doesn't this suggest we need them? For myself, seeing the mighty spiritual oaks that have grown up in the soil of the Psalms, I want to use the same fertilizer.

Resources abound for setting Psalms to recognizable tunes that we might sing them, learn them and take them deep into our souls. To find some of the resources, visit <http://psalter.org> or www.amazon.com.

Let us, then, join our forefathers, the apostles, and our Lord in the singing of the Psalms.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Ray Van Neste, professor of biblical studies and director of the R.C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., is editor, along with Richard Wells, of “Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship” (B&H, 2012).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

Colossians 3:16

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Former youth minister pleads guilty to sexual abuse

BEL AIR, Md. — A former youth minister at a Southern Baptist church in Maryland pleaded guilty March 20 to sexually abusing a 15-year-old girl attending the congregation's Vacation Bible School.

Walter Harrison Yocum, 35, pleaded guilty to a single count of sexual offense in the third degree, according to the *Baltimore Sun*. At the time of his arrest August 2012, he was youth minister and contemporary worship musician at Calvary Baptist Church, Bel Air, Md. He will be sentenced May 30 and faces up to 10 years in prison.

Yocum was charged Aug. 23 with third- and fourth-degree sexual offense, sexual abuse of a minor and second-degree assault. According to a letter on the Calvary Baptist website, Yocum was suspended with pay when he confessed to his pastor about “having an inappropriate relationship with someone other than his wife.” After evidence pointed to “ongoing misconduct with a minor beyond what was initially confessed,” he was fired.

Senior Pastor Ralph Green said in a statement at the time of Yocum's arrest that church leaders were “outraged and ashamed of this unacceptable, immoral and sinful conduct unbecoming of a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Green would not say whether or not the girl and her family were church members. “Quite honestly that is not what is important,” he wrote. “The safety, security and well-being of all children and their future lives are of prime importance.”

Rogers values Baptists' ‘special gift’ — religious liberty

WAKE FOREST, N.C. — The new head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships told reporters March 22 she values Baptists' “special gift to the nation” — religious liberty — and looks forward to tackling religious liberty issues in her new role.

Melissa Rogers, a Baptist church-state expert who has been on the faculty of Wake Forest University School of Divinity in Wake Forest, N.C., said in a conference call organized by the White House that she both understands the Baptist “point of view” and aims to work with adherents of “different faiths and none.”

“Baptists have always joined hands across lines with those of many faiths and those who don't claim faith and have a commitment to the common good,” Rogers said. “The Baptist history of religious liberty is a special gift to the nation and I look forward to working on religious liberty issues in this new role.”

Rogers, who was appointed March 13, had been director of the Center for Religion and Public Affairs at Wake Forest, where she also taught courses on church-state relations and Christianity and public policy. She is a former general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty and is a member of Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church, Va.



ROGERS

GuideStone recognized in Lipper Fund Awards

DALLAS — For the second year in a row, GuideStone Financial Resources has been recognized in the Lipper Fund Awards, with the MyDestination 2025 Fund being named Best Fund Over Three Years among Mixed-Asset Target 2025 Funds.

The Southern Baptist entity's MyDestination Funds was the nation's first Christian-based socially screened date target fund when it was launched in August 2006.

Jeff Tjornehoj, head of Lipper Americas Research, one of the financial world's leading fund research and analysis organizations, said the Lipper awards “honor those funds that excelled at producing superior risk-adjusted returns for their investors. For that, we are pleased to recognize GuideStone's MyDestination 2025 Fund as the top Mixed-Asset Target 2025 Fund over the past three years.”

The MyDestination 2025 Fund was ranked No. 1 among 92 similar funds for its performance over the three years ending Nov. 30, 2012.

Earlier in 2012, the entire GuideStone Funds family was ranked No. 1 out of 182 eligible fund families with up to \$40 billion in assets, receiving Lipper's Best Overall Small Fund Group in the U.S. over the three-year period ending Nov. 30, 2011, for fund groups with at least three equity, three bond and three mixed-asset classes. GuideStone Funds was the first Christian-based socially screened fund family to win the premier Lipper honor.

Delayed marriage

Report shows more unwed births in America

First comes baby, then comes marriage? That is the new norm for many middle-class young Americans — and they and their children are paying a price, says a new report.

With 48 percent of first births now outside of marriage, “today’s unmarried twenty-something moms are the new teen mothers,” says the report, released by the National Marriage Project, the Relate Institute and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

The report says reviving cultural support for earlier marriage may be part of the solution, but some experts question that approach.

The National Marriage Project, based at the University of Virginia, has been sounding alarms about the growing disconnect between marriage and parenthood for a while. But the report is the first to make clear that a “tipping point” has been reached for many Americans in the middle class — those who have at least a high school education but no college degree, said Bradford Wilcox, the sociologist who directs the project.

Among young women with high school diplomas, 58 percent of first births are now outside marriage, the report says. For high-school dropouts it is 83 percent; for college-educated women it is 12 percent. The report notes that 54 percent of young women are high school graduates; 37 percent are college graduates.

In Alabama, there were 59,322 live births in 2011 — 24,946 births were to unwed women, according to vital statistics published by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Of those births to unwed women, 58.6 percent were to women ages 20–24 and 31.4 percent to women ages 25–29, according to numbers from the Center for Health Statistics.

Overall, the median marriage age is now 27 for women, 29 for men. But the median age at which a woman has her first baby is 26, the report released by the National Marriage Project, the Relate Institute and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy says.

Young people delay marriage to finish their educations, launch their careers and try to achieve economic security. Marriage is “something they do after they have all their other ducks in a row,” according to the report. In general, the delay works out well for college-educated young people who also delay having children, it adds. The benefits of delayed marriage can include higher incomes for women and lower divorce rates, it notes. But there also are costs, Wilcox said.

For children, the cost of having unmarried parents can be instability. According to the report: 39 percent

of young unmarried parents who start out living together break up before their child is 5 years old; just 13 percent of married parents split so soon. Such upheaval hurts children, many studies have found.

The report suggests several remedies, including economic and education policy shifts that will make financial stability attainable for more young people. But it also says some who might otherwise marry are now being discouraged by parents, friends and popular culture.

“The broader culture should respect the choice of twentysomethings to marry, especially those who have reached their mid-twenties, provided that they are in a good relationship,” the report says.

But marriage “may not be such a good deal” for less-educated couples, said Susan Brown, co-director of the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University. “We do know that people with lower levels of education who get married are more likely to get divorced.”

Brown, who did some of the research cited in the report but did not help write it, added that “one of the biggest predictors of divorce is financial instability.” So, she said, young people putting off marriage for financial reasons may have good reason.

“The ones who are not marrying are the ones who don’t have the job prospects, don’t have the economic stability,” said Stephanie Coontz, co-chair of the non-

profit Council on Contemporary Families. She was not involved in the report. They also may have other problems unrelated to marriage that help explain why unmarried young people are generally less satisfied with life, she said.

But young people who are careful about marriage may not be as careful about having babies, she said.

Report co-author Kelleen Kaye, senior director of research at the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, said her group is working on efforts to help single women in their 20s delay having children. Right now, 69 percent of pregnancies in that group are unplanned, she said. One program, she said, reaches out to community college students.

“Our message isn’t that all twentysomethings should run out and get married,” she said. “We are saying just think about the most successful way to launch your family.”

The Relate Institute, the third sponsor of the report, is part of the Marriage Study Consortium, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. (RNS, TAB)

Alabama — statistics —

59,322 live births in 2011

24,946 births were to unwed women

(Source: Alabama Department of Public Health)

Of the 24,946 births to unwed women, **58.6 percent** were to women ages 20–24

31.4 percent to women ages 25–29

(Source: Center for Health Statistics)

Diverse group stands up for traditional marriage

(continued from page 1)
travels the nation speaking at rallies opposing gay “marriage.” He succeeded Maggie Gallagher, a conservative writer and speaker who warns about “losing American civilization.”

The Family Research Council, headed by Tony Perkins, has been labeled a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center for “defaming gays and lesbians.” Perkins, a father of five, authored the nation’s first “covenant marriage” bill as a Louisiana state legislator to combat no-fault divorces.

One of the nation’s leading female opponents is Penny Nance, president of Concerned Women for America, founded in 1979 by Beverly LaHaye. Fighting gay “marriage” is the hardest issue for the group because it’s so “complicated and deeply personal,” she said, but adds, “We believe that we must stand for truth no matter who it offends.”

Leading a group of conservative black pastors is William Owens of Memphis, Tenn., whose eight children range from age 50 to 4 months. For him, opposing same-sex “mar-

riage” is part of the battle to rebuild African-American families after decades of absentee fathers. “We already have enough problems,” he said.

New York state Sen. Ruben Diaz, one of the nation’s most prominent Hispanic opponents of gay “marriage,” is used to tilting at windmills. An evangelical minister who has compared abortion with the Holocaust, he was the lone Senate Democrat to oppose the gay “marriage” law signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2011.

‘Bucking the tide’

What ties this diverse group together is a belief that legalizing more same-sex “marriages” will harm the family, particularly children, while encouraging homosexuality and infringing on educational and religious liberty. Their battle continued in late March with a “March for Marriage” in the nation’s capital, the same day the Supreme Court kicked off two days of oral arguments.

“Are we bucking the tide when it comes to cultural elites?” Brown asked before answering, “Of course. We know that.” (RNS)

Croyle to speak at upcoming conference focused on fathers

With experience parenting his own son and daughter, not to mention helping to raise more than 1,800 children through the ministry of Big Oak Ranch, John Croyle will speak at an upcoming conference with a focus on fathers.

The conference, “A Proven Game Plan for Raising Sons/Daughters,” will be held on three separate occasions, May 13, 14 and 20, and is sponsored by the Men’s Ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) and surrounding Baptist associations. All denominations are welcome to attend the conference, and attendees are encouraged to invite unchurched people as well.

The May 13 event will be held at the Oak Grove High School auditorium in Bessemer; May 14 at Summerville Baptist Church, Phenix City; and May 20 at the Cullman Civic Center. Each conference will be from 7 p.m. to

8:30 p.m., and no prior registration is required.

Mud Creek Baptist Association is a co-sponsor for the May 13 conference. Ken Maddox, director of missions for the association, said his hope for the event is that it will serve to strengthen men in their family role.

Big Oak Ranch is a Christian home for children needing a chance. Croyle is founder and executive director of Big Oak Ranch, Inc., which today comprises Big Oak Boys’ Ranch in Gadsden, Big Oak Girls’ Ranch in Springville and Westbrook Christian School in Rainbow City. Croyle played football as a defensive end for the University of Alabama’s 1973 National Championship team under Coach Paul “Bear” Bryant. His new book, “The Two-Minute Drill to Manhood: A Proven Game Plan For Raising Sons,” will be released in May.

For more information about the conference, call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268. (TAB)



CROYLE

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BESSEMER

► **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will host a Bible study from the Gospel of Luke titled "The Most Important Week in History," led by guest teacher Jerry Batson, pastor of First Church, McCalla, Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in April and May. Bill McCall is pastor.



BATSON

BIRMINGHAM

► **Huffman Church, Birmingham**, will recognize one of its former pastors, Harper Shannon, for 67 years in preaching ministry April 7. An informal gathering will be at 9:30 a.m. before the worship service for the recognition. Thomas Wilder, pastor of Bethel Church, Collegeville, will be the guest speaker. ► **Jason Dees** is the new pastor of **Valleydale Church, Birmingham**. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in communication from Auburn University and a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Covington, Ga.; executive pastor of CrossPointe Church, Madison; and pastor of New Washington Christian Church in Indiana. He and his wife, Paige, have one daughter. ► **South Roebuck Community Church, Birmingham**, has called **James Sutton** as interim pastor. He holds a bachelor of science degree in communications and minor in business administration from Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss. He is enrolled in the master of divinity program at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Marie, have two children.



SUTTON

CALHOUN

► **Harmony Church, Anniston**, will celebrate its 175th anniversary April 21. Worship will be at 10 a.m., lunch will be 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and the anniversary celebration will be at 1 p.m. To RSVP call 256-237-4458. David Jones is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

► **CrossRoads Church, Rogersville**, will hold a spring crusade "Piercing the Darkness with THE Light" April 14–17. Sunday services will be at 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Bobby Atkins, pastor of Truth Tabernacle of Praise, Stone Mountain, Ga., will speak and David Thomas, worship pastor of Truth Tabernacle of Praise, will lead music. Child care will be provided. For information call 256-247-6336 or visit www.crbc-shoals.org. David O. Cofield is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Rick Glenn** was honored with a plaque from members of **Memphis Church, Dothan**, on March 24 for 15 years of faithful service. The plaque is inscribed with 2 Corinthians 9:12. Jim Tate is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **Franklin Association** has moved to its new office building at 128 Guard St. NE in Russellville. An open house will be May 5, 2–4 p.m. For information call 256-332-1874. Larry Dover is director of missions.

FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will honor Dan Sims as pastor emeritus April 14, 10:15 a.m. A reception will be from 2–4 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Everyone is invited. Larry Gipson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Bethlehem Church, Lacey's Spring**, will celebrate its 170th anniversary homecoming April 14. Former pastor Eldridge Criscoe will preach at 10 a.m. Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will speak at 11 a.m.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission; Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*; and Charlie Howell, executive director of missions for Madison Association, also will attend. Dwayne Moore, worship leader of The Station Church, Hoover, will provide special music in all services. Lunch will follow at noon, and shared memories and special music will begin at 1:30 p.m. For information call 256-881-2659. Al Phillips is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Indian Springs Church Eight Mile**, will hold special services April 7–11, April 7 at 10 a.m., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and April 8–11, 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. Bill Bozeman will speak and Jeff Phillips will lead the singing. Charles Couey is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Carrollton Church** will host speaker David Ring on April 14, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Ring also will speak April 15 at Gordo Elementary School at 6:30 p.m. For information call the church office at 205-367-8577. Tommy Winders is pastor.

SALEM-TROY

► **Southside Church, Troy**, will hold "Seek Him First Women's Retreat" April 26–27 with guest speaker Sarah Ott. For high school seniors and up. To register or for information call 334-566-2263. Registration ends April 17. Andrew Knick is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Calvary Heights Church, Alexander City**, will host The Diplomats Quartet on April 21, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. Everyone is invited. Jeff Freeman is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Fairview West Church, Hanceville**, will hold spring revival April 14–17. Sunday services will be 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 7 p.m. Reuben "Lucky" Teague will speak. Trueman Davis is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

UMobile professor Kenn Hughes wins Dove Award

University of Mobile Director of Instrumental Studies Kenn Hughes has received a Dove Award for Best Children's Album of the Year in 2012 for his work as musical director for Denver & the Mile High Orchestra on the album, "Groovy."

The Dove Awards, presented by the Gospel Music Association, recognize outstanding achievement in the Christian music industry. The ceremony features live musical performances and are broadcast on the Gospel Music Channel. While the Dove Award was announced in 2012, Hughes recently received the Dove Award trophy, which he displays in his office in Martin Hall on the Baptist university campus.

The winning album, "Groovy," is a collection of children's songs written and performed in the distinct horn-driven style that is as popular with parents as it is with their children.

"This award is a great accomplishment for the band and represents many years of hard work and dedication, both individually and collectively. I am incredibly blessed to work with some wonderful musicians and thankful for those relationships," said Hughes, an assistant professor of music and director of RamCorps and Jazz Band.

Hughes continues to perform with Denver & the Mile High Orchestra on select dates, including a rare upcoming opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall on April 11. (UMobile)



HUGHES

Lama named Beeson's distinguished D.Min. alumnus

A.K. Lama has been named this year's distinguished Doctor of Ministry alumnus at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. Lama earned the Beeson degree in 2002.

Lama is founder and director of Transforming Leaders in Asia, a ministry that equips and disciples Christian workers. He serves as general secretary of the Council for Baptist Churches in North East India. He also holds a doctorate in Old Testament from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Lama began his career as a veterinarian in his native India, where he was a Buddhist until he became a Christian in 1983.

He and his wife, Asangla Ao, have three children.

Lama received the award from Mark Searby, director of Beeson's doctor of ministry studies program, in a chapel service at the school. (Samford)



LAMA

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Thoughts from Alabama Baptist leaders

"No matter what the Supreme Court may decide, God as well as nature have made clear that the relationship known as marriage can only be between two people of the opposite gender. It is time to use common sense in defining terms and then address issues of relationship recognition apart from the charged atmosphere of unnecessary redefinition. Love may not be gender specific but marriage is."

Ron Madison, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville

"God began civilization in Genesis 1 with the institution of marriage between one man and one woman. Any other application of the term 'marriage' is twisting those principles set by our Lord in the beginning of humanity. Our country appears ready to establish our ways apart from those of nature as set by God. Our country is headed toward that status explained and condemned in Romans 1, as we are stretching beyond the bounds of nature and natural relationship."

John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church

"The institution of marriage benefits our society, particularly children. Whatever the Supreme Court decision, marriage that is not between a man

and a woman is not marriage at all. Any new way to define marriage is detrimental. Why? The reason given for the change is fairness and opportunity to marry for all. So any redefinition of marriage opens the door for 'fairness and freedom' to be extended to all types of amoral relationships. Our society is not better for it. Our (believers') source of truth is Scripture and when we deny its teachings as our moral absolute, we are in trouble."

Donna Wright, small group and assimilation, West Mobile Baptist Church

"Unfortunately, we have two very intense sides in this battle. We who favor traditional marriage see it as a moral issue. I don't think people of faith should relax their views on what is morally right. But I suspect whether we like it or not, the other side will win on this battle because they have successfully framed it as a human and civil rights issue. In a pluralistic society, we face the reality that there are lifestyles that do not agree with our values. But I don't think that we should step back from our faith. I don't want Christians to become faint of heart."

D'Linell Finley, pastor of Southlawn Baptist Church, Montgomery

Where's all of this headed?

(continued from page 1)
ProtectMarriage.com — the official sponsors of Prop 8 — did not have "legal standing" to appeal the decision after Prop 8 was overturned by the federal district court. "Standing" became an issue when the governor and attorney general of California chose not to appeal the decision. Politico.com reported that under that scenario, the district court's ruling "could end up being limited to only the couple of counties and state officials named as defendants in the lawsuit." The court also could dismiss the petition as "improvidently granted" — that is, justices could say it should not have taken the case in the first place. Justice Anthony Kennedy — a swing vote — seemed to open the door for either scenario when he said there's a "substantial question" on standing and said, "I just wonder if the case was properly granted." A majority of the justices seemed to be in favor of punting on Prop 8's constitutionality.

Q: Where did the justices fall on the broader question of gay "marriage" legalization?

A: Kennedy, as he often does, made comments friendly to both sides. Conservatives were heartened to hear him express concern about going into "uncharted waters" and note that "we have five years of information" on the impact of gay "marriage" "to weigh against 2,000 years of history or more" on the impact of traditional marriage. But liberals noted Kennedy also seemed concerned about the "legal injury" to



RNS photo

Participants in the March for Marriage head toward the Supreme Court to oppose same-sex 'marriage.'

the "40,000 children in California" who live with same-sex parents and want "their parents to have full recognition and full status." But, as previously noted, Kennedy also implied that the court should not be considering Prop 8. The court's liberal wing — Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan — all made comments friendly to gay "marriage" legalization, with Kagan rejecting the notion that traditional married laws can be tied to procreation. But all four justices also questioned whether the court should be hearing the Prop 8 case. And Sotomayor heartened social conservatives when she said in the DOMA arguments that "states control" marriage, although she said it in the context of the DOMA case, not Prop 8. Three of the four members of the court's conservative wing — John Roberts, Antonin Scalia and Samuel Alito

— expressed concern about gay "marriage" legalization. Roberts said marriage, throughout history, "developed to serve purposes that, by their nature, didn't include homosexual couples." Conservative bloc member Clarence Thomas did not ask questions.

Q: Which side won oral arguments?

A: Potentially both, simply because there are two laws at play. If the DOMA section in question is struck down, it would be a win for social liberals and would grant gay couples in the nine states where gay "marriage" is legal the federal benefits of marriage. But if the court also gives deference to states on the issue of marriage, it would leave in place traditional laws in the remaining 41 states — with the possible exception of California. That would be mostly a win for social conservatives. Kennedy made comments in support of state rights.

Q: When will the court issue its decisions?

A: Most likely in June.

Q: Where is public opinion on the issue?

A: Polls are showing a small majority in support of gay "marriage," although there's evidence that polling is off, at least some. That's because — as the argument goes — a portion of the population is giving only the "socially desirable" answer to pollsters. Chris Stirewalt, digital politics editor for Fox News, noted in a March 26 column that among the approximately 30 states that have voted on traditional marriage, pre-election polls "have underestimated support" for the traditional side in all but one instance. He quoted New York University political science professor Patrick Eagan as saying pre-election polls underestimate support for traditional marriage laws by 7 percentage points. "There is more to this than simply the difference between the electorate and the general population," Stirewalt wrote. "Some folks are lying to pollsters." (BP)

Living with a Reverse Mortgage

By Jimmy Dixon

"What is it like to have a reverse mortgage?" Max and Carolyn Youngblood (a retired pastor and wife) have answered:

"Carolyn and I took out a reverse mortgage a little over two years ago after reading Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist*. Jimmy came to our home and he was most knowledgeable, kind and patient — a true Christian gentleman.

We decided to apply because we had a mortgage that was a struggle to pay each month. Plus there were some improvements that we wanted to make to our home. Since we closed on our reverse mortgage, life is better because we no longer have any

monthly payments and our home looks so much better.

Each month we receive informative statements from the lender. We are pleased that we have a reverse mortgage and we highly recommend Jimmy to you."



Max and Carolyn

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their

lives. He is Bible study director and an active deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure, quote or DVD, contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



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How to **COPE** with **GRIEF**



God offers hope to cling to during long, difficult journey of loss

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

For Mary Langford, the doorbell changed everything. “That sound, and the news that followed it, shattered the day’s plans and the predictability of our lives into a thousand painful pieces which would never be put back together exactly as they had been.”

The person who rang it told her that her son was dead.

“There in that dining room, which had been such a happy place a few minutes earlier, I turned to the One to Whom I have turned in every need of life,” she wrote in her book, “That Nothing Be Wasted.”

“I asked Him to help us to honor Him as we walked this unknown path,” Langford wrote of her family — her husband, Don, who was a surgeon at a mission hospital in Hong Kong, and their children, including a daughter in nursing school in Alabama. “My husband had the same reaction. He came and took me in his arms and said, ‘Now we will see what the Lord does. Now we will prove the truth of what we have believed and taught for so many years.’”

When you lose someone, you start a long,

difficult journey with God, clinging to His faithfulness, said Anne Lawton, a licensed professional counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling.

“Grief takes time,” she said. “There are no numbers or time frames. It is not a short process. Expect for it to take as long as you need.”

Langford wrote that in the early stages of her grief, she felt a continual physical ache.


“I felt almost all the time as if I were carrying a bowl full to the brim with tears, trying very hard not to spill any,” she explained. “Every emotion led to the emotion surrounding my loss. Even laughter would change midway into a sob.”

But, she said, she knew it would not always be that way.

“I was not on a dead-end street, but in a tunnel. It was a dark tunnel, and I was uncertain how long it was, but I knew there was unseen light at the other end,” Langford wrote.

“In the meantime, I looked for something to hold onto in the darkness.”

Lawton said what you choose to hold onto and what you do with your feelings of shock, anger, loneliness and depression can be helpful or detrimental in the short run and the long run.

For more information on how to cope with grief, see story page 9. For more information about how to support someone you know who is grieving a loss, see story page 9. 

“I was not on a dead-end street, but in a tunnel. It was a dark tunnel, and I was uncertain how long it was, but I knew there was unseen light at the other end.”

Mary Langford
author who lost a son

Helpful resources

Pathways Professional Counseling

A ministry of Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries
For individual counseling: Pathwaysprofessional.org

Community Grief Support Service

Professional grief counselors, grief support groups and grief education in five counties in and around Birmingham: communitygriefsupport.org

“Experiencing Grief”

A book by H. Norman Wright with in-depth guidance on walking through grief

“That Nothing Be Wasted”

A book by Mary Langford about how she coped with her son’s suicide

“A Grief Observed”

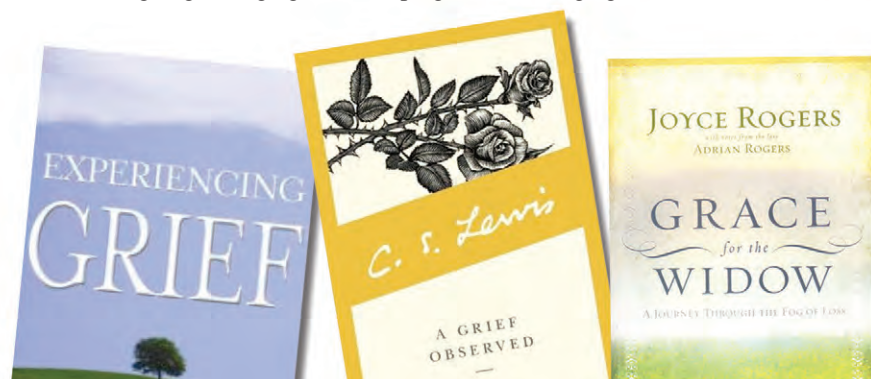
The journals of C.S. Lewis following the death of his wife

“Grace for the Widow”

A book by Joyce Rogers, wife of the late Southern Baptist leader Adrian Rogers, on how she dealt with the loss of her husband

More books and resources

For those going through grief or helping others through grief: centerforloss.com



Externalize your FEELINGS

Facing emotions properly can help long-term healing

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

There's no right or wrong way to grieve, no right or wrong feeling."

But keeping those feelings inside can be detrimental to long-term recovery, said Anne Lawton, a licensed professional counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling.

"Internalizing sadness can turn it into anger and bitterness," she said, suggesting several ways people who are grieving the loss of a loved one can externalize their feelings in a healthy way.

1. Journal.

Make a list of favorite memories shared with that person, Lawton said.

"You can write, 'I'm feeling sad or mad,' or 'Here's what's on my mind today,'" she said. "Even if it's just five minutes a day, it can be helpful in getting the feelings on the outside."

For Mary Langford, writing poems and letters to her son who'd passed away (see story, page 8) "served as a release."

2. Talk.

Find trusted friends and family to talk with and share memories. Community grief support groups can also be helpful, Lawton said.

"Being in a room of people going through a similar situation can be powerful in a way that counseling or talking with a friend cannot," she said.

3. Pray and read Scripture.

Facing grief can bring a variety of responses to God, Lawton said. Sometimes people

question God, and sometimes they have anger toward Him, for example.

"They may even face a crisis of faith," she said. "Honesty is important. Taking your questions to God in prayer is important."

The person grieving may find the questions the psalmist asks to be familiar, she said. It's helpful to know by reading the Psalms that, even in biblical times, people asked God "why," she explained.

Joyce Rogers, wife of the late Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., wrote in her book "Grace for the Widow" that God's Word was the only answer to coping with grief. You have to intentionally make time to read it every morning, to "seek Him, asking for His guidance, protection, comfort and strength," she wrote.

"No, I didn't feel like praising God, but ... I learned to praise God by faith, and one day that faith turned to feeling," Rogers wrote. "I trusted God before, and I would trust Him now. God's Word was the basis for my life before, and it would be my foundation now."

Author Peter Kreeft wrote that the answers to the questions of grief aren't "something," but Someone (see story, this page), and the deep peace and love of that Someone — Jesus — can only be found through a relationship with Him and through knowing His Word.

4. Give yourself grace.

Grief brings a variety of emotions and reactions, according to author C.S. Lewis, who wrote "A Grief Observed" after he lost his wife to cancer.

At times, grief feels like being concussed, he said. "There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me."

Sometimes you want people around, and sometimes you don't, Langford wrote.

Sometimes she "was amazed that life went on," she wrote. "I had no interest in plans or conversations which would previously have been important to me. Every subject paled into insignificance when compared with the enormity of the fact of [my son's] death."

In order to cope for the time being, Lawton said you may need to change some of your habits. If certain family traditions are hard for you at the moment, don't feel bad about that, she said.

"Starting a different family tradition may be helpful. For instance, if you always had Sunday lunch together with the family, and that time becomes hard, why not switch it to Sunday dessert, or to a different day," she said.

5. Live again.

At some point, letting go will be a step in the grief journey, wrote H. Norman Wright in "Experiencing Grief."

"We resist it because we think it means not caring anymore or blocking out the memories of my loved one. Letting go is not the same as not caring," he wrote. "It doesn't mean not remembering your loved one. You want to do that."

It means taking the energy and emotions you had invested in that relationship and investing it somewhere else, Wright wrote.

"It's shifting your focus," he wrote. "There's an insecurity in letting go but a greater security in embracing life."

It involves clinging to Christ and knowing that He works all for good for those who love Him — even your pain, Langford wrote. "He is Restorer of broken things, and it is His desire that nothing be wasted." ❧

Peter Kreeft: Answering the question 'why?'

The answer must be someone, not just something. For the problem (suffering) is about someone (God — why does He ... why doesn't He ... ?) rather than just something. To question God's goodness is not just an intellectual experiment. It is rebellion or tears. It is a little child with tears in its eyes looking up at Daddy and weeping, "Why?" This is not merely the philosophers' "why?" Not only does it add the emotion of tears but also it is asked in the context of a relationship.

The hurt child needs not so much explanations as reassurances. And that is what we get: the reassurance of the Father in the person of Jesus, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). ...

The answer is not just a word but the Word; not an idea but a person. Clues are abstract, persons are concrete. Clues are signs; they signify something beyond themselves, something real. ...

He came. He entered space and time and

suffering. He came, like a lover. Love seeks above all intimacy, presence, togetherness. Not happiness. ... He did the most important thing and He gave the most important gift: Himself. It is a lover's gift. Out of our tears, our waiting, our darkness, our agonized aloneness, out of our weeping and wondering, out of our cry, "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?" He came, all the way, right into that cry.

In coming into our world He came also into our suffering. He sits beside us in the stalled car in the snowbank. Sometimes He starts the car for us, but even when He doesn't, He is there. That is the only thing that matters. Who cares about cars and success and miracles and long life when you have God sitting beside you? He sits beside us in the lowest places of our lives ... Are we broken? He is broken with us. ... Do we weep? Is grief our familiar spirit, our horrifyingly familiar ghost? Do we ever say, "Oh, no, not again! I can't take any more!"

He was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." ...

But He came into life and death, and He still comes. He is still here. ... Love is why He came. It's all love. The buzzing flies around the cross, the stroke of the Roman hammer as the nails tear into His screamingly soft flesh, the infinitely harder stroke of His own people's hammering hatred, hammering at His heart — why? For love. God is love, as the sun is fire and light, and He can no more stop loving than the sun can stop shining.

Henceforth, when we feel the hammers of life beating on our heads or on our hearts, we can know — we must know — that He is here with us, taking our blows. Every tear we shed becomes His tear. He may not yet wipe them away, but He makes them His. Would we rather have our own dry eyes, or His tear-filled ones?

(Source: "Making Sense Out of Suffering" by Peter Kreeft)

Reach out to those grieving

Author Philip Yancey says he feels really helpless around people in pain.

"Really, I feel guilty ... there is no way I can span the gulf between us to penetrate their suffering. I can only watch. Anything I attempt to say seems weak and stiff, as if I'd memorized the lines for a school play."

It's a feeling that often keeps people from saying or doing anything at all, said Anne Lawton, licensed professional counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling. "Many people feel that there's nothing you can say. And that part is true — there are not many words that will provide comfort."

But avoiding them isn't the answer, Lawton said. Be there. Sit with them. Mourn with them. Don't avoid them.

But don't be insensitive either, said Gloria Horsley, an international grief expert, in the *Huffington Post*. Several comments that people commonly make after a death do nothing but put a person's feelings down and make the pain worse, including:

▶ "You can marry again," or "be glad you have other children."

People are not replaceable, Horsley said. "Our loved ones are unique and fill a special place in our lives."

▶ "You must move on." This comment is often ill timed, she said. "People move and change when they are ready."

▶ "They had a good life." "My sorrow is not about their 'good life.' It is about how I will construct a new life without them," Horsley said.

Instead, try actions, such as:

▶ **Show up.** It's your presence that's important, Lawton said. "Just being with them, sitting with them and listening to them — that's what's important. You don't have to say anything," she said.

Horsley agreed, noting that you don't have to try to be profound. "Just showing up and sitting with grievers is profound."

▶ **Do a kindness.** Mow the lawn, walk the dogs or take the kids to the movies, Horsley said.

Lawton adds that sending letters, meals, gifts and Scripture may be well-received, too.

▶ **Ask how they are really feeling.** "Don't ask this question unless you are willing to take some time to listen," Horsley said. "You feel dropped when people ask you to dig deep and then look at their watch."

Lawton said it's important not only to reach out but to stay connected with those who grieve.

"There tends to be a great deal of support in the days surrounding the death but not so much in the weeks and months and anniversaries that follow," she said. "An email, phone call or text message just to let them know you are there and remembering them can be very helpful." (TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Bobby Britt

Bobby Britt, a well-known pastor-evangelist who served at several Alabama Baptist churches and preached at revivals worldwide, died March 28. He was 76.

Britt preached at youth revivals during his undergraduate years at Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and during that time also served as pastor of Maytown Baptist Church. He continued to serve as an evangelist while at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

After years of serving as an evangelist, Britt returned to Alabama to serve as pastor of Hildale Baptist Church, Birmingham, from 1977 to 1983.

He then resumed evangelism for the next several years and served as pastor of Fourth Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham, for five years. He also served interim pastorates at Agape Baptist Church, Pinson, and Palmyra Baptist Church.

Britt is survived by his wife, Carolyn, three children and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



BRITT

(TAB)

UMobile seminar teaches students how to study Bible

College students should be familiar with studying, but many may never have been taught how to study the Bible, according to University of Mobile (UMobile) director of campus life Neal Ledbetter.

That's why the Campus Ministries team at UMobile held a one-night seminar Feb. 1 for students on "How to Study the Bible."

As he has mentored students over the years, Ledbetter has taught many students how to study the Bible.

"I would find myself recommending this book or that book as a resource," he said. "The reality is, most people aren't going to go read a book."

He began to compose handouts with the most important information. Over time, these

handouts became a study.

The focus of the study is getting students to ask the "right" questions. Questions such as: Who is writing? Who is speaking? Who is the audience? Why did the writer use that word? What does this tell me about God?

Ledbetter has found that most college students say they have never actually been taught how to study the Bible.

"In order to think critically and biblically on all of the range of issues that we face today, it is important to know what the Bible says about these issues," Ledbetter said.

The "How to Study the Bible" seminar is offered on campus every few years. For more information, visit www.umobile.edu/CampusLife.

(Ashley Holmes)

Want to know God?

By Pastor Kevin Blackwell
Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown

On July 19, 2010, my life changed forever. Sitting in a hotel lobby in Jinan, China, my wife and I waited with nervous anticipation. We sat there for what seemed like hours until finally a car pulled up, the door opened and into the lobby came the cutest little 6-year-old boy you have ever seen. His clothes were dirty and his shoes were too small, but he had on the best outfit he could find for this special day. Though I had never seen him before, I instantly loved him. For the first time in his life Guo Fu Feng would have someone to call "Daddy."

His life had not been an easy one. He was abandoned by his parents when only 10 months old, left with only the clothes on his back. Fung Fung, as he was called, was taken to an orphanage where he would live until the day he came to our hotel. For more than a year, Lorie and I had only pictures, stories, medical reports and dreams of how things would be on this "gotcha" day. The moment that we took him in our arms, his days of being an orphan were over.

Today Fung Fung is now Brodie Blackwell. In one day he got a new name, a new family, new clothes, his own room and a future.

We all have so much in common with my son. We are spiritual orphans separated from our Father. We need to be adopted in order for our future to be secured and our life to have purpose.

Paul says, "God sent Him (Jesus) to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children. And because you Gentiles have become His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. And since you are His child, everything He has belongs to you" (Gal. 4:5-6; 7b).

Has there ever been a time in your life when you, like my son, stepped into a new family, were embraced by your Father and found your eternal home?

You can do that today by trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You will find the life you have been longing for and the Father who loved you enough to pay the ultimate sacrifice to bring you home.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Calvary Baptist Church of Scottsboro, Ala., is prayerfully seeking to call a senior pastor to lead this conservative Southern Baptist church located in northeast Alabama about 45 miles east of Huntsville. Candidates who feel led by God to this calling should submit resumés to: Calvary Baptist Church, Search Committee Chairman, 107 Chywonah Drive, Scottsboro, AL 35769, or cbcalabama@gmail.com by June 1.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Bethel Baptist Church in Brent, Ala., is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Bethel Baptist Church, Mr. Danny Russell, 298 Tabernacle Road, Brent, AL 35034.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Bethesda Baptist Church, Prattville, Ala., seeking bivocational pastor part-time Sunday morning and evening services. Please reply to: Arlon Toole, 1902 County Road 38, Prattville, AL 36067. Phone: 334-318-3891, fax: 334-365-2127, Chopr47@yahoo.com.

WORSHIP LEADER/STUDENT MINISTER: Camellia Baptist Church in Prattville is currently seeking a God-called individual to serve in this combination position. Seminary degree is preferred, previous experience required. Please send resumés to: 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, ATTN: Personnel Committee.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Rainsville First Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational minister of music whose responsibilities would include leading choir and worship. RFBC enjoys blended worship, leaning toward praise and worship. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 585, Rainsville, AL 35986 or firstbaptist@farmerstel.com. Call 256-638-3141.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Cedar Grove Baptist in Leeds is looking for a part-time minister of music. We have both a traditional and contemporary service. Send resumés to: steven@cedargroveleeds.org.

FULL-TIME STUDENT/ED PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Hokes Bluff, near Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully receiving resumés. Please send resumés or questions to: fbchb@att.net.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER:

First Baptist Church, Pinson, is seeking a part-time contemporary worship leader. Please send your resumé to: sandysuttles@fbcpinson.org or c/o Sandy Suttles, P.O. Box 310, Pinson, AL 35126.

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MINISTER TO KIDS: First Baptist Church, Dothan, Ala., is accepting resumés for a full-time minister to kids (grades 1-6). Mail resumés to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Mike Golson, 300 W. Main Street, Dothan, AL 36301, or email: Mike@fbcdothan.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

PART-TIME FINANCIAL SECRETARY: McElwain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., is searching for a part-time (24 hours a week) financial secretary who is trained in ACS (Automated Church Systems) for financials. If interested, email jbaker@mcElwain.org to request an application.

ADMINISTRATOR/HEAD OF SCHOOL: Immanuel Christian School, Steens, Miss., is taking applications for the position administrator/head of school. Christian education's calling and administrator certifications necessary. Contact Gene Coleman. Email: genecoleman52@yahoo.com. www.immanuelsschool.net.

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

by Jennifer Davis Rash • executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Is it possible to help too much?

We can't ask them to leave. That would be rude, especially after all they have done for us this week."

Through a whispered conversation in the kitchen, my friend and her mother debated how to deal with the pair of neighbors who had returned for the third night in a row. It was nearing midnight and the residents of the house had passed exhaustion hours earlier, but here they stood preparing coffee and snacks for their guests.

A beloved family member had died earlier in the week and the outpouring of love from the community had been truly amazing. The meals, cards, calls, visits, flowers and acts of service were appreciated beyond what words could express.

But some visitors stepped over the line from supportive and helpful to basically moving in and allowing, and possibly expecting, the bereaved family to wait on them.

A few months earlier, I watched another friend walk around in a daze after his father's funeral attempting to redirect the longwinded visitors from his mother. She had not slept in days and was mustering all the strength she could to keep herself upright. She certainly couldn't carry anyone else's weight.

"People have been incredible," my friend explained to me as he listed all the ways church members, neighbors, friends and others had reached out to them. "But ..." pausing to second guess his assessment, he said it seems some people are competing to win an "I cared the most" award.

Instead of pacing themselves

and spreading out the help, the friends and neighbors were rushing to aid his family all at the same time, he explained. "And then some of the ones who stay the longest carry on heavy conversations about politics, the world and routine life issues, all of which we could care less about right now."

It's understandable how it happens. When a death occurs, the family and close friends tend to gather in a central location because it's comforting to be together. Sometimes that gathering is attractive to those who want to be, but aren't, part of the inner circle and thus they hang around keeping the attention focused on themselves rather than being sensitive to time and appropriateness. Other times, their heart is sincere and they truly are trying to help. They think if they can keep the person's mind occupied on other things, then the pain won't hurt as much.

Neither is actually helpful once the person has stayed too long, but it probably makes the person feel good about his or her efforts.

Don't get me wrong — I do think showing up is always right. Members of a bereaved family need friends who will cry with them, listen to them, help them with daily tasks and basically be there for them.

At the same time, I think there is a point where the help becomes overwhelming and exhausting to the recipients.

And mixed in the middle may be a grieving family wearing a public face of having it all together. Discerning what is appropriate may not be easy, especially if family members won't share honestly what they need and don't need.

I am learning that when there is an obvious need and I can meet it, then I should take care of it rather than merely stating, "Let me know if I can do anything."

I also believe the Holy Spirit impresses upon us ways in which we can help if we are paying attention.

For other tips related to helping those who are grieving and for resources for those who are currently experiencing grief, see pages 8 and 9.



Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Accept the challenge to learn new skills — don't be afraid

My youngest daughter, Leah, works for a direct-mail advertising company. She received good training for this assignment during her four years at the University of Alabama. Leah has flourished in her job and has been "promoted" several times. But each of the steps up has also meant more pressure, more responsibility, more change.

Change is not easy for Leah. She prefers things settled and routine.

She talks with me regularly about job issues. I have told her numerous times, "Every change you experience in the workplace is like a continuing education opportunity that is equipping you for the future. You will learn new skills, new assignments, new ways of relating to workmates and new ways to cope well with the stress of change. These newly learned skills put you in a position for greater job responsibility in the future. So choose not to be overwhelmed by change in the workplace so you can maximize your learning."

I've also shared with Leah and my other two children, "When change and adjustment come to the workplace it is easy for the rumor mill to start grinding and to find yourself in the middle of workplace gossip. Your fellow workers feel scared so they start bad-mouthing. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into this. You will destroy your credibility and trust with your superiors. Rise above workplace gossip."

I am convinced most workers today don't fully appreciate the skills they have received from their jobs. For example, many middle-aged and older adult workers learned computer skills from their jobs. If computers had not been brought into the workplace, most of these folks would not have computer skills today. Think of the numerous seminars provided by the workplace on leadership, time management and more. Employees benefit more than I think they realize.

Gary Hardin
Centre, Ala.

You are a leader

Whether you are a clerk or a CEO, a homemaker or a highly paid professional, life will consistently call on you to provide leadership.

Rather than shrink from that call believing that leadership is limited to a few creative and gifted individuals, rise to the challenge by reminding yourself that leaders are both born and made.

Many of the world's greatest leaders evolved from humble beginnings.

Peter Drucker, one of the world's leading authorities on leadership, noted: "No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings."

Victor M. Parachin
Pastor and author
Tulsa, Okla.

Forgiveness

One businessman declared "email bankruptcy," deleted his inbox and started over when it got unmanageable.

We might declare "relationship bankruptcy" by forgiving old grudges and seeking out for reconciliation those from whom we're estranged.

Jesus was pretty clear in Matthew 18 about the importance of being on good terms with everyone inasmuch as possible.

Michael J. Brooks
Judson College

Put a Stoppin' to Stinkin' Thinkin' ...

An excerpt from Rondie Wilks' *LivingFit News* at <http://livingfitonline.com> — Rondie is a personal fitness trainer and member of Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville, where her husband, Bill, serves as pastor.

1. Never think or speak negatively about yourself, which puts you in disagreement with God.
2. Meditate on your God-given strengths, learn to encourage yourself and have an "I can" attitude about yourself and others.
3. Don't compare yourself to anybody else. You are unique, a one of a kind. The best person you can be is the person God made you to be.
4. Focus on your potential, not your limitations. Have a positive attitude. Remember Who you belong to.
5. Find what you like to do, do it well and strive to be the very best you can for the glory of God.
6. Have the courage to be different. Be a God pleaser, not a people pleaser.
7. Learn to handle criticism. Let it develop you. Have a good attitude and know that we can always learn from others and improve.
8. Determine your worth by the Truth of God's Word instead of letting others determine it for you.
9. Keep your shortcomings in perspective. Do not be afraid to fail. Be confident that with God all things are possible.
10. Focus daily on your greatest source of confidence ... the God who made you and loves you.

DO YOU BLOG?

Have you shared your blog address with me? I would love to check it out. And don't forget to share your ideas of stories we should cover.

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



Photos courtesy of Chris Pirtle and Limestone Baptist Association

TRAGIC LOSS — Cherry Grove Baptist Church, Athens, burned to the ground Jan. 14 as members from the church and community watched helplessly. Volunteers help set up a mobile chapel provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions on Jan. 26.

‘One step at a time’

Limestone Association, community support Cherry Grove after fire

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Standing as a beacon in the community for many years, the building of Cherry Grove Baptist Church, Athens, was reduced to a charred pile of rubble after an electrical fire Jan. 14. But in the face of this sudden and unexpected hardship, the congregation has received much support in various forms during its time of need.

Chris Pirtle, who has served as pastor of the Limestone Baptist Association church for nearly five years, recalls praying in the car en route to the church property after receiving word about the fire.

Pirtle was still two and a half miles from the church when he spotted smoke rising in the distance above the trees. “At that point it became real,” he said.

When he arrived at the church, a crowd of about 75 people — both members of the community and Cherry Grove Baptist members — had gathered in shock to watch the smoldering 6,000-square-foot building.

Cherry Grove Baptist members who were gathered at the scene, many tearful, joined together that morning for a prayer service, Pirtle said.

And the prayers only continued.

That evening during the church’s Monday night prayer meeting, which typically averages about 10 people, Pirtle said more than 40 people attended.

Assistance and support for Cherry Grove poured in from other Limestone Association churches. “Our folks have responded real well just by us putting word out” that they need assistance, said Robert Fullerton, director of missions for Limestone Association.

Many people worked on the

church property after the fire, helping to clear off debris, Fullerton said. The association was instrumental in contacting the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) about Cherry Grove’s situation, and the SBOM responded by providing a mobile chapel for the church to conduct worship services.

A blessing

People in the association then helped install the mobile chapel, and it was ready for the congregation’s use shortly after the fire occurred.

Pirtle said the chapel is one of the blessings the church has witnessed from this experience, and he noted how God has provided for

the church’s needs. He received many phone calls from people wanting to help in the weeks following the fire, and churches have given the congregation items like hymnals and chairs. Just recently, Fullerton presented the church with a \$5,000 check on behalf of the association.

A timeline for rebuilding Cherry Grove has not yet been established, and the church is currently “taking it one step at a time,” Pirtle said.

According to Fullerton, there are several carpenter missions groups in Limestone Association churches, and some people have already offered their future assistance as soon as the church is ready to rebuild.

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Body 4 Believers

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

BWA Australia begins new ‘Disaster Plus’ campaign

FORESTVILLE, Australia — An Australian Baptist organization long committed to disaster relief and recovery is shifting focus to prepare communities for the impact of disasters before they happen.

Baptist World Aid (BWA) Australia announced a “Disaster Plus” campaign March 25 to raise funds over the next year to support and train vulnerable communities to prepare for potential disasters.

“While our response to disasters over the past decades has largely been committed to relief and recovery efforts, we have resolved that God would have us do whatever we can to be far more proactive and to prepare communities before disaster strikes,” said John Hickey, CEO of BWA Australia.

Hickey said BWA Australia will continue to respond when disaster strikes with immediate rescue, food, shelter and clothing. Last year the ministry worked in countries including Bangladesh, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Its largest response was to the Horn of Africa famine, which was taking the lives of hundreds of children and adults each day, and one of the worst seen in decades.

Justin Welby enthroned as archbishop of Canterbury

CANTERBURY, England — Justin Welby, the 57-year-old former oil executive who quit the world of high finance in 1992 to become a priest, was enthroned March 21 as the 105th archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual leader of the world’s 77 million Anglicans.

With Prince Charles and Camilla the Duchess of Cornwall looking on, Welby struck his pastoral staff three times on the door of the ancient Canterbury Cathedral, seeking admission to assume his throne in a ceremony that mixed age-old pageantry with contemporary praise and worship songs.

Welby, a married father of five, had been a bishop in Durham for only a year when he was tapped to succeed Rowan Williams as Britain’s top churchman. He inherits a church wracked by internal divisions over the ordination of women bishops and continuing strains within the larger Anglican Communion over divisive issues of sexuality.

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Common BOND

Christians aid displaced northern countrymen in West Africa's Mali

Throughout the conflict in Mali, Christians in the south have embraced their fleeing northern countrymen with compassion and helped provide basic necessities. As their funds run dry, international Christian workers in Mali are coming together with Baptist Global Response (BGR), the Southern Baptist international relief and development organization, to continue to meet their needs.

Last year several rebellious factions, including Islamic extremists, took over the northern part of Mali. As they pushed from town to town, northerners were forced to escape south to save their families. There are more than 260,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mali, reports the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Around 170,000 more are registered as refugees in neighboring countries.

Rallying together

More than 400 Christians arrived in Mali's capital, Bamako, with what they could carry in a simple sack and the clothes on their back.

"The Christian community in Bamako rallied together and, despite many missionaries being called to return to their sending countries or choosing to evacuate temporar-

ily, the Malian believers began collecting offerings to support their brothers and sisters from the north," said Debra Fields, an American Christian living in Mali.

"One [IDP] explained that they didn't really know what to expect," Fields said. "There were cultural and language barriers with these believers from the south, but their common bond was Jesus. Local believers brought clothes, food and money to the [IDPs], and they were visited and comforted by their new brothers and sisters."

These provisions were made possible, Fields said, because a local evangelical association spread the word church by church, and a committee was formed to set up a fund to help with this crisis.

"The initial fund that was put together was quite substantial, but now, 10 months into the crisis, the funds are practically finished," Fields explained.

Recently she and some colleagues visited a group of IDPs to hear their stories and share gifts of rice and oil.

"It was then I found out that their daily stipend of \$1 a day had been slashed to 50 cents a day per person," she said. "This was to provide for their food, clothing and supplies, such as soap and health care supplies. The need had now reached emergency levels with no help in sight."

Fields and Jerry Samples, a Southern Baptist worker in West Africa, decided to meet with the IDPs to discuss relief needs.

"In the initial meeting that [Fields] and



IMB photo

Last year Christians in southern Mali began a fund to support displaced northern countrymen with food and money.



IMB photo

Baptist Global Response is partnering with southern Malian Christians to help provide displaced northerners with food and support for housing and school fees.

I had with two pastors representing the [IDPs], we were impressed with their honest presentation of their needs; their upbeat attitude despite obvious difficulties they were facing; the way they received a small personal gift from [Fields] for the work; and their thankful spirit that we had even talked to them," Samples said.

Fields explained that "though much of the north has been liberated, basic services such as police, schools and government offices have not been reopened. It is not a stable or safe environment to return to as of yet. With the local funds used up and stress levels rising, [we] in partnership with BGR will be bringing food, support for housing and school fees to these internally displaced persons.

"The project is just now launching, but the initial response from the leadership was a feeling overwhelmed with gratitude," Fields said. "One leader said that the timing was providential that, with their support fund finished and the stress level so high, this act of love was sent from God."

UNOCHA indicates the needs in Mali will continue for quite some time. Humanitarian activities in the north are restricted due to the threat of mines and other explosive remnants of war, as well as ongoing violence and military operations.

Fields asks for prayer for the believers to have wisdom to know when to return to their homes.

"One leader said he was in a safe place, nice by Malian standards, but still he felt like he was in prison because he was far from the comfort of his own home," she said. "He longed to return to Gao, a difficult place to live and serve, but that was where God had called him to live and work."

"Pray also for reconciliation with the believers who fled and their communities," she continued. "Their possessions left behind were stolen and sold, their libraries burned and their worship places desecrated."

Samples challenges Southern Baptists to consider how they can assist Mali's IDPs and refugees.

'Needs are enormous'

"BGR funds are in short supply and the needs are enormous," he said. "The figures concerning IDPs change constantly. Hundreds of thousands are in countries bordering Mali wondering when they can/should return and what they will find when they do. They will need help."

"Will Baptists respond on their knees in prayer, be willing to take risks and come as volunteers ... and sacrifice financially to BGR so that we can intervene and help?"

For more information about helping displaced Malians, visit <http://www.baptistglobalresponse.com>.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (IMB)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 7

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

PURSUE SPIRITUAL GAIN 1 Timothy 6:3-19

Many adults highly value material possessions and wealth. This sort of materialism may result in a lack of generosity, which in turn makes it difficult for churches to fulfill their ministries. The Bible does not condemn wealth, but it does challenge believers to consider that greed is sinful and dangerous. This week's lesson challenges us to value godliness above material wealth.

Watch Out for Greed (3-5)

The apostle Paul had mentioned false teachers previously. Here he points out three characteristics of false teachers. (1) Their teachings are inconsistent with and contradictory to God's revelation. By rejecting the healthy doctrines of Scripture, they were rejecting the path leading to a godly life. (2) They were marked by conceit, arrogance and pride, when they had nothing to be proud of. (3) Their ignorant conceit filled them with morbid desires, envy, evil suspicions, quarreling and malicious talk. Their motive was their erroneous idea that godliness is the path to material riches. The term "godliness" here, does not mean true godliness which is holy living by the Holy Spirit's power; it means their religious profession. They used their religious profession as a means to make money. Theirs was not a spiritual ministry; it was a religious business. Believers are to watch out for the temptation to use their religious devotion as a means for material gain or fame.

Be Content (6-10)

Apostle Paul was not opposed to individuals earning a living. He was not encouraging a lack of ambition. He did, however, issue warnings about wealth. (1) Money does not bring contentment, an inner stability which keeps the believer at peace regardless of external circumstances. True contentment comes from godliness in the heart, not from money in the bank. (2) Wealth does not last. We lose it all at death. Consequently, having the basic things in life (food, shelter and clothing) ought to make us content. Paul

does not condemn having possessions, but he does condemn a self-indulgent desire for wealth. (3) The love for money, not money itself, is a (not "the") root for all sorts of evil. Money can be a trap that leads into bondage. Those people who will to be rich are those who must have more and more material things in an attempt to be happy. The desire to be rich and the love of money draw them away from Christ and fill them with pangs of conscience, disillusionment and barrenness.

Fight the Good Fight (11-16)

As Paul turns to instruction for Timothy himself, he addresses Timothy as a "man of God," who is distinctly different from the false teachers. The man of God is known for what he flees from, what he follows after and what he fights for. (1) Timothy is to separate himself from the sinful attitudes and actions of the false teachers. There are times when God's servant must take a stand against ungodly practices and separate himself from them. However, he must act on the basis of biblical principle and not because of personal prejudice or selfish party spirit. (2) God's servant must cultivate the elements of Christian character and conduct. (3) In addition, he must keep on fighting the kingdom of darkness which lies around him. He must defend the truth of God's Word and lead people to faith in Jesus.

Use Wealth Wisely (17-19)

Paul counsels Timothy concerning what to teach those who are rich in material possessions. He calls them to be good stewards of their God-given resources. Those believers who have money must use it to meet the needs of others, unselfishly and generously. These verses demonstrate there is no necessary connection between wealth and greed. Although many readers of this lesson will probably not think of themselves as "rich in the present age" (v. 17), they should be reminded that, in comparison to the rest of the world's people, most Americans are indeed wealthy. Living with eternity in view will help us pursue godliness by using our financial resources generously and wisely. ❏

Bible Studies for Life By Scott McGinnis Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

CALLED TO HOLINESS

Exodus 19:1-6, 10-14, 16-19

The linchpin of the Mosaic Torah is the meeting of Israel with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. It was there that a group of slaves were made into a people, a holy nation, through an encounter with God. This week's passage discusses the consecration of Israel as they prepare to meet God and receive the law.

In his book "The Idea of the Holy," German theologian Rudolph Otto wrote that even before we consider the moral component of holiness, we must recognize that at the heart of the holy is a God who is wholly other. Encountering this God causes all creatures to experience feelings of awe, fascination and even terror, all at the same time.

We answer the call to holiness when we allow our encounters with God to alter our way of being in the world.

Who We Should Be (1-6)

In the Old Testament, theophanies — appearances of God — serve to reveal God's nature or identity. When he first encountered God in the burning bush, Moses asked for God's name. "I am who I am" came the perplexing reply (Ex. 3:14). In this passage the identity of God is revealed by God's own acts: God is the deliverer, the eagle who has borne Israel out of danger and "to myself." Elsewhere in Scripture the image of the eagle is a sign of both nurture (Deut. 32:11-14) and also power and endurance (Isa. 40:31).

What will be Israel's response to God's act of deliverance? Over the entirety of what follows in the next several chapters hangs the small word "if." If they obey (alternatively, "really listen to") God and keep the covenant, Israel will occupy the special role of a "priestly kingdom" in the world. The role of the priest is to intercede between humanity and God. Thus Israel's status as God's "treasured possession" was not intended as the basis for arrogance or exclusivity. Through their ethical conduct, Israel will reveal God to the world. Then as now, the end of holy living is never to

be smug self-satisfaction or feelings of superiority.

How We Should Prepare (10-14)

In verse 9 Yahweh declares to Moses His intention to "come to you in a dense cloud" and so legitimize Moses' authority among the people. In order to prepare for the coming of the holy God, the people are to be consecrated through ritual washings and observing clear demarcations of the place of meeting. Crossing the boundaries meant death. Both the restrictions and the severe punishments for violation were to remind the Israelites (as well as readers) that the God they encountered was powerful, dangerous, out of the ordinary and out of their control.

Although ritual washings and other such preparations may not be a part of every person's worship experience today, readers are well served to remember that encounters with God are not to be approached casually or without the necessary forethought. The appearance of God always comes at the divine initiative, but that does not mean we do not prepare ourselves for the presence of God through ordered thinking and holy living.

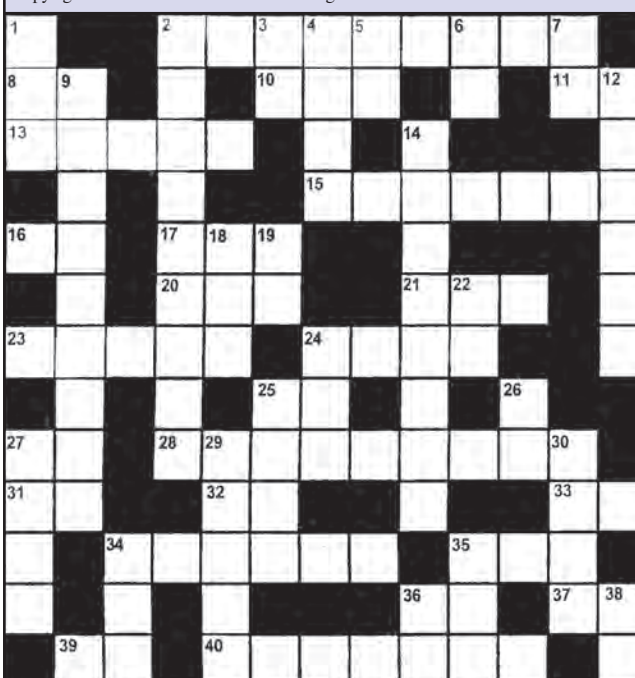
What We Should Expect (16-19)

After all the preparations are completed, God comes. The narrator of the story struggles to find adequate words and metaphors to describe what could only have been indescribable. The writer employs the images of an intense storm — thunder, lightning, clouds — but the reader infers much more. Just as Yahweh cannot be contained, so too human language fails to render the fullness of experiencing the divine.

As Otto reminded us, that indescribable something that lies at the heart of any real encounter with the divine necessarily precedes the call to holy living. It was only after meeting God at Sinai that Israel received the Ten Commandments. Meeting the God who is wholly other gives power and meaning to our lives that allow us to fulfill our calling to be both in the world and for the world — the call to holy living. ❏

Christian Crossword

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Across

- ___ of Judea. (Matt. 2:1)
- They rose ___ early. (Num. 14:40)
- Oxford English Dictionary. (abbr.)
- Emergency Room. (abbr.)
- Melchisedec, king of ___. (Heb. 7:1)
- Ahab called ___. (1 Kings 18:3)
- This is the way, walk ye in ___. (Isa. 30:21)
- That we may ___ and believe. (Mark 15:32)
- For by ___ were all things created. (Col. 1:16)
- The ___ appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself. (Prov. 27:25)
- Temptress.
- Decays.
- ___ and Ma.

- ___ the cross.
- Who smote ___ the son of Jerubbesheth? (2 Sam. 11:21)
- ___ it not written? (Mark 11:17)
- ___ angel of the Lord. (Judg. 6:11)
- Each. (abbr.)
- Saul of ___.
- Ye seek me, ___. (John 6:26)
- Either/___.
- This was ___ of whom I spake. (John 1:15)
- I in them, and thou in ___. (John 17:23)
- Abraham took a wife, and her name was ___. (Gen. 25:1)

Down

- Liquid of decay.
- In the wilderness of ___. (Gen. 21:14)
- ___ and fro.
- David was one.
450. (Roman)
- Hello. (informal)
- Without ___ ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)
- ___, and Medes. (Acts 2:9)
- Belonging to the son of Bani. (Neh. 3:17)
- Rachel ... called his name ___. (Gen. 30:8)
- Masculine object. (German)
- Printer's measure.
- ___ ye have ... received Christ Jesus. (Col. 2:6)
- A ___ caught in a thicket. (Gen. 22:13)
- Sewing fasteners.
- Before Christ. (abbr.)
- Olive and sunflower.
- The son of Abinoam. (Judg. 4:6)
- Sidon ... and ___. (Gen. 10:15)
- Open ___ door.
- National Rifle

- Association. (abbr.)
- This ___ that.
- For example. (abbr.)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Pastor in India released after 8-year imprisonment

JHARKHAND, India — After eight years of imprisonment under false accusations and numerous delays in justice proceedings, a Gospel for Asia-sponsored missionary in India has been released.

Samuel was arrested in 2004 in Jharkhand, India, on charges of participating in insurgency riots that left 19 dead. Despite avowing his innocence from the beginning and having no connection with the incident, he was immediately jailed. Within prison, he continued his ministry, sharing with others the good news of God's love.

Gospel for Asia photo

"I was thrilled to receive the phone call in-

forming us that our Pastor Samuel was released from prison," said K.P. Yohannan, Gospel for Asia (GFA) founder and president. "Jesus told us we should not be surprised of such persecution when we follow Him. Yet I am so relieved to know our prayers have been answered."

Jharkhand is home to thousands of Naxalites — a Maoist rebel group. The government has been working hard to keep the peace in this state. However, after a vicious fight in which 19 policemen were killed, authorities mistakenly identified Samuel as one of the Naxalite rebels responsible for the attacks.

Samuel's incarceration dragged into years as appeals and hearings were continually delayed, separating him from his wife and young daughter. During these eight years, as jailers came to trust him, they gave him permission to conduct prayer services on Sundays and Fridays within the prison. Many came to know Christ. As early as August 2010, an Indian court ruled that all charges against him should be dropped, since evidence was insufficient to prove guilt of the crime or any association with the insurgents. However, a final hearing necessary for release was not scheduled on the court docket for many months, and then was delayed time after time.

During his incarceration, about 20 prisoners had come to know and follow God because of his ministry behind bars. "What the enemy intended for evil, the Lord has used for good," Yohannan said.

Muslims destroy more than 175 homes in Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan — Christians are living in tents in Pakistan after Muslims destroyed more than 175 homes following a blasphemy accusation. They are disillusioned that authorities have not compensated them, but for some the greatest pain is what cannot be replaced.

"I am still unable to recover from the trauma after seeing my house burned down completely," one elderly woman said. "It takes ages to build a house and make it into home, but these cruel people shattered our lives within minutes."

The two streets leading to Joseph Colony are packed with white and yellow tents, most donated by the Al-Khair Foundation, a British Muslim charity, and the Sindh-based "secular" political party, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Joseph Colony is an impoverished Christian area of nearly 200 families.

Christians of Joseph Colony lost their homes after police ordered them to leave the area in anticipation of rioting by local Muslims in early March. About 3,000 Muslims gathered outside Joseph Colony on March 9, furious over an alleged remark against Islam by a Christian, Sawan Masih, in an earlier discussion with his Muslim drinking buddy, barber Shahid Imran.

In spite of Masih's arrest in the early hours of March 9, the mob robbed and torched more than 175 houses, two church buildings and dozens of shops and vehicles.

The Lahore district government has set up 185 tents for the displaced families. Layers of coiled barbed wire and a heavy police contingent protect the entrances to the camps set up for the residents of Joseph Colony. Residents are determined to start their lives afresh, but they say the most difficult challenge is getting free of fear.

CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **'The Amazing Grays' of FBC Pleasant Grove Sing at Judson:** "The Amazing Grays," the senior adult choir of First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, sang in Judson College chapel March 26. The choir is under the direction of Harold Newberry, 83, the church's minister of pastoral care.

► **Judson Honored for Community Service:** Judson College was named to the 2013 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Honor Roll recognizes higher education institutions that reflect the values of exemplary community service and achieve meaningful outcomes in their communities. The award winners were announced March 4 at the American Council on Education annual conference in Washington.

► **Judson's FAITH and Voices of Praise Ensembles to Perform in Concert:** Judson College's FAITH and Voices of Praise ensembles will be part of the "Created to Praise" concert April 5 at 6 p.m. at Siloam Baptist Church, Marion. Other performers include gospel recording artist Hasan Green, the Adam Jack Band, rap artist Minister Alexis Crutcher and praise dancer Ana Williams.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Wins National Advertising Awards:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) received national awards for its website, magazine, leadership banquet and other marketing materials in the 28th Annual Educational Advertising Awards competition sponsored by Higher Education Marketing Report.

UMobile competed against colleges and universities with enrollments of less than 2,000.

UMobile received four silver awards, one bronze award and two merit awards. Silver awards were given for the website, www.umobile.edu, created with nvisionative and The Visible Group; *University of Mobile Magazine*, external publication category, the 2013 leadership banquet, total public relations campaign, and the leadership banquet brochure, brochure category, all with JWA Creative.

A Bronze Award was given for the Visit Day invitation, direct mail advertising category, with JWA Creative. Merit Awards were given for the Charitable Estate Planning newsletter in the newsletter category and the Project Serve logo in the logo/letterhead design

category, both with JWA Creative.

► **UMobile's Stephen Schuler and Bethany Bear Featured on Award-Winning Christian Blog 'Transpositions':** Essays by University of Mobile's (UMobile) Stephen Schuler, associate professor of English, and Bethany Bear, assistant professor of English, are featured on the award-winning Christian blog "Transpositions."

The essays are featured in the domestic arts symposium on the site associated with the Institute for Theology, Imagination, and the Arts at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. The blog's goal is to create a connection between Christian theology and the arts through many modern leaders, thinkers, writers and artists.

"Transpositions" was voted runner-up Best Christian Blog in the Christian New Media Awards in 2011.

Schuler's essay can be found at www.transpositions.co.uk/2013/02/reclaim-restore-redeem/. Bear's essay can be found at www.transpositions.co.uk/2013/02/to-feel-even-as-i-once-knew/.

► **Boy Scouts Honor UMobile President Mark Foley:** The Mobile Area Council of Boy Scouts of America honored UMobile president Mark Foley as a Golden Eagle Dinner Honoree on Feb. 28. He received the award during the 5th Annual Boy Scout Golden Eagle Dinner hosted at Steele Creek Lodge in Satsuma.

Golden Eagle Dinner Chairman Michael E. Box presented the award for Foley's outstanding service to the state of Alabama, his contributions to the community and young people and his support of the Boy Scouts of America.

► **Piano Ensemble Concert Set for April 9:** The University of Mobile Center for Performing Arts/School of Music will present the UMobile Piano Ensemble concert April 9 at 7 p.m. in Moorer Auditorium of Thomas T. Martin Hall.

The Piano Ensemble includes performances by faculty and students and is one of two performances held each year. Students performing are: Katherine Chen, Elyn Collier, Alex Davis, Jennifer Gonzalez, Walton Green, Luke Jones, Emily LaForce, Heidi Little, Daniel Moore and Rachel Shelton.

For more information, contact Barbara Laurendine at 251-442-2420 or visit www.umobile.edu.

► **UMobile 'Spring Spectacular' to Feature Variety of Musical Styles:** The University of Mobile Center for Performing Arts will present "Spring Spectacular" on April 28 at 7 p.m. at the Saraland Center for Performing Arts at Saraland High School.

The event is the final major per-

formance of the academic year for the university's Center for Performing Arts and School of Worship Leadership. Featured ensembles are RamCorps, Voices, Welsh Revival, Sounds, Exit 13, Impact, Jazz Band, Sofre', Symphonic Winds, Chamber Singers and more.

For more information, visit www.umobile.edu or call 1-800-WINRAMS or 251-442-2222.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **John C. Knapp of Samford University Named President of Hope College:** John C. Knapp, who is the founding director of the Frances Marlin Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership at Samford University in Birmingham, has been named the next president of Hope College.

Knapp was unanimously elected the 12th president of Hope by the college's board of trustees March 25. He will assume office July 1.

► **Samford Gets \$170,000 Grant for Unique Research on Science and Religion:** Samford University's Center for Science and Religion has received a \$170,000 research grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

The Templeton grant is one of 10 to be awarded nationally through the foundation's "Randomness and Divine Providence" initiative, based at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. The initiative promotes scholarly inquiry into questions of how God might work through intermediate processes.

Starting June 3 and continuing through June 30, 2015, Samford's project — "Who Pulls the Random Strings in Neural Evolution?" — will address the question through computer-based evolutionary simulations.

► **Samford Junior Preview Day is April 27:** Samford University will host a Preview Day for high school juniors April 27. The event will allow students and their parents to experience the campus and get a head start on the fall admission process. Participants also are invited to join current Samford students at the outdoor concert that evening.

Registration check-in at 9:30 a.m. in Wright Center will be followed by sessions with admission counselors, panels led by current Samford students and lunch in the campus cafeteria. The afternoon schedule will include campus and residence hall tours.

For more information or to register, call 205-726-3673 or 1-800-888-7218, email visits@samford.edu or go to www.samford.edu/previewdays.



Photo courtesy of Fair Trade Services

Heather Williams

'God is very near'

Singer/songwriter discovers redemption, restoration in Christ

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As singer/songwriter Heather Williams shares about the redemption and restoration she found in a relationship with Christ, she displays character and strength far beyond her years.

During her childhood, Williams dealt with extreme poverty and intense abuse from her mother and stepfather. One time, she even was chained to a tree as a punishment.

At the age of 11, Williams' mother sent her away, and she began living with her grandfather. While dealing with the traumatic effects of abuse, neglect and rejection, Williams turned to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain during her teenage years. At times, she contemplated suicide.

Just before her life was about to spin completely out of control, Williams found redemption, unconditional love and a Savior while reconnecting with her birth father and accepting an invitation to attend a worship service.

Realizing that she was at rock bottom, Williams surrendered her life to Christ.

"When I was 18, I was going through a whole series of events where I was really rejecting God and

blaming Him for everything that had taken place in my childhood," Williams said. "But I finally came to a point where I decided that I was going to give my life to God, because I was running out of options to survive."

While undergoing a radical life change, she began pursuing music as an outlet to share her experiences. As she was getting her life back on track, Williams

fell in love and got married. Tragically, the young couple encountered heartache and grief when their 6-month-old son suddenly died.

In the midst of their pain, she wrote the words to the hit song, "Hallelujah."

"I believe that God took a moment where I was desperately crying out to Him and translated it into this powerful song that people can relate to," Williams said.

"Everyone has that moment where they have nowhere else to turn, except desperately seeking God's comfort and guidance. This song offers people hope in dark situations by reminding them that God is very near to them."

Reflecting on her journey through the years, Williams is grateful for how far God's grace has brought her. "Everything that I've lived through, I have tried to translate into music — to somehow be able to tell the story of hope and redemption that Jesus Christ has brought me and how He can bring the same to anyone else," she said. ❧

"Everything that I've lived through, I have tried to translate into music."

**Heather Williams
singer/songwriter**

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Kentucky overrides religious freedom bill veto

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky's General Assembly voted overwhelmingly March 26 to override Gov. Steve Beshear's veto of House Bill (HB) 279, also known as the religious freedom bill. The Democratic House passed the measure 79-15 and the Republican-controlled Senate voted 32-6.

"This important law will protect the rights of people of faith in Kentucky," said Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC).

"Religious freedom was a good idea when Kentucky became the 15th state of the Union on June 1, 1792. It still is," Chitwood said.

Chitwood and Curtis Woods, the KBC's associate executive director, were among religious leaders and legislators who publicly denounced the governor's March 22 veto at a March 26 Family Foundation of Kentucky-led rally.

HB 279, proponents argue, brings Kentucky back into line with federal court standards that Congress affirmed in its 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The law seeks to restore "compelling interest/least restrictive means" as legal tests that government must pass before restricting religious freedom.

HB 279 was sharply opposed, however, by gay advocacy and other groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union. In the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Chris Hartman, director of the Kentucky Fairness Campaign, was quoted as saying the override of Beshear's veto made minorities more vulnerable to discrimination.

Beshear, in vetoing the bill, had said it was vaguely worded and could result in costly and protracted lawsuits. The Democratic governor released a statement after March 26's legislative action expressing disappointment with the override of the only bill he vetoed in the 2013 legislative session, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported.

Chitwood expressed his deep appreciation to Kentucky Baptists who took time to call their legislators. "Once again, we see how our people's involvement makes a difference," he said.

Adam Greenway, immediate past KBC president and associate dean and professor of evangelism and apologetics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, also was "deeply encouraged" by the strong bipartisan vote.

Secretary of State Kerry calls for release of Abedini

WASHINGTON — On March 22, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called for the release of pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen of Iranian descent who is suffering in a notoriously brutal Tehran prison because of his Christian faith.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which represents Abedini's wife and two young children living in the United States, called Kerry's statement "a tremendous step forward in our government's involvement in securing Pastor Saeed's freedom."

Kerry, in a press statement issued while in the Middle East, said, "I am deeply concerned about the fate of U.S. citizen Saeed Abedini, who has been detained for nearly six months and was sentenced to eight years in prison in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs."

The statement came hours after ACLJ released a letter from Abedini recounting the torture he is enduring and one day after a State Department official mentioned Abedini's case before the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Prior to that mention, State Department and White House officials had previously addressed Abedini's case in public only when questioned by reporters and others, Fox News said.

Naghmeh Abedini, Saeed Abedini's wife, said, "I am very happy to read that although Secretary Kerry has asked for medical treatment for Saeed, he does not stop there and states that the best outcome is Saeed's immediate release."

Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ's executive director, testified at the congressional hearing alongside Abedini's wife and said March 22 he was pleased with Kerry's "bold and public statement" on the pastor's behalf.

"The voice of nearly 550,000 people worldwide is being heard and is now being echoed by the top diplomat of the United States," Sekulow said, referring to a petition for Abedini's release at Save-Saeed.org.



ABEDINI