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INSIDE



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Southwestern's Patterson urges ministers not to drink

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Baptist Campus Ministries of Southern Union State Community College, Wadley, lead in worship at the student missions commissioning service at FBC Talladega.

Photo by Kim Andrews

'Manual labor & MINISTRY'

Students commissioned for summer missions also offered first-ever DR training

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In April 2011 when a tornado outbreak blew through Alabama leaving huge destruction in its wake, people statewide — including college students — were anxious to offer help in any way they could. Matthew Dunson, currently a sophomore mechanical engineering major at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), recalls wanting to assist as best he

could without any formal disaster relief (DR) training.

So when the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) offices of global missions (which includes DR) and collegiate and student ministries recently teamed up to host a DR training session at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference

Center in Talladega April 11-12, Dunson was eager to participate.

"I've grown up doing yard work and also was a part of World Changers in high school, and I felt like this training would combine the things I liked most about each of those activities — manual labor and ministry," Dunson said. He

learned about the event thanks to an email blast that went out to UAB students who are part of the school's Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM).

UAB's Baptist campus minister Bill Morrison said the 2011 tornado devastation became the seed
(See 'Tailored,' page 11)

Do evangelicals have 'narrow vision' of religious liberty?

Loss of the historic Baptist commitment to religious liberty has left U.S. evangelicals ill-prepared for current threats to the free exercise of religion, Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, suggested April 11. "I think one of the problems is that for a long time evangelical Christianity, at the lay

populist level, has had a narrow vision of religious liberty, because we haven't had a lot of threats to it in a real sense," he said. "You have some people who haven't thought through that what our Baptist forebears were saying is right — that religious liberty is an image-of-God issue; it's not a who-has-the-most-votes issue.

"That means we're the people who ought to be saying the loudest:

"We don't want the mayor and the city council to say that a mosque can't be in our town," he said. "The mayor and the city council that can say that is a mayor and a city council ... that has too much power.

"And then secondly we've had a lot of people who have cried wolf over situations," he continued. "They've cried persecution when there is no persecution." (ABP)

COMMENT

Continuing the Angel's Task

Matthew's words are dramatic: a violent earthquake caused by an angel of the Lord coming to the tomb where Jesus had been buried; light as blinding as a flash of lightning pushing back the large stone that sealed the entrance to the tomb; Roman soldiers sent to safeguard the tomb so overcome by fear they curled up on the ground shivering and shaking (Matt. 28:2-4).

The angel was not sent to let Jesus out of the tomb. In His resurrected body Jesus could appear in a locked room (John 20:19) or disappear from a table where He had been eating with friends (Luke 24:31). Neither the bindings that had been wrapped around His body the previous Friday evening nor the carved round rock blocking the door could keep Jesus in the grave.

The angel was sent to help people see that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

The first part of the task was easy — roll away the stone so the women who came to do the last deeds of service to the body of their former leader could see the empty tomb and the grave clothes lying there. The emotional trauma of grief and loss was so heavy on those who loved Jesus they could not connect all the dots of God's eternal plan even though Jesus had told them about it earlier (Matt. 16:21). What they knew was the One they loved was dead. They needed help in understanding what they were experiencing.

'He is not here'

"I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified," said the angel. "He is not here. He has risen just as He said" (Matt. 28:5-6). There it was plain and simple — the first Easter announcement. He is risen. He is risen indeed.

Luke's account adds more details. "Remember how He told you while He was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again" (Luke 24:6-7). That is when the women remembered, when they began to understand (v. 8).

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the angel's announcement, "He is not here." All three announce that Jesus has risen and all three offer



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

the proof of the empty tomb to help the women remember Jesus' teachings.

An angel was the first to announce that Jesus had been raised from the dead, the first to remind of God's plan for the salvation for humanity, the first to point toward the empty tomb as proof that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). But after the encounter with the women at the tomb, the task of sharing the good news of Jesus was transferred from the angel to those who believe.

The angel who rolled away the stone so they could see the empty tomb, the angel who announced He is risen also charged the women to "go quickly and tell His disciples He has risen from the dead" (Matt. 28:7). Scripture records no later incident of an angel declaring Jesus' resurrection. In Acts 1:10-11 angels promise the return of our Lord. But from the time the women left the empty tomb the task of telling others about Jesus was transferred from angels to those who believe that Jesus is risen. He is risen indeed.

As if to emphasize the responsibility of believers to share the resurrection story, Jesus emphasized that point over and over again in His appearances following the resurrection. Matthew says before the women could get to the place the disciples had gathered Jesus appeared to them

and commissioned them to "go and tell" (Matt. 28:10).

Jesus told Mary Magdalene to stop clutching Him as if that were all there was in life but to "go and tell my brothers" (John 20:16-17).

Later that evening Luke says Jesus appeared to the disciples "and opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations" (Luke 24:45-47).

To the disciples who were just beginning to connect the dots of scriptural teaching, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Matthew, Mark and Luke, together with the Book of Acts, all record Jesus' final charge to His

disciples to tell others about "repentance and the forgiveness of sin." In the famous Great Commission, Jesus said, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20).

In Mark 16:15-16, Jesus says, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

"Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached

in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," says Luke 24:47.

Acts 1:8 records Jesus' final words to the disciples and other believers including "and you will be My witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

Sharing the marvelous good news of the Jesus story can be personally challenging. Even the joy of seeing the empty tomb and hearing directly from the angel that Jesus was alive could not drive out all the fear of the women at the tomb (Matt. 28:8). And not everyone will believe our witness. Not even the disciples believed the women at first because their words seemed like "nonsense" (Luke 24:11).

It was not the angel's job to make the women believe. His task was to share the announcement and help them see God's love in action. No human being can make another believe in Jesus, but we can share the announcement and help others understand that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). When we do that we continue the angel's task and we comply with the charge given by the angel and by the Lord Himself.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

A BIGGER QUESTION

I read Bob Terry's editorial "Restoring Religious Liberty" in the April 10 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, but I don't understand the legalese such as "justify burdens" and "compelling interest."

Surely there has to be limits on how far we can go in granting religious freedom.

What should not be protected:

1. The killing of young women who have been raped (an accepted practice of some religious groups).
2. Withholding medical help or treatment that could save the life of a child.
3. Female "circumcision."
4. Establishing areas in some of our large cities that reject civil law in preference to religious law.

5. Etc.
This issue is not as simple as the Hobby Lobby case.

Also the effort to protect Hobby Lobby's religious freedom ignores the religious convictions (or lack thereof) (See 'Letters,' page 8)





"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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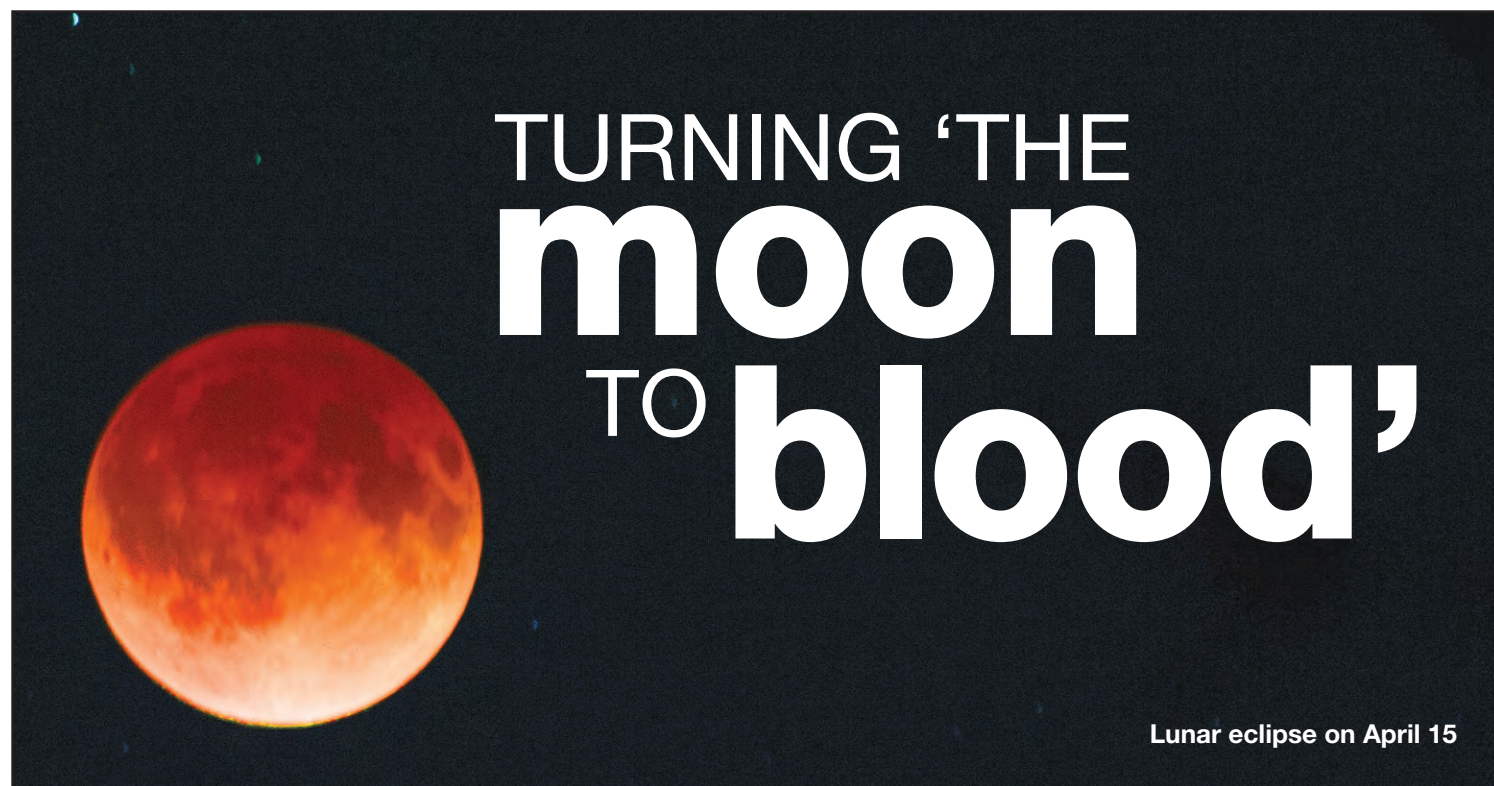
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Lunar eclipse on April 15

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'Blood moon' lunar eclipses not a sign, Baptist professors say

Could a series of "blood moon" events be connected to Jesus' return? Some Christians think so. In the wee hours of April 15 morning, the moon slid into Earth's shadow, casting a reddish hue on the moon. There are about two lunar eclipses per year, according to NASA, but what's unusual this time is that there will be four blood moons within 18 months — astronomers call that a tetrad — and all of them occur during Jewish holidays.

A string of books have been published surrounding the event, with authors referring to a Bible passage that refers to the moon turning into blood. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord," Joel 2:31 says.

In the New Testament, Acts 2:20 echoes the same doom: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord."

Jewish holy days

Books capitalizing on the event include "Four Blood Moons: Something Is About to Change" by Texas megachurch pastor John Hagee.

In his book, Hagee said something will happen to the nation of Israel because of the tetrad. The four eclipses occur April 15 and Oct. 8, 2014, and April 4 and Sept. 28, 2015. The ones in April occur during Passover, and the one in October occurs during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles.

Jewish holy days revolve around a lunar calendar with Passover beginning on the first full moon after the beginning of spring, and the Feast of Tabernacles occurring on the first full moon after the beginning of fall. Hagee writes that every time a tetrad occurs on Jewish feast days, something traumatic and "world-changing" happens to Israel.

In 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain and Christopher Columbus discovered America, giving the Jews a place to go. In 1948, the modern state of Israel was born, and in 1967, Israel won the Six-Day War and recaptured Jerusalem.

This time, Hagee suggests that a Rapture will occur where Christians will be taken to heaven, Israel will go to war in a great battle called

Armageddon and Jesus will return to earth.

But NASA doesn't consider tetrads as especially rare. The most unique thing about the upcoming tetrad is that they are visible from all or parts of the United States, NASA stated.

Two Southern Baptist professors also say Hagee's prediction is a misinterpretation of the Bible, noting it "ignores" a common style of writing in the Bible known as "apocalyptic literature" that "frequently contains cosmic imagery" to describe significant spiritual events.

In apocalyptic literature such figures of speech aren't meant to be interpreted "in a literalistic manner," said Ben Merkle, associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Hagee has a history of making controversial statements, as when he suggested Hurricane Katrina was an expression of God's wrath toward New Orleans. He also holds to "dual covenant theology," the belief that Jews can be saved by keeping the Old Testament "Law of Moses" unlike Gentiles, who must trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

"The heavens are God's billboard, and when something big is about to happen, He gives planet Earth a sign in heaven," Hagee said. "It's a signal that something significant is about to happen. Pay attention. NASA has said this is coming. God has said through Joel and Saint Peter, 'Listen. When this happens, it's unusual.'"

Cosmic imagery

But Merkle said such cosmic imagery commonly occurs as a figurative way of describing God's action in human history.

Isaiah 13:10, for example, says the stars "will not give their light," the sun "will be dark when it rises" and the moon "will not shine." But context makes clear that the prophecy was fulfilled in the sixth century B.C., when the Babylonians took Judah into exile, Merkle said. It did not reference a literal darkening of the sun, moon or stars.

Merkle said a similar interpretation applies to Acts 2:20, a key passage in Hagee's interpre-

tation of the tetrad. In that verse, Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel on the day of Pentecost — including Joel's talk of God turning "the moon to blood" — to describe God's giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

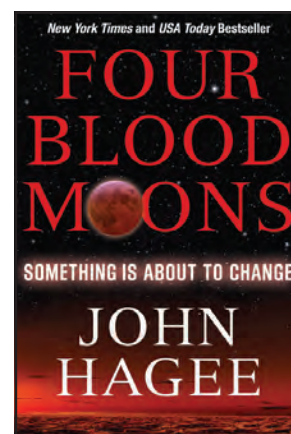
"Peter (and Luke) had no difficulty in affirming that the prophecy given by Joel was fulfilled in the coming of the Spirit" at Pentecost, Merkle said. "Peter specifically states that the Spirit's coming at Pentecost 'is what was spoken by the prophet Joel' (Acts 2:16).

"Peter could have omitted the references to the sun and moon by ending his quotation from Joel earlier. But he specifically includes them as what has been fulfilled. Peter knew that such cosmic language should not be interpreted literally. Rather he knew that such language meant that God would sovereignly intervene in history and do something miraculous. He knew that this marked a key event in the history of redemption. It was a sign that they were living in the end times."

Saying that Acts 2 encourages believers to be on alert anytime the moon literally takes on a red hue represents a misunderstanding of Scripture, Merkle said. "Hagee has a history of putting forth teaching that is later retracted and his interpretation of the four blood moons may fall into that category," he said.

Bruce Gordon, associate professor of history and philosophy of science at Houston Baptist University, agreed. Apart from the star God placed over Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem, "the whole business of discerning 'signs in the heavens' related to human affairs smacks either of astrology or pointless speculation about eschatological prophecies in Scripture," he said in written comments to Baptist Press.

"Of course, Christ will return someday and creation will be made new," he said. "The wise course of action is not to speculate about various 'signs of the times,' however, but rather to keep your spiritual house in order and give stronger emphasis to Jesus' pronouncement that 'about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (Matt. 24:36)." (RNS, BP)



6 trends for 2014



State of the BIBLE

Comprehensive study shows Americans' attitudes, behaviors toward Bible

PEOPLE ARE LESS LIKELY TO VIEW THE BIBLE AS SACRED.

2011=86% | 2014=79%

BIBLE OWNERSHIP REMAINS STRONG, BUT READERSHIP REMAINS WEAK.



88%

of households own a Bible.



4.7

Average number of Bibles per household



37%

of Americans read it once a week or more.

56% of America remains pro-Bible.*

*People who believe the Bible is the actual or inspired Word of God with no errors.

The Bible has been making its way onto box office screens and home TV screens throughout the past year: from “Noah” to “Son of God,” people have been watching the Bible. But are they still reading the Bible? And do they still believe in the Bible?

Each year, Barna Group partners with the American Bible Society on State of the Bible, a comprehensive study of Americans' attitudes and behaviors toward the Bible. Asking a national representative sample of adults the same questions year after year allows us to track the country's shifting perceptions of Scriptures.

This year's research reveals six trends in Bible engagement: from the Bible's continued role as a cultural icon to increased digital Bible reading to a rise in skepticism toward Scripture, particularly among Millennials.

1. Bible skepticism is now 'tied' with Bible engagement.

Current research reveals that skepticism toward the Bible continues to rise. For the first time since tracking began, Bible skepticism is tied with Bible engagement. The number of those who are skeptical or agnostic toward the Bible — who believe that the Bible is “just another book of teachings written by men that contains stories and advice” — has nearly doubled from 10 percent to 19 percent in just three years. This is now equal to the number of people who are Bible engaged — who read the Bible at least four times a week and believe it is the actual or inspired Word of God.

Digging into the population segmentation of Bible skeptics, we find that two-thirds are 48 or younger (28 percent Millennials, 36 percent Gen-Xers), and they are twice as likely to be male (68 percent) than female (32 percent). They are more likely to identify as Catholic than any other single denomina-

tion or affiliation (30 percent) and are the most likely segment not to have attended church (87 percent) or prayed (63 percent) during the previous week. They also are most likely not to have made a commitment to Jesus that is important in their life today (76 percent).

Not only are Millennials more likely to be skeptical toward Scripture, they also are less likely to read the Bible (39 percent say they never read the Bible, compared to 26 percent of all adults), less likely to own a Bible (80 percent compared to 88 percent) and less likely to believe the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life (35 percent compared to 50 percent). Given the increase in Millennials who don't believe the Bible is sacred and the decrease in Bible awareness among Millennials, Bible skepticism will likely continue to rise in the next five years.

2. Despite the declines, most Americans continue to be 'pro-Bible.'

While the percentage of Americans who believe the Bible is sacred has fallen in recent years, from 86 percent in 2011 to 79 percent in 2014, it's still a sizable majority of all adults. In general, Americans continue to view the Bible very positively. More than half of Americans (56 percent) are “pro-Bible” — meaning they believe the Bible is the actual or inspired Word of God with no errors. Most adults say the Bible encourages forgiveness (91 percent), generosity (88 percent) and patience (89 percent) while discouraging war (62 percent), slavery (60 percent) and prostitution (82 percent). Nearly nine in 10 households own at least one Bible (88 percent) and the average number of Bibles per household is 4.7.

Being pro-Bible doesn't necessarily mean Americans use the Bible regularly, however. Only 37 percent of Americans report reading the Bible once a week or more. Among those who have read Scripture in the previous week, not quite six in 10 (57 percent) say

MOST PEOPLE STILL COME TO THE BIBLE TO FIND INTIMACY WITH GOD, BUT INCREASINGLY MORE PEOPLE COME LOOKING FOR ANSWERS TO LIFE'S QUESTIONS.



"The Bible brings me closer to God."



"The Bible brings me comfort or helps solve my problems."



they gave a lot of thought to how it might apply to their life. While the Bible's place in America as a cultural icon endures, it's not always perceived as a transformational text. Even as Bible ownership remains strong, readership and engagement are weak.

3. Distraction and busyness continue to squeeze out the Bible.

So what keeps people from reading the Bible they own? Like all other forms of analog media, the Bible is pushed to the side in part because people are just too busy. Among those who say their Bible reading decreased in the last year, the No. 1 reason was busyness: 40 percent report being too busy with life's responsibilities (job, family, etc.), an increase of seven points from just one year ago.

Other factors Americans cite as reasons for less time reading Scripture include a significant change in their life (17 percent), becoming atheist or agnostic (15 percent), going through a difficult experience that caused them to doubt God (13 percent) and seeing that reading the Bible made very little difference in someone else's life (8 percent).

These relatively smaller percentages reveal that Americans don't often turn away from the Bible over ideological or emotional conflicts. Indeed on the whole Americans say they want to read the Bible — 62 percent wish they read Scripture more — they just don't know how to make time.

4. The age of screens has come to stay in the Bible market.

One antidote to the distraction of the screen age is to put the Bible onscreen. And this past year certainly saw the Bible come to more screens than ever — from smartphone apps to primetime TV — and Americans responded. Of adults who increased their Bible readership in 2013, one-quarter (26 percent) say it was because of having downloaded the Bible onto their smartphone or tablet. More than one in 10 (12 percent) credit their increased Bible reading to podcasts or streaming church services. And an additional one in 10 (11 percent) say watching "The Bible" miniseries on TV inspired them to read Scripture more.

In just a handful of years, use of tablets and smartphones for Bible searches has

skyrocketed, from 18 percent in 2011 to 35 percent in 2014. That said, a strong majority still prefer to read the Bible in print (84 percent); the same holds true even among Millennials (81 percent), who are most likely to use the Internet to read Bible content (62 percent compared to 44 percent of all adults).

5. Increasingly people come to the Bible for answers or comfort.

While the majority of people still come to the Scriptures to connect with God, their number is shrinking, from 64 percent in 2011 to 56 percent in 2014. Today people are increasingly likely to come to the Bible for more pragmatic needs: nearly one-third (up from 26 percent in 2011) say they read the Bible for comfort or to help them address life's questions. This increase is consistent with the 2013 study, which showed that Millennials in particular want to know how the Bible connects to everyday matters like parenting, finances, the workplace and so on. They are the generation most likely to read the Bible for direction or answers to a problem (25 percent, compared to 19 percent of Gen-X, 16 percent Boomers and 11 percent Elders).

6. People are less likely to link moral decline with a lack of Bible reading.

Eight in 10 adults believe the values and morals of America are declining — but perceptions about the reasons for the decline have shifted over time. Compared to 2013, people are more likely to blame declining morals on movies, music and TV rather than on a lack of Bible reading. Additionally while half of all adults would say the Bible has too little influence on society, only 30 percent of Millennials believe this.

Bible skeptics are less likely than other segments to say the values and morals of America are declining. It's not clear whether this belief informs their skepticism or their skepticism informs this belief — or a complex dynamic of both. Millennials, as well, are less likely than the national average to say morals are on the decline (74 percent). Among young adults who agree there is a moral decline, just 17 percent blame a lack of Bible reading, compared to 26 percent of all adults. (Barna Group)

BIBLE READERS WHO SAY THEIR NO. 1 FRUSTRATION IS NEVER HAVING ENOUGH TIME TO READ THE BIBLE ROSE FROM:



THE USE OF TABLETS AND SMARTPHONES FOR BIBLE SEARCH ROSE FROM:



BUT PEOPLE STILL PREFER TO READ THE BIBLE IN PRINT.



84%
Print



10%
Digital



5%
Audio

BIBLE LOVERS AND BIBLE SKEPTICS



19%
ENGAGED*

19%
SKEPTICAL†

* Engaged people read the Bible at least 4 times a week and believe that it is the actual or inspired Word of God.

† People categorized as "skeptics" are those who, from five options, selected the most negative or nonsacred view of the Bible, saying they believe "the Bible is just another book of teachings written by men that contains stories and advice."



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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BIRMINGHAM

► **Hilldale Church, Center Point**, will hold a spring yard sale May 3, 8 a.m.–1 p.m. For information call the church office at 205-853-3000. Ron Pate is pastor. ► The senior adults of **Lakeside Church, Birmingham**, will travel to the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove in Asheville, N.C., and the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, N.C., May 19–22. To make reservations call the church office at 205-822-1240. Greg Corbin is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **First Church, Opp**, will begin a GriefShare session for those who have lost a friend or loved one April 29, 6 p.m. It will continue each Tuesday from 6–8 p.m. For information call the church at 334-493-3235. Randy Breedlove is pastor.

ELMORE

► **Mount Hebron East Church, Eclectic**, will celebrate homecoming April 27. It is the first homecoming service since the building was rebuilt following the April 2011 tornado that destroyed it. Worship services will begin at 10 a.m. Pastor Bob Williamson will speak and there will be special music. An hour of gospel music by Holy Destiny will follow at 11 a.m.

A covered dish meal will be at noon in the new fellowship building. Everyone is invited. ► **Riverside Heights Church, Tallassee**, will celebrate its 60th anniversary May 4. Services will begin at 10 a.m. and dinner will follow. Randy Billingsley is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Shiloh Church, Hartford**, will celebrate Senior Adult Day on May 4. Bill King, director of missions for Tuskegee Lee Association, will preach at 10 a.m., followed by lunch. King will appear as Bro. Billy Bob Bohannon at 6 p.m. Ricky Hall is pastor.

MADISON

► **Leigh Halverson** has been called as minister to children at **First Church, Huntsville**, effective June 8. She holds a bachelor's degree from Elon University in North Carolina and has a master of divinity from McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University in Atlanta, Ga. She currently serves as associate pastor



HALVERSON

of children and families at First Church, Jefferson City, Mo. She previously served as children's minister of Northeast Church, Atlanta, Ga. David W. Hull is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Alberta Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold a special building dedication service April 27 with an early start time at 10 a.m. followed by lunch. The building was destroyed during the April 2011 tornado outbreak. The first service held in the new building was Feb. 23. To RSVP for lunch call 205-553-6520. Larry Corder is pastor. ► **Big Sandy Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host a Community Block Party on May 3, 2–5 p.m. Local fire and sheriff vehicles/equipment will be on display. Activities include an obstacle course, Organized Mass Chaos games, face painting and archery demonstration. For information call 205-752-1284. Terry Lolley is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Fairview West Church, Hanceville**, will hold spring revival April 27–30, Sunday at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 7 p.m. Dean Burtrum will speak. Everyone is welcome. Trueman Davis is pastor of the church.

REFLECTIONS

"AND, WHERE YOUR BIBLE HAS JESUS SAYING 'TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME,' THE ORIGINAL GREEK IS 'TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME.'"



Illegal gambling loses out again

Alabama courts continue to be busy determining the legality of gambling machines seized in raids in recent years.

While slot machine-style gambling is illegal in the state, several operations have attempted to use constitutional amendments allowing for traditional paper bingo operations as a way to bring in electronic "bingo" machines. Each time a facility is raided, those machines have to be judged in court.

The most recent ruling came from Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge David Hobdy on April 14 who ruled the 500 machines seized from Anchor Club in Brighton in 2011 are illegal. Nearly \$70,000 was seized along with the machines. The machines will be destroyed and the money forfeited.

The next trial will be focused on VictoryLand casino in Macon County on June 23. The original trial date was June 3, but Circuit Judge William Shashy delayed the trial at the request of defense attorneys.

VictoryLand was raided in February 2013 with more than 1,600 gambling machines and more than \$223,000 seized. (TAB)

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Louise Bond



BOND

*Moffett Road Baptist Church, Mobile
Mobile Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "His Eye Is on the Sparrow"

HOBBIES: Reading; listening to J. Vernon McGee's "Thru the Bible" radio broadcasts

FAMILY STATUS: Widow of

13 years after 46 years of marriage to Conley; children, Shannon Bond and Shawn Frost; six grandchildren

Mississippi native Louise Bond, 80, has been a church pianist or organist for 72 years. For the past 56 years, she has done so at Moffett Road Baptist Church, Mobile. At 8 years old, she was playing piano in Sunday School, and within three or four years she was playing piano in church. As a ninth grader, she began playing the organ in church without prior training. The single year of organ instruction she received was during college. Bond, who has served on the church history committee at Moffett Road Baptist, taught 25 years at Mary G. Montgomery High School, Semmes.

I could play. It has become a ministry because I don't like to miss a service.

Q: What does the ministry work demand?

A: For years, I was there either early before services or on Saturday afternoon for practices.

Q: What do you get from the ministry work?

A: Just the satisfaction that I'm doing what I think the Lord wants me to do and what He has given me the ability to do.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: They always have. My kids were there every Sunday just like I was. My husband was in the choir. They've always supported me.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in this in the future?

A: I'll go as long as I can and as long as they need me.

Q: What difference will this ministry work make for you in the future?

A: It gives me a sort of peace that I'm doing what I'm called to do.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: He's always been there when I needed Him. I know He's there all the time. ☺

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: I was saved at age 13. I was already involved in church, playing the organ with the youth program. It sort of evolved from there. Back then, we had two-week revivals. We were having a revival at our church and that's when I accepted Christ.

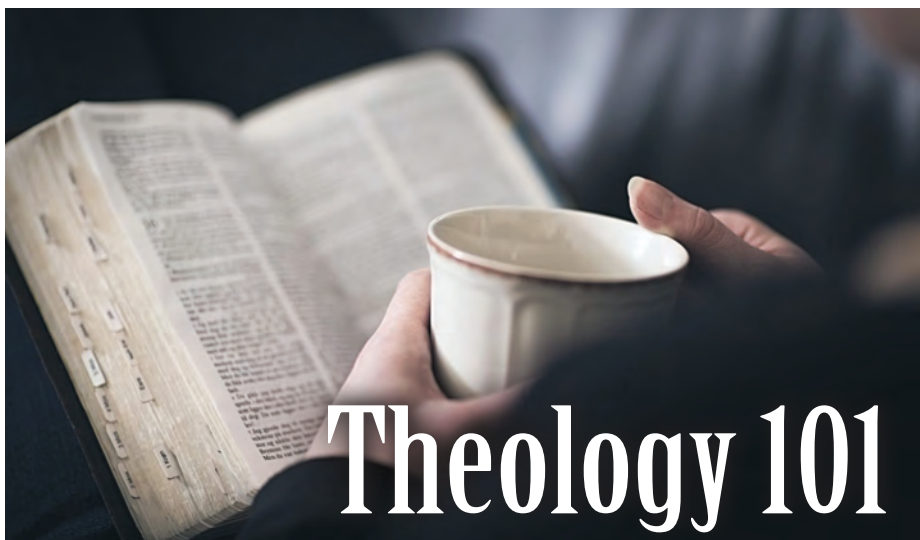
Q: When and how were you led into this ministry work?

A: I started at such a young age and I just kept going. When we moved to Alabama in '55, the first church we attended found out I could play. Every church we went into found out

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.

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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Christ

Christ Ascended

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Across denominational lines, Christians often confess their faith through the language of the Apostles' Creed. In the creed is the confession that Christ died and was buried. Immediately following is the affirmation, "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father almighty." This confession reminds us that the mission on which the Father sent His only Son into the world was not complete with His incarnate life, saving death and victorious resurrection. His mission was not done until His exaltation had been realized. We might think of Jesus' exaltation as having three stages: resurrection, ascension and enthronement. Like a middle child is sometimes said to feel overlooked, we sometimes tend to overlook the ascension of Christ. While our celebrations of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter usually overshadow it, the ascension of Jesus deserves attention similar to that which we pay to His birth, death and resurrection.

Significance of the ascension

The record is told rather briefly both in Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:9-11. Possibly because the New Testament uses only five total verses to record the event, Jesus' ascension tends to be pushed into the background. Even so the New Testament contains quite a number of references to the significance of the ascension. In the next few weeks we will be considering some of these references and the significance they attach to the ascension.

But for now let's consider that an unusual exit was a fitting complement to Jesus' unusual entry into the world. The five verses that describe His exit tell us that while human eyes watched, Christ was carried into heaven, being lifted from the earth and taken out of sight by a cloud. Thus His miraculous exit formed a fitting bookend to His entry into the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth.

To be sure, the ascension had sig-

nificance for Christ personally. As He faced the agony associated with His crucifixion, the testimony of Scripture is that He "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). A major part of the joy was no doubt the anticipation of the return to heaven.

Three-stage exaltation

As previously stated, the ascension had the distinction of forming the middle portion of His three-stage exaltation, which began with resurrection and ended with enthronement at the Father's right hand. We might think of the ascension as the link between Christ's initial condescension and His final exaltation.

Of significance both to Christ and us is the realization that His ascension attested the Father's acceptance of both His person and work. We believe that the Bible clearly teaches that as the eternal Word, Christ took upon Himself a full human nature in a real human body. That the eternal Christ could return to heaven in a human body bears witness to His success in living a perfect life in a fallen world in human flesh, before taking His humanity into heaven. Had He not been without sin in His person, ascension and enthronement would not have been possible in a heaven into which nothing enters that is unclean or defiles (Rev. 21:27).

In the Christian calendar Ascension Day occurs 40 days after Easter, putting it in the sixth week after Easter. The next few weeks will be a good season for Theology 101 to probe further the significance of Jesus' ascension. ☩

Jerry Batson, retired associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor at several schools of religion, is pastor of First Baptist Church, McCalla.



Wet/dry election

Trinity to hold liquor referendum June 3

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

The news about an upcoming liquor referendum in Morgan County's Trinity has come as a surprise to some people in the area.

According to Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) executive director Joe Godfrey, alcohol legalization proponents seem to have been working "under the radar" in order to catch liquor opponents off-guard.

The referendum, which will coincide with the primary election June 3, would allow the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages in Trinity if voters support it.

The petition calling for the liquor referendum in Trinity received 124 signatures, which is just slightly less than one-third of the entire 384 registered voters in the last municipal election, according to news reports.

Currently Decatur and Priceville are the only two Morgan County municipalities that allow alcohol sales.

Both Steve Caudle, interim pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, and Donnell Brown, director of missions for Morgan Baptist Association, had just learned of the referendum at press time.

They reported no plans have been made to fight it, but there is certainly a desire to do so. Brown added he intends to place an article about the topic on the association's local edition page of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper.

Godfrey noted "it's sad" that small communities are deceived into thinking that alcohol sales will somehow solve all their financial problems and bring economic growth to their area.

"The facts are that alcohol sales often end up costing more than the revenue they bring in," he explained.

"Using nationwide data, we find that in Alabama for every dollar of revenue brought into a community by alcohol sales, it actually costs between \$15 and \$18 to clean up the mess alcohol leaves in

its wake," he said. "And small communities often do not have the infrastructure — police, emergency services, hospitals, jails, counseling services, etc. — to handle the problems associated with increased alcohol use."

While some argue that people are already drinking alcohol in those communities, Godfrey asked, "If sales — and thus consumption — do not increase, then why does the alcohol industry want to keep expanding into these small communities and dry counties?"

"It is because they know that the more available their product, the more of it people will buy (and consume)," he said.

According to a wet/dry map posted on the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board website, there are currently 42 wet counties in the state compared with 25 dry counties — and even most of the dry counties have cities where the sale of alcohol is legal.

The most recent wet/dry battles in the state

took place in late 2012.

Rogersville, Boaz and Priceville were some of the cities that voted to legalize alcohol sales as did Randolph County.

During that same timeframe, both Hartselle and Blount County managed to keep their locations dry.

'Alcohol destroys lives'

"I hope Alabama Baptists throughout the state will realize the importance of opposing the continued expansion of alcohol sales in our communities and counties," Godfrey said.

"Alcohol destroys lives and families, it costs more than the revenues it produces and we must never forget that it is a mind-altering, addictive drug that has become an idol ... to many."

Godfrey noted that ALCAP's website is "filled with resources, including a manual on how to organize for a municipal option (wet/dry election), so church leaders may access that information quickly."

To access these resources from ALCAP, visit www.alcap.com. ☩

"The facts are that alcohol sales often end up costing more than the revenue they bring in."

**Joe Godfrey
executive director, Alabama
Citizens Action Program**

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'Parsonage allowance'

Diverse religious groups defend clergy tax break

Christians, Jews, Muslims and Hindus may have different ideas about God, but they all agree on a tax break for clergy under attack by an atheist group that says it discriminates against the nonreligious.

Interests diverse enough to embrace both the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness filed legal briefs in recent days asking an appeals court to reverse a 2013 lower-court decision ending a 60-year-old "parsonage allowance" that allows churches to provide ministers with tax-exempt housing allowances in lieu of housing them in parsonages on church property.

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filed a brief April 8 representing Muslim, Eastern Orthodox and Hindu religious groups — as well as the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and International Mission Board (IMB).

The Church Alliance, a coalition of the chief executive officers of more than 30 denominational benefit programs, weighed in April 9.

Alliance Defending Freedom also filed a brief April 9 representing 624 pastors and churches.

The briefs respond to a ruling in November 2013 by a federal judge in Wisconsin that a section of the tax code granting a benefit for "ministers of the gospel" not available to everyone else favors religion over nonreligion, thus creating an establishment of religion prohibited by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The case is currently on appeal before the Seventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago. It started in September 2011 with a lawsuit by the Freedom from Religion Foundation, a group based in Madison, Wis., advocating for "freethinkers" such as atheists, agnostics and skeptics since 1978.

The Obama administration says the group has no standing in the case because it doesn't seek the

benefit for itself but only wants to withhold it from others.

The Beckett Fund brief says the intent of the parsonage allowance is to ensure equal treatment for ministers and nonministers under a "convenience of the employer" doctrine first recognized by administrative rulings in 1914.

'Convenience' doctrine

The doctrine applies to people like hotel managers who must live on premises, military officers who must live in the barracks or commercial fishermen who must live on a ship. In those cases the employer pays the cost of an employee's housing but the IRS does not consider it income.

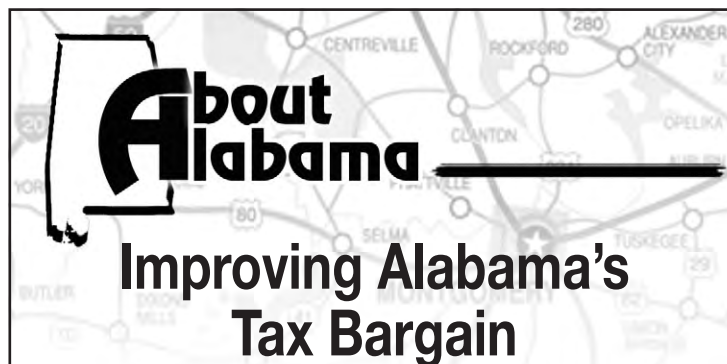
Becket Fund lawyers say ministers fit comfortably within the "convenience of the employer" doctrine. They are typically required to live at or near the church. They are expected to be available at all hours of the day and night.

Ministers are expected to use their homes for various church events like Bible studies, meetings, meals for new members and providing temporary lodging for guest speakers and missionaries.

Sermons are often prepared in the home. In many small churches the minister is the primary caretaker of the church building.

Representatives of the IMB say it relies on the ability to assign housing locations to its missionaries in a way that furthers its Christian ministry "or, in secular terms, in a way that is for the convenience of IMB."

"The starting base salary of a missionary is a little over \$20,000 and the average base salary of an IMB missionary family is about \$40,000," the IMB argues. With approximately 5,000 commissioned missionaries serving in 150 countries around the world "loss of the clergy housing allowance would have a devastating financial impact." (ABP)



By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

In the 25 years that the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama has had its finger on the pulse of Alabama's taxes, they have remained very low. This year is no exception.

Is this a bargain? Not necessarily. Taxes are used to provide services, and their value is tied to the results achieved.

The data leaves no doubt that Alabama remains among the lowest-taxed states.

'Tax Freedom Day'

Each year the Tax Foundation, a Washington-based think tank, calculates what it calls "Tax Freedom Day." This is the calendar day when total personal income is sufficient to pay all taxes — federal, state and local, freeing the balance of the year for other pursuits.

This year's Tax Freedom Day came April 21 for the nation as a whole. In Alabama it arrived two weeks earlier, April 7, because of our low tax burden. Only four other states finished paying for their taxes sooner.

The latest figures from the U.S. Census Bureau show that Alabama's state and local governments collected \$2,904 in taxes per resident for fiscal 2011, a lower amount than in any other state. South Carolina ranked second lowest.


Alabama's taxes were \$324 million lower than they would have been if collected at the same per-capita rate as in South Carolina.

However, taxes are a bargain only when taxpayers get more than their money's worth from the services produced. This can't happen without control over the use of revenue and budget procedures that focus on performance. The state of Alabama, which spends more than 10 billion taxpayer dollars each year, has neither.


About 88 percent of the state's revenue is earmarked in advance for specific purposes, far higher than in any other state. Guaranteed budgets provide no incentive to efficiency. A sound Budget Management Act has been on the books for many years, but Alabama today has no systematic process for linking appropriations to performance measures.

As every shopper knows, low prices are only half of what makes a bargain. A higher quality budget is what it will take to improve Alabama's tax bargain.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at jwillia@samford.edu.



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LETTERS

(continued from page 2)
of the individuals affected by this matter.

Perhaps this whole discussion gives support to the need for a universal, single payer health plan in this country. Then no businesses would have to make or enforce these moral issues.

Jack Ferguson
Vestavia Hills, Ala.



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Ephesians 1:13

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W.T. 'Dub' Edwards Jr.

Former longtime Samford professor Edwards dies

W.T. "Dub" Edwards Jr., a former religion professor at Samford University in Birmingham and former religion department chair at the university, died April 11. He was 86.

Edwards was ordained to the ministry in 1946 at Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden.

He graduated from Howard College (now Samford) in 1949 and later from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he received his doctorate.

As a college student, he served as pastor of both Concord Baptist Church and Pine Grove Baptist Church in Perry County. While in seminary, Edwards was pastor of two Baptist churches in Kentucky.

He began teaching in the department of religion at Samford in 1958.

In addition to the 40-plus years he taught at Samford, Edwards also was university chaplain from 1971 to 1986 and chair of the religion department from 1986 to 1992. In 1996, he was named Armstrong Professor of Religion at Samford.

He was widowed after 54 years of marriage to Peggy Jo.

He is survived by his wife, Martha; her daughter; his four children; and six grandchildren. (Julie Payne)



EDWARDS

Dan Raley

FBC Slocomb's Pastor Raley dies

Dan Raley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Slocomb, for 28 years, died April 11. He was 60.

Raley attended Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and received both his bachelor's in theology and master's in pastoral counseling from Andersonville Theological Seminary.

He was active in ministry for more than 45 years. Before his tenure at First, Slocomb, Raley was pastor of Babbie Baptist Church, Andalusia; Good Hope Baptist Church, Baker, Fla.; and First Baptist Church of Bagdad, Milton, Fla.

Dicky McAllister, director of missions for Geneva Baptist Association, noted that Raley was a man used of God and one who served his Lord, his family, his church and community well. "He was a very, very loving individual," he said.

Raley is survived by his wife, Cecilia; three children; and seven grandchildren. (TAB)



RALEY

'Weakness of SIN'

Southwestern's Patterson urges ministers not to drink

Moderate drinking and the ministry don't mix, a Southern Baptist seminary president said in a chapel message April 2.

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said it's just the second time in 50-plus years of ministry he's preached on the topic of drinking.

"I don't like to talk about this kind of thing," Patterson said, adding that he would rather preach about the gospel, but "in this day in which we live, it has been incumbent on us to address this issue."

"I do not address the issue of what is usually called substance abuse today from the viewpoint of entertaining another age of legal forbidding of the drinking of alcoholic beverages," he said. "I'm not asking for that."

"I am addressing specifically a group of people," he said. "I am addressing those who are to be ministers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

He cited Bible passages including "wine is a mocker" from Proverbs and the story in Genesis 9 about Noah, awakening from a drunken stupor, cursing his grandson Canaan to become "the lowest of slaves."

"Here was a supposedly righteous man, a preacher of righteousness, who imbibes and as a result he visits upon his own family, upon his own grandson, the judgment of God," Patterson said. "Make no mistake about it. When you begin to drink, when you begin to imbibe, what you are risking every single time is the judgment of God on those who follow in your wake to whom you are the most closely related and who you love with all your heart. Don't do it to them."

'The social order'

Patterson also described drinking as "the social order that nobody wants to face, because, 'Hey, I like my booze, and so leave me alone with it.'"

"Alcoholism is a weakness of sin in the human body," he said. "There is no alcoholic gene that makes you automatically an alcoholic, but there is

certainly overwhelming abundant evidence that some people with just one drink are immediately alcoholics.

"Don't let anything — don't let marijuana, don't let any other drug, don't let alcohol — become the ruler of your life," Patterson counseled. "They are rulers that do not care about their subjects. They are rulers that take their subjects and lead them to bankruptcy. They are rulers that take their subjects and they take them down a merry line until such time that their home is destroyed and their life is gone and their ministry is over."

Patterson said the number of ministries cut short by alcohol is "legion," including one just weeks earlier on the seminary campus.

Patterson admitted there is no command in the Bible that says "thou shalt not drink" but "there is also no line in the Bible that says thou shalt not mainline heroin."

His response to people who say that drunkenness is sinful but there's nothing wrong with drinking in moderation?

"That's my exact perspective and viewpoint on murder," he quipped. "I do it only in moderation."

"When all the statistics say what they say, when the No. 1 industry in America responsible for all the sorrow and hurt and heartache that come about is the liquor industry, how on earth can you, as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, take alcohol to your breast?" he asked seminarians.

"Our world's going to continue to drink," Patterson said. "Prohibition didn't stop it. Nothing's going to stop it."

But for those called to the work of the ministry, he said, "There is a wise way. There is a better way." (ABP)



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Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago April 1964

First Receiver: Only 15 minutes after the Revised Associational Sunday School Standard went into effect April 1 — just as the Sunday School Board opened for the day — the first certificate was presented to Bessemer Association of Alabama. A.V. Washburn, secretary of the Sunday School department, Southern Baptist Convention, presented the Associational Sunday School Standard Certificate to J.N. Castleberry, of Bessemer, Sunday School superintendent of Bessemer Association. Castleberry and Ralph Halbrooks, associate in the Alabama Baptist Sunday School Department, drove to Nashville to bring the application and receive the certificate.

40 Years Ago April 1974

Alabamians on Committees: Walter G. Nunn, of Jasper, and Charles Bowman, of Gadsden, have been notified by Owen Cooper, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, of their appointment to the Committee on Committees for the Southern

Baptist Convention meeting this year in Dallas. Nunn is pastor of First Baptist Church, Jasper, and a former president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Bowman is a radio executive and a member of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Gadsden. In this capacity they will nominate to the convention persons to serve on the Committee on Boards and Commissions and other committees authorized by the convention.

30 Years Ago April 1984

Executive Secretary Named: The Search Committee for the new executive secretary-treasurer of the Baptist State Executive Board announced plans to recommend A. Earl Potts for the position at a called meeting April 19 at 11 a.m., according to search committee chairman Troy L. Morrison, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden. The special called meeting of the board was announced by Joe Bob Mizzell, chairman of the board and member of the search committee. He is pastor of Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. Potts has been serving as acting secre-

tary-treasurer since the retirement of George Bagley in December 1983. Potts is the eighth person in the position since the organization of the Baptist State Executive Board in 1902.

20 Years Ago April 1994

Renewing Acquaintances: Members of Clearview Baptist Church, Birmingham, will be renewing old acquaintances when Peter Rudkovsky, pastor of a Russian Baptist church in Almaty, Kazakhstan, arrives in May to lead the church's revival. Plans for the meeting — which finally "fell together" three weeks ago, according to Clearview Pastor Kenny Bruce — germinated more than a year ago when a group of eight Clearview members and one person from Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, visited the former Soviet republic as part of a short-term Foreign Mission Board project. According to Clearview member Brenda LeVan, the trip was a life-changing experience during which the Americans saw numerous people make decisions for Christ.

10 Years Ago April 2004

Biker Ministry Launched: The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, began a ministry for bikers. The church set aside parking for the bikers and challenged their members to invite bikers to the church. They also started programs specifically for bikers, such as the Relational Bible Fellowship (RBF), a Sunday School class for bikers. Keith Edge was a co-founder of RBF. He said even though bikers look different, "we love the Lord just as well as the people in a suit or dress on Sunday." Other churches also have started biker programs.



Want to know God?

Pastor Toney Wales
Elkton Road Baptist Church, Athens

Do you want to know God? How we answer this question reveals the attitude of our heart. If someone responds with a "no," do they really not want to know the One that loves them the most? Or do they not want to know the god they see in some religious people, who really don't know God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

If someone responds, "Yes," then there is only one way to know Him.

In John 3, we read about Nicodemus, a religious man who wanted to know God. From his observations of Jesus, Nicodemus concluded Jesus had come from God, but he wanted to know for sure so he asked Jesus directly.

Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus was more concerned with Nicodemus knowing God than just answering a question about Himself.

Nicodemus' response to Jesus' answer was not "why" but "how" could a man be born again. Yes Nicodemus really wanted to know God. Jesus further explained that this new birth came from the Spirit of God and had absolutely nothing to do with the physical flesh.

Though we, like Nicodemus, may not understand the "hows" in which God works, Jesus assures us, as He did Nicodemus, that He knows. The answer is the same for us today as it was for Nicodemus — which is simple faith, a believing and trusting heart, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus told Nicodemus in a way he understood that Jesus was going to be crucified and that only by believing upon Him could a person be saved and know God (John 3:14-15).

Without doubt Nicodemus came to know God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as we see him setting aside his religion to put his hands to the body of Christ (John 19:38-42).

If you want to know God, you must know Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

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PASTOR: Union Baptist Church in Honorville is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Full-time and bivocational resumes accepted. Please send to: ATTN: Search Committee, P.O. Box 158, Honorville, AL 36042.

PASTOR: South Hamilton Baptist Church is accepting resumes for pastor. Full-time and bivocational resumes are being accepted. Please send resumes to: 1805 Military Street S., Hamilton, AL 35570, or email to: southhamilton@gmail.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Eastside Baptist, Birmingham, Ala., is seeking a minister of music to plan and lead worship/music ministry. Blended service. Email resumé to: jellison@EBCBirmingham.org.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER: Position will involve leading blended worship, directing and utilizing a praise band and directing the adult choir. Send resumes to: ATTN: Pastor, Camp Ground Baptist Church, 3898 Andrews Avenue, Ozark AL 36360.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Meek Baptist Church in Arley, Ala., is seeking a godly man to lead our choir and congregation in blended style worship. Email resumé: meekbaptist@att.net. www.meekbc.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Hanceville FBC is seeking a part-time minister of music. Primary goal to lead church and choir utilizing blended music in such a way that they encounter God in worship. Additional questions will be discussed during the interview

process. Please send your resumé to: resume@hancevillefirstbaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR: Flatwoods Baptist Church in Northport, Ala., is seeking a bivocational music director who will serve the church by planning and leading our worship/music ministry. The music director will be responsible for coordinating with all the church staff in planning, scheduling and directing the music program and ministries of the church. We are seeking someone who is a talented and passionate leader to plan and conduct a God-inspired music ministry. Send resumé to: fwbcpersonnel@hotmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL STUDENT PASTOR: FBC Dawes is seeking a student pastor in west Mobile. Previous experience with grades 7-12 with a spiritually focused program. Please send resumé to: jimglazejr@gmail.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER/DIRECTOR: Cinco Baptist Church, located in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., is seeking a children's minister/director. College degree required. Seminary degree and ministry experience both a plus. Church website: www.cincobaptist.org. Submit resumes to: personnel@cincobc.org.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES: First Baptist Church of Foley, Ala., is accepting resumes for the full-time position of minister of children and families. Please email resumes to: scollins@fbcfoley.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Good Hope Baptist Church in Eclectic, Ala., is seeking a bivocational or part-time

children's minister. It is desired that applicants have an academic degree of childhood development nature or experience with children's ministry. Please submit resumes to: kmcghee32@gmail.com or call Libby McGhee at 334-312-0610 for more information.

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Tailored training

College students learn how to minister amid tragedy

(continued from page 1)
that would eventually grow into this training session for college students.

"There were a lot of collegiate students that were put into action during that time, and we had several students that right in the middle of finals took their books and went to the fairgrounds to help out or went to help move debris,"

Morrison said. "What we realized then was that we were underprepared for a disaster on such a huge scale, and so we've been having conversations for a few years now about getting training for college students so they can be even more help than they were before."

Participants in the recent training received an overview of DR before choosing an area to focus on during the training weekend: feeding units, chaplaincy, clean-up/recovery or chainsaw.

Nate Young, senior Baptist campus minister at the University of Alabama, helped head up the chainsaw training portion of the event and hopes to see this program repeated to train even more students.

"The students in the chainsaw group

really enjoyed falling a tree, but they also liked learning the history and scope of SBC (Southern Baptist Convention) DR," Young said. "I'm just thankful and excited to have taken this step toward involving collegiates in SBC DR."

Though DR training and education programs are not new, the training specifically for college students is.

Dunson said one of his favorite parts about the weekend was the fact that he was surrounded by peers.

"I like the fact that it was tailored to college students and that we got to be there with people our age," Dunson said. "It was neat getting to be around people our age, meet new people and share things outside of school."

Given the positive feedback received from student participants and leaders alike, Morrison hopes to be able to replicate this event soon.

"Overall it was a very successful weekend, and I didn't hear anyone say anything negative," he said. "It was a very different kind of ... training ... much more hands on," he noted.



Photo by Kim Andrews

Family, friends and ministers gather around students to pray for them at the service where more than 120 were commissioned.



Despite enjoying his chainsaw training, Dunson said the sessions on how to talk to people who have just been through a disaster were equally important and enlightening.

A different approach

"They were emphasizing that these people have been through tremendous heartache, which is something I hadn't thought of," he said.

"That means we have to approach them differently, and we learned about how evangelizing to people who have survived something traumatic is very different than in everyday life."

Mel Johnson serves as DR strategist for the SBOM office of global missions, and Mike Nuss serves as director of the SBOM office of collegiate and student ministries.

For more information about the office of collegiate and student ministries, visit www.onemissionstudents.org.

For more information about DR training, visit www.sldr.org.



Photos by Kim Andrews

Top photo: College students are trained in chainsaw by Alabama Disaster Relief instructors. **Bottom photo:** Students at Missions Prep Weekend listen in as they are trained in travel safety, evangelism and world religions at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

Dedicated efforts

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers honored

During the recent 2014 State Disaster Relief Training weekend at Shocco Springs, April 3-5, more than 450 disaster relief personnel participated, and three volunteers were recognized by Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) staff for unique contributions to Alabama's disaster relief response efforts. Pictured are (1 to r) Mel Johnson, SBOM state disaster relief strategist; Sammy Freeman, Cleburne Baptist Association's disaster relief coordinator who accepted a team recognition for the association's chainsaw unit; Gary Cardwell, disaster relief chaplain and director of missions, Etowah Baptist Association; Larry Murphy, state disaster relief task force member; and Mark Wakefield, SBOM state chaplaincy strategist. (SBOM)

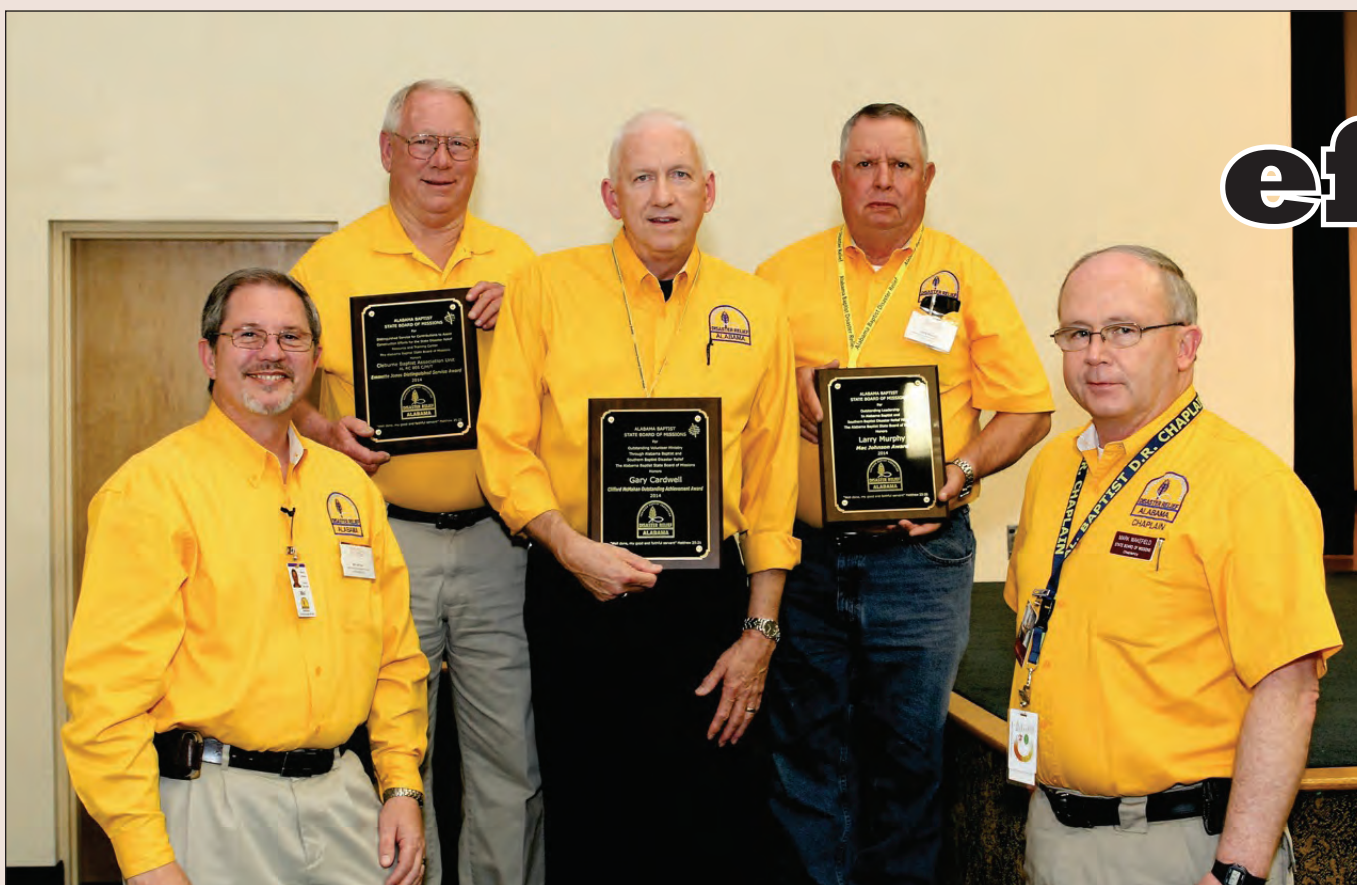


Photo courtesy of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

'Be neutral'

Government should leave religion alone, Baptist leader insists

Government should let religion "flourish or flounder on its own," not promote it or prohibit liberty of conscience, a religious freedom advocate told a chapel assembly at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas.

In spite of their diversity and deep disagreements on other issues, a historically grounded, biblically based commitment to religious liberty for all people has united Baptists for four centuries, said Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

"We have taken seriously the liberty for which Jesus Himself broke the yoke of slavery and set us free. This was our birthright in the 17th century, our rallying cry today and, I pray, our legacy four centuries from now," he said.

Walker spoke in Truett Seminary's chapel in conjunction with the Walter B. and Kay W. Shurden Lectures on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State.

Walker highlighted heroes of religious liberty from Thomas Helwys — who sent a declaration on liberty of conscience to King James and subsequently was sentenced for life to New-

gate Prison — to Roger Williams — who established Rhode Island as a haven for religious dissenters and founded the first Baptist church in North America — to John Leland — who helped convince James Madison to include a religious freedom guarantee in the Bill of Rights. He also noted J.M. Dawson — who persuaded the United Nations general assembly to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — and George W. Truett — who proclaimed religious liberty to a crowd of 10,000 from the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

But while history demonstrates

Baptists' key role in advancing religious liberty, their commitment to the principle finds its roots in the Bible and its teaching that God created humankind with free will, he insisted.

"Our understanding of religious liberty involves no less than the freedom to worship God

and to follow Jesus without efforts by government to advance or inhibit religion — someone else's or our own," Walker said.

Baptists have drawn inspiration from the example of the apostles, who were arrested for preaching the gospel of Christ, he noted.

"The rights of conscience take precedence over the demands of government authority," he said.

However, Baptists likewise



Photo by Cherilyn Crowe, Baptist Joint Committee

Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, explores the issue of government and religion at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas.

"The best thing government can do for religion is simply to leave it alone."

**Brent Walker
executive director, Baptist
Joint Committee
for Religious Liberty**

have recognized the limits of freedom, particularly responsibility to others and duty to the government, Walker added.

"Our freedom in Christ can never be separated from — and must always be limited by — the responsibility that we have to one another. Freedom and responsibility must always be held in tension. They really are two sides of the same coin," he said.

While Baptists have championed a wall of separation between church and state, they must recognize the wall is not impenetrable, Walker said.

"Sometimes it looks more like a chain-link fence," he said.

First Amendment freedoms "are not absolute," he said, pointing out religion cannot be exercised in a way that harms others, free speech does not include inciting riots or falsely defaming someone and the right to assemble is subject to reasonable restrictions on time, place and manner.

The First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom makes

sure government "maintains a healthy distance from religion," Walker said.

"These twin pillars of our constitutional architecture — no establishment and free exercise [of religion] — require that government neither help nor hurt religion," he said. "Rather government must be neutral toward religion, turning it loose to flourish or flounder on its own."

In need of balance

"Government should accommodate religion without advancing it, protect religion without promoting it, lift burdens on exercise of religion without extending religion a benefit."

Practically speaking that demands balance, he observed, noting examples such as support for

voluntary student-initiated prayer while opposing prayers led by representatives of the state, support for tax exemptions for nonprofit religious organizations but opposition to vouchers for religious schools, and support for church compliance with reasonable building and safety codes but opposition to attempts by zoning authorities to micromanage church ministries.

"In short, every establishment clause 'no' we utter to keep government from promoting religion should be accompanied by a free exercise 'yes' to ensure the rights of citizens to practice religion in accordance with the dictates of conscience. ... The best thing government can do for religion is simply to leave it alone," Walker said. (ABP)

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Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Redeeming the time

It has been almost a month since I declared war on multitasking, and so far, so good.

I have slipped back into the old habit a few times, but I recognized it quickly and pulled myself back out.

The effort it takes for me not to live there means I am learning to carefully think through requests before agreeing to them. I must understand the commitment I am making and determine whether I can truly take it on.

I don't like to disappoint people, and it seems that is exactly what I'm doing right now as I set boundaries, but I also know myself in that when I commit to something, I give it everything I have.

Of course, that's also the problem if I'm overcommitted. The intention is always to give 100 percent to the effort, but with too many slices of the pie doled out, the intention doesn't always result in as successful of an ending as I intended.

So it's not necessarily an easy transition I'm making, but I'm encouraged by the richness and depth of the new world I am experiencing.

I've also been a part of several conversations related to the March 27 Rashional Thoughts column "Move over multitasking; singletasking finally wins out." It seems I am not alone in this battle. Everyone I talked with related to the examples in some way and shared some of what they are facing.

We all expressed a desire to make sure we make the most out of each day.

So as I continue to learn to singletask, I'm strategically working to ensure I am consistently redeeming the time, even when that means making time for proper rest or recreation in which I'm completely there in mind as well as body.

A new friend of mine depicted a good example of redeeming the time recently when a group of Baptist communicators were embarking on a day trip. When he learned the trip was four hours round trip, he hurried back to his room to

grab a graduate studies book.

I teased him about how awful it would be to spend the time getting to know his new friends and that he should definitely get the book, but in reality, he was wise. He could still take some time to socialize and then spend the rest of the time studying. It was a smart way to redeem the time.

Another idea is to keep information needing read or reviewed with you for times you are waiting or flying.

Planning does help

If you are responsible for taking minutes during a meeting, then schedule an appointment with yourself right after the meeting to prepare and finalize the minutes rather than waiting until later to do them. You will be able to knock them out in half the time because they are fresh and you won't have the pressure of writing them hanging over your head.

Take 10 minutes to think through all the errands you need to run this week and group them according to similar sides of town or in order of how they fall on your route.

Fold laundry while watching TV. Do leg lifts or stretches while talking on the phone (if it is a casual conversation, probably better to stay totally focused if it is a professional conversation).

What about doing something else besides strictly driving and focusing on the vehicles around you on road trips? Obviously talking on the phone, texting and plugging in coordinates on the GPS shouldn't be done while driving. But is listening to a sermon podcast or the Bible on CD redeeming the time or multitasking?

In a brief Internet research on the topic I found differing views. Some say driving is one of those tasks that requires our full attention. Others say it would be similar to folding laundry while watching TV. The verdict is still out for me. What do you think? And what are other ideas of redeeming the time? Send them to me. 📧

Rashional Extras...

Follow me on
Twitter:

@RashionalThts

Regarding multitasking (topic of the March edition of Rashional Thoughts), I don't think that is what Christ demonstrated for us. He had a single-mindedness about His life goal and did one thing at a time very well. Although Jesus seemed to operate single-mindedly on doing one task at a time very well, God our Heavenly Father is the incredible multitasker of the universe. He multitasks so we can singletask. Trying to make ourselves "like God" in this way without His capabilities is doomed to fail miserably.

Bob Cosby, M.D.
Birmingham, Ala.

"God can take a mess and make it a message. What the world throws away, God can give purpose."

Scott Stapp
Christian singer

God's promises

Hold My hand, and never falter.
Focus on Me, and walk on water.
With little faith you can move a mountain.
For eternal life drink from My fountain.

The valleys are deep, and the roads are long.
Grab My hand when you can't hold on.
The hills are steep and tough to climb.
You will grow weary over time.

The journey is hard and will beat you down.
You will feel lonely when no one's around.
You will want to give up and quit trying.
You will often wonder why you can't stop crying.

It's not easy, but it's going to be worth it.
In the end you will be made perfect.
Keep pressing on with your head held high.
Force a smile and dry your eyes.

Remember the promises that I've made.
You will be with Me some day.
Until then keep going strong,
and use My strength to carry on.

Emily Shay
Maplesville, Ala.

Ode to Sunday mornings...

By Darla Morrison Brown
Rainbow City, Ala.

As the girls were getting ready, the essence of urgency was real ... it sounds like a backstage fury, but it is only our family headed to church.

In the parking lot of the church, we squeal tires as we come to a stop and all five of us pile out adjusting clothes, brushing off crumbs, fluffing hair and grabbing Bibles and a coffee cup.

Ill-tempered we rush to our place of worship to greet all the other families who have the same look of frustration and stress on them as well.

I know our Father is touched by our priority we place on Him as

we tumble into classes late with minds flashing of all we have been through this morning and all we have to do on this day of rest. How very merciful He is to lavish love on us, while we busy ourselves with trivia instead of putting all that energy into praising Him, teaching our children about His love and being available for others.

Even though in the Bible days they didn't worry about makeup and red lights, Jesus still saw lives filled with doing the extravagant and unnecessary.

He even had to sneak away from His full life just to pray. How much more can we as mere men benefit from being still and seeking God daily?

The Daily 10 Before 10 AM

By Bryan Gill
www.bryangill.com

I am more productive when I accomplish more before noon. (Thank you Captain Obvious, right?) But seriously, I feel like getting a jump-start on my to-do list is like priming the pump for the rest of the day. I keep a running to-do list on my desk calendar at all times. Lately I've noticed that the same things keep popping up. So I came up with a list of 10 things to do before 10 a.m. Take them. Use them. Try to implement them into your ministry. I hope it helps you as much as it helps me.

1. Read one thing related to my ministry field or culture
2. Read two chapters in the Bible
3. Email three local pastors/ministers
4. Contact four alumni or church members just to catch up
5. Schedule five relevant social media posts for the day
6. Have a six-minute nonwork/ministry conversation with at least one of my work/ministry peers
7. Review my calendar seven weeks out
8. Identify eight goals for the day
9. Determine what needs to be done in the next nine days
10. Spend 10 minutes in prayer for those involved in my ministry

"If we really care about our brothers and sisters in other countries, then we need to care about what is going on with them. ... Jesus called us to be shaped by the message of the Kingdom."

Craig S. Keener, Ph.D.
Professor of New Testament
Asbury Theological Seminary

MAKING PROGRESS?

What spiritual discipline are you focused on right now?
How do you plan to make progress in that area?

Email me at jrash@
thealabamabaptist.org.

BOOK REVIEW

Dating, Dining, and Desperation: A Dear Daphne Novel

Melody Carlson. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014. 271 pp. (Kindle Version).

If you have read Christian fiction, you are certainly familiar with Melody Carlson. If you like light Christian romance, you are probably a fan, like me. This is the second of four books in the Dear Daphne series.

Daphne Ballinger is writing a syndicated advice column, working on a book and living in her late Aunt Dee's house — for now.

Life as she knows it will soon change markedly, though, if she is not able (or willing) to meet the terms of Aunt Dee's will in the next six months. It doesn't look good for Daphne, especially after the latest complication.

Light, breezy and filled with engaging characters, this is the kind of book you sit down and read through, then wait impatiently for the next one — which shouldn't be long in coming. I'm pretty sure I know how it will all turn out (Daphne absolutely has to stay in Aunt Dee's house), but I am eager to see how Carlson pulls it off.

Interestingly the first two were published in print versions, but the remaining books are expected to release soon in ebook format only.

If you don't have a Kindle, you might want to download a free Kindle app for your computer so you can read them. 📖



Photos courtesy of Hoganson Media Relations

Scott Stapp, lead singer of the internationally acclaimed rock band Creed, recently released a solo album, 'Proof of Life,' which features a collection of songs that focus on his walk with the Lord.

Finding redemption

Rock band Creed's lead singer Stapp fills void in life with Christ

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, Alabama Baptist

As the lead singer of the internationally acclaimed rock band Creed, Scott Stapp helped the group earn enormous success and popularity — selling more than 30 million albums, scoring 11 No. 1 radio singles and savoring a Grammy Award for best rock song “With Arms Wide Open.”

However, Stapp paid a high price for success.

While performing concerts around the world Stapp was easily persuaded by the perils of the music industry.

Although Stapp had grown up attending church regularly and made a profession of faith at an early age, he admitted falling apart emotionally, physically and spiritually at the height of the group's fame and glory.

As he battled addictions and suffered from depression the effects of Stapp's lifestyle left him feeling completely empty inside.

No matter what he did nothing could fill the void in his life — until he surrendered his life to the Lord.

With his life spinning out of control Stapp found redemption just before hitting rock bottom.

While committing to change his ways and turn his life around he reconnected with Christ who was waiting with arms wide open.

“For years I was slowly killing myself,” Stapp said. “Drugs and alcohol want to kill you instantly but they're patient and will take their time. The same is true of toxic relationships. I had to declare the most obvious of truths — that I had been torturing and poi-

soning myself in an attempt to snuff out my soul.

“My heart tells me that God is always there even when you feel your breath fading from your lung. God is reaching out to accept you in ways that renew your spirit and energize your soul.”

Realizing that he had been given a second chance at life, Stapp wanted to spend it living for Christ. He chronicles his journey of transformation and rediscovery in the book “Sinner's Creed.”

Today as Stapp performs concerts he realizes the importance of using his musical gifts for God's glory.

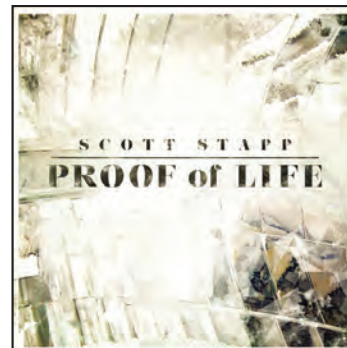
He recently released a solo album “Proof of Life,” which features a collection of songs that focus on his walk with the Lord. He also is currently on tour to promote the project and recently garnered his first No. 1 Christian radio hit with the song “Slow Suicide.”

“I think once I rediscovered the purpose for my life and realized that the proof I had been looking

for was right in front of my face, I finally recognized what God was doing in me and needed to share that message with others,” Stapp said.

“When you find the light that can pull you out of darkness you want to scream that from the mountaintops and tell everyone else living in the darkness: ‘I've found the light. Let me help you.’ That's when I realized that it was time to make this record and share this story.

“It's been a process of really understanding God's grace and what Christ has done for me. I think the most important thing that I want people to take away from this record and my story is that God can take a mess and make it a message. What the world throws away, God can give purpose.” 📖



MOVIE REVIEW

Linsanity

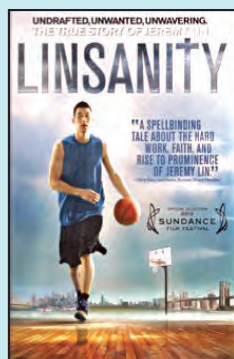
Produced by 408 Films and Arowana Films, 2013. PG. 89 minutes.

Any basketball fans out there? If so, you will probably know exactly what the title means. For those who do not, the word is a play on the name of an unusual basketball player who, without a lot of playing time as a pro, has built a fairly sizeable and very loyal following.

Why unusual? For one thing, Jeremy Lin's parents are Asian immigrants. There have been few Asians in the NBA's history. For another, Lin is an active, outspoken Christian and an all-around fine young man who has had to overcome some serious obstacles to reach his goals.

“Linsanity” is a well-crafted documentary that showcases Lin well. Not much of a sports fan, I thoroughly enjoyed the movie — but there are enough scenes

from basketball games to engage basketball fans. My one disappointment with this film is a couple of words that, though used regularly on network television, seem out of place in a movie like this. If your youth pastor can “bleep” out these words, the DVD would be excellent to show to the youth group. 📖

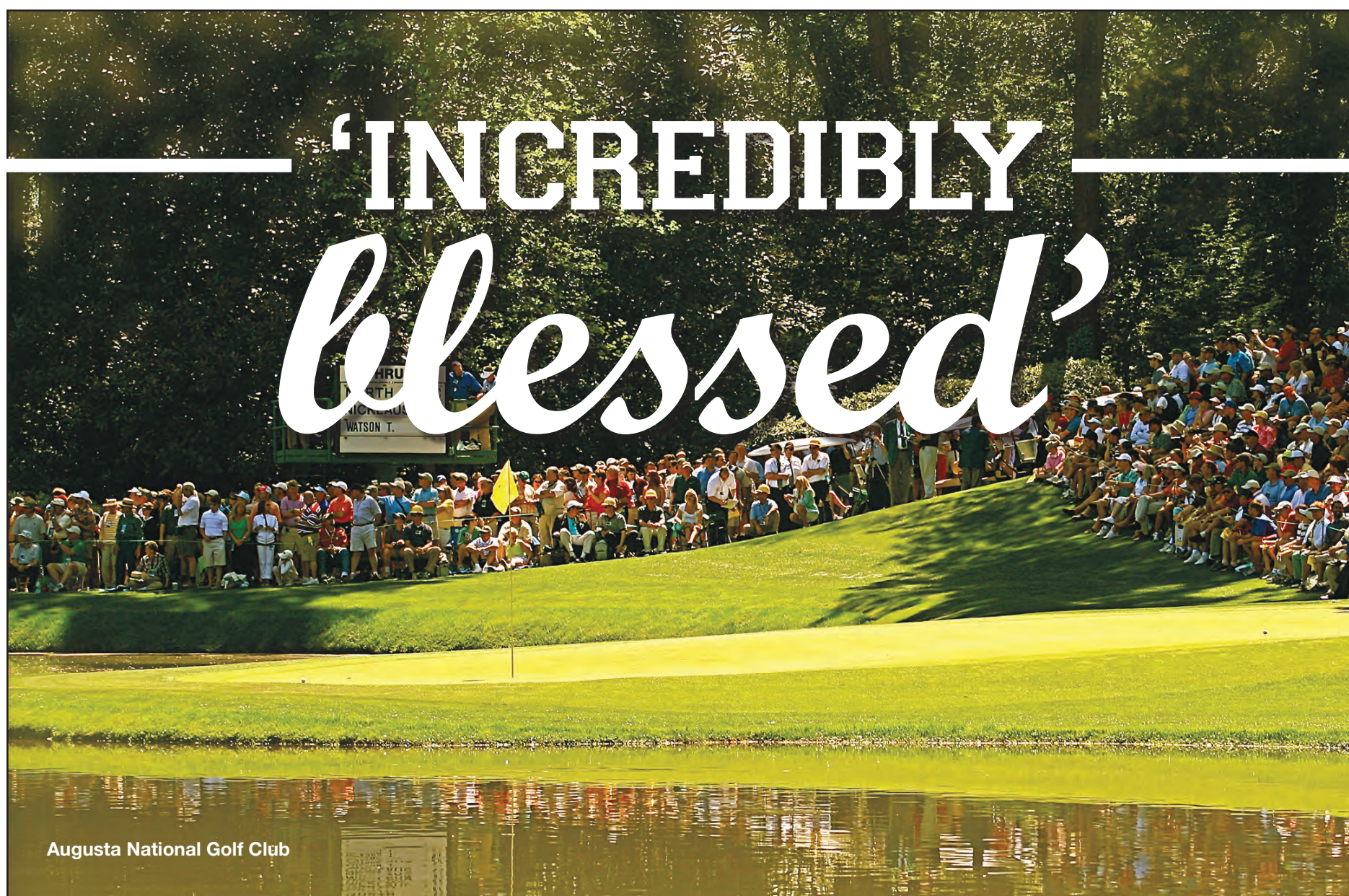


Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



Martine@kingdomresearch.org



Augusta National Golf Club

en.wikipedia.org

Masters winner Watson says talking about Jesus is 'just showing the Light'

Bubba Watson shot a 3-under-par 69 April 13 at Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, cruising to his second Masters Tournament championship in three years. An outspoken Christian, he took to Twitter following the win and proclaimed himself "blessed."

"I want to thank everyone for the support, encouraging words & congrats that have poured in this week!" he tweeted. "I feel incredibly blessed."

Watson, a former college golfer at Faulkner State Community College in Bay Minette, identifies himself on Twitter as "Christian. Husband. Daddy. Pro Golfer."

Only 16 other golfers have won multiple Masters titles including Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, Arnold Palmer and Phil Mickelson.

"It's overwhelming," Watson said after the win. "To win twice, to be with those great names. ..."



WATSON

A small-town guy named Bubba now has two green jackets. It's pretty wild."

Watson won by three strokes over Sweden's Jonas Blixt and 20-year-old American Jordan Spieth.

Before he teed off for his final round April 13 he pledged prayer support for a follower on Twitter tweeting, "Praying for you!"

Weeks earlier he tweeted an endorsement of the movie "Son of God," saying, "Just watched the movie Son of God. Best interpretation of the life of Jesus through a movie!! #DiedForOurSins."

It's not unusual for Watson to use Twitter or his platform as a professional golfer to speak about his faith in Christ and encourage others to follow Jesus, according to a 2012 Baptist Press article following his first Masters victory.

Speaking to the Augusta, Ga., crowd and a TV audience two years ago, he thanked "my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." His first tweet after he won the 2012 Masters read simply: "To God Be the Glory!!!"

Watson is a regular at the PGA Tour's

Wednesday evening Bible study, which has an attendance of 50 at times, the 2012 report said.

"For me it's a way to get back connected with the Bible and with God and Jesus," Watson said of the Bible study. "Now you know other people you can talk to, ask questions to, tell them what you're thinking, tell them what's going on in your life."

Talking about Jesus is "just showing the Light," Watson said in 2012.

"There's people who want to put down Christians. I try to tell them Jesus loves you. It's just a way to be strong in my faith."

Saved as a teenager, Watson recommitted his life to Christ in 2004 and was baptized later that year along with his wife, Angie. The couple has an adopted son. (BP, TAB)



"There's people who want to put down Christians. I try to tell them Jesus loves you. It's just a way to be strong in my faith."

— Bubba Watson, professional golfer