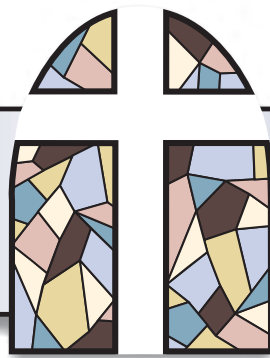


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INSIDE



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BP photo

As the conflict between Israel and Hamas continues, believers from both sides are gathering to pray, and Southern Baptists continue to minister.

IN THE MIDDLE OF WAR

Palestinian, Jewish believers in Israel pray for peace

Several days after the death of three schoolboys in Gaza, Stephen Johnson still weeps. He isn't the only one.

And he isn't the only one praying that the heartbreak of war casualties among Palestinians and Israelis ends soon.

More than 50 Jewish and Palestinian believers met together to pray for peace in mid-July, a show of solidarity in the conflict that is rocking their region.

"We pray for all people caught up in the conflict, that the Church will be an instrument of peace and that hostilities would end," said Johnson, a Southern Baptist representative in the West Bank.

The young boys, who were part of a Christian-sponsored school in Gaza, are the faces of the conflict for Johnson and his wife, Rebecca. They are examples of the high cost of the conflict between Israel and Hamas,

the hardline Islamist terrorist organization controlling Gaza.

"We ask you to join our team in weeping with the parents and family of these three children," Johnson said. "Pray with us for the safety of our students and teachers at the school, for all our friends in Gaza and also for all Israelis. May no more mothers have to cry over the loss of their children."

Faces of conflict

The three children — Jihad and Wisam Shuheiber and their cousin Afnan — represent three too many innocent lives lost, Johnson said.

Ben Martin, a Southern Baptist representative in Israel, emphasizes that this conflict is not between Jews and Palestinians, but between Israel and Hamas, a United States- and European Union-recognized terrorist organization.

"Terrorism comes because people give their hearts over to hate. They

hate their enemy more than they love their own people," Martin said. "My prayer is that people on both sides of the conflict would not fall into the trap of hate, which is a dark prison."

Miriam Holman, a Southern Baptist representative living among the Jewish population in Israel, agreed.

"My heart goes out to people on both sides of the conflict, and I pray that this operation will end soon and without any more loss of life," she said.

The recent violence started with the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli students in the West Bank on June 10 and the revenge killing

of a Palestinian youth July 2.

Back-and-forth rocket attacks and airstrikes between Hamas and Israel ensued, culminating in a major offensive against Hamas in Gaza on July 8.

A temporary cease-fire ended abruptly July 17 after Hamas fired rockets into Israel. The preceding ground invasion of Gaza by Israel is the first major Israeli ground incursion into Gaza since 2009.

On July 19, rockets fired by Hamas militants killed a Bedouin Muslim man in Israel and wounded three others in his household, including two children. The tragedy highlights (See 'Baptist,' page 3)

"My prayer is that people on both sides of the conflict would not fall into the trap of hate."

**Ben Martin
Southern Baptist
representative in Israel**

Coming next week ...

**Youth Evangelism
Conference coverage**



COMMENT

Footprints on Our Hearts

Many people walk in and out of our lives, it has been said. The question is what kind of footprints do they leave on our hearts. That is especially true of family members. Sometimes the footprints of loved ones are sweet and precious. Sometimes they are as painful as if left by someone carelessly stomping on our hearts.

That family life is important to God is beyond debate. When God created humanity He put man and woman in relationship as the first family (Gen. 1:28). He instructed them to be “fruitful and multiply.” God’s intent was for family to be the basic building block of society and that remains unchanged.

The Bible teaches family members were to care for each other. Even in the midst of the dreadful story of Cain slaying his brother Abel (Gen. 4), one finds the implication that just as Cain was to be Abel’s keeper, family members today have responsibility for one another. Both the Old and New Testaments contain frequent references to ways family members are to care for one another.

The well-being of others is a guiding principle. The Ten Commandments taught children to “honor” their parents. When the apostle Paul repeated this commandment in Ephesians 6:1–4, he added that parents are not to treat their children in ways that provoke anger. No family member is free from responsibility for the welfare of others in the family.

Importance of family relationships

In our society that is a difficult concept to understand. American individualism emphasizes the individual, not the family. We sometimes miss that though Noah was the righteous one as recorded in Genesis 6:9, it was Noah’s family that was saved from the Great Flood. The Bible and most other cultures stress the importance of family relationships.

It is to our detriment that we dismiss family ties and responsibilities so easily. Instead of family being the place where we work to do our best by one another, too frequently family is the place where we tread on the love of one another.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

We lose patience. We snap. We behave rudely. The tone of our voice conveys insensitivity. We fail to listen. We place personal desires before family plans. We insist on our own way. In short, we show contempt for those who God intends to be dearest to us. The footprints we leave are often rough and mean.

Such behavior is so widespread in the United States that psychologists have done numerous studies. They often ask why Americans, including Christians, are frequently kinder and more considerate of strangers than of family members.

Psychologists have even identified patterns of behavior including people who enjoy accolades for doing nice things for others but never do anything special for their own families.

Many of the studies point to the same conclusion — the focus on individualism. The one captured by his/her self-importance takes for granted that family members will endure their bad attitudes and behaviors. They expect families to be there for them no matter how family members are treated.

But love, even God’s love, has to be accepted and returned. To be saved one must not only believe that Jesus is the Son of God, one also must publicly confess Him or identify with Him (Rom. 10:9–10). We are taught to love God with heart and soul, mind and strength (Luke 10:27). The process is clear: love is offered; love is received; love is returned.

When one ignores love, flaunts love or fails to return love, love dies. It is no wonder that in such cases family members may echo the words of God as recorded in Genesis 6:3 when He said, “My spirit will not always strive with man.” A more modern translation might read, “I will not put up with this forever.”

Whether it is the rude child or the insensitive parent or the self-consumed spouse, the result is the same. The footprints left on the hearts of others are painful — memories to be forgotten rather than moments to be treasured.

A study at the University of British Columbia found that when couples who had been in long-term relationships with each other began treating each other the way they did on a first date, their morale boosted significantly. One of the researchers noted, “We make an extra effort when meeting strangers because we want them to like us.”

Practice basic etiquette

How ironic that with strangers we are polite, kind and considerate but we take family members for granted. Perhaps a starting place to build respect for one another and joy in the company of family members is to practice basic etiquette.

For many families, there is another necessary step — letting go of anger toward one another. Anger cannot be blamed on someone else. Anger is our own emotional response to some action or event. We have to own our own emotional responses including our anger built up over time.

Holding on to anger mars relationships, limits understanding and hinders reconciliation. No good thing comes from holding on to anger, especially against a family member.

Anger distorts reality and clouds judgment. It blocks out the present and focuses on the past. Holding on to anger only hurts the one carrying the grudge.

It was Jesus who said, “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matt. 6:14–15). That applies to how we live in families.

None of us are perfect, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” All of us need to be forgiven by God and by family members for our transgressions. And all of us need to forgive one another, including family members, as we have been forgiven by our Heavenly Father.

We learn. We love. We grow as individuals and as a family. Together we work at making footprints on the hearts of family members that are sweet and precious because family is important to God and it is important to us. 🙏

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

FAITH-BASED MOVIES

Thank you for the graphic in the June 12 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* on the United States showing the percentage of people that would like more faith-based movies (see “Moviegoers want more faith-based films, LifeWay study shows,” page 1).

There are 63 percent in the South

(that is us) who would like more.

That leaves 37 percent that don’t. I read that you can judge a man’s character by what he laughs at. The entertainment one seeks also tells the same.

The graphic gives a lot more information about the sections of the country than just that one issue.

We see we need to pray first for

ourselves; second for the people of this country.

Thank you for showing us the truth about ourselves.

Mildred Jacobs

Spanish Fort, Ala. 🙏





"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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Photo by Clay Leavell

Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) celebrated its 125th anniversary July 18-19. Part of the celebration included missionaries from around the world carrying lanterns into the Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center chapel to represent how WMU has helped spread the gospel.

'For His Glory'

Alabama WMU reflects on 125 years of 'shining the light' of Jesus

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) launched its celebration of 125 years of missions by honoring the organization's history and encouraging believers to "shine the light" of Jesus to the lost.

The anniversary celebration was held July 18-19 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega in conjunction with Equip, Alabama WMU's annual leadership-training event (see story, page 8).

Speaking to a crowd of more than 600 gathered in the Shocco Chapel, Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, challenged church and associational missions leaders, volunteers and career missionaries alike to carry on the WMU legacy by taking the gospel to all nations.

A place for WMU

"As long as there are lost people in the world, there is a place for Alabama Woman's Missionary Union. Go and shine the light in the darkness," McIntosh said.

The theme of light unified the worship celebration. Baptist missionaries from around the world began the service by proceeding into the darkened chapel with lighted lanterns

and placing the lanterns at the front left of the auditorium. The glow of the lanterns provided a serene backdrop for the remainder of the service, which included worship music, Bible study and testimonies from several International Mission Board (IMB) and North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries.

Congregational hymns, led by Chip Colee, minister of music for First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, included "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" and "Shine, Jesus, Shine." A multilingual praise choir moved many to tears as they sang "How Great is Our God" in several languages, including Spanish, Korean and American Sign Language.

National WMU President Debby Akerman explored examples from the life of Moses to emphasize the 2014-15 theme of Alabama WMU, "For His Glory."

"From Mission Friends to the day we die, we serve for His glory," Akerman said.

"Thank you for giving God the glory."

Several missionaries shared stories of God's light shining through the darkness around the world. One missionary who serves in a high security area told of a police chief in his community who prayed to receive Christ and now helps protect the missionaries. Another told of a young Muslim man who received Christ while attending a Christian training.



Photo by Clay Leavell

Alabama WMU's Ashleigh Coats helps prepare lanterns for the anniversary celebration.

Several missionaries noted the valuable support Alabama WMU gives their families. A mother of four missionary kids thanked Alabama WMU for sending birthday cards to her children and for helping missionary kids make the transition to the United States when they leave the missions field. Another young woman expressed how much the

Alabama International Parents Fellowship had meant to her parents and grandparents.

A husband and wife who have served among Sub-Saharan Africa peoples for more (See 'At the center,' page 9)

Baptist representatives keep focus on ministry in midst of revenge killings

(continued from page 1)

the blurred lines in the conflict.

The situation is unpredictable, but despite the violence Southern Baptist representatives keep the focus on ministry.

"Our team remains where it is to share His love with the hurting world around us," Johnson said.

Johnson recently gained approval for a food distribution program in Gaza through Baptist Global Response once the hostilities end.

In Gaza, a Baptist church of about 50 people suffers alongside others with a lack of food, inability to move about freely and no electricity for large parts of the day.

Holman, who lives close to the conflict in Israel, regularly retreats to her room when sirens go off but also reports busy markets and life as usual between moments of chaos.

Hundreds of missiles were lobbed into Israel every day in mid-July, she said, noting moments of peace were rare but welcomed.

No safe place to go

She recently relocated to a safer distance from the violence but is burdened for those who have no safe place to go.

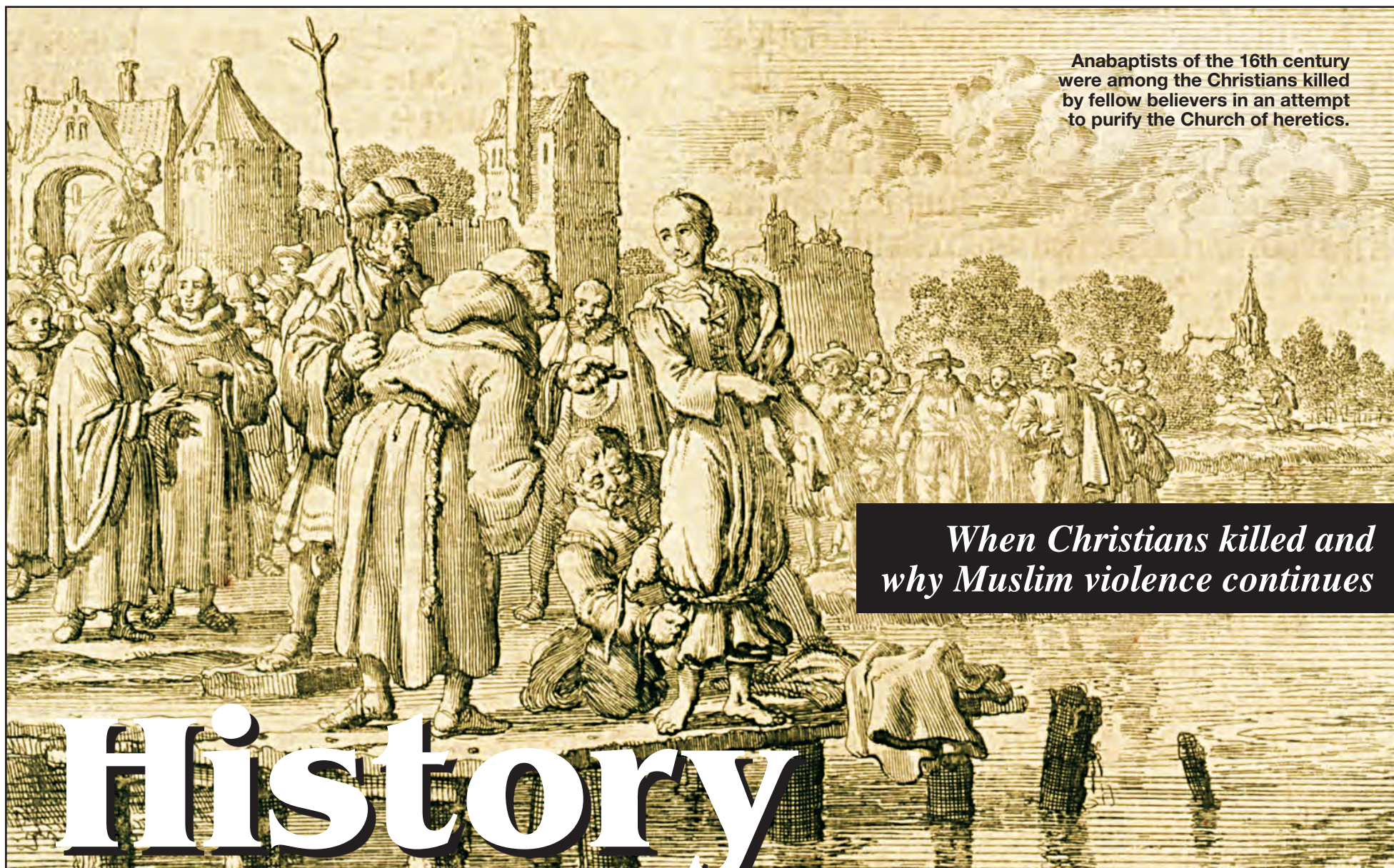
"Thankfully there have been few deaths or serious injuries in my town as a result of the missiles or the riots, but the situation is

very tense," she said. "Pray that this situation will open up opportunities for me and other believers to share about the true Prince of Peace."

Southern Baptist representative Rebecca Johnson encourages prayer partners to pray for Israelis, Palestinians, Hamas, terrorists, the innocent and the guilty — everyone involved in the violence and bloodshed taking place in the Middle East.

"For God so loved the world — the ugly, me, you, Palestinians, Hamas, Israelis — so much that He gave His Son that we might have a relationship with Him," she said. (BP)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons.



Anabaptists of the 16th century were among the Christians killed by fellow believers in an attempt to purify the Church of heretics.

When Christians killed and why Muslim violence continues

History of religious violence

BP photo

Religious violence declines wherever religious liberty ‘has been preached and practiced’

Rising death tolls in Iraq and Syria, where Muslim extremists are killing in the name of their faith, represent a stark contrast to the relative lack of religiously motivated killing among Christians — a contrast that seminary professors say is attributable to the principle of religious liberty.

Religious violence declines wherever religious liberty “has been preached and practiced,” said Rick Durst, professor of historical theology at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. He added that Baptists have played a significant role in establishing religious liberty as a tenet of modern Christianity.

Baptists “have asserted from the beginning that the gospel does not need government preference, that the conscience is inalienable and what we really need is a free church in a free state,” Durst said.

However, Christians used to kill with some frequency over matters of doctrine. There was the Spanish Inquisition, Calvin’s Geneva, England’s notorious Bloody Mary, the drowning of Anabaptists, the Crusades and more.

Timothy Paul Jones, a Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary (Louisville, Ky.) faculty member and author of “Christian History Made Easy,” said “it was the intermingling of church authority and civil authority that made it possible for persons who claimed to be Christians to have the state execute others who also professed Christ.”

Civil and church authority first mixed in the early fourth century when the Roman

emperor Constantine legalized Christianity and made it the empire’s preferred religion. Perhaps the first case of one Christian executing another occurred in the late fourth century when Emperor Magnus Maximus beheaded an eccentric ascetic named Priscilian.

Donatists — fourth- and fifth-century Christians who held that clergy who re-

nounced their faith under persecution could never administer the sacraments again — claimed some of their leaders were executed. But no other sources corroborate their account and it may be an embellishment, Jones noted in written comments. Donatists were persecuted and some may have died in prison without being executed.

Durst, who believes Donatists were executed, agreed that the mingling of church and civil government helped turn Christians from a persecuted sect into a power group prone to persecute. If a state prefers one religion, “you can invoke the state to enforce religion, to actually attempt to force the conscience,” Durst said.

Purging heretics

An early form of the Inquisition — a Roman Catholic movement that attempted to purge heretics from the Church, at times by execution — began in the 1100s. In the mid-1200s, the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas said heretics “deserved not only to be separated from the Church but eliminated from the world.”

Jones noted that “in most instances, the church did not actually execute anyone. Instead, church officials declared someone to be a heretic. Then they handed over the of-

“Religious toleration emerged in post-Reformation Europe as a practical measure when governments were no longer able to enforce religious conformity. When early forms of religious toleration first emerged, it was more a temporary concession for the sake of peace than a permanent solution for the sake of freedom. But this concession eventually developed into an ideal.”

Timothy Paul Jones

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty member and author

“The flower of religious liberty blooms out of the hearts of Baptist and Quaker congregations in America. However, when you take that concept and ... put it into governmental documents like the Constitution and the amendments, then that concept is a bit like a cut flower. It’s been cut off from the roots but established as a principle of government. How long do cut flowers stay fresh? That’s what concerns me.”

Rick Durst

professor of historical theology, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary

fender to civil authorities to be executed.”

While condemning all killing over religious doctrine, Jones wrote that Christians “rarely, if ever, perceived themselves as killing fellow Christians.”

“Whether rightly or wrongly, they saw themselves as killing heretics who had rejected some essential aspect of the Church’s faith,” said Jones, who is Southern Seminary’s Gheens Professor of Christian Family Ministry. “Many of those who did the killing as well as those they killed may not actually have been believers in Jesus Christ.”

Inquisition continues

Still the Inquisition persisted in various forms for centuries and faithful believers were among those executed. Sixteenth-century Reformers also executed those seen as doctrinally deviant. That included the Anabaptists (European Christians who baptized by immersion) and Michael Servetus (a rival of Calvin who denied the Trinity).

An initial hint of religious liberty came from Martin Luther, Jones said.

“In 1517 in the Ninety-Five Theses, Martin Luther wrote that ‘the burning of heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit,’” Jones said. “Later Luther distinguished between mere heretics and heretics who were publicly blasphemous or caused public unrest. The latter were to be executed by the state, according to Luther, and he saw the Anabaptists as part of that latter category.”

In Luther’s wake, several key factors helped end theologically motivated killing, Jones said. Among them:

► In the 1600s, British writers like John Milton argued for liberty to speak and act “according to conscience.” But they only applied that liberty to vying Protestant sects and not to Roman Catholics or non-Christians. The Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, who was England’s head of state during the years when there was no monarchy, went a step further, saying he would rather “Mahometanism be permitted amongst us than that one of God’s children should be persecuted.” After the monarchy was restored in 1689, Nonconformists like Baptists and Congregationalists were granted freedom of worship.

► In continental Europe, a conflict between Protestants and Catholics in the 1600s known as the Thirty Years War took 10 million lives and involved “senseless pillaging,” Jones said. The conflict “seems to have pressed many Europeans toward a positive perspective on tolerance of persons with differing religious beliefs.”

► In America, Maryland passed a law in 1649 allowing anyone who believed in the Trinity to practice their religion freely. Roger Williams, a theologian who “became a Baptist but then quickly became an ex-Baptist,” founded Rhode Island as a colony with religious freedom, “requiring nothing

more than a belief in one God,” Jones said.

“Religious toleration emerged in post-Reformation Europe as a practical measure when governments were no longer able to enforce religious conformity. When early forms of religious toleration first emerged, it was more a temporary concession for the sake of peace than a permanent solution for the sake of freedom. But this concession eventually developed into an ideal,” Jones said.

Rex Butler, professor of church history and patristics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, cited 1648 as a key date for the end of doctrinally motivated Christian killing. That was when a series of treaties known as the Peace of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War. He noted England’s Civil War and France’s ongoing religious conflict in the 18th century as factors that led Europeans to seek an end to religious violence.

“In the aftermath of these religious conflicts, religious and philosophical thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries began to look for different ways to approach religion,” Butler

noted. “As Justo González, author of ‘The Story of Christianity,’ posed the question: ‘Was there not a more tolerant, more profound and even more Christian way to serve God?’”

Series of challenges

“The answers varied from the rationalism of the philosophical Age of Enlightenment to the heart Christianity of the Pietists and Revivalists and the separation of church and state in America. Ultimately over the past three centuries, the modern secular state developed in Europe and America and brought with it another series of challenges for the church and the state,” he said.

Butler added that conflicts between Christians did not totally end in the 1700s. For example, the Spanish Inquisition “was not completely ended until 1834,” and Catholics and Protestants fought in Northern Ireland well into the modern era. “Since the 18th century, however, Christian wars of religion have declined,” he said.

Durst credited 16th-century Anabaptists with pioneering the idea of a free church in a free state. Baptists carried on that idea and brought it to the New World, where they helped codify it in America’s founding documents.

One reason Muslims persist in theologically motivated killing, including conflicts in the Middle East between Sunnis and Shiites, is that Islam does not embrace the separation of church and state, Durst said.

“Islam has always historically embraced ‘sword evangelism,’ that state and mosque are one,” Durst said.

Another contrast between Christianity and Islam is that Christians have apologized for the medieval Crusades, in which Christian armies warred against Muslims, but Muslims largely have not apologized for their religiously motivated killings, Durst said.

Durst cautioned against skeptics’ overblown portrayals of religiously motivated killings. He said nonreligious governments like China and the Soviet Union “are millions and millions of violent deaths ahead of anything religion has ever done.”

The brutality of some atheist and Islamic nations should remind believers that religious liberty emerges from Christian theology, Durst said. If America loses its Judeo-Christian foundation, its citizens could lose the freedom to practice their religion, he said.

“The flower of religious liberty blooms out of the hearts of Baptist and Quaker congregations in America,” Durst said.

“However, when you take that concept and ... put it into governmental documents like the Constitution and the amendments, then that concept is a bit like a cut flower,” he said.

“It’s been cut off from the roots but established as a principle of government. How long do cut flowers stay fresh? That’s what concerns me.” (BP)



Soldiers plunder a farm during the Thirty Years War, a conflict in continental Europe between Protestants and Catholics in the 1600s that took 10 million lives and involved ‘senseless pillaging.’

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

► **Concord Highland Church, Hueytown**, will host a singing with Heritage Quartet, of Scottsboro, on Aug. 2, 6:30 p.m. Richard Larson is pastor.

BUTLER

► **Ebenezer East Church, Greenville**, will celebrate its centennial anniversary and homecoming Aug. 10, 10 a.m. Lunch will be at noon. The church also will hold revival Aug. 11-13, 7 nightly with music by The Kempters each night. Herbert Brown will speak Monday, Timothy Skipper will speak Tuesday and Reggie Williams will speak Wednesday. For information call 334-382-3523. Nathan Skipper is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Alexandria Church** will celebrate its centennial Aug. 3, 10 a.m. A lunch and singing will follow the worship service. Jerry Cobb is pastor.

CHEROKEE

► **Cherokee Association** will hold an evangelism rally with Fred Luter, immediate past president of the SBC, on Aug. 6, 7 p.m. at First Church, Centre. A pre-service concert with Jay Parrack, formerly with Gold City Quartet, will be at 6:30 p.m. Wendell Dutton is director of missions.

CLARKE

► **Ucanush Church, Coffeeville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 3. Lunch will follow. The church also will hold revival Aug. 4-6, 7 nightly with Rockey Pierce from Frankville Church. Jesse Griffith is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 10, 10:30 a.m. Seth Terrell will speak. A covered dish lunch will follow the service. Patrick Martin is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **Park Avenue Church, Oneonta**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary and homecoming Aug. 10, 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Dan Sims will speak and former interim pastor Dan Deliz will serve as the emcee. Lunch will follow and an old-fashioned hymn singing will be at 2 p.m. All are invited. Odis Epps is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Bryan Hawkins** is the new minister of music and children for **First Church, Geneva**. He is a graduate of Southern Union State Community College in Wadley and Beacon University in Columbus, Ga., where he received his bachelor of arts in biblical studies. He previously served at Pepperell Church, Opelika. His wife is Amy. Nathaniel J. Carroll is pastor. ► **First Church, Slocomb**, has called **Van Gauthé** as interim pastor.

MORGAN

► **East Highland Church, Hartselle**, will hold revival Aug. 3-6, Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday at 7 p.m. Evangelist Phil Glisson will speak. Walter Blackman is pastor. ► **Church youth groups** from Morgan County will join together at Brewer High School in Somerville for the joint wor-

ship service "Morgan County Youth United" on Aug. 6, 6:30 p.m. Gates will open at 6 p.m. Area pastor Michael Walters will speak. Proceeds from concession sales will go to benefit First Priority and Fellowship of Christian Athletes in area schools. For information call Walters at 256-778-8627, ext. 110.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Terry Thren** is the new pastor of **Clay Church**. He and his wife, Susan, have four children and seven grandchildren.

MONTGOMERY

► **Scott Weatherford** will begin as the new pastor of **Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery**, on Sept. 7. He currently is pastor of First Alliance Church, Calgary, in Alberta, Canada. He previously planted SBC churches in Texas and Florida. He is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Tara, have two children.



WEATHERFORD

SHELBY

► **Mike Shaw**, recently retired pastor of First Church, Pelham, will speak at **Siluria Church, Alabaster**, on Aug. 3 at both the 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. worship services. The public is invited. For information call the church at 205-663-7904. Michael Brooks is pastor. ☛

Child abuse victim sues Highland Park Baptist for lack of supervision of now convicted child molester

A victim of a former children's minister sentenced to 30 years in prison has sued both his perpetrator and the church that hired him.

The victim, identified by initials J.G., filed a lawsuit July 22 in United States District Court alleging injury by Jeffery Dale Eddie, longtime associate pastor for children and church administration of Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals.

The civil suit claims Eddie, who pleaded guilty to numerous sex crimes in March, molested the man now living in Louisiana over the course of 12 years beginning when he was 11.

The lawsuit accuses Highland Park Baptist of failure to properly supervise Eddie, an employee from 1998 to 2014.

The lawsuit claims church leaders waited 10 days before reporting the incident to police, after an internal investigation, violating a state law that requires clergy to report suspected abuse immediately. The suit also claims the church provided Eddie "with little to no oversight, monitoring or supervision," allowing him to cover the only window in his office with a bulletin board, close the blinds on the door to his office

and lock his office door while individual children were present and giving him sole control over the installation and monitoring of security cameras.

It claims the congregation failed to train staff on the identification and reporting of child abuse and never monitored Eddie's computer and phone activity during his years of employment.

'Job-created authority'

The lawsuit says Eddie would never have had an opportunity to molest J.G. and other victims without job-created authority given to him by the church. All the actions "leading up to the sexual abuse fell within his scope of employment with Highland Park Baptist Church," it says. "As such, the sexual abuse was an outgrowth and was engendered by his employment with Highland Park Baptist Church."

The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages from both Eddie and the church. It comes just a week after Highland Park's financial assistant and trusted church member Debbie Mansell was arrested for allegedly embezzling nearly \$130,000 in church funds. (ABP)

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

King retires from TBFA after 21 years of service

After 21 years of service George King retired June 30 from his position as vice president of client services for The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA).

King earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity and doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He previously served as pastor of Moon Lake Baptist Church, Mentone; Berry Baptist Church; and Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. He also served as pastor of churches in Birmingham Baptist Association and Mud Creek Baptist Association as well as a church in Mississippi. He currently serves as bivocational pastor of Mountain Hill Baptist Church, LaPine, a position he's held for nearly 19 years.

In his role at TBFA, King administered the scholarship program, something he said he was thankful to have been a part of as he saw more than \$500,000 given in scholarships each year to Alabama Baptists seeking seminary degrees.

He also noted how TBFA is a unique Alabama Baptist ministry in that it deals with estate planning and "leaving a legacy."

"Too many times ministers get a bad rap about preaching on money but ... if we don't have funds, ministries don't get started," King said.

"If you plan your estate then you can plan to leave funds for the Lord's work. ... I feel (TBFA) is truly a ministry from the Lord, and I thank Alabama Baptists who had the forethought (in 1940) to say we need some way to have Alabama Baptists give through their wills and leave a legacy."

King and his wife, Sandra, have two children and four grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



KING

Dawson's Hatfield retires after nearly 36 years

For Bob Hatfield, serving as minister of music for nearly 36 years at one church has been a "tremendous blessing and grace gift" from God.

In October 1978, Hatfield and his family moved to Birmingham to begin serving Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Prior to Dawson Memorial Baptist, Hatfield served in music positions at First Baptist Church, Pinson; First Baptist Church, Scottsboro; Lakewood Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga.; Buckner Children's Home in Dallas, Texas; as well as churches in

Arkansas and Texas.

He earned an undergraduate degree from Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga.; a master of music degree from Samford University in Birmingham; a master of church music degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and a doctor of ministry degree from Beeson Divinity School at Samford.

At age 16, Hatfield was asked to lead the music for a youth revival in Walker, La. After that summer he served in similar roles every summer until he started serving in a

part-time position at Lakewood Baptist.

At Dawson, Hatfield served as administrator for all music ministries but specifically directed the chapel choir and sanctuary choir. His main role, he said, was to plan and lead worship.

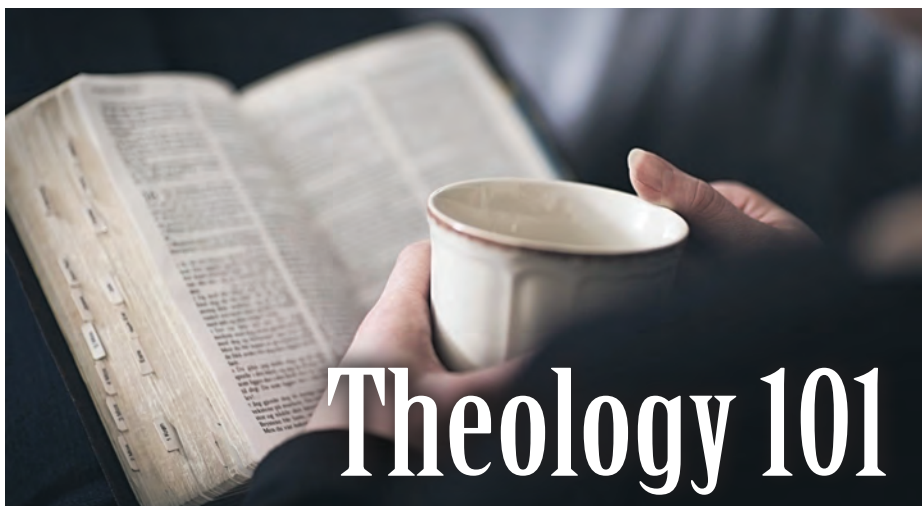
"(At Dawson) I've been able to work with fine pastors and great staff. The people here have been so gracious to me and to my family and allowed us to invest in their lives as well," Hatfield said.

He will begin a part-time position at Dawson in October as minister to adults 55 and over, something he said he is "really looking forward to."

He and his wife, Polly, have two children and five grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



HATFIELD



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Scripture

Enablement for Application

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

In the past two weeks we have pondered the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the writing of the Bible and in illumining in us the truth He enabled to be expressed through human language. Even so, the Spirit's involvement with the Bible did not end with His inspiration of its production nor does it end with illumination for our understanding. As we handle the Bible the Holy Spirit stands ready to help us understand how the meaning of Scripture can and should be applied to our lives and our world.

Occasionally someone speaks of receiving new revelation from the Bible. While we understand what they mean it would be better to think either of new, fresh understanding of the revelation that has been there all along or maybe to describe the experience as gaining new insight in how the Scripture applies to us. God's self-revelation was indeed progressive or unfolding as people were increasingly able to receive it. However, with the completion of the Bible, God completed His revelation to us through Holy Scripture. What continues and progresses is our understanding and application of God's truth. This possibility accounts for a common testimony that says, "Every time I read the Bible I gain something new or see something I never understood before, even when reading passages I have often read before."

Putting truth into practice

The Holy Spirit actively seeks to lead us into greater understanding of the Bible and to more careful and complete application of truth to life. We might think of it as the Spirit of truth taking the Word of truth and making us understand how to put truth into practice. Hebrews 4:12 puts it this way, "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged

sword." The presence of the Holy Spirit in us wants always to make the Bible come alive to us and active in us, not just at the level of understanding its meaning but also at the level of making us "doers of the Word and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

The Holy Spirit is God's agent working in His children for accomplishing His will. He works in us to create the desire to do His will and to supply the power needed to do so. Philippians 2:13 sets this forth, "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

Love one another

Take for example, the Bible's admonitions that we love our neighbor (Matt. 19:19; 22:39). The Holy Spirit inspired James to declare, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well" (James 2:8). We are doing well by this biblical mandate, when we practice loving one another, not when we understand the principle of loving others. The admonition of 1 John 3:18 puts it, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." How are we able to do this? The Holy Spirit becomes our Helper, according to Romans 5:5, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." ❏

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.



Seminary campus sold

Relocation financed; endowment gets \$50 million

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has finalized the sale of its property near Mill Valley, Calif., setting aside funds both to purchase a new campus in Southern California and add \$50 million to its endowment.

The sale agreement for Golden Gate's Mill Valley property included a base price of \$85 million, along with other terms financially advantageous to the seminary, including a favorable lease-back rate; the ability for the seminary to remain fully operational in the Mill Valley location for two years; and the seminary retaining revenue earned through rentals and other uses of the property during the lease-back period.

Jeff Iorg, the seminary's president, said, "We are delighted this first phase of our relocation is complete."

Board chairman Steve Sheldon added, "The board is determined the property sale will dramatically improve our long-term financial health. By adding this much to our endowment, we are accomplishing that goal."

The board also approved an allocation of resources for new facilities in Southern California, Iorg reported. "Now that the sale has been finalized, we can conclude our agreements for the new campus and announce those in a few weeks. God is bringing this entire process together in ways we could have never imagined," he said.

The seminary is finalizing plans for its new primary campus in Southern California and a new regional campus in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In commenting on the sale agreement, Iorg said, "There's been much conjecture about the value of the Mill Valley property over the years. In reality, because of the development restrictions on the property, its value is less than some have speculated. We have tried for years to remove these entitlement restrictions, to no avail. We have watched with increased urgency as value has continued to erode because of these restrictions. This helps explain the necessity of our decision to sell the property."

Two-year lease-back

"An indispensable part of the (sale) agreement is the two-year lease-back. We had to build the relocation process around the needs of students," he said.

Golden Gate's relocation plan, as it relates to students, has received a positive review by the staff of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the seminary's regional accrediting agency, who affirmed the transition plan for its thoroughness and focus on students.

"Approved applications for fall enrollment are actually ahead of the same time frame last year," Iorg said. "Given the breadth of our current transition, that is unexpected confirmation we are on the right track." (BP)

Lifeway Community holds mortgage burning



Photo courtesy of Lifeway Community Church, Loxley

Lifeway Community Church, Loxley, in Baldwin Baptist Association held a mortgage burning ceremony June 29 and burned the mortgage document in a charcoal grill. Founding pastor Rick Barnhart (center) shared a message, and a worship team made up of current and former members led the music. A fellowship meal followed the ceremony.

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Teaching future generations

WMU's Equip training instructs on reaching the lost

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

To prepare for life as a missionary to Ivory Coast, Diane "DP" Smith received extensive training in the French language and European cultural influences of the small country in West Africa. Her missions education began much earlier, however.

"Because people raised me up doing missions, I went to the missions field," Smith said. "If you are teaching children on missions, you are touching generations and nations."

Smith was one of the current and former missionaries leading workshops at Equip, the annual leadership training event of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), held July 18-19 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

Though this year's conference included a celebration of Alabama WMU's 125th anniversary (see story, page 3), participants were fed much more than birthday cupcakes. Throughout the two-day event, WMU leaders and volunteers from across Alabama were discipled and encouraged in their work to teach future generations about the need for missionaries to reach a lost world.

In addition to the opportunity to meet missionaries and hear about their ongoing work in places like North Africa, the Middle East, East Asia and Clarkston, Ga., participants could choose from sessions aimed at those involved in various adult, youth and children's ministries.

Two simple questions

In her sessions, Smith introduced participants to Ivory Coast, the focus of this year's International Mission Study by national WMU. Smith, an art professor, showed photographs, drawings and other artifacts from her time in Ivory Coast. She encouraged the women that their efforts are essential to spreading the gospel, asking two simple questions: "Who's going to tell if we don't teach? How will they go if they don't know?"

During Friday night's Global Café, participants enjoyed cupcakes and coffee with state and national WMU leaders and there was a global photo booth where groups could have a souvenir photo made. Several missionaries were on hand for informal conversation, and several women learned

about gospel storying through henna tattoos.

Amid the fun, an exhibit titled "See the Lostness" brought visitors face-to-face with the lost people of the world. Black-and-white photos of children and adults from the world's Unengaged Unreached People Groups lined three walls of the room from floor to ceiling. Visitors were invited to write prayers or thoughts on self-adhesive notes and add them to a fourth wall.

The display was a powerful reminder that more than 250 million

people around the world are not only lost but also have no access to the gospel.

Vickie Hicks, WMU coordinator for West Cullman Baptist Association, called the display overwhelming.

"It caused me to ask forgiveness for not lifting the lost up enough in prayer," Hicks said.

Diane Tucker, Acteens coordinator for West Cullman Association, said the exhibit, coupled with the worship service earlier in the evening, challenged

her as a leader of young women.

"We need to be giving young people the light," she said. ☞



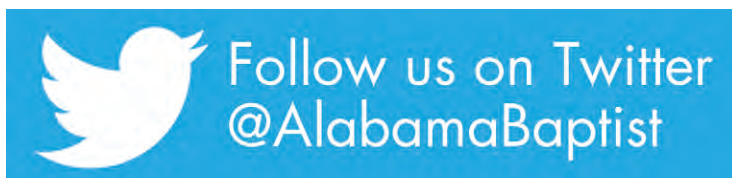
Photo by Clay Leavell

Women learn about gospel storying through henna tattoos at Equip.



Photo by Carrie Brown McWhorter

Alabama Woman's Missionary Union Equip training participants write prayers for the lost to post on a wall.



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**"Who's going to tell if we don't teach?
How will they go if they don't know?"**

Diane 'DP' Smith
former missionary to Ivory Coast

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'At the center of missions'

Alabama Baptists 'endeared, indebted' to WMU, Lance says

(continued from page 3)

than 30 years thanked the crowd for their financial support and poignantly noted that more than half of IMB support comes from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

"If you're going to think about the IMB, you have to thank Lottie Moon," the husband said. "I'm not saying that we would have spent half as much time (in Africa) without that support. I'm saying that without WMU, half of the missionaries never would have gone in the first place.

"From a lost world, WMU — thank you," he added.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said WMU members are at the center of missions education, support and leadership.

"We are endeared and really indebted to the ministry of Alabama WMU," Lance said. "You are very much a part of who we are and where we are as Alabama Baptists."

Missions giving

McIntosh also thanked Alabama Baptists for their missions giving, noting that in the past 75 years, Alabama Baptists have given nearly \$2 billion to missions. Every dollar given represents lives transformed, she said.

"What I love about Alabama Baptists is that our hearts beat for the cause of Christ and for the cause of missions — to take the light of the gospel to the world," McIntosh said.

According to McIntosh, the following numbers represent Alabama Baptists' giving to missions:

▶ \$20.50 first recorded offering by a ladies' missionary society in 1823.

▶ More than \$281 million to support international missionaries through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

▶ More than \$139 million to support North American missionaries through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

▶ Since 1995, Alabama Baptists have given \$1.25 billion to the Cooperative Program to support cooperative efforts of Southern Baptist Convention entities.

▶ An estimated \$14 million given to Kathleen Mallory Mission Offering supporting Alabama WMU and World-Song Missions Place.

As the service closed, missionaries lined the aisles of the chapel holding their lanterns and then passed their lights to the young women recognized as Emerging Leaders of Alabama WMU, symbolizing the future of WMU and missions support in Alabama. Attendees softly sang "This Little Light of Mine" and received a small lantern to carry into the darkness outside the chapel.

Kathryn Stewart, a trustee of Alabama WMU and member of New Life Baptist Church, Bay Minette, in Baldwin Baptist Association, said the conclusion of the service reminded her of the call to missions placed on the lives of all believers.

"This world is full of darkness, so whatever little light we can shine on somebody will not go unnoticed." ☪



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Pilgrim Rest final church to rebuild after April 2011 tornadoes



Ground breaking

Photo courtesy of Cherokee Baptist Association

Members of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Centre, gathered for a ground breaking ceremony June 8. The former building was destroyed in the April 27, 2011, tornadoes. Church members have been meeting in a mobile unit provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Construction on the new building is scheduled to begin soon, according to Wendell Dutton (fourth from right), Cherokee Baptist Association director of missions. Others pictured are Dennis Tierce, chairman of the deacons and building committee chairman (eighth from left) and interim pastor Blane Tidwell (far right).

Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago July 1964

Foundation Passes Million Dollar Mark: For the first time in its history, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama has passed the \$1 million mark. According to Carl G. Campbell, Foundation executive secretary, a check from the estate of the late Miss Bonnie Nowlin, a member of First Baptist Church, Gadsden, pushed the total assets over \$1 million. In announcing the new record, Campbell exclaimed, "It finally happened. I almost kissed that check. Getting a million is a great achievement for Baptists of Alabama."

40 Years Ago July 1974

Committee Includes Alabamians: Two Alabamians and one former Alabamian have been named to serve on the Direction '84 committee, which is authorized by the Brotherhood Commission to make a long-range study of men's and boys' work in the Southern Baptist Convention. Walter G. Barnes, president of Insurance and Investment Consultants, Inc. Birmingham, and Jack Brymer, managing editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, were named as committee members along with C.E. Price of Pittsburg, Pa., formerly a member of First Baptist Church, Birmingham. Both Barnes and Brymer are members of Shades Crest Baptist Church, Bluff Park.

30 Years Ago July 1984

First Huntsville Marks 175 Years: First Baptist Church, Huntsville, recently observed its 175th anniversary with special events marking the celebration. Organized in 1809 in a rural community near Meridianville, the church moved to Huntsville in 1861. Today there are more than 3,200 members. Ralph H. Langley, the 37th pastor of the church, has been pastor since 1979. Among the guest speakers for the celebration were J.T. Ford, the only living former pastor of the church; Edwin Johnston, grandson of S.J. Baker, the 31st pastor; Lucy Hoskins, first full-time church secretary; and Hudson Baggett, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

20 Years Ago July 1994

Eighty-Fifth Street + Mount Olive No. 2 = New Deerfoot: Eighty-Fifth Street Baptist Church, its East Lake neighborhood shrinking because of airport expansion and a flood control development, closed its doors July 24. On July 31, the Birmingham congregation combined with Mount Olive No. 2 Baptist Church, Trussville, to form Deerfoot Baptist Church, located in the Deerfoot subdivision in Trussville. Wayne Scott, who has been pastor of Eighty-Fifth Street for 17 years, is pastor of

the new church, and Curtis Rush, Mount Olive's pastor, is associate pastor. Joe Carter from Eighty-Fifth Street will be Deerfoot's minister of music and education. The Deerfoot congregation will meet in the Mount Olive sanctuary. "We feel like we're coming to the marriage as equal partners," Scott said. "We have more people, Mount Olive has the property and both staffs have been retained." July 24 was Eighty-Fifth Street's 65th anniversary.

10 Years Ago July 2004

FBC Montgomery Celebrates New \$23 Million Building: When First Baptist Church, Montgomery, began thinking of expanding 10 years ago, the initial problem

was where to expand. "We feel like God gave us the assignment of downtown (Montgomery) to stay near the need," Pastor Jay Wolf said. So instead of accepting offers of donated land and moving out, the church decided to build up. Demolishing two older buildings, the church built a 96,879-square-foot four-story building to house a new sanctuary, kitchen, fellowship hall and educational space. Because the sanctuary was built with beautiful, but costly, materials the church faced an "extraordinary expense" in building, Wolf said. But the extra expense was worth it, he added. "If we're going to do something for Christ, let's give it our very best, like Solomon building the temple. This church represents our best." ☪

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Evergreen Baptist Church, Billingsley, Ala., is a rural congregation seeking a part-time pastor. We are located in Autauga County at the tip of Chilton and Dallas counties. We have Sunday morning services and a Wednesday evening Bible study. Please send resumé to: Billy Caver, 2366 County Road 40 West, Billingsley, AL 36006, or contact by phone 334-361-0507 or email: ELSA4321@gmail.com.

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.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS: Golden Acres Baptist Church is accepting resúmes for a full-time minister of students (grades 9-college). Resúmes may be sent to: 3405 South Railroad Street, Phenix City, AL 36867, ATTN: Gina Harper or emailed to: gabcgina@att.net.

STUDENT MINISTER: Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, AL, is now accepting resúmes for a full-time Student Minister. Please submit resúmes or questions by email to: info@circlewood.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR/

MINISTER: The First Baptist Church of Chickamauga, a vibrant, growing congregation in northwest Georgia (a Chattanooga suburb), is seeking a part-time (25-30 hours per week) children's ministry director/minister who will oversee all aspects of our children's ministry and preschool ministry with a total of 60+ children. All questions, resúmes and inquiries for a full job description should be directed to: thadkey@gmail.com.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES: Ooltewah Baptist Church is seeking a full-time director of children's ministries. Mail resumé to Children's Ministry Search Committee, c/o OBC, P.O. Box 9, Ooltewah, TN 37363.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR: Resumé to: Cottage Hill Baptist Church, 1120 Pleasant Grove Road, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127, or call 205-744-8521. cottagehillbaptist.org.

PART-TIME PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR: Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds, Ala., is seeking a part-time preschool director. This position currently requires 15-20 hours per week. Please email resumé to: joanne@cedargroveleeds.org or call 205-699-8446 for more information.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: The

McMinn-Meigs Baptist Association in South East Tennessee is actively seeking our next director of missions. Resúmes will be accepted until August 15, 2014. We look forward to hearing from you. DOM Search, McMinn-Meigs Baptist Association, 350 North Congress Parkway, Athens, TN 37303 or McMinnMeigsBaptist@gmail.com.

PIANIST: Clearview Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., is seeking a pianist. Please contact the church office at 205-854-2027 or connie@clearview-baptist.com.

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Want to know GOD?

Pastor Doug Dortch
Mountain Brook Baptist Church,
Birmingham

Some years ago a Hungarian author by the name of Frigyes Karinthy published a volume of short stories that introduced the world to the famous theory of "Six Degrees of Separation." The theory holds that our world has become so relationally interwoven that in spite of whatever physical distances may divide us, no one person is more than six relational steps away from knowing any other person. In other words, everyone knows someone who knows someone six times over. Of course, since the advance of Karinthy's thesis our "wired world" has become even more interconnected so that those degrees of separation have probably already shrunk by a step or three.

However, when it comes to the most important relationship any of us can have, a relationship with God, the steps have been condensed to a single person, Jesus.

Jesus is the means by which God has reached out to His human creation. When we accept what God did for us in Jesus' death and resurrection, we find all of the barriers between God and us torn away and we are able to know Him as God created us to do. There is actually "zero separation" and nothing separates us from God's love in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:39).

It may help to find someone who knows God and get that person to help you know Him too. In fact, people who already are in relationship with God through Jesus Christ are always excited to make those introductions. But you aren't required to go through another person, no one other than Jesus; you simply open your life to God and invite Him to come in and He promises to do just that. No matter what you may have done or how you may have avoided Him in the past, God is merciful and compassionate and He is near to all who call on Him (Ps. 145:8-21). Call on Him today and you'll never regret that you did. ☪



Rashional thoughts on efficiency

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org • Follow me on Twitter @RashionalThts

A recent letter published in *The Alabama Baptist* detailed how inefficiently the state highway department is managed. “Having served as a county commissioner in one of the largest districts in the state, we often had to deal with a slow, inefficient, unmotivated or even adversarial state highway department,” the letter writer noted on page 9 of the July 17 issue.

I have no personal experience with the highway department, but the letter writer’s evaluation could be applied to a number of businesses, organizations and groups with which I do have personal experience.

I’m sure you can think of a few as well. Think about when you drive by a construction site where one person works while four stand around and watch. In the few seconds it takes me to drive by, I can spot six or seven things the others could do to move the project along, and I’m not even part of the process. Why can’t they see those things?

Or what about watching people work behind a counter at a snail’s pace while the line of people waiting to be served grows and grows. No urgency, no spring in their step, just slow and methodical movements.

Built differently

I guess I’m built differently. I would be competing with myself to gain speed, increase accuracy and produce an overall positive experience for every person who stood in my line.

And while it always disappoints me to run across people who spend more energy trying to get out of work than it would actually take to do the work, I recognize this is something all teams face.

In fact, in most work environments you will find yourself in one of three positions — overwhelmed with too much to do, underwhelmed and possibly even bored or balanced just right.

The goal is to move all team members to the balanced category. And with the right attitude and spirit among team members every team can produce a balanced, fulfilled and efficient life for each member.

But how do we get there?

It starts at the top. If leadership allows people to do just enough to stay on the team or keep their job, then some people will do just that. Not everyone is self-motivated and strives to do better.

A good first step

So a good first step is for team leaders to recruit only team members who will commit to doing what it takes to reach the overall goal of the group or company. This does not mean the person must be an extroverted, type-A, take-charge kind of person though.

Several years ago my sister-in-law Katrina helped me understand the difference between introverted with a strong work

ethic and quiet with a lazy streak. There were some things that needed to be done related to our family, and it was obvious to me where to jump in and help. She was involved in the same conversations I was and had the same opportunities to help, but she didn’t move. I was confused, so I asked her about it.

She explained that she actually felt left out because she had wanted to help but didn’t think we were interested in her contributing. She was merely waiting to be invited.

If it needs to be done, then do it

Katrina is more than capable and will do top-quality work at anything she puts her mind to, but she works from the premise of not overstepping or doing anything she hasn’t been asked to do.

This was a great lesson for me to learn, because I am of the mindset that if you see something that needs to be done, then take care of it. And because I had experienced similar situations with a few of the student interns at *The Alabama Baptist* during that same time frame, I decided to make some adjustments.

I started applying the principle of inviting them to join in work projects and helping them understand I wanted them to participate and to take initiative.

From there, everything changed for those students and they developed more in a few days than they had in months. Learning to view the world through another person’s eyes and working to communicate in the language he or she understands is making a difference in the teams in which I participate — whether it be at the paper, at church, in the community or among family members.

But the responsibility of balancing the weight among team members doesn’t fall solely on the team leader. Each individual must contribute to the effort to achieve a positive outcome as well.

Are you overwhelmed?

If you happen to be a team member who is overwhelmed with too much to do, then you will need to determine if you are willing to share some of the load or if you struggle with control issues and have trouble letting go. You also must learn to work as a team rather than a lone ranger or no amount of bemoaning how stressed you are will change things. You have to trust your team members and work to grow them, empower them and cross train them as needed to be able to work together.

However, if you are a person whose plate is piled high and spilling over, it seems easier to keep doing all the tasks rather than take the time to work with someone to take some of them. I truly understand. I fight this every day. But it’s not true. It really is better in the long run to carve out time to train someone and officially hand the responsibility, assignment or whatever it is off to a trusted team member rather than keep trying to throw a tiny bit of strained energy at it day after day.

What’s hardest for me to admit is that in most cases the other person will do a better job with the task than I can because they will have more energy to devote to it.

Are you bored?

Of course, if you are a team member without enough to do, then you must first be honest with yourself and make sure you aren’t hiding from responsibility and purposefully trying not to carry a fair share of the load. If this is the case, then you should evaluate your purpose for being a part of the team. Are you OK with being the weak link? A strong team leader would probably have helped you find another place to go by now, but don’t settle for giving as little as you can even if leadership allows it to happen. You are better than that, plus you are missing out on a fulfilling life experience.

If you are like Katrina in that you want to be an essential part of the team and contribute at a high level, but you are unsure where to show initiative and where to hang back, then observe the environment around you. Who seems to be overloaded on your team? What parts of that person’s responsibilities could you help with easily? What could you learn to do without much difficulty? Those are good places to start.

Observe areas to help and offer to take something off someone else’s plate, even if it is something extremely simple.

Take initiative to grow

Then do it again and again. Don’t do it one time and then fall back. Pick out things you are comfortable with and that are easy items for the other person to hand off. Offer to take them on as your responsibility. Keep doing this with the people who are overloaded until you sense you are making a dent in their load and bringing your load up to a more equal level.

Remind others on the team you want to grow and take on more challenging responsibilities. Prove yourself by being dependable and following through with your current responsibilities and the new ones you take on.

Make sure you are delivering high quality results in all that you do, especially during the times you have more time than responsibilities. Don’t be tempted to rush to complete assignments while not worrying about the quality. If you have extra time, then push the quality up another level.

Taking the initiative to improve your work without someone having to suggest it will speak to the true nature of your intentions, interests and character. Quality and quantity are both important in all that we do, but they must be balanced appropriately.

Well-balanced, efficient team members produce a team that can’t be stopped, but more importantly it is biblical to do, be and give our best. 🙏

Rashional Extras

Put on then as God’s chosen ones holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:12–17

So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:14–16

So shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:11

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

Proverbs 16:3

Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men.

Colossians 3:23



Camp of Champions

By Riley P. Green III

through the Eyes of Ranger Riley

For 362 days out of the year, you are likely to find me dressed in neatly pressed khakis and a conservative dress shirt. My conservative dress hides my playful nature. But for three days every summer, I trade in my dress clothes for a pair of shorts, a favorite T-shirt and my legendary Ranger's Hat. Like a comic book superhero, I transform myself into Ranger Riley, a hero to children who have come from hard places. At *Camp of Champions*, you can see my playful side and my passion for caring for children and families.

And during *Camp of Champions* you see children being transformed. Children, who have been neglected, abused or traumatized, get the opportunity to just be kids who are at camp. They laugh and sing. They play and swim. They eat too much and stay up too late. They learn about Christ in VBS type classes. They do the same things all kids do when they go to camp.



House parents and foster parents also transform themselves at camp. The mission field of Christian childcare can be lonely. Very few people understand why someone would choose to offer unconditional love to children from hard places. These children may look and behave very different than their new family. House parents and foster parents can feel alone and can get overwhelmed. But, at *Camp of Champions*, house parents and foster parents are the normal ones. They build relationships and bear one another's burdens. They get great training to care for children coming from hard places, but they also get to catch their breath and experience renewal of their spirits.

Once a year, Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) hosts its annual *Camp of Champions* at Shocco Springs in Talladega, Alabama. 2014 was another great time for the ABCH family to gather together, with over 650 people attending! It has become one of the most significant events in the life of the ministry for the children we serve, our house and foster parents, and our staff. *Camp of Champions* is unique to ABCH and it is one of the distinctives of our approach to the ministry of Christian childcare. **As one national foster care expert said, "You guys are the only ones I know in the US that provide a camp like this for their foster parents. My hope would be that this camp experience could be duplicated all across the country."**

Thank you to all the churches and individuals that gave financially, donated snacks and supplies, along with the many volunteers that helped to make this year's camp a huge success. And for the third year in a row, a group from Shades Crest Baptist Church were on hand at snack time to provide healthy snacks, to help with snack time and to spend time with the kids at camp. We are very grateful that the students at Samford University kindly chose our *Camp of Champions* as their Step Sing philanthropy for 2014. Camp is always a fun and meaningful time in the life of our ministry, and could not be possible without the support of churches and individuals.

Camp is a big deal and we would love to find a way to get your church involved in our camp next year. Contact camp@abchome.org to learn ways to be a part of Camp of Champions 2015!

Make sure that you check out the full list of events at www.alabamachild.org.



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Pro-life ISSUE

LifeWay Research survey shows domestic violence rarely addressed in church

A new survey from LifeWay Research found most Protestant senior pastors say they know victims of domestic violence and believe stopping abuse is a pro-life issue. But according to the study, those pastors seldom address domestic violence from the pulpit — and less than half have been trained in how to help victims.

Those are among the findings of a new telephone survey of 1,000 senior pastors of Protestant

churches from LifeWay Research. The survey was co-sponsored by two Christian nonprofits: Washington-based Sojourners and Maryland-based IMA World Health.

Addressing the issue

Sojourners president Jim Wallis said the survey shows churches can do more to address domestic violence.

“This is a conversation the Church needs to be having but isn’t,” he said. “We cannot remain silent when our brothers and sisters live under the threat of

violence in their homes and communities.”

The LifeWay Research pastor’s survey is one of the first of its kind on the topic of domestic violence.

Researchers found about 4 in 10 (42 percent) pastors “rarely” or “never” speak about domestic violence. Less than a quarter (22 percent) speak to their church about the issue once a year.

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research Division, said, “When two-thirds of pastors address the issue of domestic violence in church one time a year or less, we have a serious disconnect with the realities of American life.

“Pastors cannot ignore or downplay the issue, when lives are being ruined — and sometimes lost — through sexual and domestic violence right in their own communities and churches.

“The Church needs to be part of the solution here,” Stetzer said. “This is an issue where people of faith across theological lines can speak together that it matters, we care and it must change.”

Pastors also tend to downplay the possibility domestic violence can affect their congregation. For pastors who don’t address the issue, about 3 in 10 (29 percent) believe domestic violence is not a problem in their church.

Pastors who do speak about domestic violence are more likely to say it is a problem for their community (72 percent) than their church (25 percent).

Yvonne DeVaughn, director of Advocacy for Victims of Abuse

(AVA), said, “I think many pastors still don’t think it exists in their congregation.” AVA trains church leaders to assist victims.

According to a 2010 national survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1 in 3 women (35.6 percent) and 1 in 4 men (28.5 percent) have “experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.”

That same survey found 1 in 4 women (24.3 percent) and 1 in 7 men (13.8 percent) have been “hit with a fist or something hard, beaten, slammed against something at some point in their lifetime” by an intimate partner.

Living in danger

DeVaughn said victims often feel trapped. They may feel their lives are in danger. But they also may fear leaving an abusive spouse is a sin.

Stetzer said, “The gospel sets prisoners free — and that includes victims of domestic violence, who often feel like prisoners in their own homes. Pastors can do more to proclaim that message.”

Justin Holcomb, co-author of “Is It My Fault?: Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence,” said victims of abuse often blame themselves. But hearing sermons about stopping domestic violence reminds victims that God cares about their suffering. And it gives them hope that God can deliver them from the evil of domestic violence.

Some abusers, Holcomb said, use Scriptures like Malachi 2:16

— which says God hates divorce in some translations — against their victims. He believes pastors can counteract that message.

“God says He hates divorce — He also hates the abuse of women,” Holcomb said.

LifeWay Research also found half of senior pastors (52 percent) don’t have sufficient training to address cases of domestic or sexual violence. About 8 in 10 (81 percent) say they would take action to reduce domestic violence if they had more training.

Most pastors (74 percent) know of a friend, family member or church member who has experienced domestic violence. And most (83 percent) say they would turn to outside experts in order to address cases of domestic violence.

But more than half (62 percent) also have provided “couples or marriage counseling” to those experiencing domestic violence.

Advocates for victims say that’s a dangerous practice, especially for women who are victims of abuse. A counseling session may actually lead to more violence, Holcomb said.

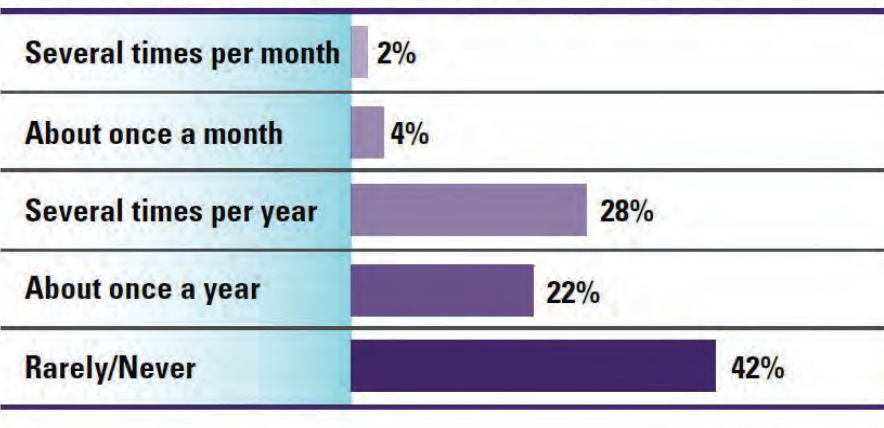
“She’s going back home with that guy,” he said. “And if she made him look bad in front of a pastor — she will pay for it when she gets back home.”

Survey logistics

The telephone survey was conducted from May 7 through May 31. The calling list was randomly drawn from a list of all Protestant churches in three size categories. Up to 10 calls were made to reach a sampled phone number. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted to reflect the size and geographic distribution of Protestant churches. The completed sample is 1,000 phone interviews. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed +3.1 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. (BP)

Among Protestant pastors:

How often do you speak to your church in sermons or large group messages about domestic or sexual violence?



LifeWayResearch.com



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 3

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

RISK EVERYTHING FOR GOD Daniel 3:1, 8-12, 15b-18, 24-25, 28

The story of the three Hebrew men — this is a familiar one found in many Bible storybooks. Daniel chapter three has 97 verses in the Septuagint, in which Jewish scholars added “The Prayer of the Three Hebrew Men” when translating the original Aramaic to Greek. The Latin Vulgate includes a chapter three with 100 verses.

Their Hebrew names meant Grace of Yahweh (Hanaiah), Who is Like God (Mishael) and Help of Yahweh (Azariah). Upon entering the “Babylon Royal Academy for Reprogramming Hebrews,” they are renamed Command of Aku (Shadrach), Who is Like Aku (Meshach) and Servant of Nego (Abednego). Their names are changed but their commitment to the God of Israel remains firm.

Imagine the Muslim call to prayer being offered in Mecca. All the men surrounding the Black Stone face it, bowing down in worship — all except for three members of the Saudi royal court. Their unwillingness to submit would be a serious religious and legal offense. Consider this word picture and you will have some idea as to the boldness (or perceived insanity) of Shadrach and his compatriots.

Where is Daniel during these events in Dura? This is one of the most frequently asked questions about the book. The answer is: Daniel is in Babylon. According to Daniel 2:49 the young man from Jerusalem is serving Nebuchadnezzar at the royal court.

Determine to Serve God Only (1, 8-12)

Sinaitic law is very clear. Israelites serve no other gods, and they are forbidden to bow before idols. Nebuchadnezzar’s gold idol (see 2:36-38) cannot be ignored, but the three men choose not to follow the edict to worship the larger-than-life statue. They know their stand might cost them their lives, but they recognize that God is their supreme authority, before whom every king will give account.

Noting their ethnic distinction, certain Mesopotamians bring this act of rebellion to the attention of the king. Nebuchadnezzar

responds in anger to the accusations, and he calls the men to answer for their brazen actions.

Resist All Pressure (15b-18)

But if not ... these words are the turning point in the conversation. King Neb gives them another chance to follow the law. After all, they are young and still learning the ways of Babylon. Bow down when the music plays; but if not, you will be incinerated.

But if not ... the men seize upon these words. Your majesty, we will not bow down, and our God will deliver us from your hands; but if not, we still refuse to worship your gods or your statue.

But if not ... according to George Will (“A Dying Tradition,” *The Day*, 5/4/84), Allied troops were pinned down by Nazi forces at Dunkirk in 1940. They were surrounded and had little chance for survival. A British officer was able to get a signal out. His communiqué was three simple words: “but if not.” Instantly the Allies knew the reference was to the three Hebrew men of this Bible passage. Their eventual rescue was seen to be miraculous.

But if not ... these words are a concise reminder that God is greater than any challenge we face; and even if He chooses not to deliver us, He is still God and worthy to be praised.

Trust God’s Presence and Power (24-25, 28)

Something supernatural occurs in the fire. Three men are bound and then thrown in the fire with no hope of escape. But wait — they are walking around without bindings. And who is that fourth figure, the one “like a son of gods” (from the original Aramaic)? Conservative Bible interpreters generally view the fourth person as a supernatural being: an angel, a theophany (manifestation of God) or a Christophany (pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ).

The event and its outcome demonstrate God’s intervention with a supernatural being and a miraculous deliverance. Three Hebrew men trust God in their trial and deliverance. In fact, they will trust God if He does not deliver them. Will you? 🙏

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D. Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

READY FAITH 1 Peter 3:13-16; 4:1-2

When Lord Baden Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts movement, died, the inscription of his tombstone was very simple.

It gave his name, date of birth and death and little else. It had one curious symbol engraved on it. It was a tracking sign, one of the many he had used to teach boys to find their way through the countryside by means of signs that were left behind to guide them. The final sign was the one that he had on his tombstone — a circle with a curious dot in the middle, which simply means “gone home.”

The hope of heaven for the Christian is not merely “pie in the sky when you die” but is the controlling perspective of the people of God as they live in a world of suffering and sin. Our eternal perspective brings an impetus to the way we live in this world for Christ.

Ready Faith Looks Beyond This World for Its Reward (3:13-14)

Those who anticipate eternity will be better prepared to face difficulties in this life, especially if they come as a result of our Christian commitment. Rather than complain about life’s circumstances, disciples of Jesus are “eager to do what is good.” When the world seeks to “do harm” to us we seek to “do good” in return. In such circumstances we are encouraged not to be fearful; either of what people will do to us or that such antagonism can be ultimately detrimental to our faith. Indeed we should consider ourselves “blessed.” Peter seems to be echoing the word of Jesus, “blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Instead of being fearful of other people, revere Christ as Lord in your hearts. In biblical language, the heart was the seat of both our volition and our emotions. We are called to love God with our mind, our

will and our deepest emotions. This alone will enable us to endure suffering and be witnesses for Christ.

Ready Faith Demonstrates the Reality of Our Hope (3:15-16)

Faithfulness in suffering brings with it an opportunity to turn the tables on the evil one and to focus the attention of our opponents on Christ Himself. When our Christian conduct arouses the interest and curiosity of other people we are to be ready to give an account of our hope, to speak to others of the difference Christ made in our lives and why we live not merely for this world but for the future hope of heaven.

The witness we offer must not be characterized by arrogance but gentleness. It is sometimes tempting to match the arrogance of atheists with a similar arrogance. Such an attitude is counterproductive. Our witness to Christ should be offered in a gentle spirit with respect for the struggles of the person we are speaking to as well as reverence to our Lord whose love for the lost is profound. Everything we do should be in tune with the attitude of Christ.

Ready Faith Allows Christ to Shine Through Our Lives (4:1-2)

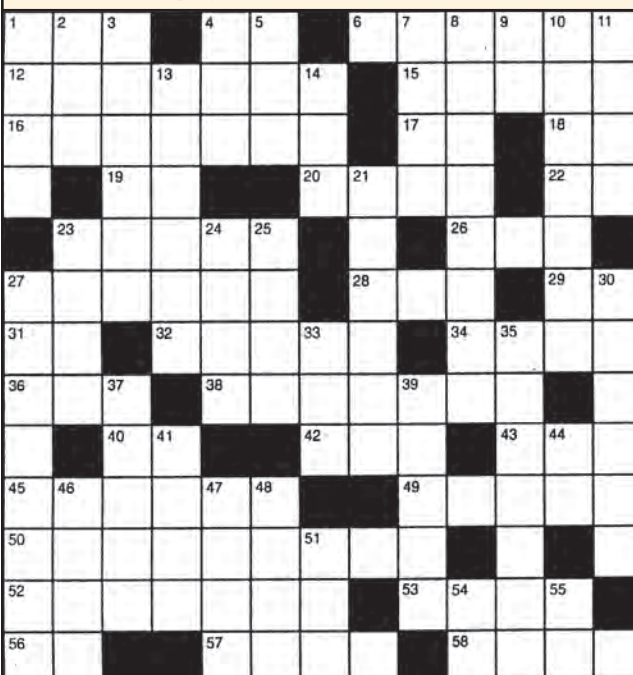
Our lives and our witness should have the same intention and insight as Christ. The example of Jesus indicates that we must be willing to experience the cost of discipleship, of facing opposition as our Lord did and in this demonstrate we have “finished with sin” in the sense that we have turned our backs on an ungodly life to live a life like Him.

In this way and in this way alone will the beauty of Jesus be seen in and through our lives.

Earthly human desires are often counterproductive to holiness, but when we live our lives in tune and in sync with God’s will as revealed in the Scriptures then we will make an impact in our witness before others. 🙏

Christian Crossword

By Judy Ellis Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Because the enemy hath said against you, _____. (Ezek. 36:2)
- Sixteenth letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Color.
- _____ seed.
- Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons; _____ the chief. (1 Chron. 26:10)
- _____ the son of Jair slew Lahmi. (1 Chron. 20:5)
- A branch of the military. (abbr.)
- Paid. (abbr.)
- Doctor. (abbr.)
- I will even appoint over you terror, consumption and the burning _____. (Lev. 26:16)
- And when _____ defied Israel. (2 Sam. 21:21)
- Pharaoh’s daughter drew him up out of the water. (Ex. 2:5)
- Hot or cold drink.
- These things have I written unto you concerning them that _____ you. (1 John 2:26)

- Sons of Benjamin. (Gen. 46:21)
- New Testament. (abbr.)
- He saith among the trumpets, _____. (Job 39:25)
- The Lord is thy _____ upon thy right hand. (Ps. 121:5)
- Crush.
- If _____ be blameless, the husband of one wife. (Titus 1:6)
- Have _____ weightier matters of the law. (Matt. 23:23)
- And _____, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord. (Gen. 38:7)
- Doctor. (abbr.)
- _____ not vain repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)
- Determined to send _____ unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea. (Acts 11:29)
- South American grass.
- A continual _____ given him of the king. (2 Kings 25:30)
- Drink waters out of thine own _____. (Prov. 5:15)
- Revise.
- Her majesty. (abbr.)
- And in those days shall

- men _____ death. (Rev. 9:6)
- After Joel and before Obadiah.

Down

- Prayer ending.
- Child of Aram. (Gen. 10:23)
- Publish in the palaces at _____. (Amos 3:9)
- Cooking vessel.
- The sixth captain for the sixth month was _____, the son of Ikkesh. (1 Chron. 27:9)
- Isaac’s eldest son.
- Remember that thou in thy _____ receivedst thy good things. (Luke 16:25)
- Lunar module. (abbr.)
- We are _____ and fatherless, our mothers are as widows. (Lam. 5:3)
- Deep and _____. (Acts 17:20)
- Saul of _____. (1 Sam. 17:40)
- Any of various nucleic acids.
- Welcomes.
- We would know therefore what these things _____. (Acts 17:20)
- Bounce off.
- Now the coat was without _____. (John 19:23)
- _____, Meshach and

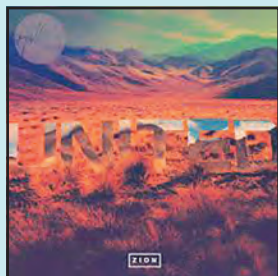
- Abednego.
- Thy lips are like a _____ of scarlet. (Song of Sol. 4:3)
- Opposite of “live.”
- Went forth toward Gethsemane, which is over against the going up of _____. (Josh. 18:17)
- Screams.
- Indian hut.
- Having faithful children not accused of _____ or unruly. (Titus 1:6)
- Spanish. (abbr.)
- And they came to _____, where were 12 wells of water. (Ex. 15:27)
- Female sheep.
- _____ ye well. (Acts 15:29)
- Direction.
- District attorney. (abbr.)
- Then Nebuchadnezzar came near _____ the mouth of the burning fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:26)



TOP 10

downloaded songs from iTunes

CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



1. Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)

By Hillsong United
(Zion Deluxe Edition)



3. Thank God I Got Her

By Jonny Diaz
(Let It Fly)



4. We Believe

By Newsboys
(Restart)

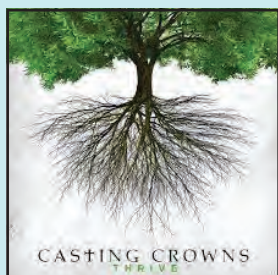


5. Thrive

By Casting Crowns
(Thrive)

6. Greater

By MercyMe
(Welcome to the New)



7. Hope in Front of Me

By Danny Gokey
(Hope in Front of Me)

8. This Is Amazing Grace

By Phil Wickham
(The Ascension)



9. God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)

By Newsboys
(God's Not Dead)

10. I Can Only Imagine

By MercyMe
(Almost There)

Source: iTunes at press time



Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

Adam Young, the man behind Owl City, began his musical journey in high school by playing guitar in his church's youth group. While performing, Young desires to shine the spotlight on Christ.

'Endless grace'

Owl City creatively communicates message of hope

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Known to audiences around the globe as Owl City, Adam Young has a unique ability to capture attention while playing multiple instruments. Through his performances Young desires to creatively communicate messages of hope.

During high school Young began his musical journey by playing the guitar for his church youth group. He never expected that he would perform in arenas around the world.

"I played guitar in the church youth group and that got the wheels turning," Young said. "I started playing drums shortly after, and because I couldn't play anything in time, the foreign idea of 'sampling' caught my attention. I became interested in learning more about the art of sequencing and programming. I saw electronic music as a bottomless well to delve headfirst into."

Spotlight on Christ

"As a kid in my bedroom, I suddenly became an orchestra conductor in front of the Vienna symphony. One thing led to another, and I'm just chasing after my dreams on a trip that's just as much about the journey as it is about the destination."

Wherever Young performs, he desires to shine the spotlight on Christ.

"I pray that whatever happens that my music would ultimately be usable for the glory of Christ. The first time I played in Shanghai, we pulled up to a sold-out room full of people who didn't speak much English at all. I was blown away, literally lost for words because everyone knew all the songs and lyrics in English word-for-word.

"I remember blanking out completely, forget-

ting all about the music and just praising the Lord with every fiber of my being. Later that night I lay awake thinking, 'Who am I to be allowed to experience something like this?' I've been blessed with a lot of moments like these, and my knees have been black and blue as a result because all I know to do is hit the floor and thank my Savior for the endless grace I've been given."

Animated films

His music has been featured in several animated films, such as "Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole," "Wreck-It Ralph," "Escape From Planet Earth," "The Croods," "VeggieTales: Merry Larry and the True Light of Christmas" and "The Smurfs 2."

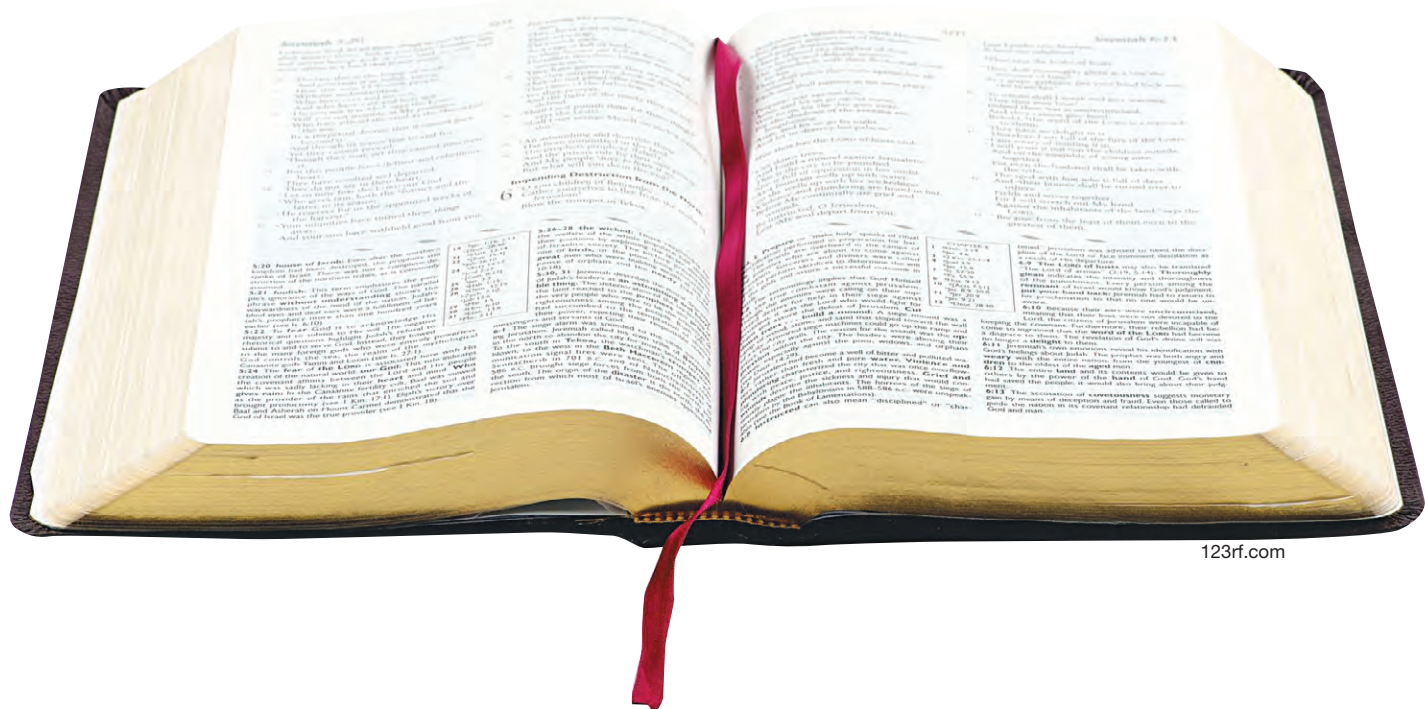
"These days so many people, myself included, are glued to their iPhones, iPads, televisions, laptops, etc.," Young noted. "As a result, I think people have lost a lot of interest and intrigue with respect to using their imagination. I would love for my music to bring imagery and intrigue to people, because I'm a firm believer that the power of the imagination holds a lot more strength than anybody gives it credit for. I want to capture that idea with music."

During his travels, Young believes the Lord has been teaching him valuable lessons along the way.

"Without question, God has been teaching me about perseverance," Young said. "I've had a few things come up where I've wanted an answer from God right away. It has been a great reminder to abandon whatever strength I think I have in myself and leave the whole business at the foot of the cross so that Christ may lead, and through Him, I may serve to glorify Him and ultimately further the Kingdom. It sometimes is a rough ride but Jesus never said it would be easy, which is all the more reason to trust Him with all I've been given and praise His name with every breath I have in me." ❧

'Life transformation

by comprehension of God's perfect Word'



123rf.com

North Carolina Baptist pastor memorizes 35 books of Bible, working on book 36

Andy Davis' office has two of four walls filled with books. Most of them — Bible commentaries, books on counseling, church history and more — nearly stretch from floor to ceiling.

But Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Durham, N.C., will tell you there is one book that has captured his heart: the Bible. And his desire to know God's Word has led him to memorize 35 of its books.

He noted he's never claimed to have been able to recite in detail each of the 35 books he has memorized. "There is a limit to memorization," said Davis, who is currently working to memorize book 36: Zephaniah.

"But what I really want to know is, 'Why are you memorizing?' The goal should be life transformation by comprehension of God's perfect Word," he said.

Nathan Finn, a member of First, Durham, since 2005 and a professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, said Davis' love for Scripture memorization has inspired some people to join the church.

"Some have come across his booklet on the topic, while others read about Andy's approach in an article in the *Raleigh News & Observer* several years ago," Finn said. "I know we have many members who are strongly committed to extended Scripture memorization because of Andy's influence."



Andy Davis

BP photo

Davis came to Christ through CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) while a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

He began memorizing Scripture through Navigator's Topical Memory System. During his senior year at MIT, he said, he began thinking that "it might be better to memorize an entire book of Scripture" as opposed to just memorizing topical verses.

While on a missions trip in Kenya in 1986, Davis decided to start memorizing his first book, Ephesians, as he waited for a bus. "When I returned from Kenya, I was committed to continuing so I then began memorizing Philippians and then book three was the Gospel of Matthew."

It took Davis a year to memorize the Gospel of Matthew. "I will never forget the joy of getting to the Great Commission in Matthew," he said.

It is essential to the Christian life for believers to have a daily time of prayer and reading God's Word, he noted.

"I believe we should follow Jesus' example of having it early in the morning," he said. "Really no culture makes much of a claim on the individual early in the morning."

Davis said he desires for Christians to have both a knowledge in depth and in breadth of the Bible. The former is done by memorizing Scripture, he said, whereas the latter is a steady intake of Scripture.

"There are always dead spots in your

day where you don't have to do any verbal work," he said. "In those dead spots, I suggest memorizing a few verses a day for 15 minutes a day."

Davis reminisced on his busy schedule during his doctoral years at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He was working and in school full-time while also helping raise a family.

"I would take my daughter on walks while also memorizing Hebrews," he said.

Extended Bible memorization, he said, "gives me a tremendous leg up on sermon preparation." He noted this helped him finish preaching through the Book of Hebrews about a year ago.

"I used three commentaries when I preached it. ... But none of them helped me as much as my 16 years of reviewing it just for myself," he noted.

He also affirmed its importance in other areas of his ministry such as marital counseling, evangelism and prayer. "I cannot overstate what Scripture memorization has done to prepare me for ministry," he said.

Bible intake

If there's any requirement for spiritual health it is "that you have some Bible intake and prayer every day. ... I would never say that about Bible memorization, that if you're not memorizing Scripture you are sick spiritually or you're not a Christian, but it is very helpful ... in your marriage, in your parenting and in your evangelism."

Davis said he does not intend to memorize the entire Bible.

"The Scriptures don't stick to me like they used to," he said. "The Bible says that 'all men are like grass and all of their glory is like the flower of the field.' That includes the glory of really being able to memorize a lot of Scripture."

Davis said he memorizes Scripture — that has been printed out and laminated on a piece of paper — for five to 10 minutes a day. He takes a few extra minutes to go over older material.

"Memorization is going to be hard work, but what saves it is the joy of ... insight and of illumination by the Holy Spirit that you didn't get from a com-

mentary or book," he said.

Barna Research recently released a study showing that 90 percent of Americans own a Bible, while 82 percent of American adults consider themselves somewhat knowledgeable about it. Yet according to the study, 43 percent cannot name the first five books of Scripture.

Much of the biblical illiteracy in America comes from a failure of feeding on God's Word, Davis said.

"If people are biblically illiterate, it is likely that they are not 'born again.' And if they are 'born again,' they are grossly, spiritually immature [and] susceptible to temptations ... susceptible to prosperity gospel teaching or cults or to new religious thinking.

"The Bible is inerrant, perfect and is everything it needs to be, but it is less than the best," Davis said. "The best is ... when we see [Jesus] we will instantly be transformed and be like Him." (BP)

To download Davis' book, visit <http://ambassador-international.com/books/approach-extended-memorization-scripture>.