



INSIDE



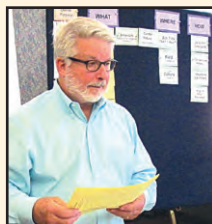
South Sudan Civil War prevents aid for those affected by 'worst in the world' famine

◆ Page 3



Back to Campus: Helping students prepare for this year's fall semester

◆ Pages 6–16



Wellness Retreat, reorientation helps ministers 'grow strong at the broken places'

◆ Page 21

Back to School

Embracing kids' first day of school

By Ginny Bourland
www.caringbridge.org/visit/ginnybourland

So the day has finally arrived. The day so many parents dread, agonizing over for months (or years for some), worrying themselves sleepless, cramming every last bit of “life lessons” into each child’s brain before it is filled with nonsense from others. Yes today is the last day before my daughter — my youngest child — starts Kindergarten. My precious, princess-dressing, wand-wielding, Frozen-singing daughter is entering the world of public school.

I have read the myriad of articles from so many parents floating around on the web regarding first day of school woes and worries, and I agree with so very much of what they have to say. I can relate to just about every emotion and thought that is going through their heads.

My son started school three years ago, and two months before he started I was “that” mom — the one who could have written “those” articles.

The dread of sending him off to public school, the fear of bullies and danger in the school, the anxiety over whether he could snap his pants back after using the restroom, the worry

over whether he would make friends — and if they’d be “good” ones, the doubt of whether he would speak up when he couldn’t open his milk carton or just go thirsty, the urgency I felt to teach him everything I ever needed him to know before he actually left the house that morning, and the absolute dread of the horrible, nasty words I felt confident he would learn on the bus. My ignorant and naïve brain, which had no —

NONE, zilch, zero — experience with buses growing up, thought all things evil in the world start, grow, develop, unwind, explode and finish on public school buses.

I was terrified of putting my 5-year-old son on that bus with 10 year olds and would create these awful scenarios in my mind of what would happen when he climbed on. He, of course, was oblivious and thrilled at the prospect of riding a bus.

Getting on the bus

Though I should point out that he had no clue what existed at the end of that bus route. His view of school was getting on that yellowish-orange wagon and, I guess, riding around with friends for eight hours until it was time to come back home.

The luster of the bus quickly wore off and he accepted what would be his role for the next 13 years (and then some, I pray) and we settled in to our new routine.

So fast forward three years and here I am doing it all again. It’s a bit different because it’s my last child and it’s a girl, but I’m going

**“God took over
and provided
peace that passes
understanding just
as He promised.”**

Ginny Bourland



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through those emotions just like I did three years ago.

My daughter is just as excited about the bus as my son was, and I still struggle with believing that not all things evil begin and end on public school buses. She is counting the minutes until she gets to leave for school in the morning. But my perspective is — and was three years ago — quite different overall from the majority of these articles. While I can totally relate to the others’ views, one month prior to my son starting Kindergarten my world flipped upside down and along with it my perspective.

The summer was going great and my husband and I were counting the days until my son started school. It would be nice to get a reduction in child-care expenses

and have a bit more money in our pocket, but I still dreaded leaving the safe and secure world of day care we had known for five years. I was fortunate to be able to work part-time so I was home with him some and we had had a nice balance of mommy-time and structured school time and other play date times. I was not ready to give that up.

It wasn’t really not being ready for school, it was completely based on the fact that to this point his little world that had been made up of me, his daddy, his little sister, our extended family and only those friends we allowed to enter in.

School meant release of control and no say so in with whom he came into contact. He was going to begin hearing and learning lessons (See ‘Celebrate,’ page 4)



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COMMENT

In Christian Education Both Words Are Important

Across Alabama and the nation, students are headed toward college campuses, some for the first time. Most Alabama students attend public colleges or universities but a growing number attend private Christian schools.

Samford University in Birmingham, the largest of the three institutions of higher learning cooperating with the Alabama Baptist State Convention, expects another record enrollment of freshmen this year. The University of Mobile (UMobile) and Judson College in Marion also plan to welcome large freshmen classes but final numbers will not be known for several weeks.

Samford, UMobile and Judson all offer Christian education. But what is that? Is it the traditional learning process with the trappings of chapel and required courses about the Bible stuck on?

In an essay published in the journal “Renewing Minds,” David Dockery, former president of Union University (a Baptist school in Jackson, Tenn.), wrote the purpose of Christian education is “helping students learn to think, live and serve Christianly.”

Educating students

In one sense, the task of Baptist schools is the same as that of public institutions — education. Students are expected to learn how to think critically and communicate effectively. They are to develop competencies in a specialized field while mastering general knowledge expected of an educated person.

The rigors of education are similar in both public and private schools. That is why many of the top regional universities in every part of the nation are Christian schools. Being Christian does not denote academic inferiority or sloppy scholarship.

However, Christian education does indicate a student focus not found on some public campuses. Some public universities are primarily research-oriented. Professors spend more time in research and writing than in classrooms. Baptist schools have a different focus — education of students. While research and writing are always encouraged for faculty, the schools are student-oriented, majoring on the educational process through faculty-student interaction.

Another difference between public colleges



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

and universities and Baptist schools is highlighted by Dockery’s statement about “helping students learn to think, live and serve Christianly.” Baptist schools help students see the world from a Christian perspective or worldview.

The way one sees the world will largely determine if moral choices are guided by Christian principles, by what feels right at the time, by what makes the most people happy, by selfishness or some other motivator.

In their mission and core value statements all three Alabama Baptist schools announce their intention to help students think, live and serve “Christianly.”

Samford’s core values include “believe in God, the Creator of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord” and “engagement with the life and teachings of Jesus.”

UMobile states it “explicitly seeks to integrate the critical pursuit of knowledge with biblical and spiritual awareness.”

Judson promotes “faith in God, adherence to Christian traditions, commitment to the ministry and mission of the Christian Church” and “making ethical decisions based on the life of Jesus Christ (and) the teachings of the Bible.”

Those statements are not just words on paper. They are stack poles around which the schools are built because schools hire faculty and staff that help them accomplish their mission. Schools hire for academic competencies. They hire for abilities to do a task be it teaching or some other assignment. And schools hire for ability to integrate Christian faith and learning because at the schools cooperating with the state convention, professors are expected to be guides for students as they develop faith-informed thinking and scholarship abilities.

That is the announced mission of each school.

It has been argued that a university is its professors. One writer observed that “if professors no longer profess the faith then the school cannot do its mission.” In one sense, that is true. When the professor no longer professes, Christian education is diluted down to just education. The unique characteristic offered by Christian schools is lost. That is why Christian schools make so much of their stated mission. With that in place every faculty candidate can be asked how their life history demonstrates commitment to and compatibility with that mission. It is a way to ensure that the schools continue hiring to accomplish their stated purpose.

At the same time, Christian education involves the culture of the school as well as what happens in the classroom.

Campus worship, Bible studies, prayer groups, campus chaplains, ministry oppor-

tunities, various Christian organizations, institutional priorities, modeling by professors and administrators and more all contribute to a campus culture different from most public institutions. So do prohibitions against certain kinds of conduct often accepted in secular circles.

Baptist institutions are not isolated from known sin. Fallen humanity expresses itself everywhere. If one seeks certain activities, then he or she will surely find them. But the culture of the Alabama Baptist-related schools all point toward

communities of “service to God, to family, to one another.”

Blaming a Baptist school for the actions of a student who violates the standards of the college is as misguided as blaming a Sunday School teacher when someone misbehaves in a local church. Sometimes sin happens despite one’s best efforts.

Learning experience

The goal of Christian education is to offer a learning experience that connects mind, body and spirit. It does that through what happens in the classroom. It does that through faculty-student relations. It does that through campus culture. It does that through a community of believers working together to accomplish the mission of Christian education.

The contributions of our Baptist colleges are important to society, to the Church and to countless individuals. Their ministry deserves our support and our prayers. 🙏

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Follow Bob Terry
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"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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BP photo

Small photo: A South Sudanese child displaced by recent fighting waits in the town of Mingkaman, where humanitarian assistance is being provided. **Main**

photo: Displaced children eat their daily meal at a displacement site on the Topping base of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in the capital city of Juba.



BP photo

'Perfect storm'

South Sudan Civil War prevents aid for those affected by 'worst in the world' famine

An escalating civil war is preventing humanitarian aid from reaching those most affected by famine in South Sudan, said a senior International Mission Board (IMB) strategy leader for sub-Saharan Africa.

"Pray for doors to open in good time," IMB's Tim Cearley said.

The United Nations (U.N.) Security Council expressed "grave concern" over the ever-worsening food situation. They are calling it the "worst in the world."

The crisis is the result of ongoing military and civilian conflict and displacement, the council said in a statement released July 25. Fighting broke out eight months ago between two major rival political and tribal factions.

Mark Hatfield, Baptist Global Response (BGR) director for sub-Saharan Africa, said, "It is like a perfect storm when drought, political unrest and subsistence farming practices all come together."

Cyclical drought

"Hunger due to cyclical drought is a growing problem all across Africa, especially in the Sahel," he said. "When there is political unrest, the situation is exacerbated due to the lack of ability to get into the fields to cultivate crops and manage herds. This all collides in places like South Sudan, where you have large groups of people living in situations where they have no surplus food stored or financial savings available to mitigate for crop and herd failures."

Some 3.9 million people in South Sudan face "dangerous levels of food insecurity," according to a joint statement issued by the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme, "with many of them not knowing

when and how their next meal is coming."

The two organizations estimate nearly 1 million children will require treatment for acute malnutrition by the end of the year.

UNICEF executive director Anthony Lake said, "The world should not wait for a famine to be announced while children are dying each and every day." About 50,000 children could die from malnutrition in 2014 alone, he said.

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, its neighbor to the north, in 2011. There are now nearly 1.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) because of conflict in South Sudan, according to U.N. sources.

Hatfield said, "Many times in hunger situations like what we are seeing in South Sudan, missions organizations need to focus on mentoring the local church in fulfilling its biblical role as a holistic expression of the gospel by assisting in food distribution."

Missions organizations struggle with helping, he said, because long-term goals are focused on keeping dependency low. When assistance provided by national churches is not subsidized, they find local reproduction is more possible.

"This is a worthy goal in long-term church

planting and development work," Hatfield said, "but in times of disaster, when local resources are just not available, we have to step up and share the abundance that God has given us by supporting local churches and organizations that are providing food for the hungry."

Cearley said the situation is real and is not going away; and soon the entire country could be affected. He said the next few months will be critical for missions personnel as they face possible escalation of violence and more food shortages. The challenge, he said, is the balance between meeting urgent physical needs and meeting urgent spiritual needs.

People are responding to the Good News. But Cearley added, "Quoting Carl Henry, the gospel is only Good News if it gets there in time." He said pastors of the Baptist conven-

tion in South Sudan are passionate about reaching the unreached as a result of recent training in utilizing oral strategies for sharing the gospel.

"Pray that the South Sudanese followers of Jesus would be faithful to share their faith and ready to show His love as the Church tries to respond to the hunger that will come," he said. (BP)



BP photo

Displaced children await registration in the town of Mingkaman. They were displaced by fighting in Bor, the capital of Jonglei State in South Sudan.

Celebrate each day

'This is her moment ... and I will be her biggest fan and largest ears'

(continued from page 1)

not given by mom and dad. Had we taught him enough? Had we equipped him properly? Would he remember the things we had worked on? Would he care? Not just his world was changing, but my world was crashing down around me. I was overwhelmed and worried and anxious and felt this timeline under which I needed to operate to teach him every thing I knew.

But God had a different idea.

'Let go and let God?'

How about instead of this basket-case mom focusing on her child and Kindergarten and some pointless fears, I give her a distraction? How about I allow a cancer diagnosis to rock her world and help her learn how to truly "let go and let God"? So exactly one month before my oldest child started Kindergarten, I was given a cancer diagnosis (that was, as cancer goes, on the grim side of average) and then endured three separate surgeries including what some people refer to as the "MOAS — the Mother of all Surgeries" and ultimately spent 11 days in the hospital.

I missed his Meet the Teacher day, and so many of the other things I had wanted to do with him before starting school weren't possible but we made it. God took over and provided peace that passes understanding just as He promised. I was there to see him get on the bus the first morning of school. And I was there to give him a great big hug and see that smile when he got off — and he hadn't turned into a demon during his

time on that frightening mode of transportation either. I had to focus so much on healing and eating and just breathing that I had to forfeit those anxieties about school.

And you know what? He did it. We did it. He did it with aplomb if I do say so myself. I will say there were no tears of sadness that day from my eyes. While millions of moms around the country struggled (understandably) in that moment of growth and independence and freedom for their kids, I rejoiced in being able to be present.

One month prior and plenty of days in between I doubted whether that would be the case. Yes I have an incredible husband who understood how much all those silly mommy things mattered and he stepped up in a big way. And yes I have a phenomenal mother whose heart probably broke more than mine did at this turn of events because, well, I'm her baby going through cancer. And yes my support system is better than anyone in this world deserves. But truly the only thing that really mattered about my son going to school was that he go, that I see it happen and for him to know I was there and that that moment in his life was important and shared by me.

I couldn't tell you what we ate for breakfast that day or what my note in his backpack said. But I can tell you that when my mom and I took him to get ice cream that day when he got home, I got to hear one word answers to every question my heart and mouth could ask and that was golden. I got to see his eyes shine, and I got to feel the confidence in



Ginny and Shea Bourland are members of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. They are the parents of Will, 8, (front, right) and Bella, 5 (front, left).

Photo courtesy of Ginny Bourland

his voice as he relayed that he had "done school."

And now I get to do it again. My daughter begins tomorrow. This day couldn't have arrived soon enough. I may not have everything in order, but the critical parts (mom, check; dad, check) are there. There are the fleeting concerns that I haven't used my time wisely, haven't prepared her enough, haven't adequately readied her for this momentous day. But experience tells me God has. If I have followed God as I should have, He has used me (and her father and brother) to equip her exactly as she needs to be. I can trust God in that.

My cancer has returned twice in three years, and we have learned and experienced a lot as a family during that time.

Most recently, in February, I was given a terminal diagnosis and discovered that seeing my daughter begin Kindergarten was not necessarily a given. Today I believe — unless one of those terrifying, spawn-of-Satan, noisy, n'er-do-well school buses runs me over — I will get to see her start school. I will once again get to be there to get her on her way and get to be there when she climbs off that bus, hopefully with the same huge grin that her brother had three years prior.

Yes we are planning a special outfit and yes we have some Ready Confetti to sprinkle under her pillow. But the anxiety? The sadness? The worry, fear, growing-up-too-fast thinking I know I would have experienced minus cancer? It isn't there. This is her moment — "I did it. I tied my shoes all by myself." "I just won a trophy for first place." "I'm starting my dream job." "I've met 'the One.'" This is all that rolled into one and there will be plenty of those that I won't get to see, so I will relish tomorrow and be her biggest fan and largest ears

as she relays her day in the afternoon. I will be present for this moment and pray that one day when I'm not, she knows that while I could be there I was. Being present for this day was a goal of mine. The more experiences I get to share with her — with them — the more I will continue to be a part of her life when I'm not present.

Most people are willing life to slow down. Cancer has made me want life to speed up. I have so many things I want to share with my kids, not just things I want to teach and do, but things they will do one day that I want to hear about.

I've learned (in a new way) that God's timing is perfect. It won't be wrong when I am not here for some of their life events. I will be here for the things for which I need to be here. I will celebrate each day, and the new things we experience that day.

I pray I can help my family cherish significant moments with this perspective — to temper the build-up leading to each occasion and enjoy the journey getting there; to live each experience recognizing the blessing of being a part of it; to know that being there is part of a plan with a purpose; and to savor every second of being with family and especially my children.

And I never would have had this perspective without the blessing of cancer. It has taught me so much. I am grateful to be able to see beyond the surrender or resignation required by me (by choice or not), in order to witness my little girl flourish.

God bless each of you starting school for the first time. And may children of all ages be safe and secure inside those school walls each day. Lord, cover those buildings in the shelter of Your wings and guide the teachers and administrators to grow in wisdom each day as we turn our children over to them. ❏

"I never would have had this perspective without the blessing of cancer. It has taught me so much."

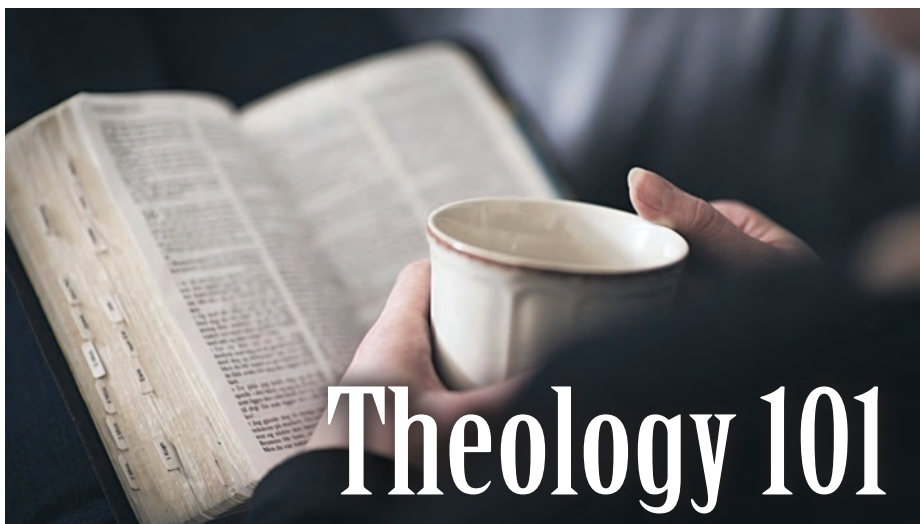
Ginny Bourland

Seddon Baptist Church relocates



Photo by Harry Moritz

Seddon Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association bought and renovated a former lumber store at 4205 Cogswell Avenue in Pell City. The church relocated and held its first service at its new campus June 1. 'We are amazed at what God has already done, and we are believing Him for even bigger and better things,' Pastor Dale Foote said.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Temples

Believers Individually as Temples

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

The Old Testament presents the temple in Jerusalem as the place where God manifested His presence with Israel. Psalm 11:4 puts it directly, “The Lord is in His holy temple.” As noted last week, the New Testament picks up the imagery of a temple as the place where the Spirit of God dwells. A major difference is that in the Old Testament the temple was a physical building, but in the New Testament the temple is composed of Christian believers.

Two passages in 1 Corinthians refer to believers as the temple of the Holy Spirit, but with a subtle difference between the passages. We looked last week at 1 Corinthians 3:16–17. That passage tells us that believers gathered in worship are collectively God’s temple. This week we look at 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 in which our bodies as individual Christians are said to be temples of the Holy Spirit. The difference is found in changing the reference to a temple in the singular in this week’s passage instead of the plural reference in last week’s passage. When we are together we are God’s temple and when we are apart we continue individually to be temples of His Spirit.

Temples of the Holy Spirit

This truth comes at the climax of a larger passage that addresses a problem that is as true today as it was in ancient Corinth, namely, sexual immorality. Against a cavalier attitude that thoughtlessly indulges the body in sinful pursuits, the awareness of Christians that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit should give us serious pause when tempted to go with the tide of the times.

As Christians, wherever we go and whatever we do, we involve God’s temple — our very bodies. Indulging physical appetites in ways that are outside God’s intention is nothing short of a defilement of this temple. If Christians carried a deeply grained conviction that our bodies are God’s temple it would go a long way toward raising

the moral climate of our times. Faced with temptation we should be able to say, “I cannot do that because my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and I do not wish to grieve Him.”

Daily awareness of being God’s temple would not only safeguard us against acts of sin against our bodies but would also deliver us from wanting to know how close we might imitate an unconverted society and its questionable morals and yet still enjoy God’s favor upon our lives.

The physical body

A theology of the physical body must include at least three ideas that flow out of 1 Corinthians 6:20. First sinful indulgences involving the physical body desecrate God’s temple. A truth ingrained in attitudes toward the temple in the Old Testament is that the temple was made a holy place by its dedication to God and His consequent presence manifested in it.

The second idea to be woven into a Christian’s theology of the body is recognition that we have been bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ. As a result of the purchase we are no longer our own. We belong to Him, body, soul, mind and spirit.

The third strand in a theology of the human body is that involving it in sinful activities amounts to failure to glorify God through our bodies. Not only must Christians avoid demeaning their bodies as if desecrating a holy temple, but positively we must be vigilant to adopt behaviors that actually glorify God. ☩

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.



Earthquake response

Baptists provide relief in southwest China

Some remote communities in southwest China still had not received relief supplies, several days after a magnitude 6.1 earthquake killed nearly 600 people and destroyed 80,000 homes.

One Baptist Global Response (BGR)-trained relief team working in the area, reported Aug. 5 that two villages they managed to reach had received no relief supplies, including clean water, even though they were near the road. “The situation of other mountain villages is more serious, but we have not been able to get there,” the team leader reported.

Efforts to reach the most isolated communities are being hampered by road collapses and landslides as well as a steady stream of civilians trying to bring supplies into the disaster zone, said Pat Melancon, BGR managing director of disaster response.

“It is not unusual in disaster response for well-meaning untrained volunteers to become a burden to the local communities already struggling to get back on their feet,” Melancon said. “That is why BGR trains national partners to respond in a self-supporting fashion, so they are an asset during this difficult time, not a burden.”

Chinese authorities have urged untrained

volunteers to stay away from the quake zone, according to news reports. Many civilians have walked or hitchhiked to the area. Some drove their own vehicles into the worst-hit areas, further clogging already congested roads.

The BGR-trained teams are working in the epicenter of the earthquake, Melancon said. In outlying areas that still have not received any assistance, water continues to be a practical and urgent need as well as tents, food and clothing. BGR teams are assessing survival needs related to water, sanitation, shelter, food and health issues as well as helping people with supplies they bring with them.

The death toll jumped by nearly 200 on Aug. 6 as rescuers began searching previously unreachable mountain villages. The count of houses destroyed has about doubled.

Rescuers freed one woman from a pile of rubble where she had been trapped for almost three days, but hopes that others will be found alive are waning, according to news reports. Residents of some communities reported school dormitories had collapsed.

An estimated 230,000 people are living in evacuation centers. (BP)



BGR photo

An estimated 230,000 people are at evacuation centers in southwest China after a magnitude 6.1 earthquake hit Aug. 3.

Cottage Hill Baptist renovates stage



Photo courtesy of Paragon 360

Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, recently completed a stage renovation to make the environment more ‘conducive for worship,’ according to Pastor Alan Floyd. The stage has an illuminated 32-foot-by-48-foot wall. It includes back-stage access and an illuminated cross at the top, among other features.

BACK TO CAMPUS



Photo by Doug Rogers
Students from FBC Montgomery visit with a woman at a park in Queens, N.Y. The students were on a choir missions trip and were helping a local church planter make contacts in the community.

Tips for helping students stay in church during their collegiate years

By Steve Masters
Louisiana State University, BCM director

What can you do to help a student or young adult have a lifelong faith? Here are a few practical things — whether you are a parent, grandparent, youth leader or church staff member — to help students in your church grow and mature in Christ.

► **Encourage missions involvement.**

Going on church and youth missions trips is one of the best ways for a student to personalize his or her faith. As the director of an on-campus collegiate ministry, when I ask incoming college freshmen why they stayed close to Christ during their high

school years, many of them share the importance a missions trip or missions involvement had in strengthening their walk with the Lord. Consider participating in a missions trip and local missions ministries as a family. Organize your service with several families in your church.

► **Live it out.**

As a parent or grandparent, be an example to students. They are watching and observing how you live out your faith. Are you having a daily quiet time? Are you memorizing Scripture? Are you using your spiritual gifts? Are you sharing your faith with your co-workers, friends and relatives? Are you involved in local missions and the missions trips of your church?

If your son or daughter really is like you

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BACK TO CAMPUS

spiritually, what kind of Christian will that make them? Are you a 24/7 Christian or just a weekend warrior? If you aren't living out your faith, then chances are great that your son or daughter will follow in your footsteps.

► **Help them get to know the staff and adults in your church.**

Students need to be a part of the total church, not just the youth ministry. Be creative in helping them get to know the church staff and

other strong Christian adults in your church. I am convinced that students "catch" Christianity as much as

they learn it. As they spend time with other strong Christian adults, students grow in their faith.

► **Realize the importance of summer student conferences.**

Many youth groups participate in a summer conference such as World Changers, Student Life or FugeCamps. These weeks can be invaluable in helping students grow and mature in their faith. As they spend a concentrated period of time in Bible study, prayer and worship, they "catch" a passion for Christ from the camp leaders and counselors. They develop strong friendships with other students and the adult leaders of your church.

Plan your vacations around ma-

ior youth conferences your church attends. Make sure your older students don't let summer jobs or sports activities keep them from participating. Valuable spiritual growth can be missed.

► **Connect graduating seniors to campus ministries.**

As a collegiate minister for more than 30 years I can confidently say that being able to contact incoming students months before they arrive on campus greatly

increases our chances of reaching and involving the student. Visit sbccampus-connect.net to connect with your student's campus min-

istry. To contact the Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) director visit bcm.life.net.

► **Encourage high school juniors to be Senior Disciples**

Senior Disciples commit to being leaders in their youth groups and to reaching out to their high school for Christ during their senior year. They can sign up at seniordisciple.net.

► **Encourage high school grads to be Collegiate Disciples**

Collegiate Disciples commit to being involved in a local church and the BCM at the college or university they attend as well as being a disciple for Christ while in college. Students can sign up at collegiatedisciple.net. (BP)

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Go and make DISCIPLES

First Priority of Alabama encourages youth pastors, campus ministers to equip young people

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

First Priority of Alabama encouraged 75 youth pastors and campus ministers to spread a message of hope at the City-Wide Campus Ministry Network Luncheon on Aug. 7 at Samford University in Birmingham.

Held quarterly, this meeting “gives people a chance to see that they’re involved in something bigger than what they can see,” said Matthew Wilson, executive director of First Priority of Alabama.

First Priority was founded in Irving, Texas, in 1985 following Benny Proffitt’s struggle with reaching young people as a youth pastor.

“I said, ‘Lord, either teach me how to reach this generation or take it away from me,’” said

Proffitt, who served as the keynote speaker at the Aug. 7 event. Proffitt is president of First Priority Global.

From that plea came the realization that to reach the next gen-

eration, youth ministers have to go to where students are instead of trying to get students to come to them, he explained.

Since that realization First Priority has now grown into a

global ministry with programs in Uganda, Kenya, Spain, Indonesia and parts of Europe.

First Priority is in nearly 300 schools across Alabama, with more than 12,000 students involved in programs in Birmingham alone, Wilson said.

First Priority is not a ministry but a strategy, Proffitt emphasized. Step one is go to the kids, and step two is take on the role of equippers.

“We’re not going to reach the next generation if we’re not equipping the young people who already go into the schools every day,” Proffitt said.

For youth workers and ministers, the task is to go and make disciples.

“Jesus never told us to build God’s kingdom — it’s already built,” he said.

The catalyst for First Priority’s strategy is relationships, he added, noting that “without relation-

ships the truth doesn’t matter.”

Challenging participants to read Luke 6:40 and read what Jesus instructed His followers to do, Proffitt said, “If we’re going to proclaim a message, we need to know what the message is.”

In keeping with the spirit of equipping, each participant received a packet of materials with information on youth retreats, Christian programs, missions trips and more.

The meeting also gave new ministries the opportunity to share with others in attendance.

Israel Partridge, founder of True Adventure Sports (TAS) in Fort Payne, said his business/ministry uses extreme team-building sports and activities to show youth how their physical struggle is rooted in a deeper spiritual struggle. TAS provides guided trips for rappelling, rock climbing, whitewater kayaking, zip lining, wild cave tours and more.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Matthew Wilson (right), executive director of First Priority of Alabama, takes advantage of networking opportunities at the City-Wide Campus Ministry Network Luncheon on Aug. 7.

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BACK TO CAMPUS



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Benny Proffitt, founder and president of First Priority Global, encourages participants at the quarterly City-Wide Campus Ministry Network Luncheon on Aug. 7.

Tim Hill of Gulf Shores Beach Retreat shared about the “chance to experience God in a different way” with a weekend by the sun and sand.

Hill then introduced Taylor Morton, founder of Converge Ministries, who Hill will partner with for an upcoming winter retreat. Based in Centreville, Converge Ministries strives to break down barriers that separate Christians from uniting as one body of Christ.

Wilson, who works directly with

First Priority Greater Birmingham, described the strategy First Priority Greater Birmingham will be using to minister to students in the 2014–2015 school year — “Hope.”

The four-part strategy is designed to equip students to be the change for Christ in their school.

“We want you to see yourself as

coaches,” Wilson told participants. “Give the right resources and game plan ... then let them play the game they’re called to play.”

For more information about First Priority and the City-Wide Campus Ministry Network Luncheon, call Matthew Wilson at 205-871-8886 or visit www.gofirstpriority.com.

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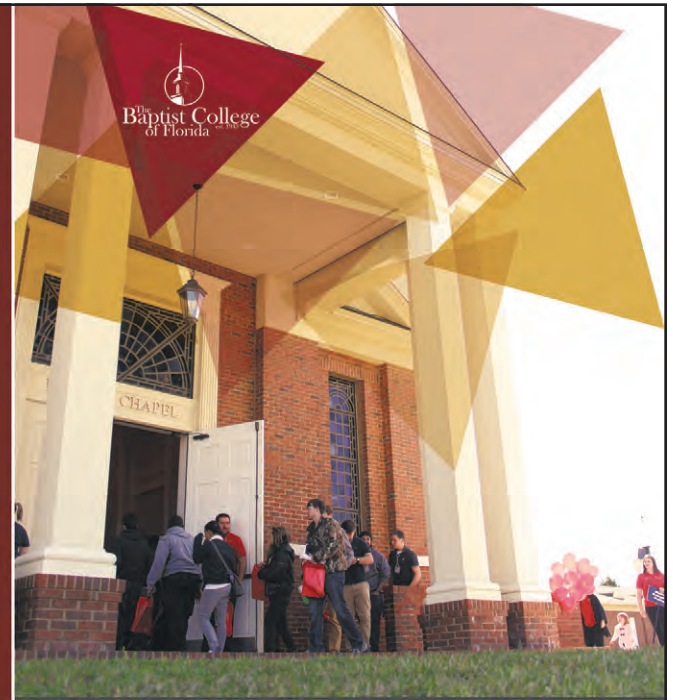
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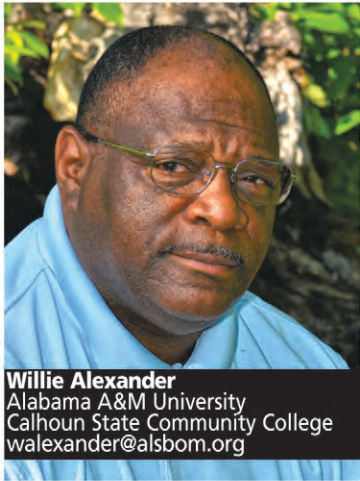
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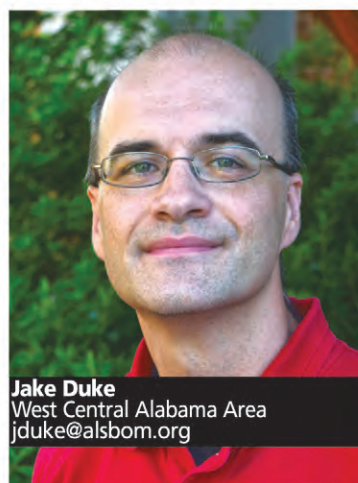
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The University of Mobile (UMobile) is impacting the world for Jesus Christ through Christian higher education that prepares students to be Christ-followers and world-changers in each of the more than 40 areas of study we teach.

Your Alabama Baptist university is raising up generations whose hearts are on fire for the Lord. Students have extensive opportunities for hands-on missions locally and internationally, exciting and relevant campus Bible study, events such as Project Serve day of service Sept. 26 and national championship-level athletic programs that emphasize Christian character. Academics and campus life integrate learning, faith and leadership.

The school year begins Aug. 15 when

students move on campus and classes start Aug. 18.

Demand for on-campus housing continues to grow. We have added 24 beds to campus housing, bringing our total residential population to a maximum of 734, with enrollment more than 1,600.

Expansion projects

Our facilities are expanding through an agreement to purchase the College Park Baptist Church campus adjacent to UMobile, as that congregation builds at another site. This will add 14 acres to our 880-acre campus and expand our facilities by more than 32,000 square feet. The building's educational space will be renovated to provide offices, classrooms and labs for our School of Nursing. Other areas, including the auditorium, will be used as a

UMobile announces new online degree: Bachelor of Science in Marketplace Ministry

The University of Mobile (UMobile) will offer its first completely online degree program beginning January 2015, the Bachelor of Science in Marketplace Ministry.

This fully online degree is ideal for adults starting or transitioning to a career in various ministry areas. The online format allows students to earn a college degree while working full-time, living anywhere in the world and balancing family responsibilities.

The Marketplace Ministry bachelor's degree combines the strengths of theology and intercultural studies majors in UMobile's

School of Christian Ministries. It includes courses in ministry, leadership and counseling.

The degree is ideal for those who have already earned a college degree in another field or are beginning or continuing a college degree. Students graduating with a Marketplace Ministry major will be prepared for careers as bivocational Christian leaders in ministry and secular work, church planters, church pastors, urban ministry leaders, corporate or industry chaplains, and leaders in faith-based and nonprofit organizations. (UMobile)

To learn more about the new Bachelor of Science in Marketplace Ministry, request information at umobile.edu/MM.



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

Weaver Hall, named for founding president Dr. William K. Weaver Jr., was the first building constructed on the campus founded in 1961 by Alabama Baptists.



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

More than 1,600 students are expected to enroll at the University of Mobile, where they will have more than 40 areas of study to choose from.

conference center for university programs.

We continue to attract talented faculty, including the recent addition to our

School of Worship Leadership of platinum record songwriter Jamie Harvill, a 1989 graduate whose worship classics include "Ancient of Days" and "Firm Foundation."

UMobile is recognized in America's Best Christian Colleges, America's 100 Best College Buys and is a Military Friendly School with Smart Ratings that are among the top in the state.

Our School of Christian Ministries sent teams to Moldova, Haiti and Germany this summer, marking 52 nations reached

through international service projects.

More than 22 performing ensembles in the Center for Performing Arts/School of

Music and School of Worship Leadership have given concerts and led worship across the nation.

Our School of Education is preparing the next generation of godly teachers; our School of Business is integrating business principles and faith in its courses; our School of Nursing is training compassionate health care professionals; and our College of Arts and Sciences is challenging students to explore ideas in all fields with a biblical worldview. (UMobile)

To learn more about UMobile, visit the website at umobile.edu or call Enrollment Services at 251-442-2222 or 800-WIN-RAMS.

Performing Arts Series

Season tickets are on sale through Aug. 22 for the University of Mobile (UMobile) Performing Arts Series featuring jazz, musical theatre, opera, classical masters, sacred music and drama, and Christmas Spectacular.

Season tickets include 10 events, five dessert receptions and Gold Circle preferred seating. Call the Center for Performing Arts at 251-442-2383 or email svalentin@umobile.edu to order season tickets. Tickets for individual events will be available a month prior to each performance.

Upcoming events

The Performing Arts Series includes:

- Jazz Band Art Series featuring the music of Denver & the Mile High Orchestra with special guest Denver Bierman, Sept. 25 at 7 p.m., Saraland Performing Arts Center (SPAC).

- "The Drowsy Chaperone" Tony Award-winning musical, Nov. 8 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 9 at 2 p.m., SPAC.

- 12th annual Christmas Spectacular, Nov. 22 and 23 at 7 p.m., Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. Additional performances not included in the season ticket package are Nov. 20 and 23 at 7 p.m.

- "Saviour – The Story of God's Passion for His People" contemporary oratorio, Jan. 30, TBA.

- Jazz Band "Over the Rainbow," March 19 at 7 p.m., SPAC.

- Night of the Classical Masters, Feb. 24 at 7 p.m., Dauphin Way United Methodist Church, Mobile.

- Mobile Passion Play presented by UMobile and Dauphin Way Baptist, March 28 and 29 at 7 p.m., Dauphin Way Baptist. An additional performance March 27 is not included in the season ticket package.

- "The Merry Widow" operetta, April 18 at 7 p.m. and April 19 at 2 p.m., SPAC.

- Prism Presents UMobile, April 20 at 7 p.m., Dauphin Way Baptist. Prism Music Publishing premieres a new choral book including works by UMobile students. Southern Baptist Convention music ministers and the public are invited to attend and hear the works performed for the first time. Prism Music will record the concert.

- Spring Spectacular student talent showcase, April 26 at 7 p.m., SPAC. (UMobile)

BACK TO CAMPUS

Useful shopping tips for college-bound students

Preparing for college life is a must, whether you are planning to live on or off campus. But it can be overwhelming without a game plan.

To make this exciting experience as smooth as possible, the college experts at Bed Bath & Beyond are offering helpful shopping tips for students and parents.

► **Use a checklist.** Stay organized and on budget with a checklist. Some retailers offer online and in-store lists breaking down the essential gear needed for on and off-campus living.

► **Know your school rules.** To avoid any unwelcome surprises on move-in day, learn your school-specific rules before shopping. From microwaves to coffee-makers, know what you can and can't bring to your school.

► **Create a college registry.** A registry makes a great resource for family and friends choosing graduation or college gifts. Students also can use their registry to share what they're bringing to school with roommates.

► **Bedding.** School-provided mattresses are often thin, so consider adding a memory foam topper or fiber bed for extra support. Remember that most dorms

require twin extra-long sheets (TXL), and don't forget to protect the mattress against bed bugs and allergens with a mattress protector.

► **Meet the roomie.** Once students receive their housing assignment, they should connect with their future roommate to finalize room decisions and avoid duplication.

► **Organize.** Maximizing space is a must. Create more room with storage and organizational items under the bed, over the door and in the closet. Look for multifunctional items, such as bed risers that have an AC outlet and USB charger.

► **Make it homey.** Add an area rug and throw blankets for extra warmth, or add accents like a side table and colorful throw pillows. Welcome friends and study buddies with functional and stylish seating. Decorate the walls with dry erase message boards, artwork and photo displays.

► **Study smart.** Make sure your workspace is highly functional. You'll need plenty of storage for school supplies, lighting for late night cramming and a surge protector to plug in all your devices. (StatePoint)

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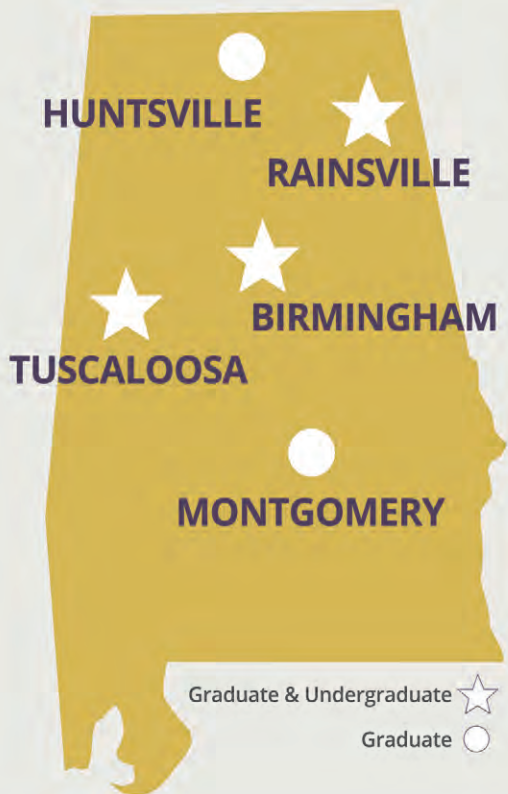
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JUDSON COLLEGE

Judson College welcomes new faculty, staff members to campus this fall

The 176th academic session of Judson College in Marion will begin Aug. 27. Since 1838, Judson has been offering a college experience that equips students with

the knowledge, faith, and confidence they need to reach their full potential. The vision of Judson's founders to prepare young women for lives of purpose remains relevant as new generations of Judson women answer their alma mater's call to "high endeavor, lofty thought and noble deed."

Inspired by the example and mentorship of dedicated faculty and staff, Judson students learn to embody the "Judson Spirit" by embracing community, growing in intellect, developing integrity and leading through compassionate service.

Judson is pleased to welcome four new faculty members, who bring outstanding academic credentials to their positions. The new faculty include the following scholars:

► **Dr. Jeremy Olson — Head of Chemistry Department** — Olson received his bachelor of science degree from Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Ga., and his doctorate in medicinal chemistry from the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst, N.Y. Olson was previously an adjunct professor of chemistry at Essex County College in Newark, N.J.

► **Dr. Camilla Horne — Head of Music Department** — Horne received her bachelor of arts degree from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D.; her master of musical arts degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Mo.; and her doctorate in music from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minn. Horne was previously an adjunct professor of music at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

► **John Robertson — Instructor of Piano** — Robertson received his bachelor of music arts degree from Bob Jones University in Greenville, S.C., and his master of music degree in piano performance and pedagogy from Samford University in Birmingham. Robertson was previously a piano and music theory teacher at Samford.

► **Christine Ivie — Head of Criminal Justice Department** — Ivie received her bachelor and master of science in criminal justice degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is currently working to complete her



Jewett Hall

Photo courtesy of Judson College

doctorate in criminal justice at the University of Alabama.

In addition to the new faculty members who will join the campus community this fall, Kendel Gilchrest will join the college's staff roster as Director of Career and Calling Initiatives. In this role, Gilchrest will coordinate college programs related to the discernment of vocational call and preparation for the workforce.

Rose Sunday

As they have each year since 1915, Judson students will join administrators, faculty, and staff for Rose Sunday on Sept. 7. Rose Sunday celebrates the ties between Judson and its Baptist founders with a special worship service at Siloam Baptist Church, Marion.

Judson's continued relationship with the Alabama Baptist State Convention and enduring commitment to Christian faith

and service make her "America's Christian College for Women."

Alabama Women's Hall of Fame

The impact a life of service can have on communities will be celebrated March 5, 2015, when Judson welcomes the public to the induction ceremony for the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame, which is housed on the college's campus.

Opportunities abound

With a longstanding tradition of preparing young women for successful careers, a student to faculty ratio of 9-to-1, and a nationally-recognized commitment to

community service, Judson is truly a remarkable place for young women. Current Judson students have sung at Carnegie Hall, conducted leading-edge biological research, and learned to put their faith into action through service projects in their Perry County community and through cultural immersion in Rwanda and Uganda.

Scholarship Days

These and many other opportunities await prospective students, who are invited to attend one of three upcoming Scholarship Days on Sept. 20, Nov. 8 or Feb. 21.

Additional information about visiting Judson is available at www.judson.edu/admissions. (Judson)



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Judson College students participate in Rose Sunday, an annual event celebrating the ties between Judson and its Baptist founders.

The vision of Judson's founders to prepare young women for lives of purpose remains relevant as new generations of Judson women answer their alma mater's call to "high endeavor, lofty thought and noble deed."

6 tips

Helpful ideas for smooth transition to college

The transition to college is an exciting time, full of anticipation for the next chapter of life. But with new opportunities come uncertainties, from financing an education to picking the right courses.

“Paying for college and having kids leave the house is new territory for most parents and children,” said Jodi Okun, founder of College Financial Aid Advisors and brand ambassador for Discover Student Loans. “But with research and preparation, parents can help kids learn how to maximize available funds, borrow responsibly and manage their new lives.

“Parents should encourage kids to take responsibility for forming a long-term financial plan they can work through together.”

Okun offers the following tips for a smooth transition:

1. Empower students. Let students start with smaller decisions, such as what to do with high school graduation money, and then build to bigger ones, such as finding and applying for additional scholarships and deciding whether they can balance school with work-study or a part-time job. Encourage students to form meaningful relationships with their school’s financial aid office.

2. Balance dreams with opportunities. While students often pick a major based on childhood passions, parents may steer them toward an in-demand field with a good salary and career trajectory. In fact, 70 percent of parents say job potential after college is as important or more important than choice of major,

according to a recent Discover Student Loans survey. Starting salary also should guide how much debt the student takes on. For example, if a student anticipates a \$40,000 a year starting salary, he or she should take on no more than \$40,000 in student loans over the course of college.

3. Figure out the parents’ role. The majority of student loans are for students, but there are loans specifically for parents (e.g., Parent PLUS Loans and some private student loans). Consider the advantages of each and decide whether parent student loans, traditional student loans or a combination is best. Regardless of what’s decided, parents should discuss options and expectations with their child.

4. Exhaust free money first. Grants, scholarships and other free financial aid can help students pay for costs.

5. Choose the right student loan. With so many choices for loans, choosing the right one can be overwhelming. Families should compare federal and private student loans based on key components, such as interest rates, origination fees and repayment options and then choose the loans that best fit their financial needs.

6. Seek consultation. Financing college can be an overwhelming and confusing process. Consider talking to a financial planner who can offer sound advice.

As college costs rise, understanding the financial resources available as well as having conversations about who is responsible for what will ultimately provide peace of mind for students and parents. (StatePoint)



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Samford readies for another hope-filled year; expects about 4,900 students

Each August, Samford University in Birmingham rolls out its welcome mat to eager freshmen and experienced returning students. Whether “newbie” or veteran, each one arrives with hope for personal success and a great academic year ahead.

That sentiment is shared and prayed for by Samford President Andrew Westmoreland.

“Hope is the hallmark of every new year, and that will certainly be the theme at Samford as we approach the fall of 2014,” Westmoreland said.

“We see hope in the eyes of our 3,000 undergrads, hope among the roughly 1,900 graduate students who have been accepted, hope in the hearts of parents and friends, hope throughout our workforce of faculty and staff and hope from the thousands of people who give to and pray for Samford.

“In fact, it is this message of hope through Christ that drew me to Christ-centered higher education almost 40 years ago. I have cherished each day, and I am eager to begin another year at Samford.”

Summer missions trips

Hundreds of Samford students and faculty will return with memories and testimonies from summer missions trips in which they shared hope around the globe. Undergraduate and graduate students used professional skills to serve specific needs, such as the nursing and pharmacy contingents that led health and wellness outreach programs in Peru and Ecuador.

Student athletes and other Samford personnel led sports clinics and participated in a Shoe a Nation event in the Caribbean nation of Dominica. More than 5,000 pairs

of shoes, along with words of hope, were distributed in conjunction with the 10th Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Youth Festival there.

Many stories have come out of Samford missions trips about many lives having been touched with hope.

Academic news

Samford officials expect about 865 entering freshmen and transfer students to join returnees this fall for a projected record enrollment of about 4,900 total students. Almost 2,300 of the undergraduates will live in on-campus residence facilities.

Samford has responded to the changing needs of education with the development of the Institute for Continued Learning. The Institute will provide a broad but focused framework for the delivery of varied offerings. Its component offices are: Office of Continuing Education to oversee programs in law, pharmacy and nursing and other professional disciplines; Office of Learning and Innovation to develop and implement learning paths through new and existing certificate programs and lifelong learner classes in many subjects; the historic Extension Division with its theological training at sites across Alabama and new certificate programs in Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Studies; and the Academy of the Arts, which combines the former Samford After-Sundown and preparatory music programming to offer community outreach and artistically focused options for children and adults.

The School of the Arts will once again offer a variety of presentations that showcase the talent of its students and faculty and host guest performers. The arts calendar is filled with presentations of music, theatre and dance, and visual arts. A music and worship schedule includes a choral vespers series featuring the A Cappella Choir and visits by guest clinicians whose specialties appeal to church musicians and worship leaders.

The Howard College of Arts and Sciences will introduce several timely academic choices. A new minor in medical ethics in the philosophy department will explore ethical foundations of medicine and health care through an interdisciplinary study of philosophy, theology, literature and ethics. A western intellectual tradition interdisciplinary minor in the University Fellows honors program will allow students to continue studying various disciplines in an existing sequence.

Online format available

Brock School of Business will make its graduate program more flexible for many with the rollout this fall of its entire Master of Business Administration degree curriculum in an online format. With all foundation and core courses offered both on campus and online, the degree program will be more accessible to students who live beyond the Birmingham area.

Beeson Divinity School regularly presents services and lectures of interest to the community. This fall’s chapel series, “Unworldly



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Samford University Library

Wisdom: The Epistle of James.” is open to the public at 11 a.m. each Tuesday in Hodges Chapel. Information on Beeson’s Lay Academy for laity and ministers can be found at www.beesondivinity.com/layacademy.

Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education looks forward to its centennial year of teacher educator programs in 2015 with several celebratory events. New curriculum options include an online master’s degree in elementary education and a new elementary education major with a concentration in Christian education and missions.

For the second year, Cumberland School of Law will offer intensive skills workshops in January to instruct students on interviewing, counseling and negotiation. In June 2014, the school’s Master of Comparative Law degree program turned 20 years old. A major anniversary celebration will take place in September with events in Birmingham, Montgomery and Washington.

The College of Health Sciences held its inaugural commencement as an academic unit in May. Two new deans came on board during the summer: McWhorter School of Pharmacy dean Michael Crouch, former executive associate dean at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tenn.; and Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing dean Eleanor V. Howell, former dean of Creighton University’s College of Nursing in Omaha, Neb.

Other news of note

Samford is very close to wrapping up its

ambitious \$200 million capital campaign, reports vice president for university advancement W. Randy Pittman. “At the end of June, we had gifts and pledges of \$196 million, or 98 percent of our goal,” Pittman said.

More than 17,000 alumni, parents, faculty, staff, students, businesses, churches and other friends have contributed to the campaign.

“The smallest gifts were less than \$1 each. The largest single gift was \$13.4 million,” Pittman said. “All were important.”

The Samford Office of Spiritual Life, formerly known as University Ministries, has launched Samford Home Groups,

in which groups of 10–12 students meet weekly in faculty or staff member’s homes for an evening meal, prayer, Bible study and spiritual conversation. Among other changes and innovations, the longstanding Tuesday and Thursday convocation programs will be called Campus Worship with the program content to reflect that title.

Construction continues on the new Brock School of Business building, set to open in Fall 2015.

Summer progress included tying 68 tons of rebar and placing 4,900 cubic yards of concrete. The facility will take more visible shape this fall as exterior and interior walls are framed.

This year’s freshman class will arrive on campus for the thrilling, once-in-a-lifetime experience known as “Move in Day” on Aug. 22. Classes begin Aug. 25. (Samford)

Samford fall events of note

Sept. 20, Oct. 4 and Nov. 8
Senior Preview Days

Sept. 23 and Nov. 7
Beeson Divinity Preview Days

Oct. 3–4
Family Weekend

Oct. 5
Hymn Sing, Reid Chapel, 2 p.m.

Oct. 18
Junior Preview Day

Oct. 31–Nov. 1
Homecoming

Dec. 13
Fall Commencement

For more Samford events,
visit www.samford.edu.

CONNECTING with students

SBOM helps students in transition to college

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

College can be one of the most transformative times in a person's life, noted Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"Life habits, patterns, relationships and faith practices are set during the formative college years," he explained. "The first three or four weeks of a student's college career can be a predictor of what college life will look like, study habits are formed and relationship patterns are set. A student who determines to establish good study practices during those first few days of class will generally stick with those habits." Nuss added the same is true for personal relationships, attending church, campus ministry groups and eating and sleeping habits — they are all "pretty much set in those

first few days/weeks of class."

To help students in this major transition to college life, the SBOM's office of collegiate and student ministries assists them in connecting with Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) groups across Alabama and with local Baptist churches in or near their college community.

Helping to 'unpack'

"BCM and church collegiate ministries can help students 'unpack' and grow their faith in light of new life experiences during college," Nuss noted.

The collegiate and student ministries website, www.onemission-students.org/bcm, is one of several resources to connect students, parents and youth ministers directly with Alabama BCM groups.

"If students connect with BCM prior to arriving on campus, they will be able to receive information about events and activities designed to help them adjust to life on campus, meet friends and continue their faith journey as a col-

lege freshmen," Nuss explained.

BCM at The University of Alabama (UA) is actively connecting with freshmen via Facebook and sending them weekly devotional readings and welcome event information as they prepare to move to campus.

Nate Young, senior BCM minister at UA, noted information is collected from incoming students who visit their Campus Ministries Association table during summer orientation sessions.

He added they will then contact students in a variety of ways, including through Facebook, email and Twitter.

"We go to a lot of effort to give ourselves as many chances to connect with incoming — and returning — students," he noted. "We never ask or expect a student to come to everything but always encourage them to come to something."

Young said while many students participating in the various BCM events come from a faith background, they have seen students

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come to Christ during these events.

Nuss noted that helping college-bound students understand practical implications for faith in the "new world" of college can be an important ministry opportunity for the church.

"Students encounter new freedoms, relationship parameters and challenges to their faith early in their college career," he said. "Churches need to find ways to maintain contact with students,

encourage students to connect with [BCM] on their campus and with a local church."

He noted that high school students transitioning to college should be open to new friends, new ideas and especially be open to God's will and direction for their future, "all while holding to their personal relationship with Christ and allowing His Word to be their ultimate guide for life as a college student." ■



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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Ten Commandments — Eighth in a series

Thou Shall Not Steal

Jesus was crucified between two thieves.

He was there because he had been betrayed by a thief.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is grounded in the acts of thieves.

After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus offered to make restitution of anything he had stolen.

The prophet Malachi charges all of us with stealing from God.

Isaiah condemned those who took advantage of the poor, the “payday loan sharks” of that day. Paul told church members at Ephesus who had been thieves to stop stealing.

In old Israel, in Judea of the time of Jesus, in the era of Christendom and in our day stealing has been and continues to be a problem. Why? Is there anything we can do about it? Why did God condemn stealing? What about restitution? What about prevention? How is poverty related to stealing? How is greed related to stealing? And how might a change in our values protect us from the temptation to steal? How should thieves be dealt with by society?

Why a commandment against stealing?

For nearly a year now I have served as pastor of a congregation comprised largely of women who have been convicted by federal courts of being thieves. Their stories have helped me see both the importance and the complexity of this commandment.

Some of the worshippers made poor choices regarding education, employment, abuse of alcohol and drugs, starting a family and living within their means. Some had wants that exceed their means. Some had been raised by thieves and had adopted that lifestyle. Some found excitement in the process of stealing. Some justified their thefts by contending that they were merely taking from other thieves. Some

were trying to please lovers and friends. The motivation to steal is varied.

Many in this church acknowledge God was right in commanding us to not steal from one another. They do not like being stolen from, as often happens in their unit. They now understand that for relationships to be whole and communities stable, property rights should be respected.

But some will contend that in their case there was an acceptable exception. I too have sometimes said when deviating from the commands of God, “But my situation is different.” Likely you have done the same. Surely this is a dangerous position to take. To do so we are justifying ourselves rather than asking God for forgiveness.

The ladies in the church seem to be coming to the understanding that it was a sin, a violation of a clear command of God, when they stole something. They must ask God for forgiveness. They need to forgive themselves. They need to stop stealing. They need to ask forgiveness and make restitution, if possible.

As Christians we have a role to play in this. Our society has relied too much on the threat of punishment as a deterrent to crimes like theft. And we have not been redemptive in helping those who have been in prison get re-established in the community. Hunger, lack of shelter and nakedness should never be the motivation for theft. We need to help the needy financially so that they will not become enslaved by “payday loan sharks” and plunge into a deep ditch of debt. And we need to tame our societal passion for consumerism too.

Ministering to others

We encourage the born-again ladies of our congregation to connect with a church home and family when they re-enter the free society. We tell them they can minister to others through a church, and the church can minister to them in return.

As I watch the evening news I see stories of armed robberies,

By Gary Farley, Th.D.

Gary Farley has served the Pickens Baptist Association as its director of missions since January 1998. Previously he served as director of the Town and Country Missions Department at the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) in the Atlanta area. Pickens Association seeks to make it possible for every member of its churches to be a Great Commission Christian.



muggings, scams, embezzlement, fraud, car theft and more. Sometimes killings are involved. I hear about overcharging Medicare, loan foreclosures, manipulation of the stock market and the fixing of games of chance. I have had things taken from my car, my yard, even my house. I have lent items to others which have not been returned.

Clear message

In the world of the Bible one finds criticism of exploitation of the poor, of widows and of orphans; enslaving a neighbor; high loan rates; short weights and measures; not paying a worker what is due him; insensitivity to the needs of others. Jesus twice drove the exploitive merchants out of the temple. It is clear that God opposes both active and passive theft.

The clear message of the biblical revelation is that God desires a society that is just, merciful and loving. Jesus summarized the will of God as being that we love Him and love our neighbors. Stealing, whether it be by violence, stealth or deception has no place in the kingdom of God. Look at what Paul has to say in I Corinthians 6:9–11. Note both thieves and swindlers are excluded.

It seems to me there is a lot of stealing going on in our society. Many, if not most, of us who are not in prison for theft are or have been thieves at some point. Repentance is called for. Forgiveness is called for. So is love.

The Aliceville United Body of Believers took as its foundational or watchword text Luke 1:74–75. It declares the mission of Jesus is “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies and to enable us to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness all of our days.” Jesus came as a servant. He called

and still calls His disciples to servanthood. The root cause of stealing is a lack of faith in the provision of God on the one hand and on the other the failure of Christians to be sensitive to the needs of others.

Sunday by Sunday I see evidence of believers, even in this prison setting, striving to live as servants. Exploitation and manipulation, the normative social roles of our society, are being replaced by the Jesus role, servanthood. Stealing is being replaced by service and sharing. Greed by grace. Lust by love. Demanding by doing. Getting by giving. It is beautiful to see servanthood lived out in the life of this rather unusual congregation.

Following Jesus

Following the teaching of Jesus about being a servant is not an easy thing to do anywhere. For the members of this new church it is even more difficult. One is on duty as a servant 24/7 in the prison. There are those who hope, maybe even pray, that the ladies will fail and fall. With all the cultural diversity in the place, it is easy for one to take offense at what others say or do. Yet I see progress and victory in their lives. Certainly if they can do it there, we are without excuse.

As I pastor this congregation, I marvel. I am convicted. I try to be a fearless servant, holy and righteous. I am challenged by the lives of the inmates. I encourage you to do the same. They struggle and sometimes fail. I grieve that I find so few in the free world are as committed to being active disciples of Jesus, true servants. 🙏

Killing Christians

Boko Haram attack again in Nigeria

After weeks of sacking villages and destroying church buildings around Nigeria’s northeastern town of Gwoza, Islamic extremist group Boko Haram killed an estimated 100 people in the predominantly Christian town Aug. 6.

The shooting and fire-bombing of men, women and children began at about 4 a.m.

The full magnitude of the attack and the Nigerian military response was unknown as most sources have been forced to flee to Cameroon or Adamawa state in Nigeria, but on the initial day of the assault Pirda Tada, a Christian resident of Saha village, said that Boko Haram gunmen arrived in Toyota Hilux vehicles and motorcycles and attacked houses with Improvised Explosive Devices and fuel-bombs.

Houses bombed

“These Christians in our village had their throats slit with knives while their hands were tied behind their backs. Some houses were bombed as the Boko Haram gunmen were chanting, ‘God is great!’ in Arabic,” Tada said.

Six Christians were killed at Saha village, and the insurgents destroyed houses and shops and burned the Church of Christ in Nations building in Pegi Barawa village, Tada said.

Since December 2013, Boko Haram also has attacked the villages of Mainok, Barawa, Chinne, Arbakko, Attagara, Ngoshe, Klala, Kunde, Hembe, Gathahure, Klala, Himbe, Amuda, Agapalawa, Ashigashiya and Chikede, all in the Gwoza area.

It is estimated that more than 300,000 Christians have been displaced from the greater area forcing many to flee to neighboring Cameroon.

Christian leaders sent a petition late in 2013 to the Borno state government and security agencies reporting a threatening letter that Boko Haram had sent to Christian communities in Gwoza.

“You have been fleeing your homes, but we are still pursuing you because the soldiers with you people cannot protect you,” the letter read. “Your lives, farmlands and other property are also not safeguarded. Allah willing, we shall not fail to attack your communities and the listed churches in this letter.”

Yakubu Toeye, a Christian from Gwoza, said 12 church buildings destroyed in December were located in Kunde, Hembe, Gathahure, Himbe and Klala. (MS)

“And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?” 1 Cor. 14:8

Historical Shift

More Generation X college grads staying in church, study finds

You do not need a doctoral degree to think higher education leads people away from organized religion. That has been common wisdom for decades.

Now a sociologist's new generational study upends that thinking.

Today it is the least-educated members of Generation X — people born roughly between 1965 and 1980 — who are “most likely to leave religion,” said Philip Schwadel, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Millennials — Americans roughly between the ages of 18

and 30 — were not included in the study because, Schwadel said, it is too soon to tell if they will settle on a religious identity.

Schwadel, whose study is published in the August edition of the journal “Social Forces,” found a clear historical shift.

Dropout changes

“Americans born in the late 1920s and ’30s who graduated from college were twice as likely to drop out of religion than people who didn’t graduate from college,” he said. The postwar baby boomers proved to be “the last holdout of the Church dropouts.” For boomers, “a college degree was

still associated with a higher likelihood of leaving religion.”

However, for the generation born in the 1960s, there is no difference between those who did and those who did not go to college in their likelihood of religious affiliation. Now for America’s adults who were born in the 1970s, “those without a college education are the most likely to drop out.”

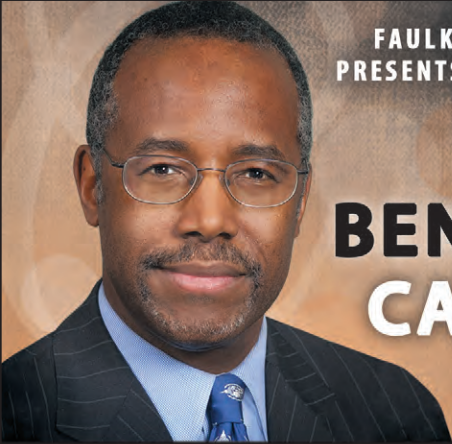
In other words, a college degree used to mean people were more likely to lose religion. Now some

people are losing religion whether they went to college or not but it is especially true for those who did not go to college.

Although the study does not examine the reasons for this shift, Schwadel observed:

▶ College is more widely accessible, no longer a bastion of the cultural elite.

▶ As more college-educated people affiliate with churches, those without degrees can feel uncomfortable. (RNS)



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CHURCH POSITIONS

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Send resumés to: Stowers Hill Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 407 Ninth Ave. SW, Attalla, AL 35954. Email: stowershillbaptist@gmail.com. Deadline for resumés is Sept. 14.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Eldridge Baptist Church in Eldridge, Ala., is seeking a worship leader to lead our choir and congregation in a traditional/contemporary worship service. Respond to: eldridgebaptist-church@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Southside Baptist Church of Troy, Ala., is currently seeking a godly, talented and driven individual to lead our choir and congregation in a blended-style of worship. Please email your resumé: southside@troycable.net, ATTN: Music Committee.

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

PART-TIME MUSIC LEADER: Calvary Baptist Church, Eufaula, Ala., is seek-

ing a music leader for primarily Sundays to lead choir and congregation in blended style worship. Email resumé to: mchelms@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR: Central Heights Baptist Church in Florence, Ala., is accepting resumés for a part-time youth director for grades 7–12. Resumés may be sent to: Central Heights Baptist Church, 10090 County Road 15, Florence, AL 35633, or emailed to: mdale1080@comcast.net.

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.

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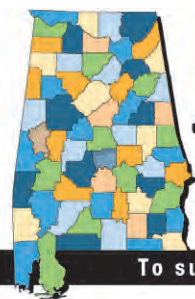
Want to know GOD?

Pastor Patrick Powell
Emmanuel Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

Just cut to the chase" is an oft-used phrase that basically means, "Get to the point and leave out the unnecessary details." Regarding salvation, one question that essentially cuts to the chase is, how can sinful people be in a right standing with a holy God? If you consider the religions of the world, though they define salvation differently, all of them answer the question by prescribing things a person must "do" in order to be saved. There are rituals to be observed, paths to be followed, traditions to be kept and a host of actions to be performed, all in the hopes of reaching the desired state of eternal bliss.

In contrast, biblical Christianity answers the question by appealing to what God Himself has done. The good news (gospel) is that Jesus did for sinners what they could never do for themselves. Through His sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus demonstrated the justice and love of God; His justice in punishing sin and His love for ruined sinners. Thus Paul writes, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith" (Rom. 3:23–25a).

So to know God, to be in a right standing with Him, the first thing is to recognize your need for righteousness and your inability to meet that need by your own doing. Thus you realize that salvation is not a reward to be earned but a gift to be received by faith. But the gift, while free to the recipient, comes at great cost to the Giver. The redemption of sinners required nothing less and nothing else than the shed blood of Jesus, which is simply too great a price to be paid if there are other ways for sinners to be justified before God. In light of this truth, the only proper response is one of humble repentance and earnest faith, giving all thanks and praise and glory to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 🙏



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.

AUTAUGA

► **Billingsley Church** will celebrate its 114th homecoming service Aug. 17, 10 a.m. with music by evangelist Bob Smith. Will Dismukes will speak at 11 a.m. A covered dish lunch will follow. Tom Taylor is pastor.

BESSEMER

► An open house for The Grace Place, a ministry of the churches of **Bessemer Association**, will be Aug. 17. The Grace Place also will be open Aug. 19 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Angie Teague is director of The Grace Place. Barry Cosper is director of missions for the association. ► **Lloyd Jones**, director of music for **Fairfield Highlands Church, Midfield**, was honored Aug. 10 with a special day at the church. The church celebrated his 85th birthday and ministry of more than 50 years during a surprise service, and choir members who have been led by Jones during his tenure sang. Following the service a birthday party for Jones was held in the fellowship hall. Ed Cruce is pastor. ► **Matt McGukin**

has resigned as pastor of **Concord Church, Bessemer**, to become pastor of Calvary Church, Idaho Falls, Idaho.

BETHLEHEM

► **Fountain Church, Monroeville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 17, 10:30 a.m. with Glory Road Quartet in concert and a sermon to follow. A covered dish lunch will be served. Mike Leys is pastor.

BIBB

► **Schultz Creek Church, Centreville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 17, 10:30 a.m. Donna Weaver will sing. The church also will hold revival Aug. 18-20, 7 p.m. A singing featuring Crimson Stain will be Aug. 30, 6 p.m. Benny Corley is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► The Collingsworth Family will perform at **First Church, Trussville**, on Aug. 15, 7 p.m. Doors will open at 6 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.perfectharmony.com,

by phone at 1-800-401-6920 or at the LifeWay Trussville location. Buddy Champion is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its regular third Sunday night singing Aug. 17, 6 p.m. with Southern Heritage. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Faith Chapel Church, Marion**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 17, 11 a.m. Donald Harris will speak. Lunch and an informal singing will follow. Lloyd Stockman is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Aubrey (Bo) Newberry** is the new pastor of **Mount Olive Church, Elba**. He is a graduate

of Lurleen B. Wallace Community College in Andalusia and Andersonville Seminary in Camilla, Ga. He previously served New Home Church, Samson.

He and his wife, Susan, have one son. ► **Bryan Simoneaux** is the new pastor of **Cool Springs Church, Enterprise**. He is a graduate of Louisiana Missionary Baptist Institute & Seminary in Minden, La.; Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, La.; and Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches,

Texas. He is a retired Army chaplain. He and his wife, Sandy, have two children.

MONTGOMERY

► **Rick Marshall** celebrated 20 years of service as pastor of **Eastern Hills Church, Montgomery**, on July 3. He and his wife, Judy, were recognized in



MARSHALL

both morning worship services and presented with heartfelt gifts, as well as honored with a church-wide reception. Ken May, director of missions for Mont-

CALHOUN

► **Huntley Brown** will be in concert at **First Church, Oxford**, on Aug. 17, 6 p.m. For information call 256-831-1121.

MORGAN

► **Shoal Creek Church, Decatur**, will host "Marvelous Mondays" on Aug. 18 and Aug. 25, 7 p.m. Evangelist Junior Hill of Junior Hill Evangelistic Association will speak Aug. 18. Worship will be led by the Shoal Creek choir and praise team. Brett Pitman, pastor of Highland Park Church, Muscle Shoals, will speak Aug. 25. Worship will be led by Jeff Beech and the Highland Park choir. Child care will be offered for each event for children from birth through second grade. Gary Linville is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Tuscaloosa Association** will host a preaching workshop Aug. 25-26, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Learn to study, craft, tell and preach Bible stories and illustrate your sermon's

life lessons with stories. The workshop will be led by Jack Day and includes two lunches and the book, "Preaching with Storytelling." For information including cost call Day at 205-937-1248. To register, email elaine@tuscaloosacba.com. Sam Day is director of missions.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **First Church, Auburn**, will celebrate minister of music and composer in residence Dale Peterson's retirement Sept. 14. As part of the celebration, the church is compiling a book of "Letters to Dale" and would like to include your letter of remembrance, appreciation and tribute. Use paper that is 8.5x11 or smaller and send it to the church by Sept. 1. Email letters to tristaslaughter@mindspring.com or by mail to Auburn First Baptist Church, 128 E Glenn Ave., Auburn, AL 36830. Tripp Martin is pastor. ► **First Church, Reeltown**, will celebrate its 131st homecoming Aug. 17. There will be a concert by the Gann family at 9:30 a.m. followed by worship at 11 a.m. with speaker Mike Shaw, retired pastor of First Church, Pelham. For information call the church at 334-257-4515. Josh Cook is pastor.

WALKER

► **Michael Adams**, former pastor of **First Church, Jasper**, for 13 years, has retired and returned to Jasper. He also previously served as pastor of churches in Arkansas, Kentucky and Tennessee. He plans to continue in ministry opportunities as the Lord leads and is available for interim pastor positions, pulpit supply, Bible conferences and revivals. He can be reached at 731-307-9064. ☞



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Turkmenistan added to 'worst offenders' list

And then there were nine. Secretary of State John Kerry announced July 28 that Turkmenistan has joined the State Department's list of worst religious freedom offenders.

The State Department's Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) list had remained static since 2006, when eight countries — Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan — were designated as CPC.

Justifying the addition of Turkmenistan, Kerry cited reports of people detained, beaten and tortured for their beliefs, prohibited from wearing religious attire and fined for distributing religious materials.

Forbidden worship

Turkmenistan, a mostly Sunni Muslim country in Central Asia, once part of the Soviet Union, forbids private worship and greatly restricts foreign travel for pilgrim-

ages and religious education.

All religious organizations in the country must register with the government, and Shiite Muslim groups, Protestant groups and Jehovah's Witnesses have all had their registration applications denied in recent years.

This edition of the State Department's annual religious freedom report focused heavily on discrimination, impunity and the displacement of religious minorities. (RNS)



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Why Should I Care about Estate Planning?

Bob Dewhurst, Vice President, Ministry Development

Appropriate estate planning is beneficial to everyone. Whether we are nearing the end of our lives, contemplating retirement, or a growing family, estate planning boils down to determining how, when and to whom we will transfer what God has entrusted to us when we can no longer serve as stewards ourselves.

Estate planning may be the single largest act of stewardship that most of us as Christians will ever perform. However, every year, the vast majority of Americans who die do so without having prepared a valid estate plan. For the past three decades, the numbers have been between 70 and 80 percent. This statistic is astounding, since the U.S. tax code provides significant incentives to prepare an estate plan. These incentives are designed to make it easy for very personal wishes to be known and followed – for instance, wishes that deal with child custody, property distribution, or leaving a legacy of Christian values. In addition, a careful estate plan will

often minimize costs related to settling the estate. A proper estate plan should accomplish the following:

- Express God's plan for stewardship
- Transfer the assets with which God has entrusted you to individuals and charitable beneficiaries
- Transfer your estate in a tax-efficient manner with as little heartache, cost, and delay as possible.

At Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, we are partnering with PhilanthroCorp to provide a service for our donors in this important area of estate planning and planned giving.

We want to assure your privacy and recommend who we trust to give you the best counsel available. Learn how they can assist you with your plan, please call 800-876-7958 or contact Bob Dewhurst in our office at 888-720-8805 if you have questions.

Grace Gifts

MEMORIALS:

(The name of the deceased is bolded)

Maxie & Lora Adams, Millry: Sarah A. Gibson
Nancy Barton, Birmingham: Marjorie Kay Nix
Mary Lois Bishop: Mr. & Mrs. James L. Wright
Otis Clarke: Marjorie Kay Nix
Mary Davis, Catherine: Mrs. Rodney Roe
Horace H. Duck, Bay Minette:
 Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette
Beth Gibson, Butler: Sarah A. Gibson
Jerry H. Harrington, Thomasville:
 Mr. & Mrs. Norman N. Loper
June Holman, Hueytown: Concord BC of Bessemer
Jeanette Horne, Salem:
 Pleasant Grove BC of Salem
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Lewie Johnson: Centreville BC
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 Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette

Sherry Cole Luckie, Forest Home:
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June Mathews, Centreville: Centreville BC
Marie Murray: Pleasant Grove BC of Salem
Hazel Martin Northcutt, Jemison: Ben & Lynda
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 Powell
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Elise Riddle: Pleasant Grove BC of Salem
Veron Roe: Forest Avenue BC of Jackson
Hollis Wayne Rowell, Franklin:
 Eureka BC of Franklin
Randall Scruggs, Frisco City:
 Eastwood BC of Monroeville
Marvin Sisk: Kendall & Tricia Shankles,
 Eric Shankles & Frances B. Traylor
Scott Smith: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Edward R. "Bud" Stabler, Atmore:
 Eureka BC of Franklin

Dian Stokes, Franklin: Marjorie R. Brown
William Walker: Forest Avenue BC of Jackson,
 Forest Avenue BC Men's SS Class

HONORS:

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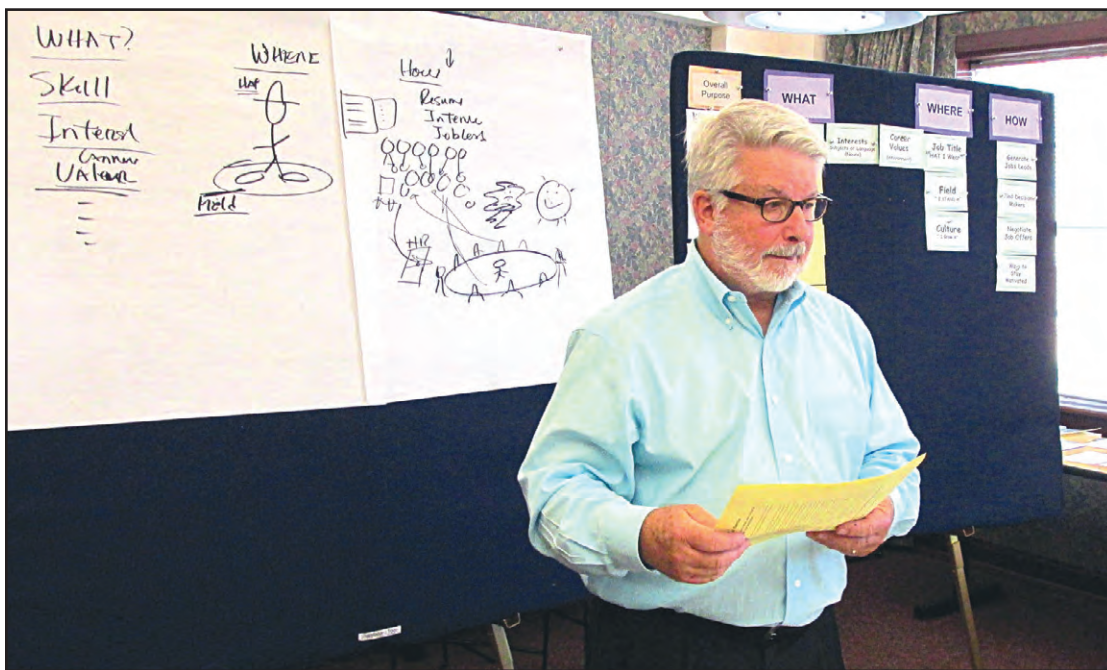


Photo by Michael J. Brooks

Mike Tate of Human Resources Management, Inc., teaches a session on transferable job skills at the recent Ministering to Ministers Wellness Retreat at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. Tate tells participants to think of 'minister' as a verb. 'What do you do as a minister that you could do in another vocation?' he asked.

Finding HOPE

Wellness Retreat, reorientation helps ministers 'grow strong at the broken places'

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jim served as pastor in a growing suburb for 14 years. One day a committee of leaders came to him with a document of resignation and a promised severance if he complied and kept quiet.

"What's your biblical grounds for this?" he asked.

The men looked a bit sheepish, admitting there was none.

"You're a loving pastor, but the church isn't growing," they said. "We're convinced we need a stronger leader."

Forced resignation

Bill served as associate minister at a church in a large city and was de facto pastor for several years while the church searched for a new pastor. His work included overseeing the construction of a multimillion dollar facility. The new pastor arrived in

the fall and told Bill in January he should look for a new position so the pastor could hire a friend in Bill's place. The pastor told Bill in April that his time was up and he must resign immediately.

Harry was accused of having an improper relationship with a woman in the neighborhood. His elders asked for an immediate resignation. Though his denomination conducted a thorough inquiry and gave him complete exoneration, Harry's job was gone.

What happens to ministers when they're terminated? Studies show it often takes six months or more to find a new ministry position. Ministers may find themselves without income while conducting their job search. Often the terminated minister is not at his best and doesn't interview well. He is despondent at having lost his job as well as losing his circle of Christian friends in the church.

Healing process

Jim, Bill and Harry (not their real names) found hope when they attended a Wellness Retreat sponsored by the Ministering to Ministers (MTM) Foundation.

"We can't do everything in one week, but we can do several things that help a minister reorient himself and begin to heal," said MTM founder and director Charles Chandler.

Chandler, an Alabama native now living in Richmond, Va., formed MTM in 1994 after his own involuntary termination as senior pastor. He found few resources for help and determined to use the insight he gained to help others. As Chandler often says to retreat participants, "All our experiences, no matter how painful, when given to God can bring good. But this doesn't mean that bad things are good. Shabby treatment of ministers is still a bad thing."

MTM held its 121st Wellness

Retreat July 28–Aug. 1 at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. Ten participants from five states and four denominations told their crisis stories and engaged in intensive individual and group therapy.

They also heard from numerous experts including an attorney, a job counselor, a physical fitness instructor and spiritual leaders.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Beverly Buston, also of Richmond, served as resident therapist for the week.

Chandler cited research by Kevin Leicht of the University of Iowa who wrote in his book "Professional Work" that the rate of clergy terminations is higher than the rate of coach terminations in the NFL — what Leicht called "a notoriously unstable profession." Leicht postulated that the annual termination rate in the general workforce is a little more than 1 percent while the clergy termination rate is closer to 5 percent.

Dale Huff, director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), estimated that some 80 Alabama Baptist ministers are terminated annually but added there are probably more whose circumstances are unreported.

"The reality is that every one of the terminations is a picture of catastrophe," said Huff, who taught a leadership session at the MTM retreat. "The terminated minister and family is affected in so many ways: loss of income, loss of friends and

support, loss of a church, which especially affects children who don't understand why they can't go to church with their friends anymore. A termination fractures trust in church leadership. It is a grief experience with the losses

being multiple."

Huff said the SBOM offers several resources to ministers in crisis including emergency financial assistance, counsel-

ing and career guidance. The SBOM also sponsors an annual retreat for terminated ministers at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talledega and lends support to MTM's annual Alabama retreat at Beeson.

Retreat participants learn about transferrable skills enabling them to make a living for themselves and their families.

According to Chandler, healing comes when ministers begin to forgive themselves and others and see themselves as persons of worth with marketable skills.

'Grow from it'

Sometimes the terminated minister is victimized by forces outside his control, Chandler said. At other times ministers make bad choices leading to crisis, but either way, "Don't waste your pain. Grow from it. Wounded ministers can have a new dimension of ministry since we can grow strong at the broken places."

MTM finds about two-thirds of retreat participants go back into full-time ministry, and the remainder enters into another vocation, works for para-church organizations or retires. ☞

For more information
about MTM, visit
mtmfoundation.org.
To reach Dale Huff, email
dhuff@alsbom.org or
call 1-800-264-1225.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 17

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

NEVER GIVE UP ON PRAYER Daniel 6:3-7, 10, 16-23

What would you do if you were faced with execution for expressing your faith in Jesus publicly? Would you stop praying? Should we remove the missionaries from countries where people do not want to hear the gospel? Should we stop praying here? If Christian faith is not welcome in the public arena of ideas, should Christians cloister themselves and withdraw from public life?

Praying to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ is considered by many to be illegal today. Not only is it unwelcome in Mosul, Iraq, where every "Nasrani" (the Arabic word for Christian; literally "of Nazareth") has been run out of town, but prayer in the name of Jesus also is verboten where you live. Try offering prayer at a public function today — a high school ball game or a commencement program — and you may be forcibly removed for your intolerant ideology. You may say, "Not in my town," but it may happen sooner than you think.

Your prayer life is a threat to those who believe that humanity is the measure of all things. Daniel discovers this reality. His faithful prayer regimen becomes a problem for his pluralistic governmental counterparts.

When Big Challenges Come (3-5)

Integrity attracts animosity. Daniel distinguishes himself under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, kings of Babylon. After the overthrow of the Babylonian government by the Persians, Daniel once again shows himself beneficial to the reigning official. While there is much debate about the man identified as Darius the Mede, the point is that he favors Daniel, who is now a seasoned saint. Like modern political adversaries, the satraps under Daniel's authority look to dig up dirt concerning his character. The only fault they find is that he seeks the Lord regularly.

We are taught in the Bible to honor God, our parents, our teachers and our leaders.

The world tells us to doubt God, question our parents, challenge our teachers and protest our leaders. If we seek to live our lives as Daniel did, seeking to obey God completely, we need not to be ashamed no matter what comes.

When Faith and Culture Clash (6-7, 10)

No one is above the law. When a king issued a decree, no one could be delivered from the sentence imposed, including the king. In addition, he could not grant a pardon to anyone found guilty of the crime.

Daniel knows the political bureaucracy has manipulated Darius. He knows about the law; he is aware that those who pray are subject to a death sentence. Regardless of the law, he acknowledges his first allegiance to the one true God, and he does not refrain from seeking the Lord.

When Personal Danger Looms (16-18)

Some laws and some legal decisions are unjust, and they stand in contradiction to God's Word. Like Daniel we must exercise civil disobedience when the law of the land requires disobedience to God. We must trust God completely to carry out His will, regardless of the personal cost to us. Whether we are here or in a distant land our obedience to God must come first.

When God Alone Can Help (19-23)

Darius hopes that Daniel has been delivered, but he cannot be sure until he hears the prophet's voice. The king fasts through the night, and he rejects any form of entertainment. He hopes that Daniel's God will save him.

The next morning, when Daniel responds to the king's calls, he gives credit to God for sending an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. He survives the ordeal unscathed. His sentence complete, Daniel is released from the lion's den to continue to serve the king.

All too often people receive credit that rightly belongs to the Lord. Daniel is an example to all of us to use our gifts to give God glory. After all, that is why we were created. 🙏

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

VICTORIOUS FAITH 1 Peter 5:6-11

In his famous allegory of the Christian life, John Bunyan wrote that "he that is down needs fear no fall, and he that is low no pride. He that is humble ever shall have God to be his guide."

Humility is the Key to Spiritual Maturity (6-7)

Peter knew from bitter experience what it was like to be spiritually proud and tell Jesus that although all the other disciples might desert Him he would never deny his Lord and Savior. When he did deny Him, he was overwhelmed with remorse and "went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62).

Peter encourages his readers to humble themselves "under God's almighty hand," which was a familiar biblical image, deeply rooted in the Old Testament experience of deliverance from bondage in Israel. The "hand" of God was powerful and also loving toward His people. Believers could find their confidence not in themselves but in God. The purpose of God is never to humiliate us but in "dying to self" that we might be blessed by Him. This will ultimately take place "in due time," which is most probably a reference to the coming of Christ. Just as Jesus "humbled Himself and became obedient to the death of the cross and God exalted Him to the highest place" so the believer can have confidence that suffering for Christ will be rewarded in the life to come. So we cast all our concerns and cares upon Him, knowing He cares and that His caring does not lack the ability or the willingness to do the very best for His chosen people.

Watchfulness is the Key to Spiritual Victory (8-9)

However, Peter is concerned that such assurance of God's care does not make us careless in how we live and so he immediately encouraged us to be watchful and to discipline ourselves. He knows that

the devil, our archenemy, is like a roaring lion prowling around. We need not fear him. But we do need to be watchful and to resist his temptations. Jesus has defeated him. As Bunyan reminds us in "The Pilgrim's Progress," Christians can "see the lions but see not the chains" and forget the victory that Christ has already won over the powers of evil. They are defeated and in His strength we can gain the victory.

Perseverance is the Key to Spiritual Blessing (10-11)

Our faith is rooted and grounded in His grace, mercy and love and in His eternal purposes. So Peter reminds us this God of all grace has called us to eternal glory in Christ and that He will restore us when we fall, support us in our greatest crisis of faith, strengthen us with His Spirit and establish us. The final image is one of total security, assuring us that nothing will move us from the firm foundation we have in Jesus Christ. The four images combine to overwhelm us with a sense of the security we have in Christ. Nothing and no one will separate us from His purposes and from His eternal love. To this God (our God) belongs eternal praise.

God has written the names of His people in the book of life. His pencil does not have a rubber eraser. The ink in which our names are written is that of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world in His eternal purposes and nailed to the cross in history.

"O to grace how great a debtor. Daily I'm constrained to be! Let that grace now like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee." 🙏



Christian Crossword

By Diana Rowland Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

- Therefore the law ___ slacked. (Hab. 1:4)
- And ___ drove thence the three sons. (Josh. 15:14)
- Eli, and ___ sabachthani. (Matt. 27:46)
- The Lord will not ___ good. (Zeph. 1:12)
- As with the taker of ___. (Isa. 24:2)
- Thither cause thy mighty ___. (Joel 3:11)
- Teman, and ___, Zephi, and Gatam. (1 Chron. 1:36)
- ___ Jones, financial company.
- Thou hast had pity ___ the gourd. (Jon. 4:10)
- Even to the ___ of them. (Jon. 3:5)
- They that observe lying vanities ___. (Jon. 2:8)
- They that ___ thy bread. (Obad. 7)
- And be thou like a ___. (Song of Sol. 2:17)
- ___ the second year of Darius. (Hag. 1:1)
- And ___ not to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely ___. (Amos 5:5)
- What shall we ___ unto thee. (Jon. 1:11)
- They shall lay hold ___ bow ... against thee, ___ daughter of Zion. (Jer. 6:23)

- Even ___, will judge between the ___ cattle. (Ezek. 34:20)
- Unto the ___ of the earth. (Mic. 5:4)
- And will ___ at all acquit the wicked. (Nah. 1:3)
- For I ___ with you. (Hag. 2:4)
- Came unto ___ unto ___ people. (Judg. 18:27; reverse order)
- ___ accept thy person? (Mal. 1:8)
- Hast thou not heard long ___. (Isa. 37:26)
- ___ have laid hands on their substance. (Obad. 13)
- Who ___ not daily. (Heb. 7:27)
- He shall ___ with his teeth. (Ps. 112:10)
- Behold, I ___ against thee. (Nah. 3:5)
- Now the Lord ___ prepared a great fish. (Jon. 1:17)
- The son of Naum, which was the son of ___. (Luke 3:25)
- Call me ___. (Ruth 1:20)
- ___ was a man subject to like passions. (James 5:17)
- It hath consumed ___ of Moab. (Num. 21:28)
- As a man wipeth a ___. (2 Kings 21:13)
- Whosoever sins ye ___. (John 20:23)
- What do ___ imagine against the Lord? (Nah. 1:9)
- I have overthrown ___ of you. (Amos 4:11)
- He whom thou ___ is cursed. (Num. 22:6)
- For while they be folden together ___ thorns. (Nah. 1:10)
- They of Persia and of ___. (Ezek. 27:10)
- And ___, the firstborn ___ Judah. (1 Chron. 2:3)
- Yea, I am their ___. (Job 30:9)
- And now, behold, I ___ thee this day. (Jer. 40:4)
- There was one ___. (Luke 2:36)
- And so is this nation before ___. (Hag. 2:14)
- And His brightness was ___ the light. (Hab. 3:4)
- Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)
- Children's game.
- Kanga's son in "Winnie the Pooh."
- And I will appoint over them four ___. (Jer. 15:3)
- Adam, Sheth, ___. (1 Chron. 1:1)
- Go up ___ the mountain. (Hag. 1:8)
- Duke Elah, duke ___. (Gen. 36:41)
- For ___ the harvest. (Isa. 18:5)
- And ___ on the east side. (Jon. 4:5)
- She called his name Ben-___. (Gen. 35:18)
- Which is the ___ of our inheritance. (Eph. 1:4)
- In his hand for very ___. (Zech. 8:4)
- Plead with your ___. (Hos. 2:2)
- This is ___ ephah that goeth forth. (Zech. 5:6)
- Take some of the ___ of oil. (Lev. 14:15)
- How shall I make thee as ___? (Hos. 11:8)
- Stopped their ___. (Zech. 7:11)
- Lest he ___ thee to the judge. (Luke 12:58)
- The land is ___ the garden of Eden. (Joel 2:3)
- Not spare continually to ___ the nations? (Hab. 1:17)
- The priests thereof teach for ___. (Mic. 3:11)
- Mine eye also is ___. (Job 17:7)
- Medical doctor. (abbr.)
- Howl, O Heshbon, for ___ is spoiled. (Jer. 49:3)
- When the king of ___ saw it. (Josh. 8:14)



TOP 10

best-selling books

FICTION

1. **Child of Mine**
By David and Beverly Lewis (Bethany House)
2. **The Harbinger**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)
3. **Bridge to Haven**
By Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
4. **A Mother's Secret**
By Amy Clipston (Zondervan)
5. **The Hope Chest**
By Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
6. **The Last Bride**
By Beverly Lewis (Bethany House)
7. **The Shack**
By William Paul Young (Windblown Media)
8. **Redeeming Love**
By Francine Rivers (Multnomah)
9. **The Beaches and Brides Romance Collection**
By Cathy Marie Hake (Barbour)
10. **Land Run Brides**
By Janet Lee Barton (Barbour)

NONFICTION

1. **Jesus Calling**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Heaven Is For Real — Movie Edition**
By Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Good Call**
By Jase Robertson (Howard Books)
4. **Heaven Is For Real**
By Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Instinct**
By T.D. Jakes (Faithwords)
6. **The Five Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
7. **The Total Money Makeover**
By Dave Ramsey (Thomas Nelson)
8. **I Am A Church Member**
By Thom S. Rainer (B&H)
9. **Four Blood Moons**
By John Hagee (Worthy Publishing)
10. **The Circle Maker**
By Mark Batterson (Zondervan)

Source: Christian Book Expo



Photo courtesy of Savvy Media Solutions

Hearts of Saints lead singer Craig Felker (second from left) hopes the group's songs help unite believers.

Straight to truth

Hearts of Saints incorporates Scripture into songs

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While performing concerts and leading worship at events, Hearts of Saints desires to point audiences straight to God's truths.

"We can't write better lyrics than the Scriptures," lead singer Craig Felker said. "It's so great when everyone is singing and worshipping together. After hearing these songs, we encourage people to dig deeper into God's Word and see where the songs come from.

"So many of our songs are based on fresh expressions of Scriptures, because the words are alive and active. We're not trying to re-write them. We are just trying to write a fresh expression around them."

All of the songs on their album, "For All of Us," are designed to encourage, equip and engage conversations about the gospel.

"The songs are really intentional and designed to unite believers because when brothers and sisters are gathered together, the Lord dwells among their praises," Felker said. "These songs are designed to encourage believers and hopefully remind them how valuable and loved they really are. The songs also can be a powerful tool to share the gospel and explain that our salvation is not based on works. ...

Because of what He has done, we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

"This record is about Christ's work and our victory in Him. The world says do, but Christ says done. He has accomplished everything for us. The theme of this record is identity, and to really understand identity you have to understand the gospel and the impact it has on your life. ... When you begin to grasp just how much God loves us, you start operating out of that adoration."

Remember and respond

By incorporating Scriptures into their songs, their goal is to help people remember, reflect and respond to the gospel message.

"As we have been leading these songs, God has been reminding me about His characteristics — what it means to be His child and how my identity is found in Him," Felker said. "God is absolutely holy, absolutely just and yet calls me His child. Because of who He is, His Word tells me who I am. When the Father looks at me, because of Jesus He sees His own son's blood. That is a radical mindset. Apart from Jesus, I am nothing. ... It says in Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from the Father's love. When everyone is singing these truths together, it is such a powerful moment as we respond to the author and perfecter of our faith." ❏

"The world says do, but Christ says done. He has accomplished everything for us."

Craig Felker
lead singer, Hearts of Saints

'JESUS is everything'

Former Jacksonville Suns pitcher Taylor finds inspiration in salvation after career-ending injury

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Graham Taylor went down with a snapped hamstring, his slide into home plate did also.

"It goes down as one of the worst slides," Taylor said of the moment captured on video. "They played it on the video board for quite some time. It was a very, very funny video. I try to tell people it wasn't a slide, it was my (left) hamstring blowing up. It wasn't funny for me at the time but everybody got a good laugh out of it."

A pitcher for the Jacksonville Suns, Taylor had gotten his first hit of the 2011 season. The next batter tripled. Taylor was running around third base when the hamstring blew.

"I did a head first tumble into home plate. I scored but it was very painful for me."

After two knee surgeries and two elbow surgeries throughout his career, Taylor retired from professional baseball in February 2014.

Taylor, who lives in Jacksonville, Fla., is now studying to pass a Series 6 exam so he can work for Principal Financial Group.

Taylor, 30, is coaching a 14U travel baseball team, the Duval Dirtbags, "to help fill that void and pass on the knowledge that was given to me over the years."

Before retirement he accomplished a dream he had since he was 5 — playing major league baseball. Taylor made his debut for the Miami Marlins against Philadelphia on April 26, 2009. He had three big-league starts before returning to the Marlins' minor league system. Taylor was 0-2 with no decision.

Facing life without baseball

Tommy John surgery, a procedure meant to reconstruct the ulnar collateral ligament in the elbow, would limit future major league experience.

"It's scary. I didn't know if I was going to recover and come back healthy and pitch and be able to be successful to where I was before," Taylor said. "If that doesn't happen what do I do? Baseball is the only thing I've ever known."

He turned to prayer. "The Lord has a plan and it's going to be whatever He has for me and I am going to accept it," he said.

"This is the path He wants me to lead."

During some prayers Taylor would fervently exclaim, "Please help me. Please give me some advice and strength that I need to get through this." He was concerned that if he was not able to pitch that no team would want him. Although his wife, Jori, had a job, he was concerned about his ability to financially support his family.

He found a pillar to lean on in his favorite Bible verse — Philippians 4:13.

"If you look, He gives you strength to do whatever you want in life and you turn to Him. Any time I am struggling through anything, I turn to God, to Jesus and I pray. ... In everything I do, I try to please Jesus, please God and live through Him," he said.

When Taylor played for the Suns, a Southern League Double-A affiliate of the Marlins, he and Kyle Skipworth, now a catcher for the Marlins' Triple-A New Orleans Zephyrs, coordinated chapel services.

Taylor's faith helped him persevere, Skipworth said. "He was in the big leagues. He was in the right place at the right time.

Unfortunately he had to have Tommy John surgery and a lot of guys tend not to come back from that. You are out of the game an entire year. It can be a big distraction."

It was when he was in college before Taylor made a decision to accept Christ. He started attending Campus Crusade for Christ at Miami (Ohio) University.

David Franco, an infielder and teammate, was influential in Taylor's spiritual life.

Franco invited Taylor to his home in Columbus, Ohio. "I met his parents and saw how much love they had for Christ, spreading the world and going to Bible studies," Taylor said.

Franco would invite Taylor to college Bible studies.

However, it was not until his father, Gary, began having health problems that he truly found interest in Bible study.

A cancerous tumor was found in one of Gary's kidneys.

"We didn't know how severe it was," Taylor said. "When that happened, I really turned to God and I started praying every day. That was the key moment when I turned my life over to God." Taylor's dad made a full recovery.

A sports and health management major, Taylor graduated from Miami in 2006. He was a freshman All-American and set the Mid-American Conference record in innings pitched.

The Marlins drafted him in 10th round of the 2006 amateur draft. Throughout his minor league career he played for five different teams and spent the 2009, 2011 and 2012 seasons with Jacksonville. He was a Southern League All-Star in 2009, a Florida State League All-Star in 2008 and South Atlantic League All-Star in 2007.

Throwing strikes

A left-hander, Taylor had an 8-7 record in 2009 with the Suns and struck out 71 batters. In 2011, he went 3.5 with a 4.09 ERA and 62 strikeouts and in 2012 he was 9-11 with a 3.97 ERA with 86 strikeouts. He used his favorite pitch, a change-up, to

get many of those outs. He pitched in the 85-88 mph range.

"I am a guy that comes out throwing strikes. That is my strength," Taylor said.

"I am not going to walk people. I am going to make guys hit the ball and give my defenders a chance to field it and make outs," he said. "I am not somebody that is going to overpower you. I am going to try to keep you off balance and hit ground balls."

Playing in the majors was huge he said. "That was my goal; everything that I had strived for. I had played the game since I was 5 years old for that moment. I was so happy." 🙏



Graham Taylor

Photo by Jay Metz