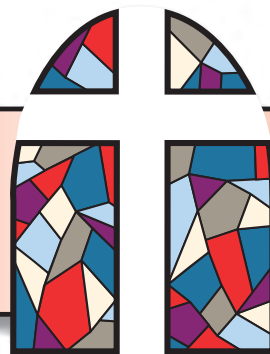


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When dad hits mom

Abby rushes home after picking up her son, Caleb, from school. She knows she only has an hour until her husband, Ron, gets home. Dinner has to be ready at exactly 5 p.m. — not a second later and no excuses. The family sits down to eat on time, but Ron takes one bite of mashed potatoes and gets that look on his face. He doesn't like them. He utters an oath under his breath and hits Abby with his fist while their son watches in horror. Abby runs to the bathroom, and Caleb tries to follow. Ron yells at him to sit down. When Abby returns to the table, her jaw is red and beginning to swell. Later that night Caleb hears shouting down the hall and tiptoes to the living room. His mom is on the floor, begging his dad to stop hitting her. Caleb knows better than to interfere. He's tried before, but his mom wants him to be safe — that's what she said the first time he tried to help her. All he can do is watch and hope that his mom will be OK.

Faith and Family

Dealing with domestic violence



123rf.com

Domestic violence victims do not have to suffer in silence, counselor says

By Barry Bolin, LPC
Pathways Professional Counseling

Unfortunately scenarios like the one described above about Abby and Caleb are all too common.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone. It does not discriminate. Recent news stories have brought the issue to the forefront, and we have learned that even fame and fortune

do not protect celebrities from it.

Domestic violence, also called intimate partner violence, is an uncomfortable topic because we are never quite sure what to do about our suspicions. But it happens more than we may realize, and it happens in families we might not suspect. In fact, there is no typical family of domestic violence. All races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes and educational levels have individuals and families who have been touched by domestic violence.

According to the victim assis-

tance organization Safe Horizon, 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. More than 3 million children will

witness domestic violence in their home, and survivors and their children are likely to experience depression, lack of concentration, poor health and often homelessness as a result of the abuse.

Domestic abuse is not a single incident but rather a pattern of behaviors by one family member toward another, usually spouse to spouse. Domestic violence can include a variety of attacks, such

as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic. The abuser's ultimate goal is to create an atmosphere of fear, and violence is used to maintain power and control over the victim.

Whether in a marital or dating relationship, the abuser uses coercion, intimidation and aggressiveness to instill fear in the victim. Examples of abusive behaviors could include physical harm, such as choking, slapping, name-calling or forcing sexual acts. An abuser might also inflict property damage, deny the victim access to money, isolate the victim from her friends and family and/or use guilt or shame to assert control in the relationship.

The abuser is often in denial, sometimes because of mental illness, family history or substance (See 'Change,' page 6)



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COMMENT

Is Cooperation a Principle or a Convenience?

The expected answer to the question above is obvious. Baptists believe in cooperation. The Baptist Faith and Message declares in Article XIV that “Christ’s people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God.”

The 2010 Great Commission Resurgence report declares the preferred channel of funding missions, educational and benevolent causes at home and around the world is the Cooperative Program (CP).

Cooperation is an axiom of Baptist life, a fundamental truth that serves as the foundation for our system of ministry. That is the expected answer, but is it the right answer? Is cooperation a principle of Baptist life or a convenience from the past that has outlived its usefulness?

About 100 years ago Southern Baptists experienced a schism when some church leaders concluded that calls for cooperation violated local church autonomy. Schism leaders objected to the national mission boards and demanded that missionaries be appointed by local churches. They also objected to state missions programs saying local churches should do state ministries. They demanded state corresponding secretaries (now known as state executive directors) be eliminated.

While the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) rejected these demands in 1907, Baptists debated whether one should be a “Board Baptist” or a “Free Baptist” until the outbreak of World War II. Those who chose to cooperate through state and national convention structures were derided for abandoning the faith once delivered to the saints. Jesus commissioned the church to go into all the world, not some Baptist Board, they charged.

A look at history

For those who left the SBC, church was only a local congregation and whenever churches worked together “for the great objects of the Kingdom of God” they were violating Scripture.

A hundred years earlier Baptists fought a similar battle. In 1814 Baptists organized the Triennial Convention, the first national Baptist organization in America. Richard Furman, the first president of the Triennial Convention, and other Baptist leaders from the South led the group to form a convention-type organization based on cooperation. But in 1820, Francis Wayland, president of Brown College in Rhode Island, rallied Baptists from the North in a successful effort to overthrow convention-type cooperation in favor of individual participation.

When the SBC was organized in 1845, messengers returned to an organization based on cooperation. Using careful wording the messengers



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

said cooperative efforts were to “elicit, combine and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner” and that “such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches.”

Baptists in the North continued to practice their individual or society model for another 100 years or more.

Today it seems Southern Baptists are again debating whether or not cooperation is a principle or a convenience.

In 1907 most Southern Baptist churches had little choice but to cooperate if they wanted to be part of “great objects of the Kingdom of God.” Most churches were limited by resources. Transportation and communication were slow and difficult. Churches needed missions-sending agencies to help them be a part of reaching the world for Christ. They needed benevolent agencies to help them care for the hurting. They needed state conventions to help train workers for local church ministries. Few if any churches could do these things on their own.

Cooperation worked. Southern Baptists developed massive ministries at home and abroad. Southern Baptists grew to have the largest and most varied Christian ministries of any Protestant denomination. Churches supported these works financially through the CP with the national average being above 10 percent of local church undesignated receipts going to cooperative causes. Special offerings were on top of what was considered the foundation piece of cooperation — financial support through the CP.

It was the heyday of cooperation.

Giving records show that by the 1980s cooperative giving began to wane. But giving reflected what was already happening in the churches. Cooperation was beginning to be seen as a convenience rather than a principle.

Some churches grew large in size and resources. Megachurches did not need state conventions to train their leaders. These large churches could bring in the best resources in the nation and often sponsored events that competed and duplicated cooperative activities.

Concentration of financial resources in megachurches meant local congregations could ap-

point and support their own church missionaries. Leaps in communication and transportation made it possible for local church missions teams to travel anywhere in the world.

Denominational identity became less important as churches established their own national media ministries while Southern Baptists abandoned cooperative efforts in radio and television.

Today some churches have larger staffs than state conventions, and some of their leaders question the need for state conventions. There is nothing a state convention can do these churches cannot do for themselves, they say.

In fact, there is nothing the national denomination can offer some of these churches. They train their own workers, write their own material, appoint their own missionaries, do their own ministries and run their own schools.

According to LifeWay Christian Resources, 51 percent of Southern Baptists now belong to 1 percent of SBC-related churches, most considered megachurches.

Denominational shift

All the while cooperative giving declined. Now it is barely above 4 percent, according to the SBC Executive Committee. As a result the “great objects of the Kingdom of God” that Baptists have historically done together face difficult times. In the last few years, the denomination has turned to leaders from the 1 percent to guide Southern Baptists and the work we have always done together. Not surprisingly denominational focus shifted. Now it seems Baptists have gone back to the future.

The new trend in missions is for churches to appoint and fund their own missionaries. Instead of a board to “elicit, combine and direct the energies” of Baptists, the International Mission Board may soon become a consulting service to local churches conducting their own missions programs. Once again the value of state mission boards is questioned by those championing that the work be left to local churches.

Other developments raise the question of cooperation being a principle or a convenience. Over-under relationships seem more prevalent than equal partners working together. Competing institutions vie for the same funding. Baptists even belittle one another in an apparent effort to gain more funding for a particular ministry.

The issue is not church size because some megachurches are paragons of cooperation. The issue is not communication or technological developments. The issue is the basic question Baptists debated in each of the last two centuries. Is cooperation a principle of Baptist life or a convenience that served well in the past but whose day has passed?

How that question is answered is important to who Baptists will become. 🙏



"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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NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville — Pastor
Bill Wilks (center), executive pastor John Herring
(left) and associate pastor Stephen Hall (right)

In the midst of tragedy



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

NorthPark 'culture' allows for quick response to UPS shooting

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

There were no training courses nor preparatory classes. The pastor had not detailed a plan of action for the congregation. The pastor had not detailed a plan of action for himself.

But when members of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, found themselves in the middle of a tragedy, they knew what to do.

"I don't know anything we could have done any better," Pastor Bill Wilks said of the initial response to the Sept. 23 news that church member Joe Tesney had killed two former co-workers and then himself at a UPS shipping center in Birmingham.

Most of the church ministers were on a staff retreat in Destin, Fla., when the shootings took place. A quick-thinking church member who learned of the situation before the name was released informed the minister who had stayed behind to keep things running at the church. She and the support staff were in their weekly prayer gathering when the call came in.

"It was a God thing that we were all together when we got the news," said one member of the support staff. For the church staff on the retreat, "it was a sickening feeling that we were five hours away when the tragedy happened," associate pastor Stephen Hall said. "But we were all in the same room sitting around a table having a discussion and that allowed us to move into action quickly."

In less than an hour, the pastor and staff had a plan of action, a statement for the press and were packing to head back to Birmingham right away.

Wilks said, "When something like this happens, you drop everything. What we were doing didn't matter anymore."

"Dealing with this tragedy in our church family was priority for everyone, and we needed all hands on deck," he said. "Our church knows that, and our staff knows that. It is the culture we have. They know we have to be ready, and they were. Everyone was working together to formulate a plan."

Executive pastor John Herring said, "Part of being a community is that you have to respond — respond to the church family and respond to those outside the church family, including the media. We can't just stick our head in the ground and not respond, but we must respond in love and care."

"I'm encouraged by the way our congregation stepped up when we weren't around,"

he said. "I think we are in a new place of health in our church. We are more committed to discipleship and caring about each other than I've ever seen."

First and foremost in Wilks' mind was the family.

Ministering to the family

"I immediately started thinking of [the wife] and how to help her and how to get to her," he said. "Our children's minister immediately started working on what to do for the children."

The minister onsite at the church and another female church member organized themselves quickly in order to get to the wife. "They were able to minister to her during this and walked her through each step," Wilks noted. "The church member was with the wife all day. We needed her and she jumped in and did whatever it took."

"It had to be pretty scary, but she fought through whatever fear she might have had and took care of the need. We could not have made it without her," he said. "It takes an army of compassionate people to work in tragic situations. It cannot all be done by the paid ministers."

More than 70 NorthPark Baptist members gathered at the church that night to pray and share as well as hear from their pastor.

Wilks said he heard a lot of "what ifs" and "I should have paid better attention."

"Some are feeling guilty, but there's no way any of us could have known this was coming."

"This was a guy we saw living the Christian life. How can you reconcile what happened? You can't. There's no way to reconcile it," Wilks said. "We have more questions than answers, but we know Who the answer is and that is Jesus." ❧

A tragedy happens ... what do you do?

By Pastor Bill Wilks
NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville

1. Stay calm, keep your composure.
2. Determine all people involved and who needs assistance.
3. Delegate assignments to staff, support staff and appropriate church members.
4. Work with a team to develop a statement from the church for the media and other interested parties that is informative and helpful but also appropriate with what is shared.
5. Inform all church staff and support staff of the plan and provide them with the official statement, so everyone knows how to communicate appropriately.
6. Communicate all necessary information to the full church membership.
7. Don't be afraid of the media. Tell the truth, be kind and work with them as best you can. Provide on-camera and in-person interviews and answer their questions as best you can while protecting individual members' privacies. Members of the media will typically respond with kindness and respect when you are helpful rather than being defensive and mean-spirited toward them.
8. Be there for those who are hurting. "Your presence and compassion are worth more than any words you can say. Just be there and let them know they are not alone in the process."
9. Remember that the world is watching, so minister, don't hide.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Carlos Gomez (left), pastor of Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Center Point, participates in a leadership conference held at the church Sept. 25 with church member Eliud Villanueva and other Spanish-speaking leaders.

Progressive approach

FBC Center Point sees growth in Hispanic ministry

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In 1994, First Baptist Church, Center Point, introduced an emphasis on Spanish ministry. Before long that “emphasis” had grown into a full-fledged Spanish-speaking service held each week, in addition to the English-speaking one. The church’s congregation shares Sunday School, and then the Spanish speakers attend a service in the chapel while the English speakers meet in the sanctuary.

“The Hispanic population has grown significantly over the last couple of years,” said Buddy McGohon, who recently served as interim pastor for First, Center Point, for about 18 months. “Usually the Hispanic service averages 120 a Sunday. The Anglo group averages about 120 each Sunday as well. At this juncture, they’re almost equal.”

Though both groups are equally members of First, Center Point, the language barrier can prove to be difficult to navigate at times. McGohon estimates that about one-third of the Spanish speakers also speak English — a percentage that’s not nearly as high on the English-speakers’ side. The Hispanic portion of the church (called Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Center Point) is especially prevalent in the children’s and youth departments. McGohon said the youth group is “almost entirely Hispanic.”

Joint services

Initially the two groups would meet together for joint services about once a year, but starting about a year and a half ago they decided to increase their frequency to at least one joint service per quarter.

Carlos Gomez, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Hispana, said, “The practice of having joint services has helped to integrate the bilingual children and the youth into the worship in the English services. The integration of Spanish-speaking children and youth

has encouraged the people of the church, in that both the English and Spanish groups are increasing in size.”

Gomez and McGohon work together to plan these joint services. Part of the service is in Spanish with Gomez translating to English and the rest is in English with Gomez translating to Spanish. They sing songs that both groups know and alternate between English and Spanish lyrics.

In late August, during one of these joint services, First, Center Point, ordained two men as deacons.

McGohon said, “This year, a Hispanic gentleman who has been a member of the church for many years was elected as a deacon, and so was an 85-year-old Anglo man who had been attending the church for many years. Both parts of the congregation vote, so they were both elected by the total congregation.”

Freddie Bagwell had been attending First, Center Point, for many years but felt called

to do something more, so he prayed about what that next step might be for him. Not long after, he was nominated as a deacon by a fellow church member.

Adan Martinez, the other man ordained, was the first Hispanic man to become a deacon at the church.

Gomez and McGohon are both looking forward to the way the future of the church unfolds.

“We really don’t have any models to look for as far as how we can grow, but it’s exciting,” McGohon said. “I think the church has a wonderful future, what with its ability to function as one.”

Gomez also is encouraged by the way the church is evolving and is proud of its progress.

“We as Southern Baptists have crossed the bridge and broken the mold,” Gomez said. “We know that anything is possible with God, and it gives us great pleasure to see God’s hand on the church’s ministry here at FBC Center Point.”



BAGWELL



MARTINEZ

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Cindy Lewis



LEWIS

Aliceville First Baptist Church
Pickens Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Matthew 5:16

FAVORITE HYMN: “It Is Well With My Soul”

HOBBIES: Cooking and exercising

FAMILY STATUS: Husband of 27 years, Joe; son, Forrest

Cindy Lewis, 49, of Carrollton, has a passion for teaching the Bible. She said it is important for people to hear the Bible taught in a way that they can understand it, in order to apply it to their life and glorify God. She has been active in teaching Bible studies and Sunday School classes at her church, singing in the choir and serving with Martha’s Ministry, which provides bereavement meals. She is treasurer for Pickens Baptist Association and has been a volunteer for Baptist Center Thrift Store. She is involved in a Bible study at the Federal Correctional Institute in Aliceville and works with Kairos Prison Ministry. In her community she participates in an Esther prayer group and Bible study, whose participants are from different denominations.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: Being a part of ministry among young adults and/or in a prison setting requires flexibility. But most importantly it requires being willing to see and hear with the eyes and ears of God and then respond with His love. Loving and listening are the keys.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I learn so much from the residents at FCI-Aliceville about God and His Word and I am so encouraged to see them and the young couples I teach eager to learn and grow in their Christian faith. I also have joy and contentment in knowing I am being obedient to God in using the gifts He has given me for His glory.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My ministry takes me away from home and family time; but my family supports and encourages me to use my gifts any time God opens a door for ministry in His name.

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

A: I am a part of a Kairos team that has an ongoing ministry at FCI-Aliceville. I look forward to continuing my work with them and seeing what other doors God might open for me in the future.

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

A: Because of the presence of Jesus Christ in my life, I want my life to bring Him honor and glory. This life is not about me. It is about Him. 🙏

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

A: My childhood was grounded in the church and my parents were living examples of Christianity. I grew up knowing who Jesus was and I accepted Him as my personal Lord and Savior as a young child.

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

A: I love to study and teach the Bible. Several years ago, I was asked to teach a Sunday School class and, over the last several years, I have taught a variety of studies to a variety of ages. ... I also have had a new opportunity to teach in the prison setting at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) in Aliceville, a women’s prison.

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

FAITH can help

Christian teachings never reinforce abusive behaviors by anyone

By Keith Whitfield
Assistant professor of theology and associate vice president for Institutional Effectiveness and Faculty Communications, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Abusing someone is the opposite of love. Abusing someone you have committed yourself to support, provide for and protect is the highest form of relational treason. It is hard for many people to even imagine how someone would abuse someone else, but it happens.

Faith can help in the face of abuse or hinder a victim from breaking the abuse cycle. As a help, it strengthens the abused to flee from the relationship and find a safe place. As a hindrance, it prevents the abused from fleeing from abuse. Christian teaching should never be used to reinforce abusive behavior.

Scripture never condones abuse. It teaches that everyone is made in God's image and shares equal dignity. It teaches that love between two people does not harm or control. Christian love for one another reflects God's love for us (John 3:16; 1 John 4:6). Scripture teaches that humanity lives

before the face of God, that people were created by God and for God. This life is described for us in terms of a relational life. He gave men and women one another to enjoy healthy, life-giving relationships that require mutual sacrifice (Eph. 5:25). Abusive behavior is sinful and cannot be tolerated or overlooked. Christian women should never be made to feel that they have to endure abuse or remain in a dangerous environment.



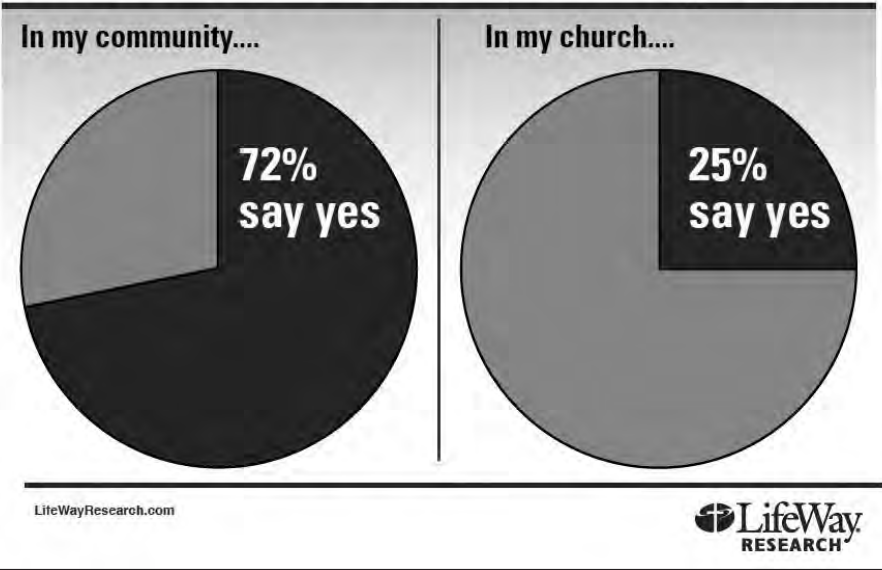
WHITFIELD

In fact, husbands are called to love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5:25, 28-29). Husbands are commanded, "Love your wives, and do not be harsh with them" (Col. 3:19). Yet we must remember that husbands are not Christ. They are fallen people who need Christ. They do not stand in His place. Wives can relate directly to Christ and, ultimately, wives live under the Lordship of Christ. Abusive husbands break God's law.

People who face mistreatment sometimes see their suffering as punishment for past deeds. They begin to feel like they deserve the abuse or that it is God's way

Among Protestant pastors who speak to their church about the subject:

Is domestic or sexual violence a problem?



of punishing them for their sins. These thoughts are contrary to the story of redemption told in Scripture.

The God of Scripture is a kind, merciful and loving God. He demonstrated His loving kindness (salvation, redeeming grace and faithfulness) to us when He satisfied the atonement need for our sins in the death of His own Son. We do not pay the penalty for sins in this life. Penalty for sin is paid in an act of final judgment. For those who place their faith in Jesus the penalty for sin was paid by Jesus on their behalf. For those who are outside of saving relationship with Him, the penalty for their sins is paid by eternal judgment and separation from God in the age to come.

When the structures of family and the church are not able to provide protection for them, victims of domestic violence should seek protection from law enforcement. God ordained government and legal systems to protect victims against injustice: "For government is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For govern-

ment is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong" (Rom. 13:4).

Finally, the pressure to forgive those who abuse you can be great. We are called in Scripture to forgive those who hurt us (Matt. 6:9-15) because God has forgiven us. Divine forgiveness offers to us both an example of what forgiveness looks like

and the power to forgive others. He came to us while we were sinners on the basis of His grace, not on our merit, and it is His grace that supplies the power to let go of the desire for revenge.

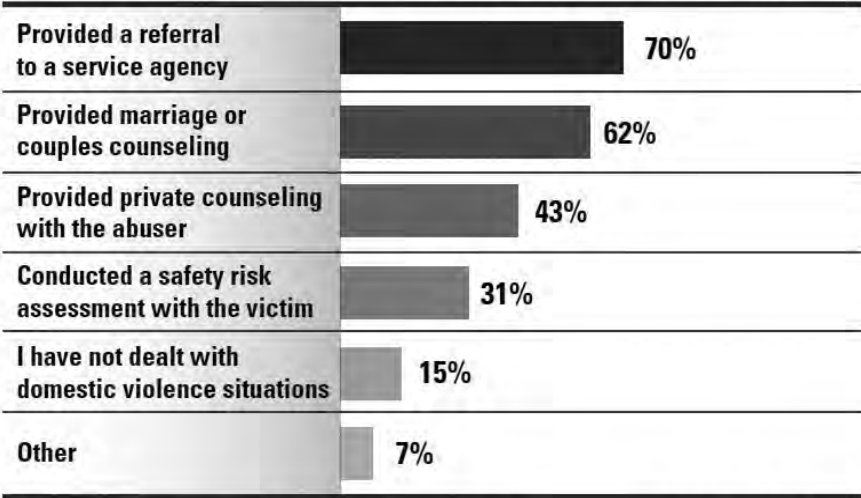
Often victims of abuse and violence feel guilty if they are unable to forgive. Part of the reason for the guilt is misunderstanding of forgiveness.

Forgiving the person who abused you does not mean you live as if it did not happen. Forgiveness does

not mean you have to put yourself in a position to be hurt again by your abuser. Instead forgiveness occurs when we let go of bitterness and the desire to seek vengeance, when we no longer live out of the anger caused by being wounded by an abuser. ❏

Among Protestant pastors:

Responses pastors have used when dealing with domestic and sexual violence situations



Notes: Pastors could select all that apply. "Don't Know" was 1%.
LifeWayResearch.com

Role of the church

Churches must 'address the spiritual and moral realities behind' domestic violence, Moore says

Since professional football star Ray Rice was suspended by the NFL for knocking his then-fiancée, now wife Janay Palmer unconscious in Atlantic City, domestic violence has dominated the conversation in social media. Prominent women, including newly crowned Miss America Kira Kazantsev and TV personality Meredith Vieira, have shared their stories of abuse, as have thousands of other women using the hashtags #WhyIStayed and #WhyILeft.

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

Jim Wallis, president of the Christian nonprofit Sojourners, a co-sponsor of the survey, said the survey shows churches can do more to address domestic violence.

"This is a conversation the church needs to be having but isn't," he said.

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

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research Division, said, "When two-thirds of pastors address the issue of domestic violence in church one time

a year or less, we have a serious disconnect with the realities of American life. Pastors cannot ignore or downplay the issue when lives are being ruined — and sometimes lost — through sexual and domestic violence right in their own communities and churches.

"The church needs to be part of the solution here," Stetzer said.

As the Rice case and others have come to light several Southern Baptist voices recently joined the online conversation to give a biblical perspective on the issue.

Biblical picture of Boaz and Ruth

Emily Ellis, a publishing team leader at LifeWay Christian Resources, lamented the results of the pastor's survey in a guest post on Stetzer's blog. Ellis said the biblical pictures of Boaz covering Ruth with his garment and God covering His people contrast with the video of Palmer lying "exposed and humiliated on an elevator floor."

"Instead of Rice 'covering' her, as God has commanded men to do, he exposed her. He abused her. He misused his God-given strength to harm her," Ellis wrote.

Joe Carter, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) communications director, noted "9 Things You Should Know About Intimate Partner Violence" on The Gospel Coalition website.

"In 48 population-based surveys from around the world, 10 to 69 percent of women reported being physically assaulted by

an intimate male partner at some point in their lives," Carter wrote. "In large national studies, the range is between 10 to 34 percent."

Carter added, "According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 4 women (22.3 percent) have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner, while 1 in 7 men (14 percent) have experienced the same. Female victims frequently experienced multiple forms of IPV (intimate partner violence) (i.e. rape, physical violence, stalking); male victims most often experienced physical violence."

Jeremy Pierre, assistant professor of biblical counseling at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., noted an article he published in 2013 as a resource to help churches and pastors considering the topic of domestic violence in light

of Rice. In the article Pierre urged churches to "promote a culture of safety for oppressed people in the congregation" and discipline abusive men.

"Wives should be reminded that by remaining quiet about abusive husbands they insulate them from the loving correction they need to save their souls from destruction," Pierre wrote in the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. "It is not loving to hide domestic abuse; it will only bring destruction. ... No matter how many times an abuser feels guilty and promises not to con-

tinue, without help from others, the pattern will continue."

Pastors should always alert government authorities in cases of violence and sexual abuse, Pierre wrote.

"Many well-meaning pastors may, in an attempt to show grace, treat violence as 'church family business.' This is both illegal and foolish. Part of godly authority is exacting the consequences of a man's actions on him. An abuser must be accountable to the law, regardless of the state of his repentance," Pierre wrote.

Russell Moore, ERLC president, said both the government and the church have a responsibility to confront domestic violence. Part of the government's responsibility, he said, is to make justice "clear and decisive enough" that men or women will report abuse and not fear repercussions from those who harm them.

"Often men who abuse their wives or girlfriends will seek to hide under the cover of therapeutic language as they seek to 'deal' with their 'issues,'" Moore wrote in a blog post for CNN on Sept. 10.

Churches must "address the spiritual and moral realities behind" domestic violence by disciplining men who abuse women and teaching about biblical gender roles, Moore said.

Christians "are the people who believe that every idle word and every hateful act, no matter how covered up in this life, will be brought into the open at the Judgment Seat," Moore wrote. "We ought to warn men that their cowardly and predatory acts toward women do not escape the scrutiny of God." (BP)

'Change happens when a victim begins to talk about the violence,' Bolin says

(continued from page 1)

abuse. In any case, the abuser believes the behavior is acceptable. An episode of violence may be followed by a season of calm and a false sense of resolution with promises that it will not happen again. However, the pattern often repeats itself causing what professionals identify as the cycle of abuse.

When we hear about cases of domestic abuse, those of us who have not experienced such violence often think, "Why does she stay?" Family members and friends may even ask the question, but it is not that easy.

Changing reasons

There are many reasons a victim might stay, ranging from belief that the abuser will change, fear that things will be worse, lack of support, fear the children will be harmed or a desire to keep the family together. In many cases, the victim has low or no self-esteem and feels responsible for the abuse. Many women feel stuck and without hope, but leaving may be the difference between life and death.

In every case, leaving or even attempting to leave is risky. Safe Horizon reports that every year, 1 in 3 women who is a victim of homicide is murdered by her current or former partner. Some sources say that approximately 4,000 women die from domestic violence each year.

In some cases, it will take a woman up to seven attempts to leave an abusive relationship before she breaks free. Intense emotional and psychological control keeps the victim paralyzed. Leaving also affects financial realities, housing and sometimes care for children.

Individuals in abusive situations should remember this one thing, however: There is hope. Someone does care. If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence situation, you can:

- Visit or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) any time, day or night. You can review the warning signs of abuse and much more information at the organization's website, www.thehotline.org. Alabama also has a state helpline at 1-800-650-6522.

- If your life is in danger, call 911. Teach children living in your home to do the same.

- Develop a safety plan for yourself, for children, for pets and during pregnancy.

- Take legal action. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, protection or restraining orders are available to set legal boundaries with the abuser and to assist in filing other criminal charges.

Call a local counselor

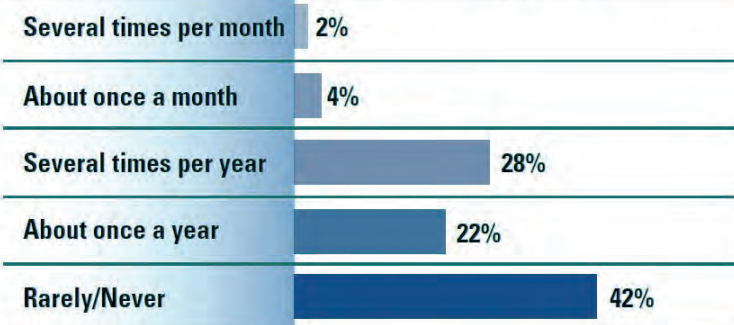
In addition, you can call a local counselor. Many counselors are trained in helping you through this difficult time. They can help network you with a local domestic violence shelter and think about the plans you might need to be making. If you are leaving a domestic violence situation, the counselor can help you develop a preparation plan, a leaving plan and an after-leaving plan, each with its own set of tasks and steps.

Ultimately a victim of domestic violence does not have to suffer in silence. Change happens when a victim begins to talk about the violence. If you find yourself in this situation, you must not allow it to continue.

The first step is to share your hurts and fears with one person. That one person could make all the difference in you finding the help you need. 🙏

Among Protestant pastors:

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



LifeWayResearch.com

LifeWay
RESEARCH

Cycle of abuse

**SHARE
your story**

on Facebook or Twitter

#WhyIStayed or #WhyILeft



Recognizing that high level of denial dominates whole cycle is vital to understanding violence cycle

By Lisa Keane
Pathways Professional Counseling

As a clinician, I have personally never seen such an honest, raw conversation about the cycle of violence and domestic abuse until the hashtags #WhyIStayed and #WhyILeft recently appeared all over Twitter. After the news broke of NFL player Ray Rice punching his then fiancée people took to all platforms of social media to tell their stories.

Many of those stories had been shrouded in secrecy, covered with deep feelings of shame. These stories illustrated the wide reach of domestic abuse. Time after time, when those hashtags were popping up we saw the cycle of abuse played out in the details described in short, 140-character tweets.

What is the cycle of abuse? By definition, the cycle is a repeated pattern of behaviors by an abuser who begins with a tension-building phase, followed by an explosion phase and then a honeymoon phase. (See "the violence wheel" illustration, this page).

However, the key to understanding any violence cycle is not just looking at the stages themselves but recognizing that a high level of denial dominates the whole cycle. I will often ask people questions about their relationship:

Do you feel you are afraid of making your partner mad?

Do you find yourself being overly anxious when you are around your partner?

Has your partner ever said that his anger or abuse is your fault?

At some level, do you think your behavior could change your partner's anger?

These questions and many more help me to get a picture of whether or not domestic violence is taking place and to what degree.

Through these questions

*Do you find yourself
being overly anxious
when you are around
your partner?*

I am attempting to help the victim see that these behaviors are neither normal nor acceptable.

Victims will often attempt to de-escalate the tension-building phase by staying silent or making excuses for the abuser.

Often in the explosion phase the abuser blames the victim for the abusive behavior. The victim may believe that the abuse would not have happened if he or she had just done the "right thing."

Honeymoon phase

All these feelings of shame and guilt are followed by the honeymoon phase where the abuser is attempting to downplay or make up for any abusive behaviors that might have taken place. Through bargaining, begging or threats, the abuser will often convince the victim that the abuse will not happen again. Therefore both the

relationship and the cycle of violence continues.

Denial is often the response that keeps those stuck in the cycle from breaking free. The common perception is that denial by the victim or even the perpetrator allows the cycle of violence to continue. Unfortunately the most crippling denial is often that of society.

We do not like the idea that violence cycles take place in the confines of our families, our churches or our neighborhoods, and we downplay or ignore our suspicions. We may have a sense that something is not right, yet we minimize what we see or wish it away. We think to ourselves, "It cannot be that bad" or "It is none of my business" or even "I am sure there is a good explanation for it."

Silence and denial keep the cycle of violence in motion. Only by shattering the silence and giving voice to those who are hurting can we finally see the cycle begin to

break down. We must stand up for those who are being victimized and help them find a way out of the abuse.

So what does breaking the cycle of violence look like?

It starts with the victim being honest about the abuse and telling others what is happening.

Once the abuse is out in the open, physical distance between the victim and abuser is necessary. Those involved need a cooling off period where they can honestly evaluate whether change can really take place in the relationship. It is vital that the victim realize the abusive behaviors, violence and manipulation tactics are not okay. Only with such insight and perspective can the victim make an informed choice about whether to continue in the relationship.

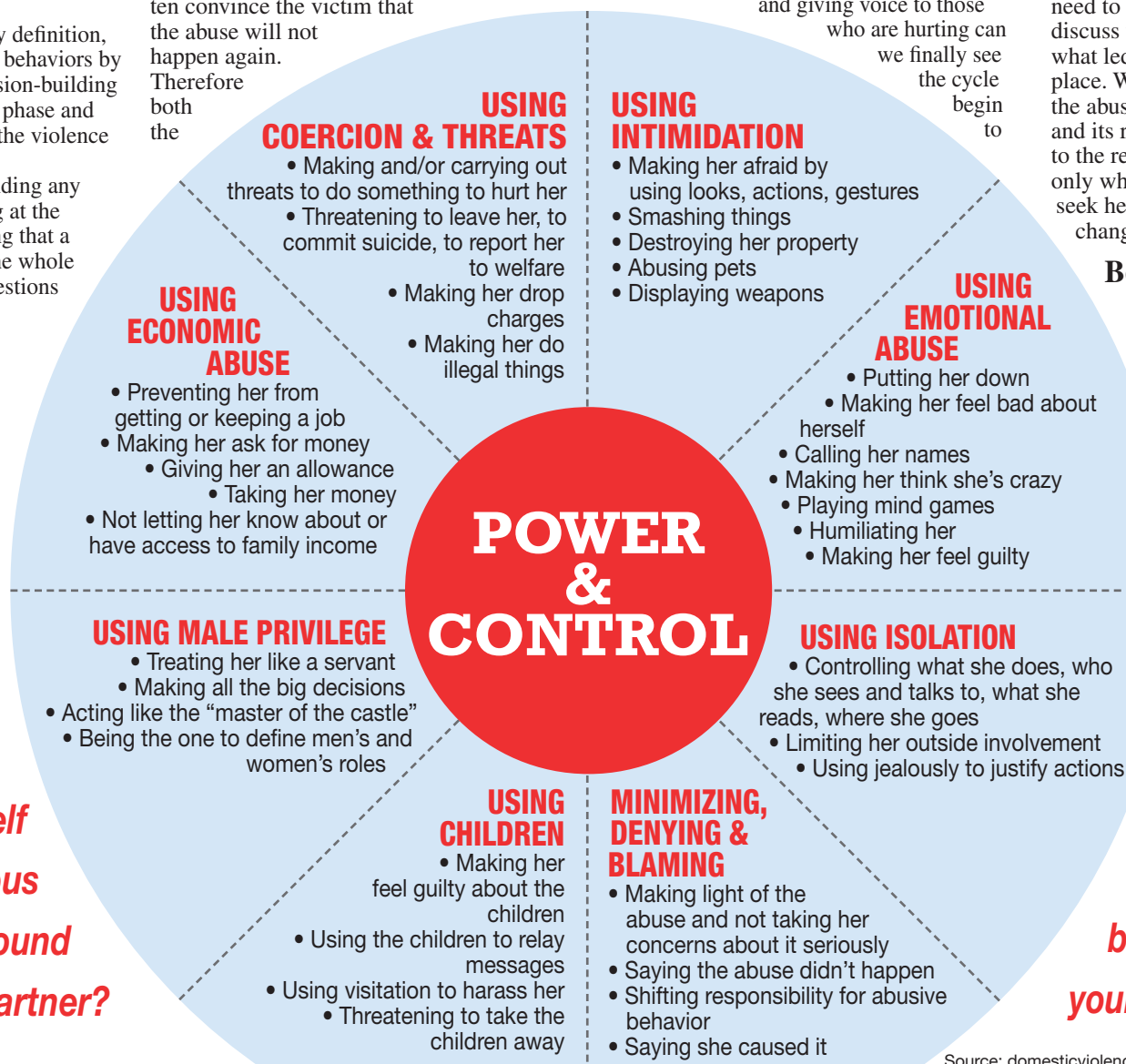
Individuals and family members will need to seek professional counseling to discuss what has happened and to process what led to the violence cycle in the first place. Without a willingness on the part of the abuser to be honest about the situation and its roots, the victim cannot safely return to the relationship. A relationship can heal only when both individuals are willing to seek help and show long-term, sustained changes in the relationship.

Be willing to help

If we want to empower victims then we must be willing to help. We must be willing to help those who want to leave and feel they have no way out. We must help them find their voice to say "enough is enough" and help them put a stop to the cycle of violence.

We cannot allow denial or fear to stand in our way in our families, churches, schools or communities. If we want to see more #WhyILeft on Twitter and less #WhyIStayed, then we must not only educate individuals on what the cycle of violence is but also show them how to break free. 🙏

*At some level,
do you think your
behavior could change
your partner's anger?*



Source: domesticviolence.org

The Violence Wheel — the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse
Each part shows a way to control or gain power.

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 100, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BETHLEHEM

► **Ramah Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate its 142nd homecoming Oct. 12. The service will begin at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. Q.T. Curtis will speak. William Bodiford is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Thomas First Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 5, 11 a.m. Lunch and afternoon singing will follow. Bud Thomason is pastor. ► **David Haynes** is the new pastor of **First Church, Center Point**. He previously served at First Church, Aniston, and Meadowbrook Church, Oxford. He holds a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in administration from Jacksonville State University, and a doctorate in theology from Andersonville Seminary in Camilla, Ga. He and his wife, Carol, have five children.



HAYNES

CLARKE

► **Loren Robinson** is the new director of missions for **Clarke**

Association. He holds a bachelor's degree in religion from Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and a master of divinity in biblical languages from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He previously served at Dauphin Way Church, Mobile, and First, Tillman's Corner



ROBINSON

in Mobile. He and his wife, Kathryn, have five children.

COLUMBIA

► **Hodgesville Church, Dothan**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 5. The service will begin at 10 a.m. Janie Harmon and Walter Wilson will provide special music. Former pastor Robert Kirkland will speak. Mark Bristow is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Brooklyn Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 12, 10:30 a.m. Pastor Jack Williamson will speak. Special music will be by Redeemed. Lunch will follow.

ESCAMBIA

► **Sardis Church, Atmore**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 12. The service will begin at 10 a.m. Robbie Knowles will speak and special music will be by Master's Trio. A covered dish lunch will follow. Earle Greene is interim pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Mickey Jones** is the new pastor of **Mount Moriah Church, Pell City**. He previously served at Popes Chapel Community Church, Ragland; Enon Church, Morris; and New Temple Church, Dora. He holds a bachelor's degree in religion and counseling from Samford University in Birmingham; a master's degree in education and educational specialist from Jacksonville State University; and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Marla, have three children. ► **Mount Pisgah Church, Cropwell**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 12. The service will begin at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. Trey Rayfield will direct music and The Tippy Ferguson Family will perform. Chris Alldridge is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Wayside Church, Alexander City**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 12. The service will begin at 11 a.m. Interim pastor Gerald Hallmark will speak. Lunch will follow. There will be no Sunday School, small groups or evening worship on this day.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Emmanuel Church, Scottsboro**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 5. The service will begin at 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Charlie Seabolt will speak. Marvin Helton is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Taylorville Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host an Out of the Boat Ministries event, Face to Face with Jesus, on Oct. 4, 9 a.m.-noon. Tollie Meggs will speak. Curtis Kelley is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Pleasant Grove Church, Salem**, will host Christian humorist Bill King as Billy Bob Bohannon on Oct. 12 at 11 a.m.

WASHINGTON

► **Reeds Chapel Church, McIntosh**, will celebrate its 164th anniversary and homecoming Oct. 12. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. and worship will be at 11 a.m. Big Blessin' will perform special music. A covered dish lunch and slideshow will follow the service. Ricky Turner is pastor. ☪

Church ANNIVERSARIES



Alexandria Baptist celebrates 100th anniversary

"The electricity was off but the power was still there" was one takeaway from Alexandria Baptist Church's recent 100th anniversary celebration.

On Aug. 3, the day the Calhoun Baptist Association church celebrated its centennial, the power unexpectedly went out 30 minutes before festivities were to begin and remained out until the message began at 11 a.m. But the temporary power outage didn't stop the church from celebrating.

The day kicked off with a meet and greet at 10 a.m. for those in attendance. During the service, which began at 10:30 a.m., interim pastor Tommy Reaves extended a welcome and several presentations were made. Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a framed certificate, and a presentation was made by Calhoun Association Director of Missions Sid Nichols. Janet Brittain, who served on the church's centennial celebration committee, presented the church with a framed certificate sent by the Calhoun County Commission. Certificates of recognition from others also were sent to the church.

Former pastor Michael J. Brooks delivered the day's message, and former choir director Charles Hess was joined by former organist Juanita Haver and former pianist Pat Irwin to lead the congregation in music. The Harmones southern gospel group sang during the service and after lunch.

According to Janice Gunter, who served on the centennial celebration committee with Brittain and Chris Colvin, old photos of the church were displayed and handheld fans were given to participants as a keepsake.

For Gunter, one of the most memorable parts of the anniversary was "getting to see members that have moved away ... getting to renew friendships and just feeling blessed that our church has had 100 years of ministry." (Julie Payne)

Grand Bay's Cloverdale Baptist marks 50 years

Cloverdale Baptist Church, Grand Bay, marked its 50th anniversary July 27 with an anniversary service that began at 11 a.m.

The anniversary featured the theme "Cloverdale Baptist Church ... Yesterday, Today and Forever" with Hebrews 13:8 as the focal Scripture passage.

Pastor/evangelist James Messer welcomed guests and directed the morning service, and former pastor Kenneth Goff delivered the message. Testimonies from church members about the past, present and future of Cloverdale Baptist were given.

John Reid, representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, was on hand to present the Mobile Baptist Association church with a framed certificate, and Chuck Davis, director of church development and African-American church planting for Mobile Association, presented the church with a certificate.

Also during the service former pastor Harold McInnis was recognized as pastor emeritus.

Following the service everyone enjoyed dinner on the grounds and the dedication of the church's newly enlarged and remodeled kitchen. (Julie Payne)

Ohatchee's Hebron celebrates 175th anniversary

For church historian Shelton Phillips the 175-year anniversary of Hebron Baptist Church, Ohatchee, was more of a homecoming and family reunion.

Phillips has been a member of the Calhoun Baptist Association church since 1952 and his father had been a member for 97 years at the time of his passing.

Phillips said there were about 60 people in attendance at the 11 a.m. service, fellowship lunch and afternoon concert with the Centennials from Etowah County.

Phillips also presented a church history report during the morning service and Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a certificate.

Pastor Jason Markham shared a message titled "A Gathering Home" and said he hopes the younger generation "will come to the church and take up where the older generations have left off."

To reach younger generations Hebron Baptist recently started a puppet ministry called Noah's Park on Wednesday nights to "show love to the community" and get "more youth involved," Markham explained. (Neisha Fuson)

REFLECTIONS

"WE'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD IN THE BROADCAST BOOTH THAT PASTOR ANTHONY HAS FINALLY ARRIVED HOME AND TURNED ON HIS TELEVISION AFTER A FULL DAY OF MINISTRY AND A LATE MEETING TONIGHT. SO - WITH YOUR APPROVAL, WE'RE GOING TO START THIS GAME OVER SO THIS WONDERFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD CAN SEE IT FROM THE KICKOFF.... THE COACHES ARE ABOUT READY...."



Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



ONE Mission

news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 | www.alsbom.org

Annual Meeting a Time to Celebrate

Somewhere I heard the statement, “The world has enough celebrities, we need more servants.” If you look at popular culture today, you can come to a place of agreement with that assessment. There are celebrities everywhere. Some are in sports, others on television or in the movies. Still others are celebrity figures made known through YouTube or social media. Was Paris Hilton the one who was described as being “famous for being famous”?

Of course Jesus is our example of servanthood. He took a towel and washed the disciples’ feet. He was a friend to sinners. Ultimately, He took up the cross and died for our sins and then was resurrected

from the dead. Everything about His life was a matter of selfless service.

The theme for this year’s State Convention Annual Meeting is one word, SERVE. We have devised an acrostic to describe the various ways we serve:

S – We serve by STARTING NEW CHURCHES
E – We serve by EVANGELIZING THE LOST
R – We serve by REVITALIZING CHURCHES
V – We serve by VOLUNTEERING TO BE ON MISSION
E – We serve by ENGAGING CULTURE WITH THE GOSPEL

Our annual meeting will be held Tuesday and Wednesday, November 11-12, at Lakeside Baptist Church in Birmingham. It will be a wonderful “family reunion” type of experience as we gather to celebrate what God is doing through Alabama Baptists. Steve Scoggins and

Daven Watkins will lead us to focus especially on the SERVE theme. We’ll hear reports about how your State Board of Missions and convention entities are serving God and others. We’ll also have the privilege of hearing on Tuesday night from Veritas, an exceptionally talented contemporary classical vocal group based out of Mobile, and Robert Smith, professor



of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School.

Jesus has called us to be His servants. As servants for Him, we can make an eternal difference in people’s lives. I encourage you to make every effort to attend this year’s annual meeting as we consider the multitude of opportunities we have as Alabama Baptists to SERVE.

Isaiah 41:10



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

For complete information about the annual meeting, including the schedule, hotel information, auxiliary meetings and messenger cards, **please visit www.abscannualmeeting.org**. Please note that you’ll need your church’s user name and password to request messenger cards (provided by the State Board of Missions to each church in a letter mailed the first week of October). Blank cards will not be issued, so you’ll need to know the names of your church’s messengers.



WMU FALL MISSIONS FESTIVALS

FALL MISSIONS FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN

OCTOBER 10-11, 2014 or **OCTOBER 17-18, 2014**

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs ▫ Begins at 5 p.m. Friday, concludes at 3 p.m. Saturday

COST: \$50 per person (includes lodging and meals)

At Fall Missions Festival, children will learn about what God is doing in the Ivory Coast. Children grades 1-6 and their leaders will hear from missionaries serving in the Ivory Coast as well as experience African culture through food, customs and other activities led by young adults who love and serve the Lord and have a heart for children and for missions.

For more information, go online to www.alabamawmu.org or contact Julie McGraw at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 226, or (334) 613-2226, jmcgraw@alsbom.org.

FALL MISSIONS FESTIVAL FOR ADULTS

OCTOBER 21, 2014 or **OCTOBER 23, 2014** ▫ WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs ▫ 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

COST: \$16 per person (includes lunch)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: October 14

Held on the beautiful campus of WorldSong, this year's festival will focus on the amazing sights and sounds of the Ivory Coast, the emphasis area for the 2014 International Mission Study. You will have opportunities to learn from and interact with missionaries who recently returned from serving in this area of the world. We'll pray together and enjoy other special activities. The Fall Missions Festival for Adults is open to adults of all ages.

For more information, go online to www.alabamawmu.org or contact Julie McGraw at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 226, or (334) 613-2226, jmcgraw@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



alsbom.org/cp

"The goal of the Cooperative Program

is to fund multiple ministries that work for the glory of God, and it has a proven track record for accomplishing that goal. The Cooperative Program has similarities to mutual funds. People invest in mutual funds, because they want to spread money into different funds, hoping to gain a safe return. Similarly, churches designate a percentage of their financial blessings through the Cooperative Program to assist multiple ministries such as International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, state missions and seminaries. By doing so, churches are trusting for an eternal return as God blesses their contributions." - DAVID BANKSON, pastor, Slackland Baptist Church, Leesburg



"I believe in the Cooperative Program,

because it is the greatest networking tool we have to spread the Gospel throughout the world. How else can Southern Baptists better fulfill the Great Commission?" - DEREK STAPLES, lead pastor, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville



For more information about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, or (334) 613-2283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.



alsbom.org/cp1

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

FREE

This 16-month calendar
(Sept. 2014-Dec. 2015) has State Board of
Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty
of room for you to add your church's events.

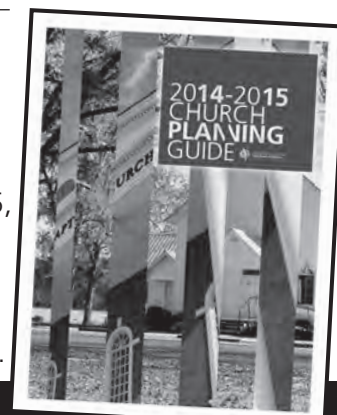


ALABAMA BAPTIST CONVENTION STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

order your 2014-2015 church planning guide

Limit 20 copies per church. To order, please call, fax or email your request to Charleen Hobbs at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 231; 334.288.2693 (fax); chobbs@alsbom.org; or order online at www.alsbom.org/cpg.

Be sure to include your name, church name, mailing address and number of guides needed (up to 20).



NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

The Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Awards will be given to individuals who have demonstrated evidence of leadership that has advanced the church in four key areas of Kingdom growth: spiritual growth, ministry advancement, missions involvement and numerical growth. The awards are given to three pastors, one from each of these categories: New Work, Established Work and Bi-Vocational. To

TROY L. MORRISON LEADERSHIP/CHURCH HEALTH AWARDS

nominate a pastor you feel has demonstrated Kingdom leadership, you may obtain an information form online at www.alsbom.org/leadership or by calling Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at **1-800-264-1225, ext. 218**, or **(334) 613-2218**, ddickey@alsbom.org. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION** of nominations is **October 15**.

**Deadline:
October 15th**

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE



Central Baptist Church,
2801 Highway 31 S., Decatur

November 1, 2014

COST: Free, including lunch

THIS IS THE 14TH ANNUAL TRAINING EVENT

for north Alabama and others who wish to attend. Conferences will cover all areas of library work plus history, copyright, card making and training in both Concourse and Atrium. Lunch will be provided at which time an author will be guest speaker. Registration will begin at 8 a.m. with general session beginning at 8:25 and the conclusion of conference at 3:30 p.m. There will be a book swap and lots of free items.

To register or for other information, please contact Eva Nell Hunter at (256) 353-5912, ext. 245 or (256) 303-7739 (cell); library@cbcdecatur.org or enhunter@charter.net.

FAITH-FOCUSED SECURITY TRAINING

LEVEL A TRAINING FOR 2014

This is the most basic training for the missions volunteer who travels occasionally to low-risk areas on mission trips. Participants will receive a full day of instruction led by Sentinel Trainers certified by Fort Sherman Academy covering topics like travel security, code of conduct, crime survival and basic crisis policy all from a faith-based perspective.

- October 4 - First Baptist Church, Russellville
- October 25 - Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan
- November 1 - Central Baptist Church, Mt. Olive
- November 22 - Eastwood Baptist Church, Monroeville
- December 6 - Milbrook Baptist Church, Millbrook

COST IS \$40 PER ATTENDEE (includes lunch and breaks).

Reservations are non-refundable.

LEVEL B TRAINING FOR 2014

Four sessions of classroom instruction led by a recognized leader in faith-based training for missions organizations. This level is designed for pastors, ministers of missions, church staff, mission team leaders and other mission leaders who travel or lead mission teams to elevated risk locations. Sessions will cover security, code of conduct, crime survival, dealing with unfriendly governments, detention and questioning. Role play will be used.

- December 4-6: Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

COST IS \$200 PER ATTENDEE (includes materials, Saturday lunch and breaks). Reservations are non-refundable.

REGISTER ONLINE www.alsbom.org/ffst

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sheron Poole at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 298, (334) 613-2298, spoole@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

Children's Honor Choir

Children's Honor Choir is an auditioned 150-voice children's choir, grades 4-6.

DEADLINE for audition forms and CD is **November 1, 2014**. The choir will be touring Feb 27-Mar 1, 2015, in Fairhope/Daphne/Mobile areas. Forms and information available online at www.alsbom.org/chc.

ENGAGE 24

24 DAYS OF PRAYER
ONEMISSIONSTUDENTS.ORG/ENGAGE24

OCTOBER

- 1** Pray for students across Alabama to be open to the Gospel message
- 2** Pray for students at Auburn University
- 3** Pray for students at Alabama State University
- 4** Pray for students at the University of Alabama in Huntsville
- 5** Pray for students at the University of Alabama in Birmingham
- 6** Pray for students at the University of North Alabama

- 7** Pray for students at the University of Montevallo
- 8** Pray for dorm rooms and classrooms to be places of peace
- 9** Pray for commuter students
- 10** Pray for students at Troy University
- 11** Pray for church collegiate groups across Alabama
- 12** Pray for students at Jacksonville State University
- 13** Pray for students at Samford University, Judson College and the University of Mobile
- 14** Pray for ENGAGE24 and for students to be bold in their witness for Christ TODAY!
- 15** Pray for students at the University of South Alabama
- 16** Pray for students at Auburn Montgomery
- 17** Pray for students at Alabama A&M University

- 18** Pray specifically for relationships with non-believers to be strengthened
- 19** Pray for students at the University of West Alabama
- 20** Pray for community college campuses across our state
- 21** Pray for students at the University of Alabama
- 22** Pray for relationships with international students on our campuses
- 23** Pray for faculty, staff and administrators on campuses across our state
- 24** Pray for campus ministers on the college campus "mission field" in Alabama

ENGAGE24 is an evangelism effort through Baptist Campus Ministries in Alabama and across the nation and is sponsored by the Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. This resource is made possible by gifts from Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Fall Senior Adult Retreat

Monday through Wednesday, **October 13-15**, Shocco Springs

Declare: "One generation will declare Your works to the next and will proclaim Your mighty acts." Psalm 145:4 (HCSB)

Preacher: Herbert Brown, pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Greenville

Celebration Leader: Debbie Childers, The Reality Group, Austell, Ga.

Music Leader: Chris Weide, First Baptist Church, Opp

More than 200 senior adults gathered at Shocco Springs in April where they praised God and focused on ways to share their stories of God's mighty acts in their lives with their children, grandchildren and those whose lives cross paths with theirs. They joined in praise, worship and laughter. Maxine Bearden from Ozark Baptist Church was there. She said, "I always come away from Shocco Springs uplifted, feeling closer to God! I am always ready to return. I am never disappointed." Will you plan to come and bring a few good friends?

Registration: 1-800-280-1105 (Cost is per person, based upon choice of lodging.)

For other information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org. You may also visit www.alsbom.org/fallsenioradultretreat for updates as they become available.



SENIOR ADULT Choir Celebrations

October 23: Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Montgomery • The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla

October 24: Providence Baptist Church, Opelika • First Baptist Church, Bay Minette

For more information and to register, go online to www.alsbom.org/senioradultchoircelebrations. For other information, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khiggs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

ALABAMA CHURCH PLANTER NETWORK DINNER

Speaker: Bob Logan

Schedule: dinner, 6 p.m.; worship led by Chelsea Westover Church, 6:30 p.m.; message by Bob Logan, 6:45 p.m.; breakout sessions, 7:15 p.m.; wives led by Marybeth Culbreth, pastor/planters led by Bob Logan; dismissal to pick up children in childcare, 8:30 p.m.

Who Should Attend? Church planters and wives and/or anyone interested in coaching are invited to this event.

About Bob Logan: No one has influenced church planting in America over the past two decades more than Bob Logan. The Basic Training we now use (Alabama Church Planting Basics) is based upon the

Church Planter Toolkit developed by Logan. He is also currently very active in coaching planters, pastors and other missionary personnel. He is the author of *Coaching 101* and numerous other books and publications.

**SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 9,
2014 ≈ PETE HANNA
CENTER, SAMFORD
UNIVERSITY, 800
LAKESHORE DRIVE,
BIRMINGHAM**

Registration/Cost: Go online to www.alsbom.org/churchplanterdinner. There will be no cost for those who have completed either Basic Training or Churches Planting Churches Training. All other participants will be charged \$25 per couple or \$15 per individual. The deadline for registration is no later than noon on Wednesday, November 5.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

KEYBOARD FESTIVALS

November 1: Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham

November 3: First Baptist Church, Fairhope

November 4: First Baptist Church, Enterprise

COST: \$5 per person

For more information and to register, go online to www.alsbom.org/keyfest. For other information, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khiggs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

SERVE

2014 Alabama Baptist State Convention
Annual Meeting
November 11-12, Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham

TUESDAY EVENING



MUSIC:

Veritas

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SPEAKER:

Robert Smith

*Professor of Christian Preaching,
Beeson Divinity School*



THEME INTERPRETATION SPEAKERS



Daven Watkins

*Pastor, First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove
Wednesday morning*



Steve Scoggins

*Pastor, First Baptist Church, Opelika
Tuesday afternoon*

CONVENTION SERMON



Tim Cox

*Pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea
Wednesday morning*

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS **John Killian**

*President, Alabama Baptist State Convention,
Pastor, Maytown Baptist Church
Tuesday morning*



HOTEL GUIDE The following hotels have offered special rates to those attending the State Convention Annual Meeting. Remember to ask for the Alabama Baptist State Convention rate when you call. Rates listed do not include taxes. This information is provided as a service and not intended to be a recommendation of any kind. If you have problems making a reservation or securing the posted rate at any of these hotels, please contact Charleen Hobbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or chobbs@alsbom.org.

9 **Springhill Suites by Marriott Colonnade**

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1 **Hyatt Regency Birmingham**

(Convention Hotel)
1000 Riverchase Galleria, Birmingham
\$122 • 800-233-1234

2 **Birmingham Marriott**

3590 Grandview Pkwy, Birmingham
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3 **Candlewood Suites**

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4 **Hampton Inn & Suites Hoover**

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\$119 • 205-380-3300

5 **Hampton Inn Birmingham/Colonnade**

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6 **Hilton Perimeter Park**

8 Perimeter Park South, Birmingham
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\$125 • 205-967-2700

7 **Marriott Courtyard Colonnade**

4300 Colonnade Pkwy, Birmingham
Free internet
\$99 • 205-967-4466

8 **Marriott Courtyard Hoover**

1824 Montgomery Hwy S, Hoover
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10 **Days Inn Vestavia**

1485 Montgomery Hwy, Vestavia
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\$64.99 two queens
205-823-4300

11 **Embassy Suites Hoover**

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12 **Microtel Inn & Suites**

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For complete information about the convention, including an interactive hotel guide, please visit www.abscannualmeeting.org.

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Register for the Retreat:

After you make your lodging arrangements at Shocco, you will need to register for the retreat by going online to www.alsbom.org/bibledrillretreat and clicking on 2015 Bible Drill Retreat Information.

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SAVE THE DATE

Shocco Springs
March 8-11, 2015

53RD Annual Conference

alabama association of baptist secretaries

Pastors and ministry assistants begin now planning for this great conference. Remember to include this in your 2015 church budget.

Cost: \$261 (which includes three nights double occupancy room, eight meals and program fees). After January 21, 2015, the cost will be \$276.

Worship Leader: Libby Stokes Woolwine

Conference Speaker: Jodi Burbank

For conference updates, check online at www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com



Student Missions Weekend

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

January 16-17, 2015
for students in grades 7-12 and their leaders

Cost: \$45 per person

Registration deadline:

January 2
AT STUDENT MISSIONS WEEKEND (**SMW**)
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- Experience dynamic worship led by an awesome praise band.
- Dive deep into God's Word through Bible study.
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For more information, go online to www.alabamawmu.org/students, or contact Erin Bishop at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 224, or (334) 613-2224, ebishop@alsbom.org.

Renew

a day away
with friends

February 28, 2015
9:00am - 3:00pm

Heritage Baptist Church
Montgomery, Alabama

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Registration deadline: February 19

For more information
visit alabamawmu.org/renew
or contact Julie McGraw
at jmcgraw@alsbom.org
or 800.264.1225 ext. 226

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jmcgraw@alsbom.org

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2015 Children's Missions Explosion

February 14, 2015 - Hillcrest Baptist, Enterprise
Liberty Baptist, Chelsea

February 21, 2015 - Chapel Hill Baptist, Northport
Mt. Zion Baptist, Huntsville

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All 4 Him

#cme15

FOCUS on One Mission

RA WEEK HIKE 4 MISSIONS

Nov. 2-9, 2014


RA Week Ideas:

- RAs usher and receive the offering.
- RAs have a Recognition Ceremony.
- RA Camp Out.
- Conduct a "Hike 4 Missions" to raise money for the Lottie Moon Offering. Information is available at www.alsbom.org/ra.
- Have a Pastor's Table at the Wednesday night church supper. RAs are special guests of the pastor and staff. (This is like a Captain's Table on a ship.)

For more information about RA Week observances, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.

START RA BASKET BALL



- Join or start an association RA league.
- Follow the guidelines of RA Basketball, available online at www.alsbom.org/ra.
- Do mission projects as outlined in the "Alabama Royal Ambassador Advancement Workbook," also available at www.alsbom.org/ra.

Note: A team does not have to be in an RA league to play in the February state RA tournament. The team does have to be a Royal Ambassador group and must fulfill the advancement requirements as stated in the guidebook.

For more information about RA Basketball, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.



SOAPBOX DERBY

State Race:

Saturday, **October 18, 2014**

Location:

Dexter Avenue, in front of the Alabama State Capitol

Rules & information:

www.alsbom.org/ra

For other information, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.

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Platform to speak

Sports broadcaster reaches people statewide

By Bruce Sims
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jerry Young, of Birmingham, is fast becoming known as the “Voice of Alabama High School Sports.”

“I began broadcasting high school games in 1982 on the radio as a hobby, but it’s one of those hobbies that has become a career,” he said. “As a result of this I’ve seen a couple of hundred different games and matches and along the way some phenomenal athletes. With today’s digital media we are able to broadcast a tele-

vised game via the Internet.”

Young’s philosophy toward broadcasting is to keep it positive.

“I want the parents and grandparents as well as the athletes involved to be able to look back on a particular game and hear something positive about their role in it. The videotapes will be something that they’ll play for their children,” he continued.

Because of his position Young is often asked to give motivational talks or lead in devotions.

“My job gives me a platform to speak to groups, and one of the things I try to get across is the importance of getting one’s priorities in order, such as their spiritual, academic, physical and social lives. I tell them that when they do, they have taken a major step toward becoming a success in life,” he said.

Standing 10 feet tall

A favorite quote Young often shares is by the famous athlete Jesse Owens.

Owens said, “It behooves a man with a God-given ability to stand 10 feet tall. You never know how many youngsters may be watching you.”

Young also appears often on radio and TV segments across Alabama.

A former deacon at Berney Points Baptist Church, Hoover, Young and his wife, Rejohnia, an RN at a Birmingham hospital, recently moved to Calera where they now

attend First Baptist Church, Pelham.

“I’m the chief cook and bottle washer of a men’s group that meets monthly to hear a speaker and eat a steak for lunch,” he said. “Each man in our group is responsible for bringing another person to the meeting.”

Because of his job with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Young is unable to teach a Sunday School class or do any of the other things he enjoys about church life.

“Ours is digital media television that reaches throughout the state,” he said. “The NFHS, which broadcasts the games and

state championships, is in all 50 states. Alabama is the first to carry a game each week.”

Young said he would be traveling from Florence to Brewton this season for the weekly Friday Football Game.

“We’ll also be doing volleyball, basketball, baseball and softball,” he said. “By May things should start to wind down a bit as I’ll be broadcasting the state swimming championships from Auburn University as well as the track and field championships.”

There also will be the soccer championships and possibly a few others to make the schedule.

“From there we start planning the following year’s schedule,” he said.

Of all the aspects of his work Young most enjoys speaking to the athletes.

“I tell them that God has a purpose for them. When they put their lives in His hands and trust in Him with all their heart, He’ll open doors they never could have imagined,” he said.

Young said he offers one last point of advice when he speaks, whether it’s to a team in the locker room or to a Quarterback Club.

“I tell them to never count the things that they do but to count the things in life that really count,” he said. “I feel they’ll not only grow up right if they do, but the Lord has a way of rewarding them in the long run.”



Photo courtesy of Jerry Young

Jerry Young, of Birmingham, calls a recent football game in Florence.

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Living

Walking Differently (Part 2 of 2)

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

Last week we began looking at the Christian life as walking differently based on the last half of Ephesians 4. We considered the first of two measuring sticks of a life that is different — that we are to walk differently from unconverted outsiders. After giving a graphic cross-section description of the world of unconverted outsiders, Ephesians 4:20–22 continues, “But that is not the way you learned Christ — assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self ... and to put on the new self.” With these words as our beginning point, this week we think about a second measuring stick — walking differently from our own unconverted past.

Terms often used to speak theologically of the beginning of the Christian life contain the implicit truth that Christians are to live differently from what was true of their pre-conversion days. For example, the common term “conversion” suggests a definite and identifiable change. “New birth” implies a similar truth — that becoming a Christian involves a new beginning or a new life. Similarly the expression “redeemed” conveys the thought of a payment made that sets a person free. In its use to describe being a Christian, redeemed includes being freed from sin’s penalty and power — a freedom that cost Jesus His life’s blood.

Put on the new self

Letting the theology of Christian conversion inform us about Christian living, our passage in Ephesians 4:20–32 gives a number of particular ways in which we are to live differently from how we lived previously. Using the imagery of a change of clothes the passage maintains that in becoming Christians we put off the old self and put on the new self. Moving beyond this imagery, the passage gets down to particulars concerning what walking differently from our old, unconverted past is to look like.

The passage instructs us to lay aside false speaking and put on true speaking (4:25). It tells us to put away sinful anger and replace it with a controlled temper (4:26–27). A series of exchanges follow — putting off stealing and engaging in honest work (4:28) as well as leaving behind corrupt speech that defiles others in order to adopt edifying speech that builds up others (4:29). Walking differently involves a total wardrobe exchange.

Pre-conversion attitudes

Lest the one-for-one exchanges elongate the list of differences that Christ in one’s life causes to happen, the passage groups six pre-conversion attitudes that are to be put away. “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (4:31). In the world at large people do encounter angry people with bitter attitudes as well as those who spew out malicious slander. However, our theology of Christian living should dictate that we not be numbered among such folks.

A grouping of new attitudes — kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness (4:32) — is to replace the former ways of thinking, acting and reacting. Between these two groupings of some of the characteristics of the old self and those of the new self, which is described as being “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:24), is the serious command not to grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30). The idea is rather clear. If as Christians we do not walk differently from our unconverted past, the Holy Spirit will be put to grief.

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.



**“I tell them to never count the things that they do
but to count the things in life that really count.”**

Jerry Young, sports broadcaster

Jo Hosmer, a member of Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla, works on a baby bib for diaper bags that will be filled with supplies and donated to Bibb County Save-A-Life by her church's Crafters group.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Stitching in His NAME

Tannehill Valley Baptist ladies use sewing skills to minister to those in need

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Every Monday morning they come to Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla. They're not there to study verses or sing in a choir — their ministry is a skill that has taken years to learn and perfect.

They are Crafters, a group of 25 ladies who use their sewing, knitting and crocheting skills to bless those who receive their handiwork.

The group began in March 2013 with four people, gradually growing as more and more women heard about the ministry.

Getting started

Pat Thomas, Crafters' founder, was a member of a similar group at her previous church, First Presbyterian Church, Wetumpka. When she came to Tannehill Valley Baptist, Thomas saw the potential to lead the ministry that she had loved being a part of.

"It's wonderful to be able to make things for people and to be able to get to know people who

you may not be as close to normally," Thomas said.

The Crafters' first-ever project was making what they call "tie-throw" blankets, in which two pieces of fabric are placed on top of each other and tied together in knots at the edges to form the border. Martha Green, a Crafters charter member, said they wanted to start with something simple to show ladies they didn't have to be an expert seamstress to be a Crafter.

"We would tell people, 'If you can tie a knot you can come on Monday mornings,'" Green said.

As the group grew, so did the expertise as women who had been sewing and crocheting their whole lives began to teach those who were new to the needle and thread.

After completing tie-throws the group made specially designed shirts for women with breast cancer. The Crafters purposely used fun patterns and decorative trim

to give the women something to smile about.

The group also has made purses for Tannehill Valley's women's ministry.

The biggest project the ladies have undertaken was making Christmas stockings in 2013. They made more than 300 for children at Casa Betania Children's Home in

Mexico, local nursing home residents, the ill and anyone who chose to buy them. For the children of Casa Betania the Crafters embroidered each child's name on their very own stocking. Tannehill Valley has an ongoing

missions relationship with the children's home and organizes annual missions trips to Mexico.

While the group has been making and giving, they've also been receiving. The majority of their supplies come from anonymous donations of fabric and money.

'Loaves and fishes'

"The more we make and give away, the more that comes to us. It's kind of like the loaves and fishes — the materials keep multiplying," Green said.

If one were to ask any Crafter for a specific example of the loaves and fishes each would say, "The material from heaven." That is what the group calls several large boxes of fabric scraps that were donated to them by a fabric store in Bessemer.

These scraps produced the

Christmas stockings and window drapes for Grace Place Mission in Bessemer and will be the source of many more projects to come.

The women also were given two ironing boards, six sewing machines and one serger.

The Crafters are currently working on making diaper bags for Bibb County Save-A-Life. The bags will be filled with such items as blankets, baby booties, outfits and bibs, also made by the sewing group. Additional items, such as baby wipes, baby powder, baby oil and shampoo, have already been collected for the bags.

The ladies are planning to

**To learn more
about Crafters,
call the church
at 205-477-6811.**

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

How would you like to get rid of that monthly mortgage payment? You don't have one? Well, how would you like to have some money growing at 3.65%? What's the catch, right? Thank the Lord, there is no catch with a reverse mortgage. Contrary to some myths (nice word for falsehoods) floating around, when a person gets a reverse mortgage, their name stays on the deed to the home and it's their home!

They can add a room, paint it pink, purple or polka dot. They can sell it since it's their home, right? Right! Now, what obligations would they have? I'm glad you asked because there are three obligations. They must pay for homeowners insurance just as they are required to do with any mortgage. They are required to pay property tax unless they are exempt from property tax. And last of all, they are required to maintain the home. That means if the



Jimmy Dixon

paint starts peeling and wood is exposed to the elements, FHA wants you to keep it from deteriorating and they'll expect you to put some paint on it.

Over the past (almost 10) years we've been able to pay off hundreds of mortgages and also help those who want to establish a growing line of credit so they'll have funds to draw on when necessary. It's possible to have more money in your line of credit than your house is worth and have your home at the same time. In other words, you can have your cake and eat it too!

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy Dixon covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon and Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free reverse mortgage brochure or free quote, call him direct at 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



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Photo by Neisha Fuson

Martha Green (far right) and other ladies of the Crafters group of Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla, work together on a quilting project they will later donate.



Photos by Neisha Fuson

TOP: Martha Green (left) and Pat Thomas sort through items the Crafters group will donate to Bibb County Save-A-Life.
BOTTOM: A Crafters volunteer irons material to make a bib.

donate any extra items to the Bessemer Save-A-Life or a local hospital.

While the Crafters intentionally strive to sow blessings into the community, they've been sowing blessings within their group as well.

Donnie Handley, a Centerville resident who was a member of

Tannehill Valley from age 5 until she was married, said she loves to fellowship with her fellow Crafters.

'Willing hearts'

"Knowing that you're doing something good with your time is just a great feeling. We all look forward to Monday mornings," Handley said.

Although some of the Crafters don't sew at all, their "willing hearts" are all they need to minister, Green said.

"Some of our ladies are disabled, some are slow of speech, hard of hearing, losing eyesight, have arthritis or other physical issues, but all have hearts full of the love of the Lord." ❧

Samford to hold 11th annual Hymn Sing

"Singing with the Saints" is the theme for the 11th annual Samford Hymn Sing on Oct. 5 in Reid Chapel, according to Eric Mathis, professor of music and director of anima: the Forum for Worship and the Arts, who also will provide the organ accompaniment.

The program begins at 2 p.m. under the musical leadership of Joe Hopkins, dean of the School of the Arts. Also featured will be the Samford University Chorale under the direction of Sherrie Lawhon.

Free and open to the public, the program is an afternoon of congregational singing of hymns and

gospel songs selected by audience participants.

Frank Jones, a 1974 graduate of Samford and pianist for the Alabama Singing Men since 1983, will provide the piano accompaniment. A popular and longtime church pianist, he has been conference pianist for the Jubilee Conferences in Gatlinburg, Tenn., and Myrtle Beach, S.C., since 2002. He incorporated Frank Jones Ministries in 2007, which is a ministry focused on worship and enrichment events.

Mathis said, "The Hymn Sing is but one piece of the worship mosaic on the Samford University campus. We continue it because year after year young and old look forward to an afternoon of singing hymns that have been important to the Christian community at large as well as our individual spiritual formation and development."

Also "we continue the Hymn Sing because the heart of the Christian vocation is loving God and loving neighbor, and singing one another's songs is but one way to deepen our love for the image of Christ who is revealed in our neighbor," Mathis said.

Begun in 2003 as The Old Song Sing-Along, the popular program has featured the music of composer Philip Bliss and gospel music performer Dick Baker. (Samford)



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Marion Matters

Judson students, faculty, staff minister through community outreach in Perry County

Marion Matters is Judson College's community outreach program that engages students, faculty and staff in a variety of work projects in the city of Marion and Perry County.

In early September, a total of 14 volunteer crews from the college traveled to different venues in Marion to perform service tasks. Community work sites included a cemetery, schools, libraries and nursing homes. More than 130 people participated in the program.

At the Marion Cemetery

four crews worked to clean the grounds — picking up trash, hauling away brush and painting the wrought iron fence.

One of the cemetery crews was led by Thomas Wilson, head of the college's biology department. "Dr. Olson, the students and I visited many graves of slaves and freedmen," Wilson said.

"The students learned how a few people in Marion have taken it upon themselves to rescue old graves that have been taken by time and by kudzu. We feel good about our community service project," he said.

The cemetery crews comprised the largest number of workers,



Photo courtesy of Judson College

which included 40 students and six faculty members; Judson College President David Potts also joined the cemetery cleanup project.

Additional Judson work crews were assigned to the following sites: Sowing Seeds of Hope Community Center, Albert Turner Elementary School, Lincoln School, Perry County Nursing Home, Southland Nursing Home, Marion-Perry County Library and Marion Academy.

Marion Matters traditionally begins campus activities every fall semester, and it is organized and directed by Judson's Student Services' Office of Faith-Based Service and Learning.

Claire Feazel, newly appointed coordinator of Faith-Based Service

Judson College work crews clean windows at Marion Academy as part of Marion Matters, an annual community outreach program.

and Learning, said, "We ask first-year students to do Marion Matters to see the opportunities of helping the community."

'Larger impact'

Feazel believes passionately about how all students are responsible for helping Marion. "If we all just do a little bit to help the place that we are living in, eventually we will see small changes, and eventually small changes will have a larger impact," she said. (Judson)

Want to know GOD?

Pastor Scott Moore
Crooked Oak Baptist Church,
Tuscumbia

Hopefully by taking the time to read this column, you are interested in knowing God. And quite likely you already know a little about God. The question is this: "Is it possible to know about God without really knowing God?"

To find the answer let's ask two godly men.

The first, a layman named Leonard Hampton, was a forester, college professor and an avid witness for Jesus Christ. He is, right now, in the very presence of the living God. If we could ask Leonard right now, "Can someone know about God without really knowing God?" Leonard would undoubtedly answer, "Yes. Sadly many people will miss heaven by the space of 18 inches — the distance from the head to the heart. Many people believe in the historical Jesus. Some even believe that He is able to give them eternal life. The problem is that they have never truly accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. They have never established a relationship with Him."

Now let's ask the same question of seminary president Gray Allison, an amazing man in his 80s that still has the same passion and clarity he had when I met him almost 40 years ago. Gray would agree with Leonard that, yes it is possible to know about God without really knowing Him. He would take Leonard's statement one step further: "Nowhere in the Bible does it tell us that we should accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. The Bible says that we must accept Him as Lord."

Confused? You needn't be. Leonard and Gray aren't giving two different answers to your question. Combining their messages these two men would jointly answer, "Want to know God?" like this: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9-10, 13). 🙏



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Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Ten Commandments will stay at Oklahoma state capitol

NORMAN, Okla. — A Baptist minister suing for removal of a Ten Commandments monument at the Oklahoma state capitol won't get his day in court, a district judge said Sept. 19.

Bruce Prescott, executive director of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists and a member of NorthHaven Church, Norman, Okla., joined three others in a lawsuit in 2013 claiming a privately funded 6-foot-tall granite monument authorized by the Legislature in 2009 and placed on the capitol grounds in 2012 violated the state constitution's ban against using public property to support "any sect, church, denomination or system of religion."

However, District Court Judge Thomas Prince of Tulsa County, Okla., disagreed, finding the monument serves a "secular" purpose recognizing the Ten Commandments' place in American history and thereby is not an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

Two of the plaintiffs claimed posting religious teachings on public property constituted endorsement of a religion other than their own. The other two — Prescott and Jim Huff, a member of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City — said the Ten Commandments are part of their faith tradition, and they object to their beliefs being exploited for political reasons.

New study connects religion with drug abstinence

WACO, Texas — Young people are less likely to try alcohol and drugs if they attend religious services regularly and self-identify as religious, a new study by Baylor University in Waco, Texas, has found.

The study suggests that youth who feel connected to a "higher power" may experience more purpose in life, and therefore be more inclined to avoid chemical substances when faced with hardships in life.

Those interviewed who are recovering from substance abuse warned against seeing church and youth group attendance alone as antidotes to the lure of drugs and alcohol. They said they became addicts and alcoholics despite consistent worship attendance and strong identities as Christians.

The study of 195 juvenile offenders was conducted by researchers at Baylor's Institute for Studies of Religion, the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. ■

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Robert Chester Edge Jr. Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies

Robert Chester Edge Jr., who served several Alabama Baptist churches as pastor, died Sept. 21. He was 79.

Edge graduated from Howard College in Birmingham (now Samford University) in 1957 and earned a divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He served as pastor of Rocky Hill Baptist Church, Uriah; Cubahatchie Baptist Church, Shorter; First Baptist Church, Beatrice; First Baptist Church, Maplesville; First Baptist Church, Lafayette; Southlawn Baptist Church, Montgomery; First Baptist Church, Thorsby; and Berney Points Baptist Church, Hoover, where he served until his retirement in 1995.

Edge was preceded in death by his wife, Sue. He is survived by four children, 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



EDGE

Losing clout

Study shows religion's influence declining in society

More Americans today say religion's influence is losing ground just when they want it to play a stronger role in public life and politics.

A new Pew Research Center survey finds 72 percent of Americans say religion's influence is declining in society — the highest percentage since Pew began measuring the trend in 2001, when only 52 percent held that view.

"Most people (overwhelmingly Christians) view this as a bad thing," said Greg Smith, associate director of Pew's Religion & Public Life Project. "That unhappiness may be behind their desire for more religion and politics."

Growing numbers want their politicians to pray in public and for their clergy to endorse candidates from the pulpit. And nearly half of Americans say business owners with religious objections to gay "marriage" should be able to refuse wedding-related services to same-sex couples.

There are three ways to look at the findings, released Sept. 22:

- ▶ 49 percent want churches and other houses of worship to "express their views on day-to-day social and political issues," up from 43 percent in 2010.

- ▶ 41 percent say political leaders today show "too little expression of religious faith and prayer," up from 37 percent in the last mid-term election. "People still see religion as one of the foundational sources of morality. They still want to see that in their leaders," said John Green, professor of political science at the University of Akron

and senior research adviser for the Pew Research Center.

- ▶ 32 percent support clergy endorsing candidates from the pulpit. That's a jump from 24 percent in 2010 although nearly twice as many — "63 percent, including some highly religious people — still say 'No, no, no,'" Smith said.

Reversal of trends

"It's a surprising reversal of trends," Smith added. In 2010, 52 percent said churches should keep out of politics.

Party identification and social attitudes "are becoming even more polarized between people who identify with a religion — mostly Christians — and those who claim no religious label (the "nones"), said Smith.

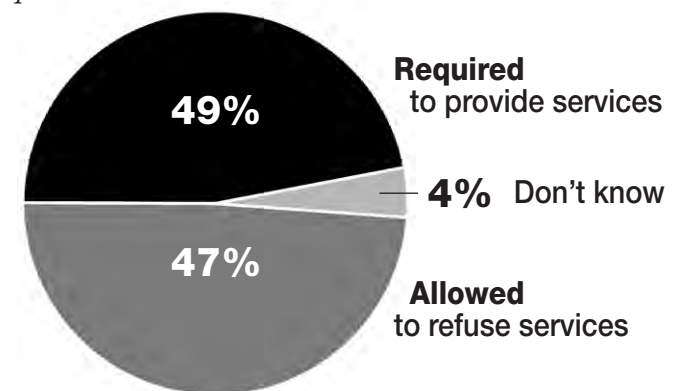
Even so, the survey finds no noteworthy change since 2010 in party preferences: 48 percent of registered voters identify with or lean to the Democratic Party and 43 percent favor the Republican Party. Most black Protestants and "nones" expect to vote Democratic this fall, while evangelical Protestants expect to vote for the GOP candidate in their district.

The public is almost exactly split on whether wedding vendors, such as caterers or florists, should be required to provide services to all clientele (49 percent) or be allowed to decline if they object for religious reasons (47 percent).

Those who said businesses should serve all clientele, included

Should wedding-related businesses be required to provide services to same-sex couples?

If a business provides wedding services, such as catering or flowers, should it be allowed to refuse those services to same-sex couples for religious reasons or required to provide those services as it would to all other customers?



Source: Pew Research Center

61 percent of "nones," 57 percent of Catholics and 59 percent of black Protestants.

However, 71 percent of white evangelicals and 49 percent of white Protestant mainline faithful said wedding businesses should be allowed to refuse gay couples when owners have religious grounds.

Since May 2013 when Pew measured this question, bans on gay "marriage" have been overturned state after state.

Still, in 2003, Smith noted, 55 percent called gay activity sinful. It's too soon to know if the 2014 findings on gay "marriage" are an anomaly or the first sign of a change in direction for public attitudes.

Fewer people say the Obama administration is "friendly toward religion" (30 percent) than said so in 2009 (37 percent). Yet that could be irrelevant in the mid-term elections.

Religion overall is less prominent and less controversial than it was 10 or 15 years ago, Smith said. He cited examples in previous elections where contentious religious issues made headlines — and no difference at the polls.

Jessica Martinez, a Pew research associate, said, "Social issues such as birth control, abortion and gay 'marriage' are consistently at the bottom of the list of what's most important to voters. There's no evidence these will be deal breakers now." (RNS)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 5

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

SECURED WITH CONFIDENCE

Hebrews 4:14–5:6

Confidence (4:14–16)

This passage introduces the theme of Jesus’ high priesthood. The writer makes three statements about Christ as our High Priest in verse 14. First Jesus is a great High Priest. Jesus was superior to the priests of Aaron. Second Jesus has passed through the heavens. He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. The priests of Aaron served in an earthly sanctuary. Third Jesus is called the Son of God. This declaration identifies the historical Jesus as our High Priest. It also presents Jesus as the one who perfectly combined humanity and divinity in His ministry for lost sinners.

Because Jesus is our High Priest we can hold fast our confession. We are to hold fast to the faith. This continues the theme of perseverance in Hebrews (2:1; 3:6, 12–14; 4:11). The greatness of Jesus as our High Priest encourages believers to draw near to Him and to seek His help in times of testing.

In verse 15 the writer stated three truths about Jesus that would help readers know that He was no stranger in helping struggling human beings. First Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. The word “weaknesses” includes any form of human stumbling or failure. Christ has sympathy for the needy. Second Jesus has been tempted in every respect, just as we are. He faced the full range of temptations we face. Satan tempted Jesus, like he had tempted Adam and Eve in Eden, with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Because Jesus never yielded to sin, we know that He faced more intense temptation. We say “yes” to sin before Satan has to utilize all of his weapons of temptation against us. Jesus said “no” as Satan hurled every arrow in his quiver. Third Jesus was without sin. Tempted in every area of personal life, He remained sinless. Jesus is truly the holy

High Priest. Christians can be comforted with the truth that nothing that entices them is foreign to their Lord. He too has felt the tug of sin, and yet He never gave in to such temptations.

How are we to respond to our sinless Savior? The writer teaches four things in verse 16. First we must draw near. Our weaknesses and sins should not drive us away from God. Rather we ought to go to God. Second we come to the throne of grace. This is the place where God blesses repentant sinners with His favor. God the Father, with Jesus at His side, graciously dispenses help from heaven to those who need forgiveness and strength in temptation. Third we come in an attitude of confidence. We can enter the presence of God with boldness knowing that God has all the grace we need. Fourth we come for the purpose of obtaining mercy and grace.

Found in Christ (5:1–6)

High priests are human and understand human weakness. They also present sacrifices for sins for others and for themselves. High priests were to be appointed by God to act on behalf of men in relation to God. The high priest was to serve as a mediator between God and sinful human beings. Jesus fulfilled these three high priestly criteria, although He is the perfect High Priest since He is without sin and therefore does not need to present a sacrifice for Himself.

Jews who read these words would know that for centuries the office of high priest had been filled by the whim of human rulers. The will of God and descent from Aaron were no longer concerns to the kings who made those appointments. The writer of Hebrews did not mention this issue, but he focused on the ideal role of the high priest. Many Jews would have agreed that the succession of greedy, immoral high priests had led the nation to spiritual ruin. They longed for the kind of high priest the writer of Hebrews described. And in all of human history only Jesus is qualified to serve as our High Priest. ☞

Bible Studies for Life

By James Barnette, Ph.D.
Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

CONNECTED IN SERVICE

Ephesians 5:15–21

Serve Each Other with Wisdom (15–17)

As with the Colossians (Col. 4:5), the recipients of this letter are exhorted to conduct themselves wisely in the world. They are a unique minority and because of their distinctive ways they will be subjects of scrutiny by outsiders. Do they really behave according to their claimed convictions? Will they offer a positive example of this gospel they proclaim? Hence the need for wise conduct lest the cause of Christ be jeopardized by thoughtless speech or action.

The injunction to “make every opportunity” is echoed in Colossians 4:5, and in both places it has special reference to Christian witness in the world. The statement that “the days are evil” is probably a confirmation that whatever the challenges that lay in the way of Christian witness at present will increase as time goes on. Nevertheless believers are to make the most of their time. Stewardship of time is as important as stewardship of possessions and it is one thing we all have in common. As long as we live together in this world, each of us has as much time as the other. It boils down to how we use the time that we all have in common.

Serve Each Other in Submission to the Holy Spirit (18)

“Be filled” is reminiscent of Ephesians 1:23, 3:19 and 4:13, where the Church is described as the fullness of God in Christ. This concept is critical to understanding the phrase, “Be filled with the Spirit,” which is literally “Be filled in Spirit.” To be filled with the Spirit is the functional equivalent of being in Christ or having Christ in us. Since Paul’s instruction here proceeds to addressing community worship, his exhortation here is not to cultivate individual spiritual experiences but to participate in the life of community, especially communal worship. It is incorrect, then, to look for ecstatic behavior as the primary sign of being “filled with the Spirit.” The primary sign of

being filled with the Spirit is the cultivation and practice of those virtues that move us toward Christlikeness. Paul offers a listing of those virtues in Galatians 5:22–23, which he refers to as the fruit of the Spirit. A Spirit-filled believer is one who develops and exhibits love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Integrating all of these into one’s life (hence the word “integrity”) is what validates a Christ-follower as being graced by the Spirit’s residency in his or her soul.

Today, as at Pentecost, the worship and witness of Spirit-filled Christians is often met with mockery: “They have had too much wine” (Acts 2:12). Someone has noted, however, that some churches today have more of the atmosphere of being drugged than being drunk, of stagnation than intoxication. God help us when our worship becomes so boring and routine that we portray the gospel as dull and lifeless. Some day soon our brothers and sisters in the Southern Hemisphere might need to come our way and remind us of the joy and the witness of passionate worship of our Lord.

Being Filled with the Spirit Affects How Believers Live (19–21)

The reference to “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” is echoed in Colossians 3:16. The meetings of early Christians included music, as they not only sang and made melody to the Lord but addressed one another for mutual edification and blessing in songs already known to the community. The hymn quoted in verse 14 could well be one example of their “addressing one another.”

Paul follows with a general exhortation to mutual submissiveness. Christians should not be self-assertive, insisting on his or her own way. As Paul told the Philippians, believers are to count others better than themselves and put the interests of others before their own. In doing so they are following the examples of Christ who “emptied Himself,” “humbled Himself” and “became obedient to death on a cross” (Phil. 2:3–8). ☞

Christian Crossword

By Amy Rognlie Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, ____.

5. Yet will I leave a ____.

11. Jesus cried ... ____, Eloi, lama sabachthani?

12. Sun. (Spanish)

13. Ancient South American Indians.

14. Jesus ... touched him, saying, I ____.

15. ____ yourselves unto God.

17. Jacob ____ pottage.

18. Mom.

19. Ye say that I cast out devils through ____.

24. Under oaks and poplars and ____s.

27. North northeast. (abbr.)

28. Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but ____.

31. But ____ found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

34. Maine. (abbr.)

35. Sharpen every man his ____.

36. ____ thy wife shall bear thee a son.

39. Give ____ to my words, O Lord.

41. Texas city: El ____.

42. Choose.

45. Joseph took them both, ____ ... and Manasseh.

50. Butter substitute.

52. I beseech ____.

54. No scrip, no bread, no ____.

55. A time to rend, and a time to ____.

56. Cow noise.

Down

1. Where is He that is born King of the ____?

2. A dish of many ingredients.

3. God will ____ thy right hand.

4. Nothing.

5. Ye are a chosen generation, a ____

6. The child did minister unto the Lord before ____.

7. Same as 4 down.

8. With; as well as.

9. North Carolina. (abbr.)

10. Weed.

16. Thou has been in ____ the garden of God.

18. Myself.

20. Period of time.

21. Zinc. (abbr.)

22. ____ the king of Syria was sick.

23. The ____ out of the wood doth waste it.

25. A faithful witness will not ____.

26. Master of Science. (abbr.)

29. They that sow in tears shall ____ in joy.

30. To obliterate.

32. All that handle the ____.

33. ____ me, O Lord.

35. Southeast. (abbr.)

37. Egyptian sun god.

38. (Love) always protects, always trusts, always ____.

40. Space.

43. Palestine Liberation Organization. (abbr.)

44. There met Him ____ men that were lepers.

46. Color.

47. The second ____ shall be an emerald.

48. They departed from ____.

49. Deceased Chinese leader, ____ Tse-tung.

51. Old English. (abbr.)

53. He had sent messengers to ____ king of Egypt.



Photo courtesy of Fair Trade Services

'How to be loved'

Agnew shares message of Christ's love

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Todd Agnew's musical journey has taken many twists and turns, he said, but he sees that journey as the fulfillment of his dual calling — to lead Christians into meaningful worship and to engage nonbelievers in asking the right questions.

"First and foremost we make sure that our goal is to lead people to the throne of God," he said. "God is larger than any words we can use and music is something beyond words. Music is a gift that God has given us and it allows us to express beyond what we can actually say."

"As I'm writing songs I'm always thinking about the tough questions that will challenge people to take the next step and move forward in their walk with the Lord."

While leading worship at events, his set list often includes a mix of traditional hymns and contemporary songs. Agnew enjoys sharing the history of the hymns with teenagers and helping them understand their rich meaning.

Teaching through songs

"I'm not someone who just gets up on stage and starts playing songs. When I'm leading worship I really try to teach about what worship is and also teach the songs — not just musically but conceptually. I'll break down the

phrases in hymns so teenagers can understand the meaning and I'll share about how the song was written. I think it makes the songs so much richer when people know the story behind the song."

Strong foundation

Agnew was adopted as a baby and credits his adoptive parents for his strong foundation in faith and knowledge, for his musical upbringing and for his understanding of "adoption by grace."

"I've come to understand that the concept of

adoption on earth is parallel to the concept of being adopted into the family of Christ, which is an incredibly powerful story of love and grace," he said.

Furthermore Agnew hopes the songs on his album "How to be Loved" will encourage people to connect with messages about Christ's love, acceptance, forgiveness and grace.

"Seeing people come into a relationship with the Lord is so special; it's beyond words," Agnew said. "We all have a need to be loved, to be rescued, to be restored, all these things. Those are the universal needs and they are all met in Jesus. I love sharing truth with people and helping them connect with God. Our goal each night is to step back while God works in people's hearts and begins to change their lives." ❧



Antithesis of worship

New movie tries to reveal 'underbelly of Christian ministries'

I'm old enough to remember when people dressed up to go to a movie, take a flight and especially, go to church. At that time, congregations sang from hymnals rather than giant monitors.

I miss those days, not because I fear change, but because these changes and others in Sunday worship seem to reflect a secular influence. A new movie spotlights this change.

Riot Studios presents "Believe Me," a faith-based drama about four tuition-strapped college seniors who start a fake charity to embezzle money from Christians. Disturbing, eye-opening and necessary, "Believe Me" may be the most important film about church you'll see; along with its warning about the wolves among us, it also shines a light on the way we prepare for the sermon and the Holy Spirit.

Not unlike today's church services themselves, "Believe Me" is not your father's church movie. The leads drink and swear, and for the first 51 minutes they flimflam godly folks with all the nefarious skill of the "Ocean's 11" protagonists. It would appear that the goal of the filmmaker is not to proselytize so much as reveal the soft underbelly of Christian ministries. But the film, which opened Sept. 26, goes further.

A significant moment concerning this age of incessant change occurs via the shot of a coliseum-sized church gathering, during which the lyrics of a song are shown overhead on a giant screen.

The lyrics proclaim the name Jesus 16 repetitive times. That sequence pretty well parodies the show-biz aspect of today's Sunday morning congregational sing-a-long, with the main musical number repeated over and over as if the praise team were attempting to put pew-sitters into a devotional trance.

'Flashy church services'

While the filmmaker's intent is more about taking a jab at "flashy church services" and self-important people who control those services, that praise/worship sequence deserves analysis.

This style of music, labeled "contemporary" Christian music back in the 1970s, was designed to appeal to those who had come to reject their parents' traditions and any kind of formality in religious gatherings. Denim-clad troubadours such as Barry McGuire ruled. Rebellion was thriving in our society and the dawning of the Age of Aquarius even invaded the sanctuary.

Along with abandoning a dress code, those who embraced this new musical fashion made it a declaration and now this format is accepted by most denominations. Soon there were two worship services each Sunday morning, with one congregation divided into

two. The first and more traditional service was given to the "older" members who could still wear their coats and ties and sing hymns, if they didn't mind attending at 8 a.m.; while the 11 a.m. gathering was given over to a younger generation, that presumably needed more sleep.

Notes and words in hymnals once aided worshipers in harmoniously following the tune. Many feel this new style of music, on the other hand, often consists of shallow lyrics and typically lacks memorable melodies. This update in the church songfest is somewhat understandable as each generation wants

its own sound, even when worshipping our Savior. But some would contend this praise/worship-lite construct has become the antithesis of that which once galvanized Sunday morning participants. Evidently ministers thought this appeasement would woo a discontented generation to return to the Lord. How's that working out for you, pastors?

That's not to say all new genres of Christian music miss the mark. Certainly worship leaders with contrite hearts abound and there are nonpaid musicians who use their talents on Sundays to thank their Creator for their gifts. Many songs written today uplift the soul, though some of us might have difficulty humming them on the way

home from service.

But what is the reason for this musical evolution? Could it be that many in this transitional age are not satisfied with change within the worlds of politics, media and electronics but demand change in our chapels, as well?

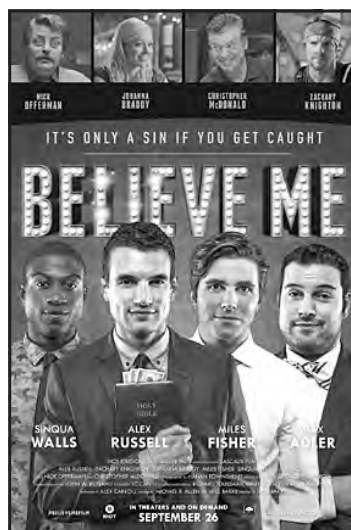
Music and attire will be modified by each new generation and no one over a certain age will be comfortable with those modifications, I understand. My concern, however, is that these changes might not be constructive and may only reflect what's in store for followers of the faith.

Maybe what's more important than the Church showing the world our commonalities is showing them our differences.

As to the film, I appreciated the filmmaker's determination to expose those who would make a buck off Jesus. But I found the production company's touting tactics somewhat ironic. On the official website, there was a promotional that read: "Get Paid to Promote the Film." Further down that page we discovered that T-shirts just like those worn in the film could be purchased.

I'm not sure the film company got the filmmaker's message.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Phil Boatwright writes for Baptist Press and reviews films for www.previewonline.org. (BP)



"Maybe what's more important than the Church showing the world our commonalities is showing them our differences."

Phil Boatwright
film reviewer



en.wikipedia photo

'AGENT for CHANGE'

Penitentiary warden sees need for Christ among inmates

A Louisiana prison warden known for pioneering faith-based programs wants to see urban and suburban churches work in partnership to reintegrate ex-offenders into society and minister to inmates' children.

"We want to make the urban church into the agent for change it ought to be," Burl Cain, warden of Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, said at a recent restorative justice ministry conference in Dallas.

Cain has seen transformation occur inside Angola — a 73 percent decline in violent incidents — since he arrived in 1995 at what was called "the nation's bloodiest prison."

After 14 years as warden of Louisiana's Dixon Correctional Institute, he concluded traditional approaches in the correctional system had failed and he committed to trying something different at Angola.

"I don't do traditional. If it doesn't make sense, I don't do it," Cain told conference participants.

Angola sought to give hope and purpose to inmates serving life-without-parole sentences by equipping them to serve as teachers in a wide variety of educational and vocational classes — from auto mechanics to welding, to carpentry, to culinary arts.

Change of heart

The programs went a long way toward changing the attitude of men serving life sentences, and the job placement rate for ex-offenders in the program rose. Still, Cain realized rehabilitation requires a change of heart.

"If you teach people skills and trades without the moral component, you just made a smarter criminal. You have to change the person. Criminals are selfish people. They don't care about you or your feelings. They do what they want and take what they want. Moral people do not do that. So the cure ... is the moral component, and that's found in religion."

Cain worked with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Leavell College to launch an extension center at the prison that offers Bible college degrees. Prisoners are required to complete the "Experiencing God" discipleship program as a prerequisite to the classes the seminary offers, he noted.

Angola recently received private funding for an 11,000-square-foot building that will house classes offered by the seminary, Cain reported.

Angola also built two large chapels — a "Catholic chapel" constructed in 38 days using inmate labor and funded by donations from Mexico and a "nondenominational Protestant chapel," he said.

But beyond worship services led by prison ministry volunteers from outside the prison, Angola also houses Bible college graduates who serve congregations within the prison.

"We have 27 churches in Angola with inmate preachers," Cain said.

In 2005, Angola prison worked with the AWANA ministry to launch Malachi Dads — a program to help incarcerated fathers who have experienced spiritual transformation reconnect with their children. The initiative takes its name from the Old Testament prophet's promise God will "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers."

The program focuses on breaking the cycle of criminal behavior by equipping Christian fathers in prison to leave a godly legacy to their children, Cain explained.

Many of the children of inmates live in urban areas, but for inner-city churches to make an impact on their lives and the lives of ex-offenders who re-enter society, they need suburban churches to stand alongside them to provide volunteer and financial support, Cain insisted.

"God can heal our prisons. God can heal our communities." (ABP)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Attorneys defending Christian banned from leaving country

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Sudan banned five attorneys from leaving the country in mid-September after another lawyer accused of tainting the country's image by defending Meriam Ibrahim, a Christian falsely accused of apostasy, two of the attorneys said.

The move came in response to attorney Iman Hassan submitting a letter of complaint to a Sudan court accusing the defense lawyers of wresting the case from her, Ibrahim's lawyers said. Hassan also is requesting that the court revoke the licenses of the five lawyers, who are not Christian but support the rights of Christians and other minorities in the country.

"The five attorneys have tarnished the image of Sudan by allowing human right organizations to put pressure on the government," Hassan wrote in her complaint.

The court in Ibrahim's case rejected Hassan's attempt to defend the Christian mother at Ibrahim's request, the defense attorneys said.

Ibrahim, a mother of two, was sentenced to death after refusing to renounce Christ, but the sentence was revoked June 23 and she was permitted to leave the country July 24.

The defense attorneys said judicial authorities appear to be biased against them. One said he was surprised that the government sought to retaliate for a case that was already closed.

"Who can challenge the government?" he asked.

Islamic extremists attack villages, kill Christians

MBAR, Nigeria — Ethnic Fulani gunmen shouting the chant "Allahu Akbar" attacked three villages in Nigeria's Plateau state in mid-September, burning down a church building and killing at least 10 Christians.

Heavily armed Fulani Muslim extremists attacked the Bokkos area Sept. 14, shooting five members of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in their homes in Mbar and burning down 15 houses and an Assemblies of God church building, said Pastor Manasseh Duwong of the COCIN congregation in Mbar.

"They were shouting, 'Allahu Akbar [God is great]' and also saying, 'We must wipe out these infidel Christians today,'" Duwong said.

Duwong identified those killed in Mbar as, "Gideon Mutang Kidum, Ladi Mafulul and two of her children, and a deaf woman by the name of Urawal." Another church member, identified only as Rabo, was killed in nearby Mandar, he added.

Also killed in Mbar was a driver passing through the town at the time of the attack, Duwong said. The assailants also burned his vehicle. His name was not immediately available, but Duwong and two other area pastors believe he also was a Christian.

The pastor said Muslim Fulani gunmen also killed two members of his church in Mbar on Sept. 7 and two more Christians the next night.

Religious literature seized by police in Uzbekistan

SAMARKAND, Uzbekistan — A police officer who led the raid on a home of a Seventh-day Adventist couple in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, said it is illegal for them to have religious literature since the Adventist community does not have registration in the city.

Protestants believe the raid was a reprisal for lodging a new registration application as the community seeks to regain the registration stripped from it in 2007. Among books seized were a Koran and Bibles in Braille.

Police also seized religious literature from individuals' homes elsewhere in Uzbekistan.

"We will continue fining you unless you stop storing religious literature in your home," Judge Oltinbek Mansurov warned Artur Alpayev in Navoi in early September after fining him six months' average local wages for having religious literature at home.

There is no published law that broadly bans individuals from owning religious books or other materials, though materials intended to encourage people to change their beliefs or works which, in the state's interpretation, "distort religious canons" have been banned since January. 📖