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TAB augmented reality



Cellphones in CHURCH

Many young people shun cellphone use in church — even to read Scripture

Young adults, known for using cellphones in just about every public setting imaginable, frown on the practice during worship services, a recent survey found.

The Aug. 25 Pew Research Center study found that only 9 percent of adults 18 to 29 years old said it's "generally OK" to use cellphones at church or in worship services. Find that hard to believe?

Well, don't, say some pastors and other religious leaders.

In Colorado, Bob Ballance said cellphone use at his church — where 20 percent of regular worshippers are Millennials — is rare.

"When I do see someone using the phone, it's usually someone my age [mid-50s], who's checked out (and) making a grocery list," said Ballance, pastor of Pine Street Church, Boulder, Colorado.

Whether it's about young people

or old, few clergy reported any issues with cellphone or other gadget usage in church. Baptist leaders in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina cited few if any complaints about smartphones from pastors.

In fact some said church-led efforts to encourage worship-centered use of smartphones and tablets had little success.

"I have used an iPhone to read Scripture from in worship — and on purpose — in hopes of getting people to do that, and it never worked," Ballance said.

Efforts to get worshippers to post their location on Facebook during services also never caught on at Pine Street, he said.

Jay Kieve, former pastor of CrossCreek Baptist Church, Pelham, shared a similar experience.

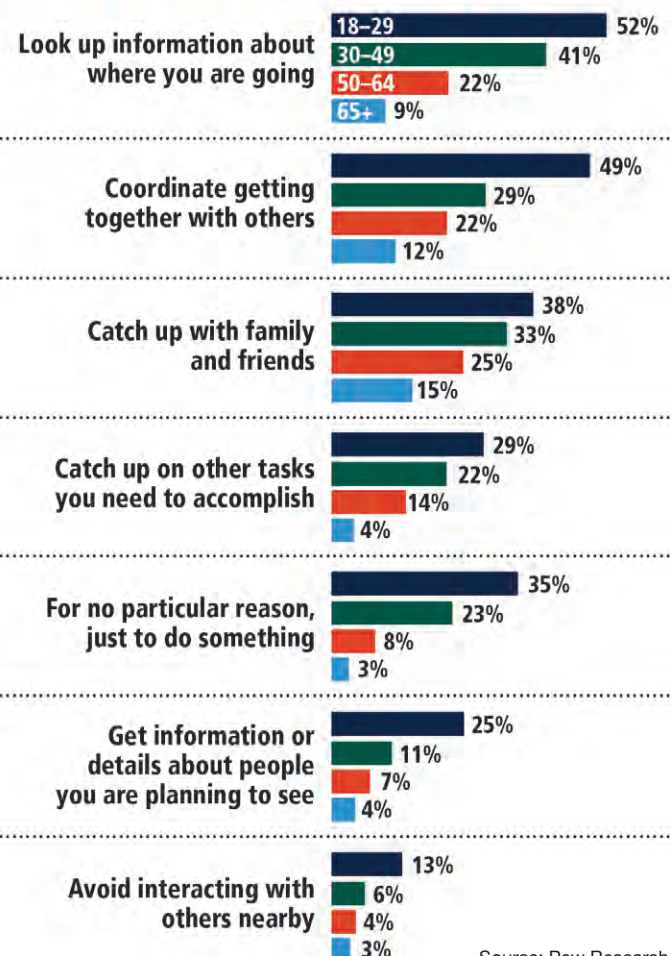
"Early in the phone-tech revolution, when I noticed that people



123rf.com, edited by Lauren C. Grim

Young adults are the most likely to use their cellphones in public places for a variety of reasons

Percentage of cellphone owners who frequently use their phones to ...



Source: Pew Research Center

were bringing their web-enabled phones to church, I put a QR code in the order of worship that linked to the Scripture passages, artwork, more info through Wiki and other interesting things," Kieve said.

Live tweeting

But it didn't take, he said, probably because it was too early in the smartphone boom. But Kieve said he would try it again now, especially by inviting people to live tweet sermon quotes and the like.

"More and more, if something doesn't appear in a social media

stream it is as if it hasn't happened," he said.

No doubt many preachers and churches have fully embraced social media. Everyone from Rick Warren, Pope Francis and the heads of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are tweeting and posting to Facebook.

And many innovative megachurches encourage worshippers to use their phones to spread the gospel — and that morning's sermon topic — to social media.

But there are many, including a (See 'Many,' page 7)

Coming next week ...

Food insecure, undernourished, desperately hungry — the crisis continues



COMMENT



TAB
augmented
reality

Financial Responsibility, Missions Strategy

Alabama Baptists regularly pray for International Mission Board (IMB) personnel serving around the world. Those prayers are more focused since IMB announced it needs to reduce its missionary force (missionaries and staff) by between 600 and 800 people to achieve “short-term financial responsibility and long-term organizational stability.”

By Nov. 2 the most experienced missionaries, those over 50 years of age with a minimum of five years of service, must decide whether or not to accept a “volunteer retirement incentive” offered by IMB (see “IMB announces voluntary retirement incentive details” in the Sept. 17 issue). After the first of the year other missionaries will be offered financial incentives should they decide to serve the Lord outside of IMB. This will be called Phase 2, officials said.

Given the circumstances, the retirement incentives will have to be considered but financial rewards are far down the list of priorities for most of these men and women. If income were a top priority it is unlikely they would have been missionaries in the first place.

These are men and women who followed God’s call to overseas service despite its costs. As one missionary writer noted, they struggled to learn new languages, faced loneliness, illnesses and separation from loved ones. They adapted to new cultures, new ways of thinking, new foods and often lived with scarcities.

Some faced persecution. Some stayed with their people group at the price of personal danger.

‘Incarnational missionaries’

These are the men and women who gave their lives to be “incarnational missionaries.”

Some missions strategists argue this is the most effective missionary approach. It has been said that it takes years to reach maximum effectiveness as a missionary. If that is true then those missionaries being asked to consider coming back to the United States are among the most effective workers Southern Baptists support.

To be clear, IMB is not asking anyone to stop serving. Board officials assure that both Phase 1 and Phase 2 will be entirely volunteer responses. Still it is heartbreaking that Christian workers



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

at the height of their effectiveness have to give up the work and return to the U.S. because there isn’t enough money to support them.

Unfortunately similar things have happened in churches across Alabama. According to the 2014 Alabama Baptist State Convention Annual, Alabama Baptists’ total giving to cooperating churches totaled about \$720.5 million in 2014. That is almost identical to what Alabama Baptists contributed to their churches in 2005 (\$719.5 million) and down \$105 million from a high of \$825.1 million.

Fewer ministries, less effectiveness

As churches received less, cuts were made. Often ministry positions were eliminated or changed from full time to part time. Programs were eliminated; building programs postponed; resources reduced; giving to causes beyond the local church fell.

Occasionally part-time staff or volunteers were able to lead outstanding programs. Most of the time eliminating a ministry position resulted in fewer ministries and less effectiveness in what was done.

That is why many wonder what will happen when a sizable portion of Southern Baptists’ most experienced missionaries leave the field. IMB President David Platt assures no drop off in gospel witness will occur. Platt promotes a strategy relying heavily on students, retirees, business personnel and other volunteers who will work together as missionary teams to share the gospel.

Months ago Platt described his vision of future missions work consisting of a missionary team with an IMB-appointed missionary church planter at the center of the team. Volunteers using a variety of platforms in the country, along with short-term missions appointees, would coordinate efforts to penetrate a target group.

Consistent with that strategy, IMB announced about two-thirds of the 300-plus missionaries it plans to appoint in each of the next two years will be short-term missionaries — two or three year assignments. Officials say it takes about 600 missionary appointments annually to stay even in light of normal retirements, resignations and returns.

Appointing only 300-plus missionaries will further reduce the missions force. Making mostly short-term appointments rather than career appointments also lessens the financial strain on IMB’s financial reserves.

Some ask if the decision to make mostly short-term appointments is entirely budget-driven since it is consistent with the strategy Platt laid out months before announcing the immediate cut in the missionary force. They point out the 135 career missionary appointments expected each of the next two years is about one-third the number appointed a decade ago.

Some career missionaries charge this approach will turn the missionary force into “amateurs.” New personnel will not have the “gifts, training or calling,” they contend.

Just as every Christian is called to minister, every Christian is called to be on mission for the Lord. But not every Christian is called to be a pastor and not every Christian is called to be a missionary, these critics explain.

The theological nuances of that argument will be debated but it is clear the strategy of doing missions around the world is changing. Incarnational-type missionaries supported through the Cooperative Program (CP) and special offerings is decreasing. Tent-maker missionaries who make their own way will increase.

Platt seems to be relying on the pattern he used while pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham. The church was heavily involved in international missions projects and programs providing personnel and financial support.

As a passionate voice for mobilizing Christians to reach the world for Christ, there is none better than Platt. He has the ear of younger Christians, especially. We pray the Lord will bless his leadership in rallying Southern Baptists to share the gospel in America as well as other parts of the world.

Supporting missions

At the same time there is irony that Platt is the one who must direct IMB through this reduction in the missionary force. During his days at Brook Hills the church gave \$25,000 annually to Baptist work through CP out of its multi-million dollar budget. That kind of pattern helped create the situation he must now remedy.

Thankfully Platt now urges listeners to support missions through CP as often as he presses for personal involvement in missions.

So Alabama Baptists continue to pray. We pray for missionaries facing decisions about returning to the U.S. or staying on the field. We pray for the missionary enterprise, as well, because we seem to be living in a historic time. We may be witnessing a seismic change in missions strategy that goes beyond IMB’s financial responsibility and organizational stability. 🙏

Have you
tried it yet?

TAB augmented reality
is here. Check out
page 13 for more details.



"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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Balancing the books

'It's not perfect,' Gov. Bentley says, but General Fund budget is approved

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

Like a family that lives paycheck-to-paycheck, so the state of Alabama had to adjust its General Fund budget to avoid a \$200 million shortfall for the fiscal year 2016 that begins Oct. 1 — and the potential government shutdown that would have ensued.

Thankfully legislators came to an agreement Sept. 16 with a vote of 23 to 9 in the Senate and 71 to 21 in the House, approving the \$1.7 billion budget and squeezing out \$166 million in new revenue, along with ending the special session that began Sept. 8.

But the agreed upon budget didn't come easily. It took a grueling six months and two special legislative sessions before legislators agreed on the new budget. It was finalized with Gov. Robert Bentley's signature Sept. 17.

The new budget, which is \$83 million less than the 2015 budget, will maintain funding for some agencies and cut funding from others. Those that will remain the same are Medicaid, corrections, mental health, human resources and the court system. The budget will make an \$80 million transfer of use taxes from the Education Trust Fund (ETF); increase taxes on cigarettes by 25 cents per pack; increase taxes on new prescriptions by

15 cents; and make a \$400 per bed tax increase on nursing homes. The last two tax increases will help defer the cost of Medicaid.

Pardons and paroles will receive an additional \$11 million, part of the \$16 million now earmarked for prison reform in the state.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management will see one of the largest losses, as its budget will be reduced from \$1.2 million to \$200,000. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs will lose \$1.8 million of its \$9.3 million allocation.

Transferring money

Although ETF will lose \$80 million by way of Senate Bill 27's passage, the 2016 fiscal year school budget should not be affected, according to news sources. The money being transferred would have gone into a budget stabilization account and not necessarily used for operations.

This transfer of money was paired with another bill, House Bill 29, and will amend the Rolling Reserve Act to free up money for school spending. The Rolling Reserve allocated money until the budget stabilization account reached 20 percent of the previous year's ETF spending, but HB 29 will allow for a smaller reserve of 7.5 percent.

According to al.com, Rep. Bill Poole, R-

Tuscaloosa, chairman of the House Ways and Means Education Committee, said the two bills would help both the General Fund and school funding in the long run.

After vetoing the budget lawmakers passed in early June, Bentley tweeted that the approved General Fund budget "isn't a perfect budget, but we have made important changes to the way our state budgets. State agencies will be ready to operate Oct. 1."

However, the long-term deficit in the General Fund remains, Bentley said, at about a half-billion dollars.

"We didn't fundamentally solve the problems of the General Fund. Not yet. But we have made a start," Bentley said.

He also said he would give serious consideration to supporting so-called "growth taxes" in the future, an effort spearheaded by Sen. Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville. The bill, also called the 78-22 bill, would "dump all tax dollars that grow over time as the economy grows into one pot of revenue," according to al.com. The money would then be divided with 78 percent going to schools and colleges and 22 percent going to the General Fund.

With the next regular session to begin in February 2016, legislators will again need to be prepared to balance the books before the next paycheck, so to speak. ☐

Wife of imprisoned pastor Saeed Abedini organizes Sept. 26 prayer vigil

The wife of imprisoned American pastor Saeed Abedini is on a 21-day "Daniel" fast and is organizing prayer vigils internationally Sept. 26, the third anniversary of her husband's imprisonment in Iran for his Christian faith.

Naghmeh Abedini, in asking Christians to pray for her husband and the persecuted Church, also is promoting a campaign to ask United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to advocate for Abedini's release when Iranian President Hassan Rouhani speaks Sept. 28 at the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

Naghmeh Abedini will attend a prayer rally for her husband and other persecuted Christians, Sept. 28, 7 p.m. at Calvary Chapel, Old Bridge, New Jersey. In advance of the U.N. sessions that began Sept. 15, she addressed more 100 members of parliaments from 50 nations who held a meeting on international religious freedom in New York, urging the lawmakers to take action in their home coun-

tries to encourage her husband's release.

In a Facebook post Naghmeh Abedini wrote about her husband: "I made sure that he was told that I had not given up the fight ... for his release. ... That despite government shortcomings, none of us were giving up. That we were getting on our knees and praying and fasting for him each day leading up to the prayer vigil."

To register for a prayer vigil, visit the Be Heard Project of the American Center for Law and Justice website, beheardproject.com/prayer-vigil/saeed. Four opportunities are available nationwide through Facebook and teleconferencing, including a 24-hour prayer conference call at 712-775-7035, through access code 281207, from Sept. 26, 8 p.m. to Sept. 27, 7 p.m.

"The Lord is showing me that as we pray for Saeed and the persecuted Church and remember the 'witnesses,' revival can be brought into our own life and in our country," Naghmeh Abedini said. (BP)

REFLECTIONS

"PASTOR, ACCORDING TO MY
NOTES, YOU PREACHED THIS SAME
TEXT ON FEBRUARY 7, 1979—
WHAT'S THE MATTER—RUNNING
OUT OF MATERIAL?"



Nepal's new constitution may make religious conversion 'illegal'

Lawmakers in Nepal recently rejected an effort to declare the Himalayan nation a Hindu state, adopting draft language to a new constitution Sept. 14 maintaining its status as a secular state.

The news brought relief for minority groups, including Christians, who feared reverting to a Hindu state, a designation that existed in Nepal's constitution for nearly 45 years, could result in persecution.

However, the constitution that was overwhelmingly approved by parliament with a vote of 507 to 25 implies that conversion from one faith to another will become illegal.

Criminalizing language

The draft language carried over from a 2007 interim constitution prohibits proselytizing. Critics say the language criminalizes any "act to convert another person from one religion to another."

Some of the constitution's text appears to run contrary to another constitutional clause that states: "every person shall have the right to profess, practice and protest his or her own religion according to the conviction and the freedom to separate oneself from any religion."

A leading Baptist in the country said,

"We seek your prayer at this moment for our country." He told Baptist World Alliance that Hindu extremists demanded that Nepal return to its former status as the "Hindu Rashtra," or Hindu Nation.

Another Baptist leader said, "Extremist Hindu demonstrators are threatening the churches. They have stoned the Itahari Baptist church at night. Many churches have been threatened by them."

Nepal was the only officially Hindu state in the world until 2007, following success of a democracy movement in 2006. Recently Hindu nationalists called for restoring the designation of "Hindu Rashtra" that existed under monarchy, along with other laws banning cow slaughter and religious conversions.

Recently the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, a think tank led by former Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director Randel Everett, organized a coalition of more than 350 individuals from a dozen countries urging government officials in Nepal to remove any ban on religious conversion from the new constitution.

About 40 people died during protests by mainly minority ethnic groups who fear discrimination as a result of the constitutional changes. (BNG, BWA)



Lafayette's Milltown Baptist marks 175 years

Milltown Baptist Church, Lafayette, celebrated its 175th anniversary Aug. 16 with a full service at 10:30 a.m.

Opening remarks were given by East Liberty Baptist Association Director of Missions Dale Wood and special music was performed by Chuck Huckaby and the Milltown Choir. Jared Milner prayed a prayer of dedication before Pastor Roger Hammett brought the message.

The flowers for the celebration service were placed by Milltown Baptist secretary Yvonne Counts in memory of Lorene Milner, a longtime member who recently passed away. Jerry Steele, a church deacon, gave recognition for deceased members including Lorene Milner, Richard Counts and Rena and Bill Adams.

The more than 100 participants enjoyed a covered dish lunch that concluded the celebration. Yvonne Counts said, "We all just had a great time." (Maggie Walsh)

groups performed and congregation members shared about their memories of the church in 3-minute increments.

Tim Keenum is pastor. (Maggie Walsh)

FBC Hayden celebrates centennial anniversary

With the theme "A Century of Service," First Baptist Church, Hayden, celebrated its centennial anniversary during a three-day event Aug. 14-16.

On Aug. 14 the church held an ice cream social and a "Red Book" hymnal singing to celebrate the past. Worship pastor Richard Metts, Tim Tumbler and Paul Owens led the singing and Diane Stewart accompanied on piano. About 150 people participated in the event.

To celebrate the present, the Friendship Baptist Association church held a concert and chicken/fish dinner. The evening had inflatables and outdoor games and about 250 people participated in the event.

The final celebration was held Aug. 16 with a 9:15 a.m. service with a message from John Hambricht, interim pastor. At 10 a.m. there was a 30-minute break for participants to view the many historical displays set up in the education spaces.

The worship service continued at 10:30 a.m. and a special video presentation was made. Ernie Carroll, director of missions for Friendship Association, spoke and Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Tom Allen presented the church with a plaque. Former pastors Sam Hollis and Jeremy Powell each shared messages during this second part of the service.

A covered dish luncheon followed in the fellowship hall, and according to Judy Partain, centennial committee chairperson, the weekend events were "perfect."

"We look forward to seeing what God is going to do in the next century as all hearts seek to serve Him," Partain said. (Neisha Roberts)

TAB augmented reality

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Ministry Training Institute
lecture here



Photo by Bryan Gill

As part of your subscription to *The Alabama Baptist*, you will receive a complimentary eight- to 10-minute lecture taught by Samford University's Ministry Training Institute each week. Use your Aurasma app to watch the fourth of an eight-part series on part of the book of Revelation by placing your mobile device over this photo. App instructions noted on page 13.

Sardis Springs Baptist 'sieges the future'

On Aug. 16, Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens, was "celebrating the past" as it "sieged the future" as the service marked 100 years of ministry, church secretary Cassandra Montgomery said.

At the 10:45 a.m. service former member Donnie Browning led music and Jack Bailey, former member and current pastor of First Baptist Church, Danville, brought a message. Also Joe Teal, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, commended the Limestone Baptist Association church for its years of service.

Following lunch, the more than 400 participants gathered for a 1:45 p.m. service for a time of sharing and recognition. Among those recognized were descendants of charter members, former pastors and former staff members. Various Sardis Springs Baptist musical



No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

‘Real pain ... real loss’

NOBTS professor's family talks openly about suicide, encourages people to show love, forgiveness in wake of Ashley Madison scandal



123rf.com

The family of Baptist professor and pastor John Gibson is calling his death a suicide connected to the Ashley Madison website hack.

By openly discussing the circumstances surrounding his death, including a CNN interview that aired Sept. 8, the Gibsons hope to help other families find forgiveness and reconciliation. Gibson served for 17 years as a professor at Leavell College, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's (NOBTS) undergraduate college. At the time of his death he also served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Pearlinton, Mississippi.

Gibson, 56, was discovered at his home on the seminary campus Aug. 24 at approximately 5:30 p.m. by his wife, Christi Gibson, when she arrived home from work. After finding John Gibson unresponsive she immediately notified emergency medical service (EMS). EMS workers were unable to revive him and John Gibson was pronounced dead at the scene.

John Gibson's son, Trey, spoke of all of his father's good qualities — his ability to preach, his servant heart and his sense of humor — during a memorial service on the

seminary campus Aug. 28. But Trey Gibson also spoke of his father's secret struggles with depression and pornography. Trey Gibson acknowledged at the time that his father had taken his own life. He boldly encouraged the mourners to seek accountability relationships to guard against secret sin.

"My dad was a great man. He was a great man with struggles. My dad reached a point of such hopelessness and despair that he took his own life," Trey Gibson said.

While the news jolted the campus, the seminary community has rallied around the Gibson family as they opened up about the struggles that led to the death of the beloved professor and minister. Seminary President Chuck Kelley touched on the subject again Sept. 8 during the NOBTS convocation chapel service.

Openly speaking

"On the first day of classes we had the unexpected death of a much loved professor, colleague and friend, Dr. John Gibson," Kelley said. "We learned that he made some very sad and unfortunate choices in

his life and his son shared in his memorial service his death appeared to come at his own hand."

The family spoke openly about Gibson's death during a national television interview on CNN. Appearing in the interview with her children, Christi Gibson confirmed the existence of a suicide note in which her husband confessed to his failures and that his name was released in the Ashley Madison website hack. Christi Gibson noted her husband also expressed great sorrow for his actions.

In the interview the family acknowledged they would have been willing to forgive Gibson's failures and work toward restoration if they had been given a chance.

"I still believe it could have been fixed. It could have been healed," Christi Gibson told CNN.

"There is brokenness in every single one of us. We all have things that we struggle with," she said. "It wasn't so bad that we wouldn't have forgiven it and so many people have said that to us, but for John, it carried with him such shame."

**September
is Suicide
Prevention
Month.**

Christi Gibson also expressed her concern for other families grappling with the fallout from the Ashley Madison scandal. For the millions of families affected, she encouraged love and forgiveness.

'Real people'

"These were real people with real families, real pain and real loss," Christi Gibson said. "Don't underestimate the power of love. Nothing is worth the loss of a father and a husband and a friend. It just didn't merit it."

Kelley asked for continued prayer for the Gibson family and the entire NOBTS community as they struggle with this loss and the circumstances behind it.

A group of students responded to the news of Gibson's suicide and the events that led to it by organizing a prayer initiative on campus.

Beginning Aug. 31, participants in the student-led prayer time met daily on the steps of Leavell Chapel to pray for the faculty and their families. The first week culminated with a joint student-faculty prayer time. After the Labor Day holiday, the student-led prayer meetings moved to a twice-weekly schedule. (BP)

What Baptist leaders are saying

'I'm on the Ashley Madison List. Now What?' via The Exchange blog

Some offenses are so big they look like Everest in the windshield, with no way over, no way around and no way through. ... No matter how large the offense looms before you, suicide is not the way to confront your failure.

Do not give up. Throw yourself on God's mercy and find grace to help in time of need. If you are on the list, maybe you are not sure what to do. Let me make suggestions.

1. *Get right with God.*
2. *Cast everything on Him.*
3. *Confess to your spouse.*
4. *Confess to someone else.*
5. *If you are a pastor, confess to your church.*

Ed Stetzer
executive director, LifeWay Research

'Ashley Madison, Adultery and the Church' via thomrainer.com

"We are already hearing stories of families torn apart, of children terrified about what is happening to their dad and of the tragedy of suicide. Church leaders cannot respond in their own power. God, however, can provide them all they need to respond in such a time of tragedy and hurt."

Thom Rainer
president and CEO, LifeWay Christian Resources

"Scripture encourages us to keep our focus and minds upon that which makes us more like Christ. Oh, may every follower of Christ so live that we serve our Lord with a whole heart — a heart that is devoted totally in its focus upon Christ. This is the great antidote to the allures of the flesh."

Frank S. Page
president, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee

'Ashley Madison is Just the Beginning' via russellmoore.com

"The brokenness of sexuality all around us demonstrates something far deeper than a crisis of culture. The brokenness of sexuality around us demonstrates a crisis of worship. We will not get out of this with better Internet filters or more accountability groups. We must recognize that technology will continue to offer fallen humanity what it thinks it wants — the illusion that we can transgress God and not surely die. Our only hope starts with the kind of vision which sees that, no matter the technology, we are never anonymous to God."

Russell Moore
president, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

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.

BALDWIN

► **Pleasant View Church, Foley**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary and homecoming Oct. 4, 10 a.m. The worship service will feature a historical collection of slides, a presentation from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and the presentation of the Woman's Missionary Union 75 Forward quilt. Lunch will be served in the family life center following the service. For more information call 251-943-1845. Kelly Brown is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Ramah Church, Pine Orchard**, near Evergreen, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 11, 11 a.m. Guest speaker will be James Best, former director of missions for Bethlehem Association. Lunch will follow. Nursery will be provided. William Bodiford is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Thomasville Church** will celebrate its 125th anniversary Oct. 4, 10:30 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds. Chris "Buff" McNickle will be the guest speaker. Ty Parten is pastor.

CLEBURNE

► **Chulafinnee Church, Heflin**, will host revival services Oct. 4-7. Len Turner, of Woodstock, Georgia, will be the guest evangelist. Oct. 4 services will be at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Oct. 5-7 services will be held at 6:30 nightly. Special music will be led by Children of the Promise and others. Everyone is invited. Philip R. Morris is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Ben Bowden** is the new pastor of **First Church, Enterprise**. He came on staff in June 2011 as associate pastor/minister of education. Bowden previ-

ously served as youth pastor for CrossPointe Church, Madison; interim pastor of New Washington Christian Church, New Washington, Indiana; and pastor of Maplesville Church. He holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and a master of divinity degree from Southern



BOWDEN

Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Lindsay, have three children. **First, Enterprise**, also will host First Priority training sessions Sept. 28, 6-8 p.m., for anyone interested in serving in the school-based ministry. A First Priority leader is needed in each school in the area. Light snacks will be served during the sessions.

CONECUH

► **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 4, 10:30 a.m. Guest speaker will be Joey Rodgers, director of missions for Conecuh Association. Lunch will follow the service. Jim O. Griffin is pastor.

FAYETTE

► **Pilgrim Rest Church, Fayette**, will host the gospel singing "Under the Tent" on Sept. 26, 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Randy Anderson is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Pleasant Valley Church No. 2, Collinsville**, will host an all-day singing Oct. 4 with Clear Vision beginning at 10 a.m. Dinner will be served. Jerry Darnell is pastor.

MADISON

► **Travis Collins**, interim pas-

tor of **First Church, Huntsville**, has announced his resignation. His last Sunday will be Sept. 27. He has been called as interim pastor of Gayton Church, Richmond, Virginia.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will host Ernie Dawson and Heirline in concert Oct. 3, 7 p.m. Stan Holt is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► **Vredenburg Church** will celebrate homecoming Sept. 27, 11 a.m. Former pastor Walter Sheffield will be the guest speaker. Lunch will follow. Thomas Anderson is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Cedar Grove Church, Leeds**, will host Thunder at The Grove bike night Oct. 9, 6 p.m., sponsored by the F.A.I.T.H. Riders Motorcycle Ministry. The event will include free food, gospel singing and fellowship. Billy Abrams is pastor.

WALKER

► **Mount Philadelphia Church, Cordova**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary Sept. 27, 11 a.m. Former pastor Billy Wooten will be the guest speaker. A reception will be held 2-4 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Please email copies of old photos of the church, events or former members to arblake@una.edu or jahester82@gmail.com. For more information call 205-522-2807.

WASHINGTON

► **First Church, McIntosh**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 4, beginning with music at 10 a.m. and a message at 11 a.m. Former pastor Jim Corley will be the guest speaker and the Sheppard family, of Troy, will provide special music. Lunch will follow. John Stone is pastor. ☞

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Jerome J. "Jerry" Cartier Sr.



CARTIER

*First Baptist Church, Satsuma
Mobile Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "I'd Rather Have Jesus"

HOBBIES: Fishing and exercising

FAMILY STATUS: Husband the past 47 years to wife, Louise; prior to that, husband of 20

years to wife, Frances, until her death in 1966; sons, Jerome Cartier Jr., and Rodney Cartier; step-daughter, Tammy Silcox; step-sons, Terry Ryals, Walt Ryals and the late Tony Ryals; 20-plus grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren

At 88, Jerome "Jerry" Cartier Sr. teaches Sunday School, something he has done for 50 years. A lay minister for years Cartier taught study courses at various churches and served as interim pastor at Baptist churches in Wagarville, Creola and Axis. He frequently spoke to Native American congregations in Washington County. When he taught a church Training Union class of teenagers, he often took its members to Mobile Rescue Mission. There he preached and the teens provided music. Cartier joined the Navy as a 17 year old and served in the Pacific Theater during World War II. He then worked 40 years at GM&O Railroad.

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

A: My mother. She changed from Catholicism, became a Christian and joined the Baptist church. I was 20 years old when I asked Jesus to come into my heart.

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

A: God just spoke to me to do it and I became a teacher in the church. That led into preaching.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: I study probably two or three hours a week for the lesson. I'm in the living room every morning for an hour in Bible study and prayer.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: Just teaching is the reward in itself.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: It's a normal process (of an hour in the living room each morning for Bible study and prayer). They know the process — children and grandchildren alike. If something comes up that I have to go somewhere in the morning, I get up earlier to have my time with the Lord.

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

A: "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (quoting apostle Paul in Phil. 1:21).

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

A: It prepares me to see Jesus. The more I know about Him, the more I love Him.

I want to help others get to know Him as I know Him. I take my great-grandchildren to Sunday School. I talk about Jesus constantly.

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

A: I grew up in an alcoholic home. My sister died from drugs and alcohol. Jesus changed my life or I would have been there too. If it weren't for Jesus, I probably wouldn't be here right now.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Additional assistance for this article was provided by Jerome Cartier Jr. ☞

SDEA hosts pastor appreciation breakfast

The Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association (SDEA) will host its seventh annual Central Alabama Pastor Appreciation Breakfast on Oct. 8, 8 a.m., at The Club in Birmingham.

The breakfast, which has always been held in Birmingham, was started to "provide a time of encouragement for the ministers of the local churches in central Alabama," according to SDEA. The event seeks to "bring ministers together from different denominations, ethnicities and communities for a time of refreshment."

This year's guest speaker is Bishop Vaughn

McLaughlin of The Potter's House International Ministries in Jacksonville, Florida.

Bring a guest

All pastors in the area are invited to participate and may bring one other minister from the church as a guest. There will be door prizes provided by local businesses and sponsors.

To reserve a seat, email Billy Hatley at bhatley@scottdawson.org, call 205-380-6320 or visit www.scottdawson.org/2014-pastor-appreciation-breakfast.php. (TAB)

TAB
augmented
reality



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Word of God Across the Ages

The Prophetic Word

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

Like God's word communicated through symbols (which we noted last week), His word spoken through prophets was a mediated word. God called and used human instruments as channels through whom He spoke, as Hebrews 1:1 asserts, "God at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets." In a similar manner, Romans opens with a declaration that God's voice was heard through His prophets, when it refers to "the gospel of God" by adding, "which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Rom. 1:1-2).

God's prophetic word was not an after-thought. Long before the writing prophets came on the scene, God had spoken to Moses, saying, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (Deut. 18:18).

Human spokesperson

At the beginning of his book, Jeremiah testified, "The Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: 'Behold I have put My words in your mouth'" (Jer. 1:9). The Book of Ezekiel says, "On the fifth day of the month ... the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest" (Ezek. 1:4). This same claim of a word from the Lord mediated through a human spokesperson is found in the first verse of Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

The New Testament insists that God spoke through inspired prophets when it says, "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). God was the source of the prophetic message and the Holy Spirit was its agency. The result was a sure word of prophecy (2 Pet. 1:19).

God's word through the prophets was quite often a multi-tiered word. At one level that word from the Lord addressed

the people and situations of the prophet's own day. In this sense the prophetic word was one of "forth-telling." Human instruments spoke forth the mind of God for their own times. At times the word of the Lord through the prophets also was one for future times. In this sense the prophetic word was one of "fore-telling." At this level we often describe the prophetic word as predictive prophecy.

At its most significant level the prophetic word of God was a messianic word. Often speaking with significance beyond their own awareness, prophets gave messages that contained allusions and predictions about the coming Messiah. Many of these allusions are quite striking. For example Isaiah spoke of One who would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Micah's message included that the One to come would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Other prophetic messages indicated One who would be descended from Abraham and David. Still other prophetic proclamations mentioned One who would be betrayed, hated and spit on. Dozens of such allusions have been noted among the words and writings of the prophets.

Readers of the Gospel of Matthew have long taken notice of how it often speaks of Jesus' message and ministry as being in keeping with words spoken by the prophets. Such is noted from its opening chapters concerning events connected with Jesus' birth (Matt. 1:22; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23) all the way to the concluding chapters and events associated with His death (Matt. 26:56; 27:9, 35), as well as in multiple chapters in between. ■

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.



Many churches embrace social media as way to spread gospel

(continued from page 1)

lot of 20somethings, who shy away from those settings — and George Miyata is one of them.

The last thing Miyata, 27, said he wants when Ballance is preaching at Pine Street is to be distracted by his phone. And that's even if he's just using it to follow along on a Bible app.

"To really hear the sermon, I want my attention to be just on that," he said.

Miyata works the sound and lighting at the church, so adding cellphone use would be even more distracting. But Miyata said he avoided using his cellphone for reading Scripture or taking sermon notes at other churches because of the social stigma.

"People would probably say, 'He's just texting,'" he said.

But it's more than that.

Miyata said he and many other young adults shun cellphone use at church because they want their worship experiences to be qualitatively different from the rest of their busy, gadget-driven lives.

"We are always inundated with technology and always on our phones," Miyata said. "It's nice to get an hour away from that and get away from our phones."

But there are other young people who see it differently, and apparently many of them worship at Riverchase Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Jeff Greer, pastor of Riverchase Baptist, said, "We see many people, especially some of the younger ones, who are bringing their smartphones to church and accessing the Bible on smartphones."

Greer said his preference would be for people to bring their own paper Bibles or to use those provided in the pews. But instituting that as church policy would be detrimental to those who prefer using cellphone apps to access Scripture.

"I just decided I am not going to try to fight that," he said. "If that's the way they have found it easiest to access the Word of God, then I'll take it."

Nor has Greer received any complaints about others using smartphones during services.

Where problems do arise is when someone — usually an older member of the congregation —

forgets to silence or turn off a phone that rings or beeps during worship, Greer said.

That's also the biggest problem with cellphones at Pine Street, Ballance said.

Since the failed experiment to make phones part of the services, the church now emphasizes worship as a refuge from the busyness of culture, he said. That message has resonated with church members — especially the younger ones.

"It seems like they want to be present and they find that pulling those things out is a distraction," Ballance said. (BNG)

"It seems like

[church members]

want to be present

and they find that

pulling [cellphones]

out is a distraction."

Pastor Bob Ballance
Pine Street Church
Boulder, Colorado

FBC Weaver donates to Spurgeon Library



Photo courtesy of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, acquired a preaching rail from FBC Weaver that was used by the 19th century British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The rail is displayed at the front of the newly completed Spurgeon Library on the seminary's campus. FBC Weaver Pastor Ron Sweatt said the church is 'honored to have the rail displayed in the Spurgeon Library for so many to see and appreciate.'

Selma's faith community embraces efforts toward improved race relations

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Jerry Light moved to Selma to become pastor of First Baptist Church, Selma, several years ago, he was surprised to learn that though the town's population was 78 percent African-American, only two African-American churches were affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

"It bothered me because Baptists are always missions-minded — both locally and abroad," Light said. "I know Selma has a racial stigma hanging over it but that was a long time ago and we need to move beyond it."

And so Light and his church began making a concerted effort to reduce some of the divides that exist in Selma by doing things like hosting a joint Vacation Bible School with an African-American church in town. Light also met Juanda Maxwell, a member of Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Selma.

One Selma

Together, Light and Maxwell spearheaded an organization called "One Selma: Coming Home United in Faith," a group that began meeting in Fall 2014 with the aim to lessen the racial divide by starting with the faith community in Selma.

"In a conversation [Juanda and I had] one day over the phone, we hatched the idea of having a unity march," Light said.

The Unity Walk, which took place in March, attracted about 2,000 participants and commemorated the 50th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday," an incident in which 600 peaceful protesters marched from Selma to Montgomery and were deterred

by Alabama State Troopers and a mounted group that used violent methods such as billy clubs, cattle prods and tear gas. Light and Maxwell advocated for the march to take place toward — rather than away from — Selma to "show that as a community we're together and headed home," Light said.

He said the march opened his and Maxwell's eyes to the potential in the town, and the appetite for change in Selma. From there they worked with Sony Pictures to bring a showing of the movie "War Room" to Selma, which also was an extremely successful event.

They then started planning for their next outreach, Return to Worship Week, which took place Sept. 13–19. The event was a community-wide and denominationally inclusive outreach to encourage people to go to church — any church — in Selma that week, whether it meant re-engaging in or experiencing church for the first time. The event was called Return to Worship Week, Light said, because not all churches worship on Sundays, and he wanted it to be a highly inclusive event. Church members were encouraged to invite friends and family and the event was publicized.

Maxwell said, "We're trying to find ways to get people in Selma to truly know one another. The only way we think you can effectively do this is through the faith community. Our faith and our service in Christ — that's the only way to change it, the only way we can actually do something that will last."

Local churches joined together, put up yard signs and distributed door hangers to publicize the

event. A banner also was hung on City Hall to announce the event.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Selma, was one of the participating churches and rector Jack Alvey said his parish really embraced the idea. The church hosted a special "Sundae Sunday" event, offering an ice cream sundae bar after the church service Sept. 13. The event brought some people who had been absent from the congregation for some time and saw a handful of visitors as well.

'Good for Selma'

Maxwell was encouraged by the outcome of the event.

"It just was amazingly wonderful and good for Selma. All of these [events] are steps toward a goal, which we feel is inspired by our Lord. And we're working together, that's the best part of it — working together black and white," Maxwell said.

Light said, "Our next tangible project is having a minister's conference for all the ministers in Selma. ... We want everyone to be a part of this event."

The faith community certainly seems to be embracing the efforts toward intentional change and improved race relations.

Alvey said, "I believe there is a hunger for improved race relations in Selma, and I think some of that hunger comes from the fact that for 50 years Selma has been painted in a very negative light in that department."

"I have also perceived the Spirit working in Selma to show the world how the good news of Jesus Christ can reconcile people of all races and colors. I feel that Selma, led by the church communities, is starting to live in that reality and God has certainly provided rich possibilities for reconciliation."



Photo by Jerry Light

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Ellis M. Bush

Retired denominational leader Bush dies at 86

Ellis M. Bush, former Alabama Baptist pastor who served in different denominational ministry roles for 68 years, died Sept. 11. He was 86.

Bush, of Troy, was ordained at Southside Baptist Church, Troy, when he was 17. He graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham in 1951. He earned a bachelor of divinity and a master of theology from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Samford presented him with an honorary doctor of divinity in 1972.

Bush served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Troy, and as interim pastor of several churches in Alabama including First Baptist Church, Troy; First Baptist Church, Luverne; and Salem Baptist Church, Brundidge. He also served as pastor of churches



BUSH

in Indiana and Kentucky.

He served as editor of the Southern Baptist Convention's then-Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey and Alabama's State Sunday School director, among other roles.

He is survived by his wife, Juanita; four children; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Robert Wayne Allcorn

Alabama Baptist pastor Allcorn dies at 70

Robert Wayne Allcorn, pastor of churches in Blount and Jefferson counties for 43 years, died Sept. 1. He was 70.

Allcorn was ordained into the ministry in 1967. He served as pastor of Robin Hill Baptist Church, Harmony Baptist Church, Haw Grove Baptist Church and Oneonta Second Baptist Church, all in Oneonta; Fairview Baptist Church, Birmingham; Union Grove No. 2 Baptist Church, Altoona; Welcome No. 2 Baptist Church, Tarrant; New Bethel Baptist Church, Blountsville; New Emmaus Baptist Church, Altoona; and Allgood Baptist Church.

Allcorn and his wife, Lorene, owned and operated Allcorn Heating and Cooling for more than 25 years as he served as a bivocational pastor.

Allcorn is survived by his wife, two children and three grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Lori. (Hannah Muñoz)



ALLCORN

David W. King

Former pastor King dies at 78

David W. King, former Alabama Baptist pastor, died Sept. 4. He was 78.

King was called to preach at age 32. He earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

King served as pastor of Plum Springs Baptist Church, Eastaboga; Harmony Baptist Church, Anniston; First Baptist Church, Harpersville; and Palma Ceia Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida. He served as bivocational pastor of Providence Baptist Church, Oakman; Glensboro Baptist Church, Glensboro, Kentucky; and Weogufka Second Baptist Church. He is survived by his wife, Martha; three children; and four grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



KING

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Church FINANCIAL issues

Conference addresses proper procedures, regulations, tips for handling taxes

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Because ministers are unique in the way they pay taxes, churches must be careful in the way they do salary administration and tax reporting, according to Lee Wright, coordinator of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of church compensation services.

Wright conducts five conferences around the state each year and directed the Church Financial Issues Conference at First Baptist Church, Pelham, on July 14. About 50 church treasurers and other leaders gathered to learn more about proper procedures, new regulations and tips for handling taxes.

Social Security

For example Social Security is navigated differently than federal income taxes, Wright said.

"An ordained minister is considered an employee for federal income tax purposes and self-employed for Social Security and Medicare taxes," he said. "Churches can withhold federal and state income taxes if they choose, but they cannot withhold Social Security taxes. The minister pays the full 15.3 percent rate himself."

Housing allowance benefit

One tax-savings benefit available to the minister is the housing allowance, he said. There's no specific dollar or percentage limit to the amount of salary that can be designated, but the ultimate limit is the fair-market rental value of the minister's home, furnished and with utilities.

"The housing allowance has been challenged by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, but they lost their case on appeal," Wright said. "We recommend that ministers continue to claim the housing allowance. It is free from federal income taxes, although Social Security taxes must be paid on it."

Health insurance

Another issue ministers face is health insurance.

"The Affordable Care Act is five years old now, but new regulations continue to be written," Wright said. "It mandated every American worker to have coverage by 2014. [In 2016] large employers of 50 and more full-time equivalents will be required to provide insurance for their employees who work 30 hours per week or more. Many churches provide group health coverage as a benefit to their employees."

Wright explained that the coverage must be a group plan in order to be tax-free. GuideStone coverage is regarded as a group plan even if the church has only one employee. There also is an exception for a group of one when there is only one employee who works 30 hours per week or more. For example if the church paid for an individual plan through a company other than GuideStone, but there was only one employee, that would meet the "group of one" exception. The government marketplace plans aren't tax free if reimbursed

by the employer since the tax savings come through the enrollment process.

Accountable business expense

An accountable business expense is another benefit for ministers, he said. For example, a lump sum given as automobile expense is considered additional salary for ministers and is fully taxable. Ministers who turn in written mileage reports under an accountable plan can be reimbursed for actual expenses without incurring any tax.

Determining employee type

Another common issue for churches is to determine whether a worker is an employee or a contract laborer. Wright said contract workers should fill out a W-9 form that is kept on file by the church. If the contract worker makes more than \$600 per year the church must issue a 1099 form. Employees must

be issued a W-2 form. Box 7 should be used for nonemployee compensation on the 1099 form for contract workers, he said.

Issues with overtime wages

The failure of many churches to pay overtime wages to some employees often is an issue for churches. Wright said the common designation of salaried and hourly isn't the best terminology for churches.

"Since we have to follow the U.S. Department of Labor's guidelines, we ought to talk about exempt and nonexempt employees," he said. Ministers would be exempt from overtime pay rules as mandated

in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Wright explained that a simple time sheet is one way to handle this matter and that churches can allow comp off-time for nonexempt employees as long as it's handled within the same work week.

"The burden is on the employer should an employee file a complaint about unpaid overtime wages," Wright said. "So a church should keep good records and not expect nonexempt employees to work overtime without extra compensation."

Tax-exempt status

A church's tax exemption is valuable, Wright said, noting it means that churches are exempt from property taxes and business income taxes and that contributions are considered charitable gifts.

But exemption can be jeopardized if there's evidence of "inurement," or gain by insiders, or by excessive political activity.

The IRS document No. 1828, "Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations," is helpful in this regard, Wright said.

Internal controls for funds

He also encouraged participants to enact internal controls to ensure all church funds are handled with integrity.

"We hear at least once a month of a church member who's embezzled funds," Wright said. "I'm sure there are other cases I don't know about. A simple 'two-person rule' is a good safeguard for most churches."

Wright explained that at least two people should count and deposit money and the church should require two signatures on disbursement checks. ☐

For more information, contact Lee Wright at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 241, or by email at lwright@alsbom.org.

Ministry Tips

DEVELOPING A PHOTOGRAPHY TEAM

By Jennifer Davis Rash
Photography team founder
NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville

An official photography team provides a natural way for churches to care for members as well as guests and potential members. It works best to establish a basic set of guidelines and routines that are followed consistently.

Name a point person to lead the team who has an appreciation and working knowledge of photography and is amiable, dependable and organized.

Point person

Communicate with church staff and laypeople about how to schedule a photography team member to cover an event or take photos of a person or people. It is best

for everyone to work through the point person, who then makes the assignments based on team members' schedules and abilities.

The best team members are those who enjoy photography as a hobby and want more experience, photographers with an above-average level of knowledge who have their own equipment and those who are semi-professional photographers and

willing to share their skills.

Professional photographers in your church would be good resources for annual educational workshops and team-building experiences.

All should consider the role a ministry opportunity and not attempt to sell subjects on their services.

And getting the photos delivered within 24 hours is always best. ☐



Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago September 1965

Acting President Named: An outstanding Alabama Baptist became acting president of Judson College on Sept. 1 and will serve until a permanent appointment is made. William Morris Beck Sr., of Fort Payne, has been named to the post by the board of trustees, according to James H. Butler, secretary of the board.

40 Years Ago September 1975

From Brush Arbor Begin-

nings: Valdosta Baptist Church, Tuscumbia, where Jerrold Parker serves as pastor, is celebrating its 50th anniversary with the dedication of facilities valued at \$170,000. The church began with 15 members. One charter member, Nora Richardson, is still an active member.

30 Years Ago September 1985

Consultant of the Year: The Home Mission Board (HMB) has named Stephen Cloues, of Birmingham, PACT (Project: As-

sistance from Churches in Transitional Communities) consultant of the year. PACT is an HMB effort to help church extension ministries for the metropolitan Birmingham area.

20 Years Ago September 1995

Four-hundred Percent Growth at Huntsville Church: Willowbrook Baptist Church, Huntsville, increased its average Sunday morning attendance by 400 percent, going from 150 to 750 in two years. The Madison Baptist

Association church has gone to two services and has rented three trailers to hold Sunday School classes.

10 Years Ago September 2005

Rainer Elected New LifeWay President: Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources unanimously approved the election of Alabama native Thom S. Rainer to become the ninth president of the Southern Baptist entity Sept. 12. As president-elect, Rainer will begin working alongside LifeWay President James T. Draper Jr. beginning Oct. 17 until Draper's retirement Feb. 1, 2006. Before coming to LifeWay, Rainer served as dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky and Indiana prior to joining Southern in 1994 as founding dean of the Billy Graham School. ☞

Want to know GOD?

By Ben Birdsong
Minister of students, Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham

How good is good enough? This is a question many people often ask. On our own we try to be good people and do the right thing and in the end many people simply hope that their good works will outweigh their bad ones, that the scales will shift in their favor. All will be well. Then they will go to heaven with all the other people who tried their best.

The reality, however, is that our goodness only looks good in comparison to other people. We think we are doing alright because we can find someone worse than us yet we are looking at the wrong standard. Compared to a perfect and holy God even our best days no longer look so good.

In Romans 3:23 the Bible clearly explains that our version of good doesn't measure up. The text says: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." A great chasm exists between God's perfection and our attempts at good, yet the great hope that we have is that the story does not end with this verse. If the story ended here we would be utterly lost and find ourselves standing hopeless and exposed as frauds on judgment day. Before we understand the greatness of what Jesus has done for us at the cross we must grasp the greatness of our need.

Our need is met with great hope because of Jesus, the perfect Savior who took our place. Romans 3:24 goes on to speak of this hope by stating: "and all are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The hope is a free gift of redemption that Jesus bought for you at the cross. The perfect One took your failed attempts to be perfect upon Himself. He paid the punishment for your imperfection and now He offers you His clean slate. Because of Jesus you can be good enough and your eternity can be secure. You simply have to take that gift by surrendering by faith to Jesus as your Savior and Lord. ☞

What readers are saying about TAB's augmented reality

The new augmented reality format looks great — extremely clear and appealing for readers. Thanks to TAB and to Samford University for this dually rewarding partnership.

Karen Burnham
Oxford, Alabama

Love the new augmented reality articles. Good job. Creative.

Jerrie Burton
Hope Hull, Alabama

Regarding the new augmented reality feature in *The Alabama Baptist*, I am

amazed at one more piece of technology. At 86 years of age, I've seen a few changes, but I'm determined to have some knowledge of what my great-grandchildren are experiencing.

Jim Taylor
Auburn, Alabama ☞

TAB* CLASSIFIEDS

For information about placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of *The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or ads@thealabamabaptist.org. Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR
Gulfcrest Baptist Church near Citronelle, Alabama, is seeking an SBC-trained, bivocational pastor. Salary consistent with the State Board of Missions salary study. Send resumé to: gulfcrestbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR
Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, Cordova, Alabama, is seeking a Spirit-filled, bivocational, strong in Southern Missionary Baptist doctrine pastor. Send resumé to: Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, P.O. Box 13, Cordova, AL 35550.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF WORSHIP & DISCIPLESHIP
First Baptist Church of Mount Olive is seeking a minister of music and education to lead a growing congregation in blended worship and discipleship programs. Bachelors required and two to five years experience preferred. Send resumé to: Stephanie@fbcmo.org.

MUSIC MINISTER
Wall Highway Baptist Church,

Madison, Alabama, seeks full-time music minister to lead and support blended worship, choirs and praise teams of four-generation church. Successful candidate demonstrates love for God, people and music ministry with integrity, vision and superior interpersonal skills. Music bachelor's, 5+ years similar music ministry experience desired. Submit resumé to: musicsearch@wallhighway.com.

SONG LEADER
East Huntsville Baptist Church is looking to hire an energetic song leader leading us in a blend of traditional and contemporary music. Send resumé to: East Huntsville Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 808 Maysville Rd., Huntsville, AL 35801.

MINISTER OF MUSIC
Crestline Baptist Church is accepting resumé for part-time minister of music. We are looking for someone to lead us in life-transforming encounters with God through greater creativity, excitement and involvement in our worship service. Mail resumé to: Search Committee, 13949 Highway 69 South, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405,

or email: irb25@live.com. Any questions, call 205-344-5011.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC
Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church in Homewood is seeking a part-time music minister. Send resumé to: RABC, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 309 Raleigh Ave., Homewood, AL 35209 or jeantowry@rabc.org.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR/STUDENT MINISTRIES
FBC Florence is accepting resumé for the full-time position of associate pastor/student ministries. Send resumé to: FBC Florence, 209 North Walnut St., Florence, AL 35630.

YOUTH PASTOR
Church seeking a called bivocational youth pastor. Send resumé to: Calvary Baptist, 7570 15th Street Rd., Concord, AL 35023, ATTN: Roger or boazroger@gmail.com.

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Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Addicting thrill of deadline pressure

When my friend Stephanie explained her predicament, it made absolute sense to me because I struggle with something similar.

We were talking about finding balance in life and ideas for sharing the various responsibility loads we all have.

"The bigger problem for me is not not being willing to share, delegate or even cut out something," Stephanie said.

"The problem I have is that as soon as I make a little space in my schedule or remove something from my responsibility list, I quickly add something new to take up the space. It is as if I'm insecure without my schedule, my responsibilities and my life in general being constantly overwhelmed."

I've heard others talk about an addiction to busyness.

Still others are get-it-done kinds of people and receive a lot of requests to take on projects or tasks. You've probably heard the saying, "If you want something done, give it to a busy person."

It's true, people who are able to tackle projects head on and work hard to accomplish everything on their to-do list each day will most likely play a major part in accomplishing what you need. But constantly adding to the busy person's to-do list could be detrimental to his or her health if he or she has a hard time declining requests or sticking to a disciplined workday.

At the same time an element of busyness or pressure is sometimes what we all need to actually stop and accomplish that overwhelming project we have been putting off. And if deadlines aren't set for even the smallest of responsibilities in our lives, then it is natural to take much longer than is really needed to accomplish them.

Deadlines definitely dictate my life. Not only because *The Alabama Baptist* is a media ministry that exists on daily,

weekly and monthly deadlines, but also because the sheer volume of what I'm juggling in all parts of life would swallow me whole if I didn't force daily and sometimes hourly deadlines on myself.

I don't say this to fish for sympathy or as a plea for help. I say it to explain the struggle of one who both desires and despises an overly busy life.

I'm a dreamer and sometimes overflow with ideas and passion for what could be.

I'm a doer. I like to work hard and get things done. I love efficiency and productivity and streamlining the streamlined process that was streamlined twice last month.

I'm a deadline enthusiast. Yes I was that college student who could start her 15-page research paper 12 hours before it was due and not only turn it in on time but walk away with an A.

I can't always explain the thrill that comes with the clarity and focus of deadline pressure but it is quite addicting.

Still as much as I love the pressure and juggling lots of projects, am I being fair to all involved by living like this?

Along with frustrating others unnecessarily, I'm likely not doing my best work because there is no time to polish and perfect. On top of that, I'm not being kind to my mental nor physical health.

A recurring suggestion from mentors in my life is to narrow my focus to a few specific commitments and be "all in" rather than spreading myself thin and giving a little of myself to a lot of things.

As I evaluate what can be trimmed, I struggle with what to sacrifice and how to protect the newly created space.

A good friend recently said, "Quit talking about it and start praying about it." Ah, yes, another important part of my life that gets neglected when I'm too busy. 🙏

Rashional Extras...

TAB augmented reality



Surprising reasons every leader should be on social media

By Tim Parsons
Pastors.com

(Excerpt taken from Tim Parsons' article at <http://pastors.com/4-surprising-reasons-every-leader-should-be-on-social-media/>)

In the past several years I've begun to see social media in a different light. Sure it's a way to stay connected with friends and family. That's its primary purpose. However, I believe there are some surprising reasons leaders should be on and should actively use social media. Here are four of those reasons:

1. It makes you human. Believe it or not, many leaders are viewed through the lens of the 8, 10, 12 hours that they are "on the clock." In other words those that you lead form opinions about who you are based on the few hours that they see you at work. And this can often lead to some pretty skewed perceptions about you as a person. It's important that they realize you are human. You have family and friends. You have hobbies. You experience life in a similar way to them. The more "human" you become to those that you lead, the more relatable you are and the better able you are to lead them well.

2. It's another communication medium. Leaders have a lot to communicate. It's pretty difficult to not only communicate everything that needs to be, but it also is hard to ensure that everyone on the team has heard you. Add to

that the different biases that people can put on what they hear or read, that makes communication one of the most difficult parts of a leader's job. Social media allows you to communicate things differently, more often and in a way that reaches people when they may be the most receptive.

3. You get to see into others' lives. This is probably one of the greatest benefits to me as a leader. The reality that people post way too much on social media couldn't be truer. It's amazing the level of detail that folks will put out there for everyone to see. And, although I think it's unfortunate, it does benefit me greatly. I've been able to pull people aside and ask them about a sick child or the like — and it's helped me lead them better.

4. You can connect with industry leaders and learn from them for free. Most of the "big time" folks in your industry are on social media. They're sharing ideas and posting updates that could help you improve as a leader. There have been countless times that I have found (and stolen) ideas that have improved the team I lead in some way. And when you connect with them on social media, it also can open doors to conversations with them that wouldn't be possible otherwise. I've talked to a lot of big names in my industry because of a connection in social media.

"We can't afford to point fingers at each other within the Church, not while the world desperately needs our helping hands. As ambassadors of Christ, we know how to negotiate a truce between the world and the Creator but first we need to make a truce with one another. Let's start small.

Can you love a fellow Christian who sins differently than you do? That shouldn't be hard. You know you fall short too (Rom. 3:23)."

Collin Hansen
"Do We Really Want Unity?" article
Relevant magazine
September/October
2015 edition

"[Jesus is] that love we've all either found or we're still looking for. All the different versions and depictions of love we might experience in life are going to fall short of that real, authentic love of Jesus."

Derek Johnson
Q&A article
Relevant magazine
September/October
2015 edition

"We must be careful that our service within the church doesn't become more important than our relationship with Jesus. Our focus for service shouldn't be on the action itself but on Jesus."

Bryan Gill
Ministry Training Institute
Samford University

"Simplicity is the secret of seeing things clearly. ... The tiniest thing we allow in our lives that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is quite sufficient to account for spiritual muddle, and all the thinking we like to spend on it will never make it dear. Spiritual muddle is only made plain by obedience. Immediately we obey, we discern. This is humiliating, because when we are muddled we know the reason is in the temper of our mind."

Oswald Chambers
"My Utmost for His Highest"

"We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant."
Andrew Westmoreland
Samford University

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Pastors should boldly preach on biblical principles of giving, SBOM's DuBois says

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Many pastors and congregations dread the tithing sermon that surfaces every so often, but "stewardship is part of our desire to give back to God's work," Bobby DuBois told Shelby Baptist Association pastors earlier in September.

DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), encouraged pastors to preach boldly on the biblical principles of giving.

"The first law of stewardship is that we can't out give God," he said. "The Bible is filled with reminders of how much God gives to us."

Parable of the talents

DuBois referenced Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

"A wealthy businessman prepared to go on a journey," DuBois said. "The first two servants took the talents given them and doubled them. The first man had more than the second but that was unimportant. The important thing is that both were respon-

sible with what they were given."

The third servant dug a hole and buried what the master gave him and was unfaithful, DuBois said.

"I've heard some people pray at offertory time asking God to bless the tithes that we're responsible for," he said. "Actually we're responsible to God for all that He's given. We must wisely use everything we have, not just what we give back to Him, and we're responsible to do so in a way that honors Him."

In addition to talents and treasure, DuBois said Christians are responsible for their testimony and their time.

Churches as a whole also are accountable to God, he added.

DuBois said SBOM develops a unified budget to fund ministries collaboratively. Some of these ministries are "fostered entities" that were founded by the state convention, such as the three Baptist colleges and *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper. Others have been selected for support over the years by messengers to state conventions.

"Churches do the same thing," he said. "A unified budget is a helpful tool because we try to

thoughtfully support ministries important to the congregation rather than every giver deciding what ministry to support."

Casting the vision

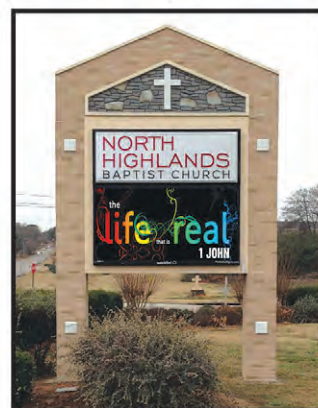
DuBois said the pastor must cast the vision and is usually the driver in helping the church determine priorities, even while sometimes having to deal with strong personalities on the budget team.

"I think of one pastor in our state whose church gave hardly anything through the Cooperative Program," he said. "He told the church he wanted to lead them to do better and after five years the church is giving about 10 percent of their receipts to missions."

"The genius of the Cooperative Program is that it helps us minister beyond our local church. It's the model given in the book of Acts when the church began in Jerusalem and carried the gospel to the ends of the earth."

"We're a convention of small churches, by and large, but most of our churches want to be part of the larger Baptist family," he said. "The gifts of every church are significant as we work together to do missions." ❧

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- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

Ineffective comparison

Racial equality not the same as marriage equality, African-American pastors say

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since the Supreme Court made same-sex "marriage" legal throughout the United States, black pastors across the country have been grappling with a difficult question — does a biblical stance against homosexuality equate with racial discrimination?

Pastors of predominantly black churches in Alabama say they are not hearing this question asked in their congregations, at least not yet. However, they are ready with an answer when the question does come — absolutely not.

Charles Autery, pastor of Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden, in Pine Barren Baptist Association, said likening a biblical view of marriage to racial discrimination is an ineffective comparison.

"I am totally against the ruling, and I don't see that opposition as discriminatory," Autery said. "Gay 'marriage' supporters are using the civil rights issue because we made such strides with that stand. They're saying, now let's use it again. But they're talking about apples and oranges."

'Irrational'

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

"As far as I'm concerned, trying to link the struggle of gay 'marriage' to the struggle of black people to overcome racism based on the color of skin, which they had absolutely no control over, quite frankly is irrational," Finley said. "There is no comparison to be made because a lifestyle is-

sue is just that. You can make a choice to change your lifestyle any time you want to, but you can't make a choice to change your race.

"I was born black, I am going to die black. I don't have any control over that. That's how God created me. For individuals to claim that their craving for a particular lifestyle is equal to my fight as a black man to end racial discrimination is something that undermines the credibility of their argument," Finley said.

He said those who engage in commerce, like restaurant and business owners, are on "softer ground" in terms of selecting which customers to serve and which to refuse. However, in the community of faith, the issue is very clear, he said.

Even as pastors maintain a biblical opposition to gay "marriage," they also acknowledge the need of all people to experience forgiveness of sins through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Strictly saying, "I don't agree with same-sex 'marriage' is not enough," said John Cantelow III, pastor of Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association. No matter what sin an individual struggles with, building relationships with people as Christ did is essential to sharing the gospel.

"Understanding the brokenness we all have experienced in

different aspects of our lives is so important," Cantelow said. "If you're broken in terms of your sexuality, many of us know how complicated that can make our lives. Pornography, adultery and fornication have afflicted many."

Emphasizing the sin of homosexuality above other sins pushes people away, said Ron Martin, assistant director of church and community ministries for Calhoun Baptist Association.

"We know we are all born into a sinful condition. I thank God that the sins I have dealt with are more socially acceptable, but I have to ask, how would I respond if I were dealing with a less socially acceptable sin? Years ago, alcoholism was a great stain of evil, but now it's an illness that we are compassionate about. Pastors will agree it's a lifelong struggle. At no point do we say, 'No, you're an alcoholic, we won't do business with you or withhold salvation from you.'"

The struggle for the church is in our thinking of marriage as a rite with religious implications rather than a legal right, Martin said.

"We see marriage as a spiritual union between a man and a woman. However, for many Americans, it's not just a spiritual thing. It's financial, making sure my significant other is covered by insurance or parental rights. If our government was

a theocracy, gay 'marriage' should absolutely be illegal. In a democracy, the government is going to be a mirrored reflection of who the people are," Martin said.

Martin, a former pastor himself, said he encourages fellow pastors not to be disheartened by what the world is doing.

"The Bible is proving itself true. Men will become lovers of themselves. People will turn away from sound doctrine," Martin said. "It sears our consciousness that America is going in a different direction, but America has always had its oppositional direction when it comes to the Word."

The political arena is not the place to fight the battle anymore, he said.

"Jesus didn't start in Herod's kingdom or Pilate's palace. He started in the little town He was raised in, teaching them about salvation. The picture we have is not of a hammer-fisted Savior but a loving Savior who would leave the 99 to find the one, who stands at the edge of His yard waiting for the prodigal son to return. If we focus on that image more, we will see change through the transformational love of God and what the government does will no longer matter," Martin said.

'Live the Bible'

"Personally I believe we will see greatness out of this if we take it as a challenge to claim our country for Christ. If we can just live the Bible, live by the basic tenets of our faith — Love Me, Love people — I believe we can change the demographic of America back to Christian beliefs." ■

**"You can make a
choice to change
your lifestyle ... but
you can't ... change
your race."**

**Pastor D'Linell Finley
Southlawn Baptist Church
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 27

Explore the Bible

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

GOD SAVES
Genesis 6:11-18; 7:11-14

This section of Scripture recounts how Noah and his immediate family are rescued from the flood. The whole process is presented as the undoing of creation and then the “re-creation” of the earth as it emerges from the flood. But after the flood not everything returns to its pristine condition. The people’s nature has not been transformed. The heart of the human problem is still the problem of the human heart (Mark 7:21-23).

Wickedness Observed (6:11-13)

Noah was a righteous man who walked in fellowship with God. Noah’s personal righteousness explains why he is warned about God’s plan to judge the earth because of the people’s sin. In contrast to Noah the earth was corrupt in God’s sight. The horror of sin in the human heart is evident as every intention of the thoughts of mankind was continually evil. Sinful, evil thinking manifested itself in the sinful behavior of the people on the earth.

In verses 11-12 the emphasis is on the violence that fills the earth. The mention of “corruption” here may lie behind the apostle Paul’s “bondage to corruption” (Rom. 8:21). The creation suffers as mankind corrupts its way and as God punishes that corruption. Originally created and designed to rule and reign the earth as God’s representatives, humans have aggressively asserted their rule over all others.

The Bible teaches here in Genesis that God is going to destroy the people He has created because of their immoral behavior. Hearts corrupted by sin led the people to abuse others. This sinful behavior always grieves God’s heart and results in His righteous judgment.

Promise Unfolded (6:14-18)

In the midst of God’s judgment there

also is mercy. God makes a covenant with Noah and provides a way for Noah and his immediate family to be saved from the judgment to come. God gave Noah specific plans for him to build a large boat, or the ark. In modern measurements the ark would have been around 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall. The inside capacity would have been 1.4 million cubic feet with a deck area of 95,700 square feet.

God revealed to Noah His intention to bring a flood upon the earth to destroy every person and animal that has the breath of life. Everything that is on the earth shall die in God’s righteous judgment. Everything, that is, except what was in the ark. Just as “Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace” were saved from the judgment there is only one way anyone in the world can be saved from God’s righteous judgment of sin and that is in the true Ark, Jesus Christ. The Church’s mission is the Great Commission. We are to make disciples of all nations and we need to do so with urgency because the judgment day is approaching. When was the last time you sought to introduce someone to Jesus?

Action Taken (7:11-14)

A peculiar feature of the story of the flood is the number of detailed chronological notices (8:4-5, 13-14). By pinpointing the exact date of the flood within Noah’s life the Scripture emphasizes that it was a real event.

All those who entered the ark, male and female, went in as God commanded and then the Lord shut the door on the ark. Their salvation was secure. And today our salvation is found not in a place but rather in a person, Jesus Christ. God is saving people all around the world as people respond with repentance and faith to the gospel of Christ. And God seals all of His children of faith with the Holy Spirit. We are saved and kept by the power of Jesus. 🙏

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery Leonard, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

GOD’S PROMISE OF ANSWERED PRAYER
Luke 11:5-13

The story in Genesis 4 of Cain murdering his brother, Abel, has long posed a challenge to students of the Bible. Because the text never specifies precisely why God accepted Abel’s offering but rejected Cain’s, interpreters have been left to puzzle over just what Cain did wrong. Among the great many answers that have been suggested, three stand out as the most common: first that Cain’s offering was rejected because it did not involve blood; second that Cain failed to offer God his best and third that Cain offered his sacrifice with a bad attitude. Unfortunately each of these answers falls short upon closer scrutiny.

Cain’s offering may not have included blood but the Bible allows for a great many sacrifices such as the grain offering (Lev. 2) and first fruits offering (Deut. 26:1-11) that call for gifts of produce, not animals. A careful reading of Genesis 4 also tells us that Cain did give his best. When verse 4 says, “and Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock,” it reveals something not only about Abel’s offering but also about Cain’s. If Abel also gave his best so must have Cain. There also is no indication that Cain offered his sacrifice with a bad attitude. Up to this point in Genesis, God had given no instructions at all concerning sacrifices; this idea apparently originated with Cain himself. But how could Cain come up with the idea of giving a gift to God and then do so with a bad attitude? We cannot even make the claim that Abel made an offering and Cain was begrudgingly forced to follow suit. It was Cain who made his sacrifice first.

Why then did God reject Cain’s offering? Key to the text is the fact that we do not and are not supposed to know. Genesis

4 is a text that teaches us what to do when we do not understand God’s actions: we are to keep pursuing Him. Unlike the first couple who hid from God and Cain who turned his back on God, we are always meant to keep running after God. It is this lesson that Jesus shares with His disciples in Luke 11.

Keep asking because God will answer. (5-10)

In Luke 11:5-10, Jesus recounts the story of a man who comes late at night to borrow food from a neighbor. Though the man is already in bed and is loath to get up, Jesus assures His disciples that the man’s “shameless audacity” will roust the neighbor out of bed and prevail upon him to give the man what he needs. Jesus urges His disciples to have this same attitude when they approach their Heavenly Father in prayer: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” The story of Cain tells us we are to pursue God at all times. When we do so we have Jesus’ blessing to pursue Him with a shameless audacity that boldly asks Him to meet our needs.

Trust God to answer out of His goodness. (11-13)

Jesus’ encouragement to the disciples to ask boldly for God’s blessing is grounded in His assurance of the Father’s goodness. Jesus asks, “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” His questions are meant to be understood as something absurd; obviously no father would do such a thing. Jesus then reasons: if an earthly father gives his son good gifts not bad, how much more would this be true of our Heavenly Father? Though there are times when God’s presence seems distant and times when His actions seem inscrutable our task is to continue to pursue Him. 🙏

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Jesus Christ is the same _____. (Heb. 13:8)
9. The beginning and the _____. (Rev. 22:13)
12. ____ this day. (Ex. 12:17)
13. Seek to ____ in. (Luke 13:24)
15. To take away weapons.
16. The ____ which he promised. (Deut. 9:28)
18. Electrical engineer. (abbr.)
19. At the ____ hand of God. (Rom. 8:34)
20. The people ____ mind to work. (Neh. 4:6)
22. The ____ of the sea. (Gen. 49:13)
25. They departed from _____. (Num. 33:45)
26. Money or goods given to poor, in love. (singular)
27. ____ prophet. (Rev. 16:13)
28. A fig _____. (Mark 11:13)
29. Foot. (abbr.)
31. Any three.
33. ____, I am with you. (Matt. 28:20)
35. Thunder and ____.

- (1 Sam. 12:17)
37. No room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
38. The children of _____. (Ezra 2:57)
40. Unto the ____ down. (Ps. 50:1)
41. ____ Lord. (Ps. 120:2)
42. Let him be Anathema Maran _____. (1 Cor. 16:22)
43. Hemoglobin. (abbr.)
44. The ____ of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)
47. “And sun” in Spanish.
48. Tailor. (abbr.)
50. Prefix indicating “inside” or “within.”
51. I will ____ thee. (Gen. 22:17)
53. ____, thou shalt love. (Rom. 13:9)
54. Glory and _____. (2 Pet. 1:3)
4. The glory of the _____. (1 Cor. 15:40)
5. A weasel.
6. Revised Version. (abbr.)
7. A territory of India.
8. Basic monetary unit of Japan.
9. Eastern time. (abbr.)
10. The eye of a _____. (Matt. 19:24)
11. Nor to your _____. (Jer. 27:9)
14. Airport code for New Delhi, India.
17. Inclined upward.
21. Moses and _____. (Lev. 13:1)
23. Associate in arts. (abbr.)
24. Very low frequency. (abbr.)
28. His ears shall _____. (Jer. 19:3)
30. Teachest _____. (Luke 20:21)
32. With a gold _____. (James 2:2)
34. Grasses.
36. Not many ____ are called. (1 Cor. 1:26)
39. A unit of conductance,

- reciprocal to the ohm.
41. Airport code for O'Hare Field, Chicago.
42. Sixteenth letter of Hebrew alphabet.
45. Multiply ____ the face of the earth. (Gen. 6:1)
46. My ____ is easy. (Matt. 11:30)
49. Revised Standard Version. (abbr.)
51. ____ood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14)
52. “Yes” in Spanish.

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"I really believe that our purpose in life is not only to make it through these tough seasons, but to rise above the situation and help someone else."

Natasha Owens
worship leader and singer/songwriter

'God at work'



Photos courtesy of Bozeman Media

Singer Owens rises above family tragedy, finds hope and healing in Christ

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Through her music and message Natasha Owens seeks to connect audiences to Christ as their source of security and strength during life's darkest moments. Following the tragic death of her father, Owens walked through a painful journey filled with sorrow and grief.

As she reflects back on that difficult season, Owens now realizes the great care and compassion that God provided in the midst of this journey. She also acknowledges that during her weakest moments, God powerfully took hold and never let go.

"After my dad passed away in a tragic gun accident five years ago, my strength started to decline and I began battling depression," Owens said. "In the middle of this season of depression, my pastor asked me to lead worship for our congregation."

"I immediately told him: 'I'm sorry, but you've got the wrong person. There are days where I can't even make it out of bed in the morning. Right now I'm very angry at God so it would be hard for me to motivate people and tell them how great He is, when He's not to me.'"

"Even though I resisted and tried to decline the offer several times, my pastor kept coming back and saying that he truly believed that this was where God was directing. After a while I accepted the position but it still took me some time to dig out of that hole. Looking back I'm so grateful for the encouragement that was provided and the many ways that God was opening doors while also reminding me to keep pressing on and moving forward."

With a renewed sense of purpose and by seeking God for the strength to face each day, Owens started investing her time and talents into leading worshippers to the throne of God.

"When I started, I was still at a place where I couldn't

even open my Bible," Owens admitted. "Eventually I got to a place where I could start reading it again and got stronger. As I began concentrating on the songs that I had to work on for that week, I realized that I did have enough strength to get out of bed and get ready to face each day. It was a process, but God knew what I needed and this opportunity kept me from getting further away from Him."

"My pastor often told me: 'Sometimes when you don't have any strength to pour out, you will find that God gives you the strength you need to make it through each day and in return He also gives you healing.'"

'Training ground'

When Owens began using music as an outlet to express her emotions, she also started receiving invitations to perform concerts and lead worship at ministry events.

"Leading worship for my church was the training ground for what I'm doing now," Owens noted. "I remember praying one night and feeling like God was calling me to do something more and something different. The next day I received a text message from someone asking if I had ever thought about making a CD. That led to my first album being released. Since then, God has opened up so many doors."

"Being thrown into these opportunities can only come from God. My very first concert was performing with Michael W. Smith, and now my

second album was produced by Ed Cash, who works with amazing artists like Chris Tomlin. It's nothing that I have done on my own, and I certainly can't take credit for anything. It's just a testimony of God at work."

Because of the authenticity and vulnerability in her original songs, she has heard from countless people about the impact of her powerful and poignant testimony.

"I am so humbled when I hear stories of how these songs are impacting people because I had really struggled for a long time," Owens said. "During that period of grief

I felt like I needed to act like everything was together on the outside, and I wanted to hide my broken pieces on the inside because I didn't think anyone would want to hear about my struggles."

"I remember the first time that I actually smiled again after walking through that season. I remember being so thankful to God for pulling me through and restoring joy to my spirit. Right then I promised God that whatever doors He opened for me that I would be obedient to walk through them and follow Him. This incredible journey started soon after that, and God has allowed my testimony to help a lot of people going through similar struggles and trials."

Owens recently released her second album, "No One But You," which chronicles testimonies about God's faithfulness during every season of life.

"My first project was about making it through a trial, and this project has a specific purpose that revolves around rising above," Owens said. "Often people don't make it through their trial because they choose to remain in a stage of anger or bitterness. Other times people make it through the trial, but they forget that it was God pulling them through and leading them out of the darkness and into the light."

Purpose in life

"I really believe that our purpose in life is not only to make it through these tough seasons but to rise above the situation and help someone else. My goal for this project is to give strength to people who are struggling by offering encouragement from God's Word and reminding them that God wants us to do more for His kingdom and to use our gifts for His glory."

This fall Owens will perform on the Every Child is Beautiful Tour along with fellow musicians Mark Schultz, David Dunn, Kutless and Rush of Fools.

"When I hear stories about how my music and message is impacting people, it really makes an impact on me and gets me refocused, redirected and re-energized," Owens said. "It reminds me that all of our temporary struggles and sacrifices are worth it, because if someone comes to know Jesus as a result and has the assurance of salvation that changes everything for eternity." ❧



GOD'S calling

MK recounts how her story turned out to be His story

By Bethani Thomas

International Mission Board missionary kid

People say everyone has a story, but I think every person is a story: a living, breathing, walking, heart-beating book. Some people create their own stories while others are forced into them. My story falls into the latter category.

Some of you reading this may recognize me as “the girl from the article” or “the girl who was kidnapped.” On the other hand, some of you may not have the slightest idea who I am, so I’ll start from the beginning.

I was 7 years old when my story took its first drastic turn. Responding to God’s calling in each of their lives, my parents packed, sold or gave away our belongings and bought a one-way plane ticket to Costa Rica. We lived there one year to attend language-learning school then moved to Guatemala, where my parents still live and serve with an indigenous people group. This would change the projection of my life and would forever mark my life as different from most of my peers.

After a few years I became accustomed to life in Guatemala. In fact it became to me a fairly “normal” life as I entered my teen years. Of course, there were ups and downs, but overall I was content. My spiritual life was the same. My parents had raised me and my brothers in God’s Word and taught us that the stories it held were true. Yet looking back, I think it’s safe to say that I had not yet truly experienced God.

On the night of Oct. 23, 2006, that changed. What began as a normal trip to the grocery store for a 13-year-old girl and her mom ended in a carjacking at gunpoint. I was thrown headfirst into a sea of chaos as a man hustled my mother from the driver’s seat, removing her from the vehicle. She lay on the street, unharmed, yet in shock as she realized that the vehicle driving away held her daughter. I was still in the passenger seat. I panicked, of course, and sat for a few moments in terror, knowing I had no control of this situation.

Taken care of

My moment of panic quickly changed into a moment of relinquishment when I realized there was nothing I could do. I knew I was helpless, so I began to pray. The moment the name of God left my lips in a cry for help, the entire atmosphere calmed. I was still on edge and I still had no idea what was going to happen to me, but I knew I was taken care of because God was writing this story, not me.

The men only wanted the vehicle. They dropped me off and my family and another missionary brought me home. The trauma was past and slowly we began to move on with life.

But the story doesn’t end there because God never sets down His pen.

My family recovered from that night. I never had any trouble sleeping nor did I suffer from fear or anxiety. My struggles stemmed from the reactions I received from others. I didn’t know if I should tell people what had happened to me so for a while I kept quiet. In Guatemala and in the United States people I knew would avoid the topic. Others wouldn’t talk to me at all, they would just wonder if I was OK or if at any second I was going to have an emotional breakdown.

On the other hand some people would walk right up to me and say how proud they were of me or how my story changed their lives. I never knew how to take that. I had no control over what had happened to me, so I didn’t think I could take any credit for how it turned out.

As a pre-teen trying to figure out who I was, I wanted to fit in and be “normal” — not stand out for something unusual that happened to me. Although it was a crucial moment in my life I didn’t feel like it should define me.

There were, however, obstacles I had to overcome because of my experience. But through these I gained insight into people in need that created a unique bridge, connecting me to others in a special way.

As I left my home in Guatemala for college in the U.S., I was overwhelmingly excited as well as afraid of the new world ahead. I felt like a foreigner sometimes. I told people I grew up in Guatemala and answered any questions they had. I am slightly ashamed to say that I did not immediately tell people about the many ways I had seen God work in and through my life, specifically my kidnapping story.

Opportunities to share

I began to tell some of my closest friends at school. God was gentle with me and slowly gave me opportunities to share with people. When I was put in such a position of complete surrender, it was as if the blinds were taken off of my eyes. I no longer saw in tunnel vision. I was given a short glimpse of the big picture and the part I played in His master plan.

I have learned a lot of things about myself, about God and about others since leaving my life abroad and “settling down” in the U.S.

My experience has taught me that we shouldn’t expect to have control over our lives, nor should we want control. We think we are the authors of our stories and that if we plan enough and stick to our grand ambitions that everything will come out just how we planned. But I have realized that God’s purpose for me, for everyone, is to play a part in His plan to draw others to Him. That’s the ultimate true story, and it is His story. (BP)



THOMAS

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Police attitude toward Christians ‘serious concern’

MANDI USMANWALA, Pakistan — Police officers charged and jailed a Christian accused of blasphemy by Muslim business competitors, beating area Christians in their search for him, sources said.

Jamshed Masih said local Muslims had entrapped his brother, Pervaiz Masih, in a false blasphemy case after he obtained a sand contract over his Muslim competitors in Garra village, near Mandi Usmanwala in Kasur District, Punjab Province, Pakistan.

Jamshed Masih said more than 300 Muslims shouted chants against all the Christians in the village Sept. 1 and vowed to avenge alleged disrespect of their prophet by burning Pervaiz Masih alive. Police raided the Christians’ homes and beat them in search of Pervaiz Masih, who had been moved to a safe location. He is now in police custody and his entire family has fled the village.

Attorney Aneeqa Maria, of the human rights group The Voice Society (VS), said VS would care for Pervaiz Masih’s family and defend him in court. “The FIR [First Information Report] of the alleged incident clearly shows malice of the complainants, but it is the police’s attitude towards the Christians there that is more appalling and a serious concern to us,” Maria said. (MS)

Christian killings in Nigeria part of ‘planned genocide’

KADUNA, Nigeria — The killing of Christians by Muslim Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria’s middle belt — including two slayings Aug. 22 in Taraba state — is part of a jihadist drive to take over resources and displace the historically Christian population, sources said.

The killing of brothers Ushahemba Kumashenge and Sughter Kumashenge was the latest of numerous attacks in Taraba, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue states. Muslim Fulani herdsmen ambushed the brothers on their farm near the village, a church leader from the area said.

The middle belt states are comparatively rich in environmental resources that have drawn migration from herdsmen and other Muslims, according to a report recently released by Nigeria Conflict Security Analysis Network.

John Danfulani, a Christian leader from southern Kaduna state, said that since 2011 Muslim Fulani attacks have killed 614 Christians in the region, wounded about 1,200 others and destroyed 1,000 Christian-owned houses.

Christians in southern Kaduna “are being wiped out with impunity and the casualty figures increase with every attack,” Danfulani said. (MS)

Court rules in favor of South Sudanese church, pastors

NORTH KHARTOUM, South Sudan — A court has ruled that committees the Sudanese government imposed on a North Khartoum church in order to enable Muslim investors to take it over were illegal, sources said.

The Aug. 31 ruling, a victory in the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church’s (KBEC) four-year battle to retain ownership of its property, ruled the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments interfered with church matters.

The church, which belongs to the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC), has been subject to arrests and demolition of its property as the congregation has objected to the attempted takeover. Two South Sudanese pastors were jailed since December 2014 and January 2015 respectively, charged with capital crimes over their support for the congregation’s fight to prevent the take-over by Muslim investors.

Yat Michael, 49, and Peter Yein Reith, 36, could have been sentenced to death or whipping but were convicted of lesser charges Aug. 5 and released on time served.

KBEC and SPEC leaders said they consider the court ruling a step in the right direction. (MS)