

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

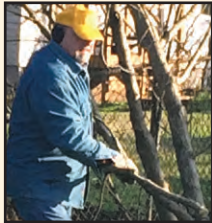


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TAB
augmented
reality

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Sunday is Jan. 17.

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." Psalm 139:13

123rf.com

Planned Parenthood dumps aborted babies in landfills, Ohio AG reports

Planned Parenthood Federation of America's (PPFA) public persona now includes a report that the remains of babies aborted at some of its centers are dumped in landfills.

An investigation of three PPFA affiliates in Ohio showed that all of them send the remains of aborted children to companies that dispose of them at landfill sites, state Attorney General Mike DeWine announced Dec. 11, 2015. The fetal remains apparently are mixed at the landfills with "common residential and commercial trash," DeWine said in a letter to the director of the state Department of Health.

PPFA performs more than 300,000 abortions a year, receives

more than \$500 million from the government annually and continues to be plagued by scandal.

Proof of disposal

The Ohio attorney general's office investigated PPFA clinics in Cincinnati, Columbus and the Cleveland suburb of Bedford Heights to determine if they were selling baby parts in violation of state law.

His staff found no evidence the clinics were selling fetal tissue, but it uncovered proof of a disposal practice that violates a state rule mandating a "fetus shall be disposed of in a humane manner," DeWine said. That rule calls for the state health director to seek to

block the practice through a court injunction.

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said, "Just when you thought you had heard it all, Planned Parenthood demonstrates again its callous disregard for the unborn. Unborn babies are as human as any other person. They deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect anyone else would be given, even in death.

"If the latest revelation is determined to be true, we have further evidence to support our call to end all taxpayer subsidies to Planned Parenthood. The staff of ERLC is

praying and working for the day when our nation recognizes the dignity of the unborn and protects them by law. Until then, we must all do everything we can within the limits of the law to hold accountable anyone who abuses the power of life and death over the unborn."

Rejecting the report

PPFA officials in Ohio rejected the report from DeWine's office, describing the allegations as "inflammatory and false."

The Ohio affiliates filed a federal lawsuit Dec. 13 contending they handle fetal remains the way other abortion providers do and utilize companies that dispose (See 'Is abortion,' page 4)

"Unborn babies are as human as any other person. They deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect anyone else would be given, even in death."

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy, ERLC

COMMENT



TAB
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reality

By All Possible Means

It is a truth most Christians know with their heads but have trouble embracing with their hearts. Stated simply, not everyone is nurtured by the same spiritual environment. At least that was the conclusion of a Barna study examining group expressions of the Christian faith.

With our heads we affirm that truth remembering the declaration of the apostle Paul when he declared, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). But with our hearts many wish everyone could experience the same spiritual stimulus that spurred them toward a deeper relationship with God.

If one was saved in a revival service for example one often concludes that revivals are the answer to a church’s lagging evangelism. If a lay renewal weekend turned around one’s relationship with God then everyone should participate in a lay renewal weekend.

Personal experience and individual preferences make it difficult for many people to appreciate that some respond better to a personal conversation about their relationship to God than they do to a sermon in a large setting or that some people move slowly toward God and are put off by calls for immediate decisions.

Spiritual environment

That does not mean revivals, lay renewal weekends or any other special activity are wrong or inappropriate. It only illustrates that not everyone is nurtured by the same spiritual environment.

The apostle Paul was a Roman citizen under bondage to no one. Yet he often adopted the mindset of a servant in order to gain a hearing for the gospel (v. 19). At other times Paul complied with the demands of Jewish ceremonial law in order to share the good news of Jesus with a Jewish audience. He did this even though Paul clearly taught that in Christ the burden of ceremonial law had been removed.

With Gentiles, the apostle behaved as one not under the Jewish ceremonial law. With philosophers, he debated philosophy and shared



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

the message of Christ on their own terms. Paul would violate no law of God to please man but he accommodated himself in every lawful way to gain a hearing from some.

The apostle Paul used a variety of approaches in order to gain the widest hearing for the gospel because he understood people are not all nurtured by the same spiritual environment.

Knowing this truth does not stop Baptists and other Christians today from disagreeing about how to share the gospel or what style of worship is best. For some a high-energy service focused on choruses and Scripture songs is the only way to worship. Others prefer singing the great hymns of the faith in a more traditional service.

Some Christians want to focus on Bible study during worship while others focus on beginning a relationship with God. Some Christians are stirred by the lofty sounds of organ and piano. Others are moved by the guitar and drum.

Increasingly, a number of Christians are rejecting all of these approaches in favor of small groups or house churches where sharing is emphasized and personal relationships are nurtured.

Each approach to worship and proclamation has its strengths but no one style appeals to everyone because, as Barna found, not everyone is nurtured by the same spiritual environment.

On visits to England my wife and I like to participate in evensong services, especially in some of the great London cathedrals. Each weeknight as evening falls, worshippers gather

for music and Scripture. Occasionally there is a sermon. The liturgy has remained unchanged for hundreds of years. To us there is something powerful about standing where Christian believers have stood for centuries and declaring faith in God through Jesus Christ with the same words and readings used by all who had stood on those stones before.

One of our granddaughters attended evensong services with Pat and I on one trip. Afterward she observed that evensong might be “our thing” but it was not hers. She had just completed a week at Mfuge, a summer youth gathering, before accompanying us to London and what she enjoyed was the high-energy music and rhythmic beat.

Desiring to walk with God

The apostle Paul’s emphasis was not condemning the Gentile or the Jew but ministering to them with the gospel. It is doubtful that in today’s culture he would be interested in poking fun at contemporary worship or condemning the formality of traditional services. More likely he would be concerned about what opened people to the message of the gospel and created a desire for a continuing walk with God.

The Barna study found differences in responses based on geographical regions, on gender, on age, on life situation and on religious background. Obviously reaching people for the Lord and spurring their Christian growth is much more complicated than the type of music one sings.

Like the apostle Paul those today with a warm-hearted zeal for the gospel will “be all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” That may mean using a variety of approaches to minister to those already in the church’s sphere of influence as well as to those we hope to reach.

Certainly Paul’s example and the findings of the Barna study remind us again that pleading for one method of outreach or one style of worship is inappropriate because not everyone is nurtured by the same spiritual environment. 🙏

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

PROOF ON TRUMP?

In the Dec. 17, 2015, issue of *The Alabama Baptist* I absolutely disagree with the headline, “Baptist leaders say Trump violates religious liberty.”

Do you have proof that Donald Trump violates religious liberty and who are you to judge anyone?

The Bible says in Matthew 7:1:

“Judge not, lest you be judged.”

Trump is only trying to look out for your safety and mine. He did not say the shutting down of allowing Muslims entering the United States would be a permanent thing.

I am behind Franklin Graham 100 percent in his stand with Trump. Read again what he said about World War II. He makes a lot more

sense than whoever wrote the article on page 13 of the issue.

You Baptist leaders, who by the way, were put in office by other Baptists, should pray and let the Lord (see ‘Letters,’ page 9)



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"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

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Helping in time of crisis

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers respond to December storms

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) efforts are ongoing in response to severe weather that affected many areas of Alabama during Christmas week 2015.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), most of Alabama received upwards of 3 inches of rain between Dec. 21 and Dec. 26. Many areas received more than 5 inches during that same period, with parts of Winston, Barbour, Pike and Coffee counties reporting more than 10 inches.

On Christmas Day tornadoes touched down in Jefferson and Tuscaloosa counties, causing damage to several structures and downing trees in several neighborhoods.

State of Emergency

The Associated Press reported three weather-related deaths in Alabama, two in Coffee County and one in Madison County. Governor Robert Bentley issued a State of Emergency on Dec. 24 for all Alabama counties because of heavy rainfall and flooding.

As of Jan. 8 flood warnings continued for Escambia, Mobile, Baldwin, Washington, Clarke, Choctaw, Wilcox, Monroe and Dallas counties as the Alabama, Escambia, Mobile and Tombigbee rivers remained above flood stage.

Disaster relief teams were working in five active areas of response during the week of Jan. 4, according to Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). As of Jan. 8, 120 jobs were either being worked on or had been completed, Johnson reported.

Chainsaw teams from Birmingham, Friendship, North Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Walker Baptist associations were engaged Dec. 31 to work in the Birmingham area. Johnson reported that 120 DR volunteers were at work that day. Chaplains reported at least three decisions for Christ.

In north Alabama, a DR team from Limestone Baptist Association assisted by local volunteers provided mud-out help along the Madison/Limestone county line. Local volunteers were at work in Marshall County as well, where several roads were closed because of flooding.

The Elmore Baptist Association DR unit helped several homeowners of flooded homes with mud-out work. Mud-out teams also worked in several homes in Elba in Coffee County. Teams engaged in the response in southeast Alabama included units from Covington, Baldwin, Coffee, Columbia and Tuskegee Lee Baptist associations.



Photo by Natalie Walker

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from Bessemer Association work in clean-up efforts around homes on Jefferson Avenue on Jan. 4.

Bessemer Baptist Association DR volunteers worked the first week of January in the Bessemer area.

In a phone interview Jan. 7, Coffee Association Director of Missions John Granger said the major relief efforts had been removing furniture and drywall from flooded homes.

Those efforts were wrapping up, he said, though debris removal from city streets and parks and other clean-up efforts would be ongoing for a few more days.

"As far as we know, we're about to finish up with cleaning out flooded homes, though there will still be a need for jobs that untrained volunteers will be able to do that will be helpful to local residents," Granger said.

Quick response

Granger estimated that 55 trained DR workers from around the state had been at work in Elba, noting that several had worked New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. The teams were hosted by First Baptist Church, Elba, and stayed at The Vineyard Christian Retreat, a Coffee Association camp. The Vineyard provided breakfast and dinner daily, and local churches provided lunch for workers each day. Granger also noted the quick response by Johnson, who met with city and county officials early in the crisis, and the work of DR white hats Otis Corbitt and Dennis Mason.



Photo by Natalie Walker

Bessemer Association volunteers clear debris after Christmas 2015 storms.

Granger said the disaster relief response has had a positive influence in the community, noting words of gratitude shared on social media during the cleanup. The cooperative effort between volunteers from around the state is encouraging as well, he said.

"We appreciate so much our connectedness with the rest of Southern Baptist life. It means a lot when you have people who know what they're doing come in to help and support us during a time of crisis," Granger said. ☪

For updates on DR efforts in the state or to donate to relief efforts, visit www.sbdr.org.

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

“My prayer is that this collection of short essays will help equip the Church to serve and love the unborn, unloved and neglected.”

Trillia Newbell
editor of “Women on Life”

What it means to be pro-life

Pro-life women seek to equip Christians to address life situations from biblical perspective in new book

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is preparing to publish a book by women on being pro-life in all of life.

ERLC is releasing the book — “Women on Life: A Call to Love the Unborn, Unloved and Neglected” — to coincide with Sanctity of Human Life Sunday emphases.

The book’s release also will be near the dates of the inaugural Evangelicals for Life, a co-sponsored conference to be held in conjunction with the annual March for Life in Washington (see story, page 5). For more information or to register, visit <http://evangelicals.life>.

Variety of contributors

With 16 female contributors, “Women on Life” — in both print and e-book format — seeks to equip Christians to address a variety of life situations from a biblical, pro-life perspective.

The book’s topics include protecting unborn children and vulnerable women from abortion, seeking purity in singleness, teaching children about sex, helping pregnant teenagers, receiving forgiveness for sexual sin, adopting children, living as a single mother and caring for widows, the elderly and those with special needs.

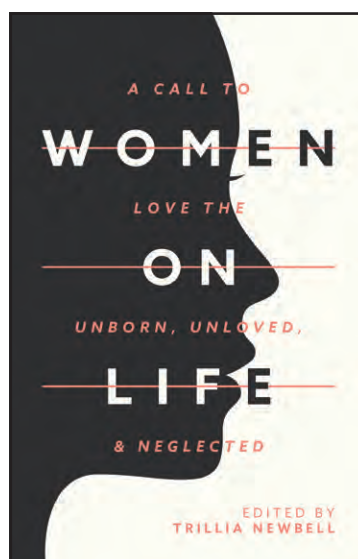
“Women on Life” is about what it means to be pro-life, said Trillia Newbell, the book’s editor, in an ERLC news release.

“It’s not enough to be vocally pro-life,” said Newbell, ERLC’s director of community outreach. “To be pro-life is to act out of love for every single person who carries incredible worth.

“‘Women on Life’ isn’t just a book about why we are pro-life, but rather how we can practically love and serve in a variety of difficult, real-life circumstances.”

Russell Moore, ERLC’s president, said in the news release, “It is crucial in our advocacy for the unborn that we speak directly to the consciences of women with a pro-life, whole-life message. The voices gathered together in ‘Women on Life’ are doing just that. I’m excited to see what this book will accomplish for the cause of life and human dignity in our churches and communities.”

Among the contributors are Betsy Childs Howard, an editor with The Gospel Coalition; Jackie Hill-



Is abortion really a political issue?

(continued from page 1)
of them “respectfully and safely.”

Stephanie Kight, president of Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, said in a written statement, “Politicians in Ohio will stop at nothing to ban abortion in all cases in our state.”

She called the report a “plainly political attempt to restrict women’s access to safe and legal abortion.”

In recent years, fraudulent over-billing of the Medicaid program has been uncovered at some PPFA affiliates.

In addition, undercover video investigations have caught PPFA staff seeking to cover up alleged child sexual abuse and the apparent willingness of employees to aid sex traffickers whose prostitutes are in their early teens.

In another secret investigation, PPFA workers agreed to receive donations designated for abortions of African-American babies. (BP)

Bill to defund Planned Parenthood awaits Obama’s decision

Sitting on President Barack Obama’s hypothetical desk is a repeal bill that would not only defund the abortion corporation Planned Parenthood Federation of America but also would repeal many portions of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare.

With a House vote of 240 to 181, the Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015 (HR 3762) also was passed in the Senate in December 2015.

Symbolic action

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Price, R-Georgia, HR 3762 comes at a pivotal time in the 2016 election season and is in part a symbolic action meant to highlight ideological differences between both sides of the political party, according to news sources.

The bill would strip Planned Parenthood of 89 percent of its federal funding for one year. The abortion corporation has been under attack after undercover videos were released in 2015 showing the organization’s leaders admitting to making a profit from selling fetal tissue,

something leadership later denied.

An earlier version of the bill was passed in October 2015, amended by the Senate in December and approved by the House again Jan. 6.

The amendments include repealing large sections of Obamacare, including the mandate for employers with more than 50 workers to provide insurance to employees.

The bill also would increase funding to community health centers, remove the mandate for individuals to purchase health insurance and repeal the tax on over-the-counter medications, among other things.

President Obama, however, has already said he will veto the bill and has until Jan. 16 to do so. The House, according to news

Perry, poet and artist with Humble Beast Records; and Kelly Rosati, vice president of community outreach for Focus on the Family.

Newbell thinks the book will help churches address a problem reflected in a new survey by LifeWay Research.

The study, released Nov. 23, 2015, found, among other opinions, about twice as many women considering abortion expected or experienced judgment from a church rather than caring.

“My prayer is that this collection of short essays will help equip the Church to serve and love the unborn, unloved and neglected,” Newbell said.

Online retailers

“Women on Life” will be available for purchase through most major online retailers. The book is being published by Leland House Press, an ERLC initiative to help local churches address moral and ethical issues.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is Jan. 17 on the Southern Baptist Convention calendar. (BP)

sources, is expected to override the veto. It takes two-thirds vote in both the Senate and the House to override a presidential veto.

Even if President Obama does veto the bill, pro-life activists say the vote that passed the bill in the House and Senate is important because it shows a similar bill could make its way to the desk of a pro-life president in 2017.

Other supporters

Leading pro-life groups also have said they support the bill, including Susan B. Anthony List, Family Research Council, National Right to Life, March for Life (see story, page 5), Concerned Women for America, Operations Rescue, American Life League and others. (TAB)

VOICE YOUR OPINION

SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible



**"BEHOLD, CHILDREN ARE
A HERITAGE FROM THE
LORD, THE FRUIT OF THE
WOMB A REWARD."**

**>>PSALM 127:3
#EFL2016**

EFL graphic

Being a **pro-life witness**

Evangelical pro-life conference to educate, equip believers to take stand for unborn

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

Lord, I don't believe abortion is right. I know Your Word teaches against it and I know I want to make a difference in this fight, but I don't know how. I don't even know where to begin, or who to talk to, or what ministries are out there. What can I do, as an individual, to stand up for the unborn?"

Has that conversation ever played out in your head?

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Focus on the Family have teamed up to sponsor the first Evangelicals for Life (EFL) conference Jan. 21-22 to educate and equip evangelicals on topics such as abortion, human trafficking, adoption and end-of-life issues.

Held in conjunction with the March for Life on Jan. 22 in Washington, EFL will host several guest speakers who will share resources and information

on why evangelicals need to be in the pro-life movement; why abortion is a social justice issue for all evangelicals; why Hispanic evangelicals are distinctly pro-life; how to connect the sanctity of life and the Great Commission; how the gospel shapes sanctity of life; why being pro-family includes being pro-life; and many other subjects.

'Unique opportunity'

ERLC President Russell Moore said during a conference call Jan. 6, "The EFL conference will be a unique opportunity to come and fellowship together with likeminded people and to have resources for the year to come ... for instance learning from a pastor who is doing remarkable work dealing with men in the aftermath of an abortion. That's someone other evangelicals need to hear from and learn how to implement that type of outreach into your own church and your own ministry."

Some of EFL's guest speakers will be

Moore; David Platt, International Mission Board president; Charmaine Yoest, Americans United for Life CEO and president; Jeanne Mancini, March for Life Education and Defense Fund president; John Stonestreet, Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview president; Nathan Lino, pastor of Northeast Houston Baptist Church, Humble, Texas; Paige Cunningham, The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity executive director; Casey Mattox, Alliance Defending Freedom senior counsel; and Jim Daly, Focus on the Family president.

March for Life

EFL participants also will walk together in the March for Life, something evangelicals have largely not been a part of in the past.

"(At the March for Life) the burden of leadership falls disproportionately on our Roman Catholic friends. ... Given the strong pro-life witness evangelicals have, we need to be

present and join arms with our allies (at the march)," Moore said.

Daly said during the conference call, "For evangelicals to come together to support life in the context of EFL and the march is the right thing to do. I'm surprised it hasn't happened in years past. We feel now ... we need to band together to say we are all in favor of life. To create a culture that every child is wanted."

Moore said, "A conscience that is awakened to the unborn is a conscience that is awakened to human dignity. The pro-life movement is a multipronged movement. ... It can change people's minds that unborn children ought to be protected. ... It affects ministry in every community where people are not just caring for a person at the moment of crisis but leading them in job training, child-care and after the birth of a child. ... And the idea of adoption comes out of that concern for the unborn and the women who are vulnerable."

Beyond participating in EFL and the

march, Moore said some practical steps that churches and communities can take in the pro-life movement include pastors preaching about abortion "not only in terms of justice for the unborn but in extending mercy to those who have aborted."

"Our churches often empower the abortion industry with [our] silence," Moore said.

"We need people in local congregations asking the question, 'What would You have me to do to stand up for life, Lord?'"

That's not going to be one answer for every person. ... There are a variety of ways that each part of the body of Christ can be involved to witness to the pro-life cause," many of which will be discussed at EFL.

Talking about the issue

Daly said, "I hope we can begin to think about how to make abortion rare. Let's begin that dialog. I hope we can talk to people who have a different opinion than us and try to find a solution to avoid taking human life." ❧

Pregnancy resource centers of Alabama

Sav-A-Life of Tallapoosa County
Alexander City
256-329-2273

Sav-A-Life Family Hope Center
Andalusia
334-222-0644

Sav-A-Life of Calhoun County
Anniston
256-237-9999
savlifecalhouncounty.org

Sav-A-Life of Limestone County
Athens
256-233-5775
savlifeathens.org

Sav-A-Life Bessemer, Inc.
Hueytown
205-491-2626
savlifebessemer.org

Sav-A-Life Escambia County
Brewton
251-867-4947

Sav-A-Life of DeKalb County, Inc.
Fort Payne
256-845-0838

Shoals Sav-A-Life, Inc.
Florence
256-740-0640
shoalsavalife.com

Sav-A-Life Birmingham area
Birmingham / 205-979-0302
ptcbirmingham.com
Vestavia Hills / 205-979-0302
Near Center Point / 205-545-5878

Sav-A-Life Pregnancy Center
Decatur
256-355-3828
decaturpregnancy.com

Sav-A-Life of Lanett Valley, Inc.
Lanett
334-642-8832
lanettpregnancy.org

Sav-A-Life Shelby Pregnancy Resource Center
Pelham
205-664-1667
ichoosetoday.org

St. Clair County Sav-A-Life, Inc.
Springville
205-467-7322

Compiled from care-net.org

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.

BIRMINGHAM

▶ **Andy Wilbanks** is the new minister to families at **Hunter Street Church, Hoover**. He transitioned to this position from minister of children, a role he has had since 2010. Prior to that he served as minister to children at NorthPark Church, Trussville. Wilbanks is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham and earned his master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Lindsay, have three children. Buddy Gray is pastor. ▶ **First Church, Birmingham**, will host revival services titled "Behold, I Do A New Thing" on Jan. 17–20. Wayne Dickard will be the guest speaker. Services will be held Jan. 17, 10:15 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Jan. 18–19, 6:30 p.m. both nights; and Jan. 20, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. For more information call Cindy James at 205-870-3888. Jim Cooley is pastor.

BLOUNT

▶ **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will host its third Sunday night singing Jan. 17, 6 p.m. with The Steeles. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

▶ **Sixth Street Church, Al-**

xander City, ordained Myron West to the ministry Dec. 13, 2015. He and his family serve among the Acholi people of Uganda with Four Corners Ministry. West and his wife, Holly, have two children. Matt Haines is pastor.

MARSHALL

▶ **First Church, Albertville**, will celebrate Willis Kelley's 60 years in ministry Jan. 17, 2–4 p.m. Kelley served in several churches in Marshall and DeKalb associations. Chris Johnson is pastor.

LIMESTONE

▶ **Bernice Adele Yarbrough Martin** was recognized Jan. 9 by her church, **Round Island Church, Athens**, for her 100th birthday, which was Jan. 12. Martin has six children, 12 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and nine great-great-grandchildren.



MARTIN

SHELBY

▶ **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will host The Kempters in concert Jan. 31, 10:30 a.m. A covered dish luncheon will follow the service. For more information call Peggy Sue Harding at 205-908-8177. James Blair is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host a men's conference titled "Men Who Win" with guest speaker Steve Hale on Jan. 15–16. On Jan. 15 the conference will begin at 6 p.m. with dinner and two sessions. The conference will continue Jan. 16 beginning at 8:30 a.m. and featuring two more sessions. Hale also will speak during the morning worship service Jan. 17, 10:30 a.m. For more information call 205-553-4315. Herb Thomas is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Chewacla Church, Opelika**, will host Bill King on Jan. 24, 11 a.m. King will perform as humorist Billy Bob Bohannon at 4 p.m. Johnny Coker is pastor. 📞

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ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

State missionary Quimby set to retire Jan. 29

For Alabama Baptists, Reggie Quimby has been a household name of sorts for at least 27 years since he's been serving in different capacities as a state missionary at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). But on Jan. 29, Quimby, who currently serves as SBOM's director of the office of global missions, will retire.



QUIMBY

Quimby initially came as a missionary in residence with SBOM's Brotherhood Department in 1989, having served in Spain with his wife, Karen, through the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board). From there Quimby was invited to serve full-time as associate director of the Brotherhood Department under director Tommy Puckett.

Prior to his time overseas Quimby served as associate pastor and minister to youth at Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. He also served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Gantt, and Jones Chapel Baptist Church, Evergreen, as well as minister to youth at a church in Texas. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile and a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Regarding his time at SBOM, Quimby said, "I have appreciated the dedicated leadership at SBOM ... and have been greatly blessed by my fellow laborers in Christ who serve throughout our Alabama Baptist churches and associations. I am indebted to each one and most especially to the Lord for allowing me to serve Him and be blessed in ways I never could have imagined."

Quimby will continue to work in the global missions office as a contract worker after his retirement. He and his wife also plan to travel, he said, working on short-term missions trips and "a little fishing on the side."

They are members of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, and have three children and eight grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)

GuideStone opens SBC Church Compensation Survey

GuideStone Financial Resources, along with LifeWay Research and Baptist state conventions, has opened the biennial Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Church Compensation Survey for 2016. Ministers and church employees are invited to participate in the survey, a resource used by churches of all sizes to determine fair wages and benefits. Survey participants will have the opportunity to enter for a chance to win an iPad.

The survey's results will be made available in early fall, in time for many churches considering their 2017 budgets. The most recent survey results — conducted in 2014 — have been visited almost 55,000 times.

"GuideStone works tirelessly to be an advocate for pastors and church staff, ensuring that they are compensated fairly," said O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone. "The surveys can help churches benchmark their


own salary and benefits packages against churches of like size within Southern Baptist life."

Survey results are not reported individually. Compensation and benefit information can be contributed anonymously. At the conclusion of the survey, GuideStone and LifeWay will compile the submitted data and provide all users with access to the results. Participants in the survey who provide an email address will have first access to the study's customizable reports.


"This survey, which is one of the most comprehensive of its kind, will help scores of churches as they seek to provide for those who are called to lead their congregations," Hawkins said.

Southern Baptist church ministers and staff have until May 31 to complete the online survey.


The survey and complete contest rules are available at GuideStone.org/CompensationSurvey. (GuideStone)



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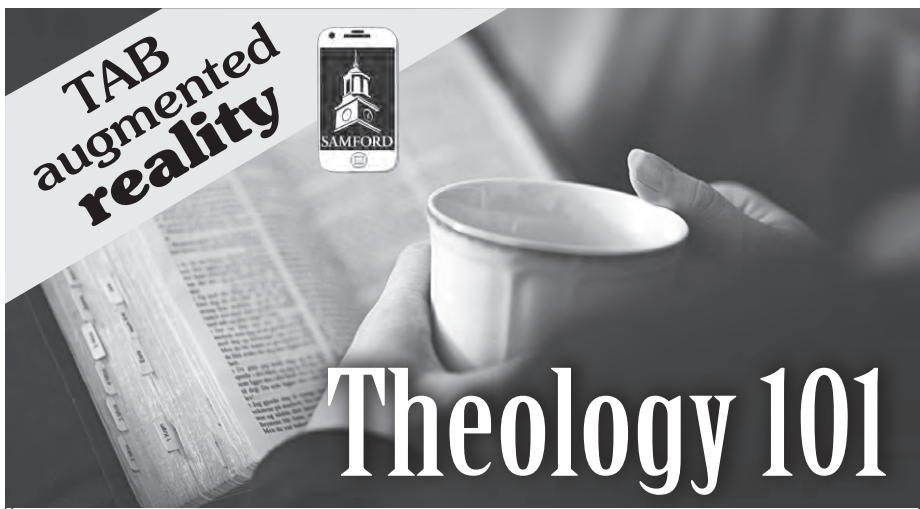
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Photo by Chris McCaghren

As part of your subscription to *The Alabama Baptist*, you will receive a complimentary eight-minute lecture taught by Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland for the next two weeks. Use your Aurasma app to watch the sixth lecture on Christian leadership from Romans by placing your mobile device over this photo. App instructions noted on page 13.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Knowing God

God Is Spirit

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

Last week we began thinking about God's essential nature by noting that He is eternal. This truth is helpful to us when we read the comforting words of Deuteronomy 33:27: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." These were the only words on a telegram delivered to our house from a former pastor in 1958 after my Dad had died unexpectedly.

This week we consider another truth about God's nature or being.

When responding to a Samaritan woman who questioned Him about worshipping God, Jesus declared, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). That God is Spirit means that He does not have a human body. As with His eternality, once again truth about God challenges our human way of thinking. All living beings that we know have bodies. Our challenge is to confess God as both eternal Being and spiritual Being.

Physical characteristics

To be sure, in order to help our understanding, the Bible often attributes physical characteristics to God. For example the words on the telegram that came to our family in 1958 made reference to God's arms. In a similar way, when He spoke to Moses about the impending deliverance of Israel from bondage, God told Moses to say to the people, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm" (Ex. 6:6). Again, when God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, the record says, "He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Ex. 31:18). Later, God cautioned Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me and live" (Ex. 33:20). Second Chronicles 16:9 speaks of God's eyes, and Isaiah 59:1 makes reference to His ears.

Are we to understand that God possesses ears, eyes, arms, fingers and a face? Not literally, but thinking about God in terms of physical characteristics

helps us humans gain a vivid understanding of God's actions. This way of referring to God has a special name.

We use a big word to describe such language about God. We call such references "anthropomorphisms," a way of speaking about God as if He were not absolutely spiritual in His being but in possession of physical features and qualities. The reality is, however, that God is spiritual in His being.

'The invisible God'

The reality that God is Spirit means that He is invisible. In speaking of God the Son, who became flesh and blood, Colossians 1:15 says of Christ: "He is the image of the invisible God." The doxology of 1 Timothy 1:17 puts it: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever."

Furthermore, since God is Spirit He is infinite. He is not limited by time and space as we are with our physical bodies. We cannot be everywhere at the same time. Our physical bodies make it necessary that we take time to move from one place to another and can be in only one place at a time. God can be everywhere at the same time.

In speaking to the Samaritan woman as noted above, Jesus declared that God's existence as Spirit informs true worship. That true worship must be "in spirit and truth" tells us that our worship must be according to truth and offered in sincerity of heart. Acceptable worship of God who is Spirit must be deeper and more inward than traditions, rituals and recitations, although such elements can contribute to worship from the heart. ☞

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



Samford ranked among Kiplinger's top 100 'best college value' list

Samford University in Birmingham received a new milestone ranking among private universities in the "Best College Value" list released recently by *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*.

Samford was ranked No. 49 of the top 100 private universities in the United States. Samford is the highest ranked private university in Alabama and one of the highest-ranked overall among peer institutions in the Southern Conference.

The rankings were released online in December 2015 and will be featured in the February issue of the magazine.

Value, affordability

"The latest ranking from Kiplinger's continue a national trend for Samford to be recognized and ranked for academics, value and affordability," said Betsy Bugg Holloway, Samford's chief marketing officer. "While these rankings are just one measure of an institution's effectiveness, it does affirm Samford's national reputation as one of the premier private universities in the U.S. I am pleased to see that we have risen again in the Kiplinger rankings and that Samford continues to be recognized

among the best values in the nation."

Samford also was ranked 165th among the overall Top 300 Best Values of public and private schools. The University of Alabama ranked 184th and Auburn University ranked 253rd. This is the first year for Kiplinger to do a combined ranking of public and private institutions. Introduced in 1998, the Kiplinger's rankings highlight public schools, private universities and private liberal arts colleges that combine outstanding academics with affordable cost. In addition, Kiplinger has ranked the top 100 best values in each category.

Kiplinger assesses value by measurable standards of academic quality and affordability. Quality measures include the admission rate, the percentage of students who return for sophomore year, the student-faculty ratio and four-year graduation rate. Cost criteria include sticker price, financial aid and average debt at graduation. Many schools, including Samford, have appeared on the list multiple times, a testament to the consistent value these colleges provide, according to Kiplinger's officials. (Samford, *TAB*)



Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice.

Ephesians 4:29, 31

REFLECTIONS



Fanny Crosby's legacy continues through new album of forgotten lyrics

Fanny Crosby's hymns have impacted lives for Christ worldwide for generations, but until recently 2,700 of them were overlooked in an archive, unsung and unpublished.

Now on the album "Blessed Assurance: The New Hymns of Fanny Crosby," some of those forgotten lyrics have come to life through today's worship writers and singers, introducing a new generation to one of the most substantive hymn writers of all time.

Fanny Crosby (1820-1915), undaunted by lifelong blindness, was "a songwriter for the people," said Adrian Thompson, vice president of song and artist development at Integrity Music. "She wrote songs that the common man really grasped."

Christians have sung "All the Way My Savior Leads Me" and "Rescue the Perishing" for decades, and now they can discover "No One Like Jesus," for example, sung by Michael W. Smith on the new album.

Mike Harland, director of Life-Way Worship Resources, said, "This is a very important discovery. Fanny Crosby is already acknowledged as one of the most

prolific hymn text writers in all of Church hymnody. To find a significant number of previously unpublished texts by her that can be developed for the modern Church is a treasure trove for many generations to come."

Stephen Kelley, an entrepreneur and collector of antique hymnals, discovered the lost lyrics in 2000, and it took 15 years to publish a sampling coinciding with the 100th anniversary of Crosby's death in 1915.

Kelley said it began when he was distracted in church one Sunday by the words of "To God Be the Glory."

"I had sung the song for years but I never paid much attention to the words," Kelley said. "Inside that hymn is a word called life-gate — 'open the life-gate that all may go in.' It's a reference to salvation and that captivated me."

'Profound'

That led Kelley to an interest in Crosby, and after some research he found that her publisher was storing her forgotten works in an archive at Wheaton College in Illinois and "for whatever reason chose not to do anything with them."

Harland was asked early on in the project to review a sample of the discovered lyrics and weigh in on what value they may have for the Church today.

"I was amazed at what I read," Harland said. "They were as profound as the hymns of hers we have loved all of our lives."

Crosby, who was a Baptist church member in Brooklyn, has 15 hymns in the 2008 Baptist Hymnal, making her the most quoted lyricist in the entire project, Harland said.

Thompson said what's exciting for him is to have Crosby co-write with contemporary musicians. "It's not just reworking hymns that we've been singing for lots of years," Thompson said. "These are works that have never seen the light of day before."

Thompson considers Crosby a prototype of the modern worship leader. "She committed every day to writing something, which is a real task for any creative person," he said. "She lived a frugal life. She gave her money to urban missions. She didn't live a lavish life. She wanted to be a servant, and she had a passion for God. I think there are a lot of lessons in who she was."

"Blessed Assurance: The New Hymns of Fanny Crosby," includes genres as diverse as Matt Redman, Ricky Skaggs and the Blind Boys of Alabama. (BP)



Marjorie Duncan

Former BBA staff Duncan dies at age 75

Marjorie Duncan, who served in ministry for 25 years through the Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA), died Dec. 28, 2015. She was 75.



DUNCAN

Prior to working at BBA, Duncan served as pastor's secretary at her church, Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point. For 30 years, she served as a counselor during the worship service at the church.

At BBA, Duncan served alongside three executive directors and was most recently the special assistant to the executive director/director of human resources. She also served as BBA clerk before retiring in December 2014.

Duncan was active in other ministry work as well. She was on the board of trustees for the Alabama Baptist State Convention for three terms. She served as president of the Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries and served as historian for two years.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Billy Ray Duncan, and is survived by two children and four grandchildren. (TAB)

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LETTERS

(continued from page 2)
work all this out instead of trying to turn people against one man.

He has a soul too.
Proud to be a Christian Baptist.
Betty S. Messick
Montgomery, Ala.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

In "Baptist leaders say Trump violates religious liberty," in your Dec. 17, 2015, edition of *The Alabama Baptist* it was stated that Russell Moore said, "Anyone who cares an iota about religious liberty" should denounce Trump's "reckless, demagogic rhetoric." Moore is the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission president.

You also stated that Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, stated Dec. 8, 2015, that "Donald Trump's proposal ... is un-American, unworkable, counterproductive and embarrassing."

I for one, though not endorsing Trump or any other political candidate, have to take issue with the statements from these two so-called "leaders."

They are so concerned about

"religious liberty" as they call it (but) we all know how concerned the Muslims are with "religious liberty." Their idea of religious liberty is "you have the liberty to choose Islam or death." There is no compromise, no bartering and no other options.

Moore and Walker do not speak for the entire Southern Baptist Convention, nor do they speak for my church or my church members.

I totally agree with Franklin Graham. It's not the government trying to shut down religion as such, although I believe the current president would love to see Christianity go by the wayside and move Islam into the power areas of this nation.

To say that it violates "religious liberty" is highly arguable when confronted with the threat that radical Islam poses to this nation.

Once again, tell Moore and Walker that they, in fact, do not speak for all Southern Baptists.

This is what you get when you put politics ahead of doctrine: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ,

he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 1:9-11).

Dale Morgan
Jack, Ala.

POLITICS IN CHURCH

It is our civic duty to register to vote and participate in elections but many religious leaders hesitate to offer their opinion on the position of the candidates and many won't allow the Church to become involved. Considering pastors preach about gambling, abortion, homosexuality and other societal issues, it seems necessary that they speak about the direction some candidates wish to take our state and country.

As a concerned Christian and single dad wishing to help move our nation toward love and forgiveness in divorce situations, I have done the research and found nothing that would restrict a church from registering voters or supporting legislation that safeguards parental rights from government intrusion.

The Bible is clear that we should submit to our government (Rom. 13:1) and trust God to take care of us at all times. We also must remember that we have

the power to determine what type of government we must submit to. We have the distinct privilege of being involved in our government, at the very minimum, by voting (Ex. 18:21).

During the Founding Era the pulpits were one of the primary sources for voting information. Churches were at the center of the political community, not on the periphery. It would make sense to believe the Church is the only way to bring Christian beliefs into focus — going back to an old method so we can step forward into our future with goodness and love.

Let's help each congregation member be a contributor in 2016. The Church can make the difference.

For more information about registering to vote, call the Secretary of State at 334-242-7210 or visit alabamavotes.gov or your local board of registrars.

Kenneth Paschal
Pelham, Ala.

CLIMATE CHANGE

When I first started reading the article "Developing countries, poor residents topic of concern after Paris Agreement" in the Dec. 24, 2015, issue I expected it to be more typical media praise of the Paris climate change conference. Thankfully, the views of John Christy, the climate scientist

and former Southern Baptist missionary, were discussed. Also the outstanding resolution on global warming adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2007 was quoted. These Christian and scientifically based opinions significantly disagreed with the climate change agreement that was approved by the United Nations conference in Paris.

It is evident from the article in *The Alabama Baptist* that combatting climate change is not worthy of Christian support because it is likely to do much more harm than good.

I have been following the global warming/climate change developments since John Christy and I were deacons at Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville, about 20 years ago. I was working for Space Craft Inc. at that time. I received my doctorate in electrical engineering from Vanderbilt University. Now I am retired and a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover.

Gary Briscoe
Hoover, Ala. ☞



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- 9 AM Dr. Terry Mortenson — Dinosaurs: Have You Been Brainwashed? (youth/college session)
- 10:15 AM Ken Ham — Genesis & the State of the Culture
- 6 PM Ken Ham — One Blood, One Race
- 7:30 PM Dr. Terry Mortenson — Millions of Years: Where Did the Idea Come From?

Monday, Feb. 29

- 9 AM Ken Ham — Dinosaurs for Kids (grades K-5)
- 11 AM Ken Ham — Science Confirms the Bible (grades 7-12)
- 6:30 PM Ken Ham — Communicating the Christian Message in a Secular World
- 8 PM Dr. Terry Mortenson — Noah's Flood: Washing Away Millions of Years

For more information, visit answersoutreach.org/Florence16



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Making a difference one outfit at a time

Clothing for Champions gives confidence boost to children in Alabaster

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Nearly 100 children in four Alabaster city schools returned to classes last fall with new clothes and shoes thanks to the Clothing for Champions ministry led by Michelle Weaver, community ministries director for First Baptist Church, Alabaster.

Weaver, who's served on the church staff for a decade, said she'd seen over the years how parents came to the church's clothing bank in June or July needing clothes for the upcoming school term.

"Our clothing ministry is relatively small, and the donations we receive are somewhat sporadic, so I began praying about something else we might do," she said.

Weaver said she knew purchasing new clothes and shoes would probably amount to \$75 to \$100 per child, and the need seemed overwhelming.

But her prayer partners challenged her to press forward, so

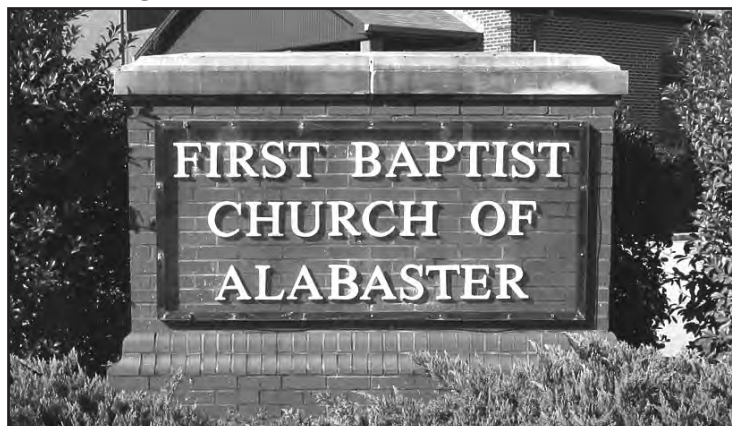


Photo by Michael J. Brooks

she contacted area churches last spring. Two churches — Siluria Baptist and Evangel Presbyterian — got on board.

With the help of guidance counselors at Alabaster City Schools, Weaver compiled a list of families who might be open to assistance.

Weaver said the name of the ministry was inspired by the athletic teams at Thompson High School in Alabaster, which are known as the Warriors.

"We knew that wearing hand-me-downs subjected some children to ridicule and bullying," she said. "Wearing a new outfit gives children an extra boost of confidence. ... We wanted them to believe they were champions and to shine on the first day of school."

Weaver said many of the families served have limited income, and several were from homes with single parents.

John, a single grandparent, said the program helped him and his

10-year-old grandson, of whom John has full custody.

"I lost my job and it's been tough," he said. "Fortunately I do start a new job this month. The clothing program was a great help for me and my grandson last fall. New clothes are a blessing and he was excited to get them. God met our needs and He used some friends in the community to help us."

Weaver said her volunteers also made families aware of other resources available in the community offering assistance for various needs.

"In this way we believe we were able to offer help beyond the first day of school."

Weaver said she foresees the ministry growing and perhaps doubling in 2016.

"We didn't even target Shelby County Schools, but the needs are there too," she said. "Perhaps with more volunteers we can assign one church to a particular school. I'm excited to think about what God will do with this ministry." ❧

Want to know GOD?

By Pastor John Alexander
New Hope Baptist Church, Buhl

Stories worth remembering bear repeating.

Every year, the Church tells the same stories. We tell the story that God called Abraham and sent him to an unknown land, and others like it. Then comes Advent and we tell the story of Israel's longing for a Messiah who would free them from Gentile oppression. As we hear the story we catch an undercurrent that God will do far more than expected.

The lessons of Advent lead us to one of the most improbable stories you'll ever hear: The story of Emmanuel, "God with us," coming to earth through a virgin birth.

As we go through the year, we tell the story of Jesus' life. We hear of His miracles, of His compassion and of His condemnation of the religious who fail to recognize His authority.

We spend the season of Lent telling the story of why God sent Jesus into the world. In Holy Week we hear the tales of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His teachings in the final week before His death.

Then on Good Friday we tell the story of Jesus' death. We remember that He died for us that we might receive redemption from sin.

The story of Christmas leads to the glory of Easter. Every week Christians meet to hear the story of Jesus' resurrection when He defeated sin and death. We hear that everyone who will believe in Jesus, confessing Him as Lord and believing in His resurrection, will receive eternal life.

The Christian story bears repeating. The story of Christmas reminds us every year that God reserves the right to exceed our wildest dreams.

This story has changed lives for 2,000 years. Today I invite you to live the story with us and come and confess Jesus, believing in His resurrection. I invite you to celebrate Jesus' victory. As you believe in Jesus, I invite you to join us in spreading the greatest story ever told to a world desperate to hear it. Let the story change you. ❧

TAB* CLASSIFIEDS

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Millry Baptist Church, Millry, Alabama, is seeking God's will in finding a full-time pastor who has a heart for people and is evangelistic and mission-minded. He will have graduated from one or more institutions of higher education established and operated by the Southern Baptist Convention. A master's degree level would be a plus. He must have at least 5 years experience as a pastor in a Southern Baptist church. Send resumés to: Millry Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 197, Millry, AL 36558.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

TWO POSITIONS: WORSHIP & STUDENT

Elkdale Baptist in Selma, Alabama, is seeking two full-time positions: worship pastor and student pastor. Please send resumés by Jan. 29, 2016, to: Cory Horton at cory.horton@elkdale.org.

TWO POSITIONS

Clearview Baptist Church in Birmingham is seeking a part-time worship leader and a pianist. Call 205-854-2027 or email: connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

St. Clair Baptist Association in Ashville, Alabama, is receiving resumés for director of missions. Cutoff date to receive resumés will be Jan. 31. Please send resumés to: Moody First Baptist Church, c/o Chuck Edwards, 902 Church St., Moody AL 35004.

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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Christian Discipline Series

The Discipline of Intentional Prayer

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

On a recent road trip I was reminded that interstate travel is a good time for intentional praying. That is particularly true if you have just agreed to write an article on prayer as I had done a few days earlier. So just what is intentional praying? It may be the kind of praying we do least, but it is praying that genuinely seeks an answer.

Our prayers take different forms. Most Christians are experts at crisis praying, which is our natural response when something goes wrong. David spoke for all of us when he wrote, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God" (Ps. 18:6a). We also are proficient with habitual prayers when we arise in the morning or sit down to a meal. It is fitting that we should have a habit of praying since Paul wrote, "Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:17-18).

In addition to these, however, the discipline of prayer should include intentional prayer that is focused, reasoned and intense. This is the kind of prayer we find in John 17, often called Jesus' High Priestly prayer. Timing was critical — just a matter of hours before His arrest. The prayer was marked by urgency and reflected His concern for His followers. It was a prayer of submission and commitment to the Father's plan.

Jesus' intentional prayer

The intentional prayer of Jesus looked back to His time with the Father before the world existed. It looked forward to the time when many would believe through the words of the apostles. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, even though He had recently announced that the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Jesus' intentional prayer is focused and tightly wound. For three years He had taught the multitudes, healed the sick and confronted the religious leaders with the tenets of true religion. He

By Darrell Cook

Cook is pastor of Dogwood Grove Baptist Church, Adger. After retiring, Cook and his wife, Elaine, served as International Mission Board missionaries in South Asia. He then earned a master of divinity degree from Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. The couple has three daughters and three grandchildren.



earned the titles of Master Teacher and Great Physician. He came to seek and to save the lost. But in this hour, His prayer is about His concern for the spiritual well-being of His disciples: "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours" (John 17:9). In this prayer He also petitions the Father for all who would ever come to believe in Him through the words of the apostles. He models the discipline of intentional prayer.

We find other examples of intentional praying in the Bible. At the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, Solomon knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. This was a public prayer that the people of God would remember Him and obey Him. That day the emphasis was not on the dedication address but the intentional prayer that the people would use the holy temple properly (2 Chron. 6).

In the New Testament, within days after the resurrection, the congregation at Jerusalem prayed intentionally for the apostles who faced opposition as they preached the gospel in the city: "Now, Lord, look on their threats and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word" (Acts 4:29).

The familiar story of Paul's thorn in the flesh is an example of an intentional personal prayer: "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me" (2 Cor. 12:8). Paul's words are not recorded but we sense the urgency of his need and

the reality of an unexpected answer to prayer.

Biblical prayers are instructive for us if we want to pray effectively. Intentional praying is not broad-brush praying that makes sure no topic is left out. It is not praying by a formula. Rather it is prompted by a particular issue and focused on one subject. Prayer should be natural because we are invited by God the Father. It should be focused because we are instructed by Jesus the Son. We pray with confidence because we are assisted by the Holy Spirit.

Being a disciple of Jesus means more than just believing in Jesus. A disciple wants to learn from the Master in order to live and love like the Master. The disciplines of the Christian life are those practices which shape us into the likeness of Christ. They begin to shape our conduct, influence our priorities and determine our character. The Bible describes us as the clay which is formed by the potter.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer must certainly be a discipline of the Christian life, but our prayers can easily become routine. As the Twelve spent time with Jesus they recognized that His prayers were different from theirs and they asked Him to teach them to pray as He did. His answer to their request is the Lord's Prayer which is the appropriate starting place for us to learn to pray.

The Bible tells us what Jesus taught His disciples, how He modeled praying and what He is doing for us right now. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we ought to draw near to the throne of grace with boldness. We can do that because "we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." We can pray intentionally to the Father through our Mediator, Christ Jesus, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. We can have confidence that the Father will answer our petitions for our good and for His glory.

If we are serious about the discipline of prayer we will seek to know God's will and ask Him to accomplish that in our personal lives, our families, our congregations and throughout all creation. For His glory. 🙏

Seminaries confer degrees on Alabama Baptists

Alabama Baptists graduated with degrees at the master's level or higher from Southern Baptist seminaries and divinity schools in December 2015. *The Alabama Baptist* was provided the following list of graduates by the schools.

Beeson Divinity School:

Master of Divinity — Audrey Dawn Cisco, Birmingham; Thomas Blake Jenkins, Tuscaloosa; Jerren Christopher Lewis, Hoover; Stephen Thomas Payne, Birmingham; Jacqueline Orleans Pettus, Birmingham; Hunter West Van Wagenen, Vestavia Hills; and Michael David White Jr., Vestavia Hills.

Doctor of Ministry — Trace Austin Hamiter, Auburn; Jeffrey David Heine, Birmingham; Deric Delane Thomas, Glencoe; and Nash Danforth Wills, Ashford.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts — Rocky Mayo, Birmingham; and Anna Elizabeth Slay, Hoover.

Master of Divinity — Jared Cornutt, Rainbow City; John David Crosland, Auburn; Jonathan David Gentry, Tallassee; Bradley Thomas Hughes, Mobile; Michael Aaron Watford, Birmingham; and Jimmie Lee Harper, Montgomery.

Master of Theology — Brett Ryan Champion, Quinton.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Theological Studies — Trey Thomas Mitchell, Florence.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts — Jen Norris, Frisco City.

Master of Divinity — Roy Berryman, Chelsea; Thomas Fletcher, Bessemer; Craig Gilley, Moody; Amanda Roberson, Hoover; Chris Tillman, Mobile; and Pete Harbin, Northport.

Doctor of Educational Ministry — Stuart Davidson, Daphne.

Doctor of Ministry — Chris Crain, Jasper; Dustin Stockstill, Flomaton; and Mark Wakefield, Moulton.

Doctor of Musical Arts — Will Whitaker, Enterprise.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Philosophy — Bill Cannon, Ozark; and Jason Edwin Dees, Birmingham.

Master of Theology — Nathaniel Jones Carroll, Troy.

Master of Divinity — Jay Culver Haynes, Munford; John D. Perry, Birmingham; and David Joel Wildberger, Mobile.

Master of Arts — Jessica Suzanne McCay, Huntsville; and James Benjamin McLain, Jasper.

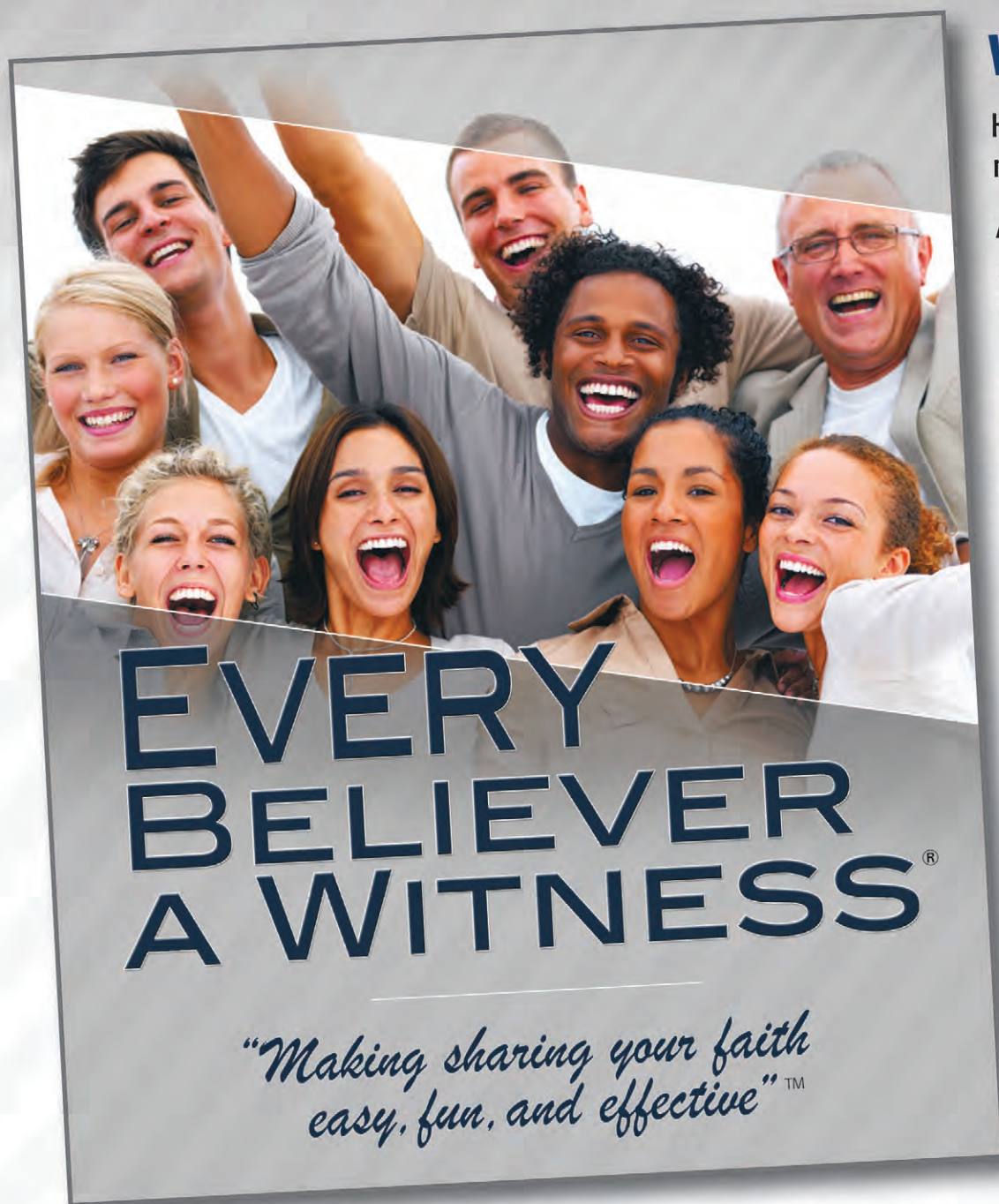
EDITOR'S NOTE — Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary did not have Winter 2015 graduates from Alabama. 🙏

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



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- April 14, FBC Demopolis
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TAB augmented reality

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)
- 3** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Communications executive Pattillo dies at 75

BIRMINGHAM — Wesley M. (Pat) Pattillo, a longtime communications and development executive for both Baptist and ecumenical organizations, died Dec. 22, 2015. He was 75.

Pattillo retired in 2011 after 10 years as associate general secretary of the National Council of Churches USA. Before that he served for more than 30 years in leadership roles with three prominent Baptist educational institutions. He was vice president for development and director of public relations at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, from 1965 to 1986. He moved to Samford University in Birmingham, serving as vice president for university relations from 1986 to 1994.

From 1996 to 2001 he worked for Hong Kong Baptist University in Kowloon, China, as director of North American programs.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Zelma Mullins Pattillo, and two children. (BNG)

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU LOSE A SPOUSE

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- Tips for an executor when settling an estate



Philip Wilson

local author and advisor

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Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

During the past holidays I received a call from a lady who said her mortgage company was threatening foreclosure, and she wanted to know if I could help. If she had called a year earlier it would have been easy to help her get a reverse mortgage, but with the changes FHA made last spring, helping someone with a possible foreclosure isn't at all simple, but sometimes it is doable.

I share this as a warning to anyone struggling to make ends meet. Please call me before you miss even one single mortgage payment. If you've missed a mortgage payment in the last two years then you may not qualify for a reverse mortgage, and if you do qualify it will only be because we can prove to the lender that you experienced an extenuating circumstance or there is enough equity in your

home that the lender will escrow (hold back) proceeds from the reverse mortgage to pay your homeowner's insurance and property taxes for a while.

If you are not sure if you would qualify or not, please don't wait until your situation gets worse. My personal phone number is listed below and I'd love to talk with you even if your credit is bad. There is always hope as long as the Lord is on His throne, and I'll be glad to explore some possibilities with you.

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



Jimmy Dixon



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Catholic school ordered to hire gay employees

A Massachusetts state court ruled in mid-December 2015 that a Catholic school may not deny employment to a homosexual.

Fontbonne Academy, an all-girls college preparatory school in Milton, Massachusetts, offered Matthew Barrett a job as a food service director in Summer 2013. When Barrett filled out a new employee form and listed his "husband" as an emergency contact, school administrators rescinded the offer, citing Catholic belief that marriage is between a man and woman and that they require employees to model Catholic values.

On Dec. 30, 2015, superior court associate Justice Douglas H. Wilkins ruled the school discriminated against Barrett in violation of state law.

Wilkins said Barrett also suffered "gender discrimination" because he was denied a job "for marrying a person whom a female could have married without suffering the same consequences."

Barrett's lawyer, Ben Klein, of Boston-based Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, said

the court's decision was the first time a judge had ruled against a religious organization seeking to deny employment to a person in a same-sex "marriage."

Although a Massachusetts nondiscrimination law offers an exemption to religious organizations, the exemption only applies to organizations that limit enrollment to members of their own religion. Fontbonne Academy accepts students of all faiths, so the exemption does not apply.

'Ministerial exemption'

In addition the justice wrote the so-called "ministerial exception" that normally gives religious organizations broad discretion in hiring and firing employees did not apply in the case because Barrett would not be involved in teaching religious matters as a cook.

In a similar case in Georgia, a Catholic prep school settled out of court with a music teacher who claimed he was fired because he "married" his gay partner. In that case, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission agreed the music teacher likely had been fired because of his sexual orientation. (BP)



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 17

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

CARRYING HIS VALUES Matthew 5:17-22, 43-45

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. Though there are messianic prophecies yet to be completed, Jesus' first advent fulfilled divine oracles regarding His heritage, birthplace, life, death and resurrection. In His teachings, Jesus left no doubt that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17; Luke 24:27, 44-48).

This week's lesson focuses on Jesus, religious leaders and the Law. Jesus counts the Law as authoritative and He communicates the commandments with personal authority unmatched by the scribes and Pharisees. Later in the sermon, Jesus repeatedly makes references to the Pharisees and their religious practices (6:3, 5, 16). Elsewhere in Matthew, Jesus refers to these religious leaders as hypocrites (15:1-7; 22:15-18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).

Look to the Scriptures (17-20)

According to our text, Jesus held to verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture. Every word, every stroke of the letter of the Law was given by God and would be fulfilled by Jesus (5:18).

Jesus focused on the elders, scribes and Pharisees; these were men held in high esteem because of their great knowledge and practical understanding of the Scriptures. If anyone knew the commandments — all 613 of them in the Law, it would be these men. If anyone made a point to live according to the Law — it would be them. How could anyone surpass the righteousness of these well-educated, holy men? This was Jesus' point. No one except Jesus, "God with us," could keep the Law perfectly. Only He could fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

Value Human Life (21-22)

Jesus began to address specific methods of the experts in the Law. The elders had

a practice of discussing the written Law, quoting rabbis from previous generations. This oral Law made its way into written form; the first of the official rabbinic writings was known as the "Mishnah." Unlike the elders of His day, Jesus communicated directly that the Law applies to thoughts ("angry with his brother"), words ("says to his brother, 'Fool'") and deeds ("be reconciled with your brother"). For more than actions alone we are accountable to God for our attitudes as well.

Human life is a blessing from God. Murder is the intentional ending of human life without cause, and the lawful consequence for murder was capital punishment (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17). Those who entertain murderous thoughts, utter murderous words and intentionally take human life are answerable to God.

Love Beyond Expectations (43-45)

These verses and those that immediately precede them record Jesus instructing to extend grace rather than to exact justice. Instead of pulling teeth and gouging out eyes the Master taught to do the unexpected. If a soldier lawfully compelled you to carry his sack from one mile marker to the next, then carry it a second. Surrender more than you are being sued for. When struck in the face, turn the other cheek. Give without expecting repayment.

Love is to be the compelling motivation for disciples' thoughts, words and deeds. Out of gratitude for God's grace and mercy toward us, we are to love those who stand against us and pray for those who falsely accuse us, make us the punchline of their jokes, marginalize us politically or socially, classify our Holy Scriptures as hate speech and intend to persecute and prosecute us. They have no defense against our prayers and Christ's unconditional love. They may receive it or reject it but they cannot ignore it. 🙏

Bible Studies for Life By James R. Strange, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

CHERISHED IN GOD'S EYES Psalm 8:1-9

Today's lesson is a capstone for the previous six Sundays: "Priceless: Finding Your Value in God."

Like many psalms, the heading of Psalm 8 provides a clue about how it was used. "To the leader/director of music/choir-master" indicates that a group, maybe the whole congregation, probably sang the psalm. "The Gittith" might refer to a particular melody (see also Psalms 81 and 84). "A Psalm of David" was probably not part of the original composition. It could indicate that people thought David had written it, that it expressed a devotion to God like David's or that it had some other association with the king. One may turn to Genesis 1:1-2:4 and read the psalm along with that creation story.

Another thing to look for in any example of Hebrew poetry is "parallelism:" two or three adjacent lines with similar meanings and structures.

God created us for His glory. (1-2)

Don't let "Oh Lord, our Lord" pass you by. The psalmist is not content to refer to God as "Lord." God is "our Lord." That opening line is simply packed with good theology: The God who flung the stars out onto the expanse of heaven is the God who created and called us.

In these verses we meet our first example of parallelism: God's name is "majestic in all the earth" and God has "set Your glory above the heavens." The division echoes God's creation of the dome of the sky above and dry land below (Gen. 1:6-10). God is both transcendent, above the heavens, and imminent, present in all the earth. God exists both within and outside of creation.

The psalmist understands even the babbling of infants as praise glorifying God.

That all of creation praises God is considered "strength" (your translation might say "a stronghold" or "a bulwark") to withstand God's enemies. Who are these? In our context, perhaps they are people who cannot see creation as God's work. As "enemies," they are not to be fought but to be prayed for and loved (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27-36).

God crowns us with His glory. (3-9)

While creating in Genesis 1, God repeatedly calls the creation "good." After God created people He said everything was "very good." Genesis 1 presents humans as the apex of creation. Step-by-step God prepares the world for their arrival — they would not have survived in the dark, watery chaos present in the beginning. The psalmist agrees with that assessment, expressing amazement that the God of creation cares for one small part of it, and that God partners with them to care for creation.

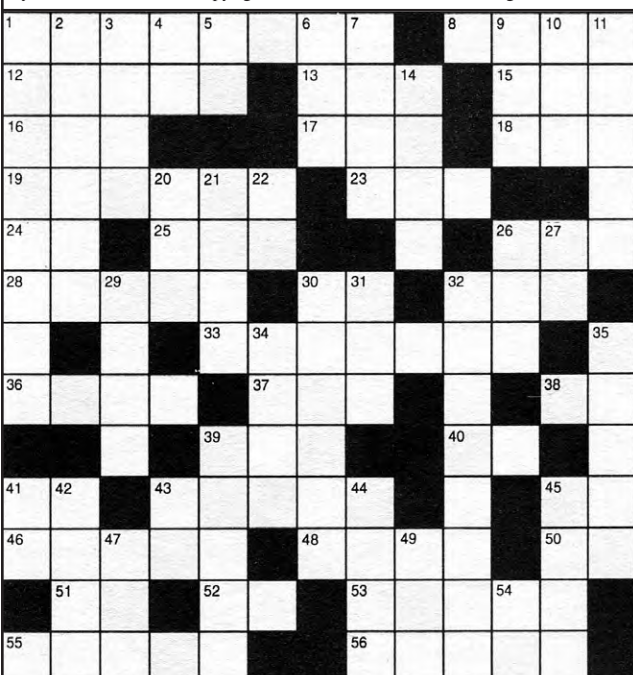
In verse 3, to say that God "established the moon and the stars" in the heavens is to deny that the moon and stars are gods, or dwellings for gods, as they were in many religions of the psalmist's day. In verse 4, "man" and "son of man" are two ways of saying "humans" or "people." This verse gives us one of our clearest examples of parallelism.

In verse 5, a Hebrew word can mean either "God" or "gods." Because it is plural, some translators take it to refer to divine beings, hence "angels" (see Heb. 2:9, where the author is talking about Jesus). The point is that no other earthly being has the honor humans do.

Psalm 8:9 repeats verse 1. The psalmist reminds readers not to end with pride in human glory, but to end by giving God's majesty the final word. What is our purpose? It is the same as creation's purpose: to give glory to God. 🙏

Christian Crossword

By Valerie Barrett Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



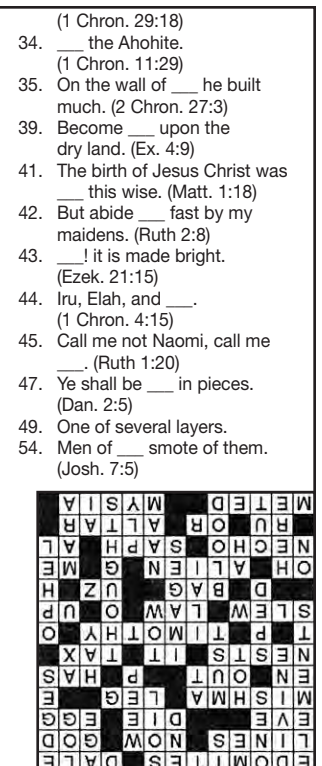
Across

- In his days the ___ revolted. (2 Chron. 21:8)
- A pillar, which is in the king's ___. (2 Sam. 18:18)
- The ___ are fallen unto me. (Ps. 16:6)
- But put forth thine hand ___. (Job 1:11)
- Hath not one ___ created us? (Mal. 2:10)
- And Adam knew ___ his wife. (Gen. 4:1)
- He shall ___ without instruction. (Prov. 5:23)
- Any taste in the white of an ___? (Job 6:6)
- Mibsam his son, ___ his son. (1 Chron. 4:25)
- Make bare the ___. (Isa. 47:2)
- Which perished at ___-dor. (Ps. 83:10)
- For ___ of Zion shall go forth the law. (Isa. 2:3)
- How we say "hath" today.
- Where the birds make their ___. (Ps. 104:17)
- And ___ came to pass. (1 Kings 16:11)
- A raiser of ___ es. (Dan. 11:20)
- Our brother ___ is set at liberty. (Heb. 13:23)
- And he ___ the burnt offering. (Lev. 9:12)
- Do all the words of this

- ___ (Deut. 28:58)
- Lord looked down from heaven ___ on the children. (Ps. 14:2)
- Taken a ___ of money with him. (Prov. 7:20)
- Children of Aram ___, and Hul. (Gen. 10:23)
- ___, not so, my Lord. (Gen. 19:18)
- I have been an ___ in a strange land. (Ex. 18:3)
- To offer unto ___ in their due season. (Num. 28:2)
- The words of ___ from the mouth of God. (2 Chron. 35:22)
- Sibbechai the Hushathite slew ___. (2 Sam. 21:18)
- To the chief Musician, ___-taschith. (Ps. 57:1)
- An abbreviation for the book of Ruth.
- You, ___ that one reign over you? (Judg. 9:2)
- Noah builded an ___ unto the Lord. (Gen. 8:20)
- A nation ___ out and trodden down. (Isa. 18:2)
- After they were come to ___. (Acts 16:7)
- All their little ___, and their wives. (Gen. 34:29)
- Hear ___ now therefore. (Prov. 5:7)
- Saying, ___ this the city? (Lam. 2:15)
- Unto the ___ of the eleventh year. (Jer. 1:3)
- It was planted in a good ___. (Ezek. 17:8)
- Mine ___ is as nothing before thee. (Ps. 39:5)
- Trespass offering, and the ___ of oil. (Lev. 14:24)
- By the two ___ was it coupled together. (Ex. 39:4)
- The people ___ throughout their families. (Num. 11:10)
- When the sun waxed ___. (Ex. 16:21)
- So he ___ do after the law. (Num. 6:21)
- Hath required this ___ your hand. (Isa. 1:12)
- The ___ appeareth, and the tender grass. (Prov. 27:25)
- With the ___ to cut down. (Deut. 19:5; alt sp.)
- Have they not ___? (Judg. 5:30)
- The groves and ___ shall not stand up. (Isa. 27:9)
- As a thread of ___ is broken. (Judg. 16:9)
- Of the ___ of the heart.

Down

- In bondage under the ___ of the world. (Gal. 4:3)
- While they ___ a lie unto thee. (Ezek. 21:29)



OWLEGORIES

Interactive app uses nature to teach kids character lessons, biblical truths

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As the parents of four boys, Thomas and Julie Boto recognize the importance of helping to equip, educate and entertain children on a daily basis.

Armed with a vision to help children understand and apply God's truths into their young lives, the Botos created the interactive digital app and gospel-centered animated series Owlegories.

This project is based on Psalm 19:1-4: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Owlegories features engaging storytelling, high quality animation and a cast of endearing characters, including Professor Owlester and student owls Violet, Gus, Joey, Nora and Twitch.

Biblical lessons

The animated series was brought to life with the help of producer Chad Gundersen and co-writer/co-director Keith Alcorn, creator and executive producer of "Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius."

Each lesson focuses on an element of nature that helps teach children about the char-

acteristics of God and biblical truths through the effective use of allegories, metaphors and analogies.

"After every Owlegories episode, a different Christian leader will share the gospel and use an element of creation as a launching point," Thomas Boto said.

'Think of the Creator'

"From these lessons we hope that when kids go outside and see the elements of creation, they will think of the Creator. When kids watch the episode about the sun, we

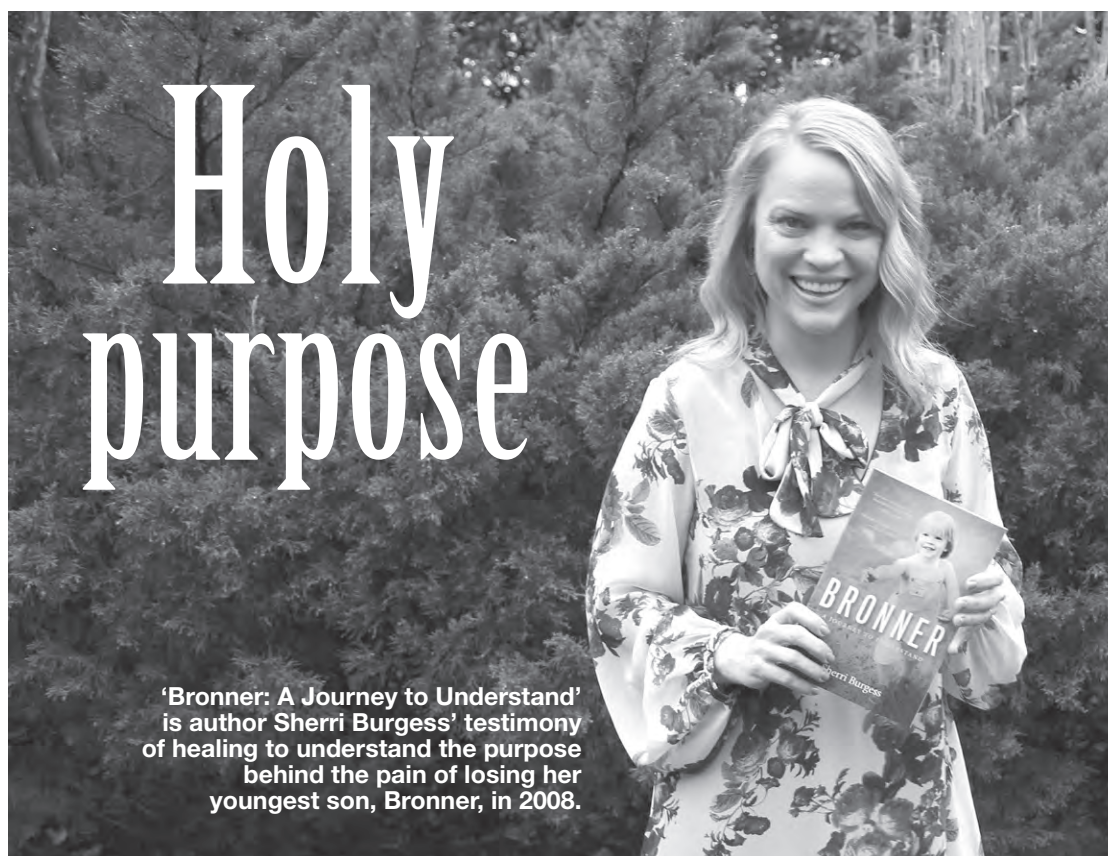
want them to remember that God is big and powerful and that God gave His own Son. We want to help kids make those connections and help ignite a passion for Christ in their hearts."

Through wholesome entertainment with the gospel message, the goal of this series is to help young families build a strong spiritual foundation.

Julie Boto said, "The main focus for this project is for kids to be entertained while learning valuable lessons about God.

"With the interactive app, they can be playing a game and learning Scripture at the same time. This provides a great opportunity for kids to be presented with the gospel while they are having fun.

"We've found this is a helpful way to share Christ with our kids, and we hope that other parents can use this as a tool to help their family as well." ❧



Holy purpose

'Bronner: A Journey to Understand' is author Sherri Burgess' testimony of healing to understand the purpose behind the pain of losing her youngest son, Bronner, in 2008.

Photo by Maggie Walsh

Sherri Burgess shares journey to understanding in 'Bronner'

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

I was crushed," Sherri Burgess said. "I was crushed and I cried out to God for answers. When the Bible tells us that God is near to the brokenhearted, that is real." When Burgess and her husband, Rick, lost their youngest son, Bronner, in a tragic drowning Jan. 19, 2008, she started down a path that led her to understand God in a way she never had before.

"There was a time early on in this journey to understand God's purpose ... that I was desperately crying out for Him to tell me, 'Why the children?' And I said to God, 'There is nothing worse than losing a child. I know You lost Your Son, but You got Him back after three days.' And I heard God say to my spirit, 'What about all of Mine? You're going to get this glorious reunion with your child, but I'm not going to get that with all of Mine.' On that day I believe it was the first time I ever had compassion for God and I felt that my broken heart must pale in comparison to His.

"God wanted to use my son and our family to bring some of His lost children back to Him. ... If He wants to use me to bring those lost people to Him, then I can submit to that because I know that my pain is temporary."

Chains have been broken

Burgess said "Bronner" was never intended to be a book on grief — it's a book on a God who loves us even when it doesn't seem like He does.

"Before [Bronner went to heaven] I felt blessed and protected by God. But this kind of calamity — it shakes you to the core. And I had to work it all out with God and struggle like Jacob did for answers, and He gave them to me time and time again.

"I told God, 'We were so happy.' And God said, 'But I want you to be holy.' Ever since then my life

has taken on a different trajectory so that I'm not pursuing happiness so much as I'm pursuing God," she said.

Having an eternal perspective is a lifestyle that Burgess wants others to experience, she said.

"It is so freeing because those chains to the world have been broken and my heart is so wrapped up in the things of God and heaven and His Spirit. Now I'm free to walk in the way that God has called me to walk. I don't live for the world anymore.

"I believe that God is behind all of this and He had a great plan and purpose and it was good,"

Burgess said. "This was the reason I was born. ... I was born to have Bronner and Bronner was always going to be taken."

And that, she said, is what drives her, both now and during the five-year process of writing the book.

"I've never felt that God was giving me these answers just for me. It was always meant to be shared. ... For us to see the purpose behind [Bronner's death] is healing and it's good."

And she desperately wants to share that healing with others. Through speaking engagements and the book, Burgess wants to help people

understand the "why" of tragedies. Rick Burgess also speaks at events in addition to his role as radio talk show host of the nationally syndicated "The Rick and Bubba Show." The couple and their family are longtime members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, where Sherri Burgess is one of the leaders in the 12th grade Sunday School department.

Through this journey Sherri Burgess has one hope for "Bronner" — "that people will be truly changed and trust and love the Lord more because of it."

"Bronner" will be released Jan. 19, the eight-year anniversary of the little boy's heaven-going. ❧

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Playing in His honor

Pacers' Robinson 'never defers from his faith'

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Who Glenn Robinson III plays for makes a difference in how he plays. "Jesus made a huge sacrifice for us. It's our duty to use our basketball skills and talents in a way in honor of Him. That is the one thing I always say every day," said Robinson, a shooting guard and small forward for the Indiana Pacers. "My grandma tells me to honor the Lord with [my] play."

Using what he said are God-given abilities, Robinson wants to use "everything" that he has been given to play as hard as he can and make the best out of an NBA career.

"He saved us and sacrificed a lot and forgives us for our sins. We should play in His honor. I learned at a young age that without Jesus Christ we can't do a lot in this world. I grew up in a household with a strong faith. I've been to church all my life. All of my family members are Christians. I've been a Christian most of my life."

When he was a child, Robinson was baptized at New Friendship Baptist Church, Gary, Indiana, the city where he was born in 1994. He weighed three pounds and four ounces at birth.

That same year, his father, Glenn Robinson Jr., was the first overall draft pick in the NBA after being national player of the year, Big Ten Athlete of the Year at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, and NCAA Division 1 scoring leader (30.3 points). He had been Indiana's Mr. Basketball and would become an NBA All-Star.

NBA draft

After two seasons at Michigan, Glenn Robinson III declared for the NBA Draft and was drafted by the Minnesota Timberwolves in 2014 in the second round. He helped lead the Wolverines to the most wins (59) over two years in school history when he played during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 seasons.

Waived by the Timberwolves in 2015, he signed with the Philadelphia 76ers. After playing for the Atlanta Hawks during the summer league, he signed a three-year contract with the Pacers.

Averaging 4.3 points per game, 1.5 rebounds this season, Robinson has brought strengths of athleticism and court awareness.

"I have the ability to pick up and learn things really quick. That is something I think that stands out," Robinson said.

Indiana forward Solomon Hill said Robinson has a high basketball IQ and an eagerness to contribute.

"He is willing to learn and to be ready to learn.

He is definitely eager to get in there. He brings a certain energy that you can't duplicate," Hill said,

adding that when Robinson gets minutes he is able to score.

Indiana guard/forward C.J. Miles said, "He has got a good shooting tech and an all-around game. He's young and hasn't played a lot. It's good to see his feel for the game. He has a positive attitude. He comes to work every day. He is a great teammate."

Robinson is a teammate who likes to joke around.

"He is a wise-guy. He's got a little joke inside of him," Miles said.

Even amid the humor, teammates see the serious side of his faith.

Hill said, "He is a church-going man. His faith is strong, he stays with it and never defers from his faith."

Robinson said, "I go to church a lot. I

pray continually to talk to the Lord."

Among Robinson's favorite Bible verses is 1 Peter 5:10: "And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

Miles said, "He is strong (in faith) obviously. You can tell that by his actions and the way he carries himself, the way he speaks to people, the way he treats people. You can't get here (NBA) without having some type of faith either."

As he plays in the NBA, Robinson, who said one of his personal strengths is the ability to give to others, has learned that faith differs.

"Everyone doesn't have the same faith and religion ... we have to find time out of our life to honor Him. I wouldn't say that [life] has changed but there is the reminder that constantly praying definitely helps," he said.

"What does Jesus mean? That is a tough question. I think it is more of like, what doesn't He mean. He means everything." ❧



Glenn Robinson III

Photo courtesy of Pacers Sports & Entertainment

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Lawsuit on behalf of fire chief proceeds against Atlanta

ATLANTA — The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) lawsuit filed on behalf of former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran will proceed against the city following a ruling by a federal court.

The Atlanta Division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia dismissed some claims but allowed the suit to go forward on Cochran's primary claims of "retaliation, discrimination based on his viewpoint and the violation of his constitutionally protected freedom of religion, association and due process (firing without following proper procedure)," according to ADF.

Cochran, a deacon at 19,000-member Elizabeth Baptist Church affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC), was terminated Jan. 6, 2015, because of his personal statements on the gay lifestyle. He was unable to comment on the court's ruling.

In its lawsuit, ADF alleges the city terminated Cochran "in retaliation for exercising his First Amendment right to free speech." The lawsuit states, "a public employer may not terminate a public employee in retaliation for speech protected by the First Amendment."

ADF senior counsel Kevin Theriot, in commenting on the ruling, said in late December 2015, "A religious or ideological test cannot be used to fire a public servant, but the city did exactly that, as the evidence and facts of this case clearly demonstrate."

GBC has come out in strong support of Cochran, launching an online petition in January 2015 protesting Reed's action. The petition, bearing signatures from more than 11,000 individuals nationwide and which called for Cochran to be reinstated, was delivered to the mayor's office Jan. 13. (BP)

NC couples sue over gay 'marriage' discrimination

ASHEVILLE, North Carolina — Three couples are suing the state of North Carolina over gay "marriage" discrimination that apparently isn't happening.

The lawsuit targets protections for magistrates who oppose same-sex "marriage" on religious grounds and don't want to be forced to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The state Legislature passed the bill protecting religious convictions of state employees in early 2015.

The bill outlines a process for magistrates to declare a religious objection to participating in same-sex unions.

Three couples are now suing over potential discrimination. They say the bill places religious belief above the obligations of magistrates to carry out their duties.

As of September 2015, 5 percent of the state's approximately 670 magistrates have filed recusal paperwork for protections under the new law. But the law's supporters note no couple has been unable to marry because of magistrates' objections. (BP)

High school football coach suspended for praying

BREMERTON, Washington — A Bremerton, Washington, high school football coach suspended for praying on the field after games has filed a discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Coach Joe Kennedy, assistant varsity and head junior varsity coach at Bremerton High School, claims the school district violated his rights by prohibiting him from kneeling at the 50-yard line and praying silently after games. The district also retaliated against him for exercising his freedom of religion, Kennedy claims.

Kennedy began working part-time at Bremerton High School as an assistant coach in 2008. His personal, postgame prayer sessions eventually attracted players, fans and other coaches — all joining in voluntarily. School officials in September 2015 told him he could pray, but his prayers should not be "outwardly discernible as religious activity." (BP)