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Church & sexuality

Reaching 'refugees from sexual revolution' means focusing on gospel

By Maggie Walsh and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Because "we are all broken ... we are to reach out in Jesus' name and in the love of Christ to sexual sinners everywhere and of every kind," Timothy George reminded the more than 500 participants at the Church and Sexuality Conference on Feb. 29.

George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, said believers must live life on "that thin edge of nausea and sweetness" during the conference at First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Balancing between these two extremes allows believers to love sinners enough to push past their own discomfort or lack of understanding to share Jesus Christ and be engaged.

"God calls us to be engaged, not disengaged, with all the wisdom and humility that we can muster," he said.

At the same time, it is important to stay faithful to the sexual eth-

ics revealed in Scripture, preach the whole counsel of God, rightly divide the Word of God, let the Church be the hermeneutic of the gospel and have more than one approach, George explained.

He also noted that the current state of affairs related to the sexual revolution did not just happen. It has been a long time coming, he said, as he walked through highlights from the past five centuries.

But while the changes were slower in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, George said changes are happening much more quickly in the current century.



Photo by Neisha Roberts
Russell Moore, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission president, presents 'Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel.'

"[The changes in the last decade have] happened so rapidly it's hard to imagine to know where we are headed," he said. "It has been in the making for a long, long time. How long it took us to get here but how quickly the sand has shifted beneath our feet."

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, added, "If we are a gospel people then that

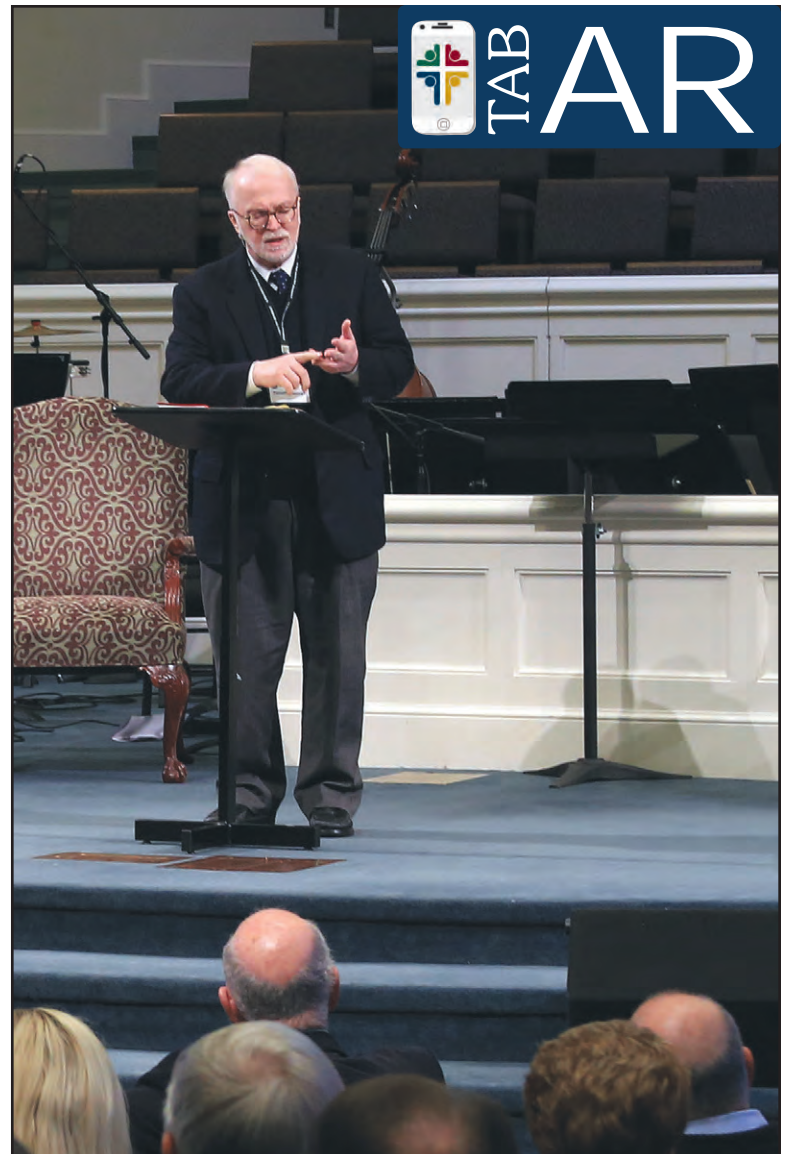


Photo by Neisha Roberts
Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, shares 'The Biblical Truth About Sexuality in a Morally Relative Age' during the Church and Sexuality Conference in Montgomery.

means that our articulation of a sexual ethic ... is not a matter of our choosing. It is a mandate that Jesus has given us.

"We have to speak with confidence that can only come from God's design and His gospel message — that is how we will become a Church for refugees from the sexual revolution," Moore said.

"We cannot be afraid to be among people who are sinful and fallen," he added. "[Because in ministering to them] we have a gos-

pel opportunity to be a John 3:16 people in a John 4:16 world.

"You and I have a divine revelation ... of sexuality and the pain and brokenness that comes with a deviation of that plan that allows us to speak with love and graciousness," Moore said. "Those panicking are rooted in a lack of confidence. They believe what their opponents say about them, that they are on the wrong side of history.

"If you have the confidence that (See 'Embrace,' page 3)

State Evangelism Conference coverage

See pages 4-5.



COMMENT

Are You Helping Refugees?

According to a study conducted by LifeWay Research released Feb. 29, almost 2 out of 3 pastors in the United States (63 percent) have not heard about ways to help refugees overseas. That was one of the findings of a study commissioned by World Relief and World Vision — two internationally known relief agencies.

Perhaps one reason for pastors' lack of knowledge is fear. Nationally 44 percent of pastors said there was a sense of fear in their churches about working with refugees. Among Baptists the number was higher, 56 percent. When one does not want to know about a topic, it is easy not to know about it.

The study found 86 percent of pastors believed Christians should "care sacrificially for refugees and foreigners" but only 19 percent reported giving money to relief organizations or praying for refugees. The percentage working with refugee families locally dropped to 7 percent.

The study may reflect the political debate going on in the nation as people weigh compassion for refugees against national security interests. According to media reports, the United States had about 250,000 refugees a year ago and plans to resettle about 85,000 additional refugees in 2016. About 10,000 Syrian refugees could be included in that number.

Germany, by contrast, could soon have more than 1 million refugees. Lebanon, a neighbor to war-torn Syria, reports more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees, leaving out the countless nonregistered moving across the nation's porous borders.

People debate

Jordan, another Syrian neighbor, reports about 1.4 million total refugees living in tent refugee camps and elsewhere while Turkey reports more than 2 million.

The political debate in the U.S. frequently boils over as people debate where helping refugees in this country and/or overseas should fall among national priorities.

Frequently the extreme voices garner the



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

spotlight with polarizing emotions and actions.

That is why it is important for cooperating Southern Baptists to remember that for most of the five years of the Syrian Civil War and political unrest in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere in the world, Southern Baptists have ministered to refugees.

Sometimes the relief has been basic material goods like a warm blanket, plastic sheeting to hold off the elements or a little heating oil for a fire.

Help from Southern Baptists

Through Baptist Global Response, Southern Baptists have provided infant milk, diapers, hygiene kits, boxes of food and more.

Career missionaries and short-term Baptist volunteers have walked the lanes of refugee camps like Azraq and Zaatari in Jordan countless times distributing basic necessities to keep people alive. At the same time they have shared the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some missionaries offer long-term assistance. One works in a ministry providing education and trauma therapy to children. In addition to teaching English, Arabic, math and other subjects, she helps children overcome hatred and suspicion and lays the foundation for them to love again.

Baptists have stood alongside evangelical believers in the Middle East as well. Though not large in number these courageous men and women have used resources provided in part by Southern Baptists to distribute food, water and other necessities for survival.

One observer said of these national Christians, "They continue to come and go at great risk to themselves and they are finding Syrians, both Christian background and Muslim background, desperate for the hope that they offer in the name of Jesus."

Baptist concern follows migrants across Europe too. One missionary tells the story of a refugee in France who lived under an overpass. He couldn't find work. He was often hungry and the filth of his surroundings caused sores across his body.

On the day he decided to drown himself in

the sea, a Southern Baptist missionary crossed his path and handed him vouchers to buy food. The food gave him hope and he decided to keep on trying to make a life for himself.

An anonymous donation in a Baptist church halfway around the world helped save his life.

Some believe the current political upheaval presents an unprecedented opportunity to impact the world with the love of Christ. "I believe God is working through the events of our day to move these least-reached peoples into arm's reach of the Church so that they can encounter Christ," said one missions strategist.

Others agree, saying refugees are not only hungry in a physical sense but also in a spiritual sense. The Civil War in Syria "means many Syrian hearts are open to the good news," the missions strategist added.

These efforts are possible only because Southern Baptists make them possible through regular missions giving through the Cooperative Program and special missions offerings. Cooperative giving by the Southern Baptist Convention's nearly 43,000 churches makes it possible for missionaries to be in distant lands. When needs arise, they are already there.

Cooperative missions giving provides resources — physical and spiritual — for these missionaries to share in times of need.

Baptists are not only helping in the Middle East, they are helping in Central Asia, in the Far East and every other part of the globe. To paraphrase what was said of the British Empire more than a hundred years ago, "the sun never sets on Baptist work."

Pastors of other denominations may not know about ways to help refugees. Southern Baptists do. Pastors of other denominations may not have built-in avenues for helping hurting people in other parts of the world. Southern Baptists do. Pastors of other denominations may not know how to pray for refugees and those ministering to them. Southern Baptists do.

Doing more together

Southern Baptists work through missionaries living among various people groups around the world. Southern Baptists partner with national Christians everywhere. Southern Baptists practice cooperative giving so together we can demonstrate the love of God we proclaim day in and day out. Obviously we can do more together than any part could do alone.

How many Southern Baptist pastors were in the sample group used by LifeWay Research in their study is unknown but every single Southern Baptist should have answered that they not only know about the needs of refugees, but that they are doing something about it every single day through cooperative giving. ☞



TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

"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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'Embrace the tension'

Show Jesus' grace, love while seeking to understand culture

(continued from page 1)

comes with the gospel, then you are resilient," Moore said. "There will be a lot of refugees from the sexual revolution because it cannot keep its promises. We must keep the light lit. We speak truthfully.

"If all we are doing is standing up and screaming how opposed we are, if all we are doing is speaking of the wrongness of those who disagree with us, then we are not doing anything different than what the devil is already doing. We have more to say than 'flee for the coming of the day of the Lord is here.'

"We have a Word that says 'behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.'"

It comes down to "embracing the tension," said Jim Graham, pastor of Coosada Baptist Church, during a panel discussion on "Taking This Back To My Church."

The panel consisted of Graham; Kathy Litton, national director of Ministry to Pastor's Wives for the North American Mission Board; and Travis Coleman, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, moderated the panel as well as an earlier panel on "Religious Liberty in a Culture of Moral Decline."

'Grace and truth'

Graham said, "The key is loving people and trying to help people see that balance that Jesus was full of grace and truth. ... We have to embrace the tension."

Litton agreed, adding that we have to intensify our discipleship efforts and be transparent and real with those we're discipling.

"We need to love our neighbor as ourselves," Litton said. "You can love someone better when you understand them more ... and we've got to show grace and we've got to be informed."



Photo by Neisha Roberts

ALCAP executive director Joe Godfrey (center) shares about religious liberty during a panel discussion with ERLC's Russell Moore (right) moderated by SBOM executive director Rick Lance.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Kathy Litton (center), NAMB's national director of Ministry to Pastor's Wives, shares during a panel discussion with Coosada Baptist Church Pastor Jim Graham (left) and state convention president Travis Coleman about how to 'Take This Back To My Church.'

"We can't pay attention to what's on top of the iceberg in people's life," she added. "We need to learn who they are and not just what's on top."

Coleman noted that intentionality is needed especially where church leadership is concerned. That pertains to church policies, religious liberty and discipleship, he said.

The panel also suggested reviewing church bylaws about use of church facilities and possible protections that might need to be addressed.

During the previous panel discussion on religious liberty, Moore said pastors and churches would not have to worry about whether they would be legally forced to perform same-sex "marriages" in the future.

But, he added, the colleges and children's homes and similar institutions are going to experience a battle related to same-sex relationships.

Also serving on the panel was Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizen's Action Program, who said Christians are facing a marginalization.

"It's a matter of putting us on the periphery of society so that we don't have any more of an influence," he said.

There has to be a balance between compassion and love and speaking out against issues of morality, Godfrey noted.

What is the Church to do?

1. Stay faithful to the sexual ethics revealed in Scripture.
2. Preach the whole counsel of God.
3. Rightly divide the Word of God.
4. Let the Church be the hermeneutic of the gospel.
5. Have more than one approach.

Source: Timothy George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham

"We have to be prophets of God and at the same time show compassion."

And we can do that, Moore said, by engaging people in a long-term conversation about what each side believes.

Believers need to separate from the sin but never be afraid to be near sinners, he said, noting many times in the Church we do the reverse.

Christians can combat the changing culture by seeing people in terms of "the long-term sweep of their lives," Moore said.

"Spend time dealing with people as people and not merely as issues," he encouraged.

Along with hearing from the speakers in the conference's plenary sessions and panel discussions, participants also attended 1 of 9 breakout sessions dealing with various issues relating to sexuality in culture.

For video and audio recordings and other information from the conference, visit als-bom.org/cas16. #

State Evangelism Conference

'Great grace leads to great love'

State Evangelism Conference speakers urge Christians to stand firm, stand out

By Maggie Walsh and Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

The culture may be changing and separating more and more from evangelical Christians, but that only emphasizes the importance of standing firm on the faith and standing out for the cause of Christ, a slate of pastors shared Feb. 29–March 1.

Pastors from across Alabama and the Southeast preached on ways to reach the changing culture with the gospel during the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference, held at First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Daven Watkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, set the stage of his sermon around the dinner table of Simon the Pharisee. Drawing from Luke 7:36–50, Watkins pointed out that Jesus never ostracized or belittled those around Him.

"Jesus is desperate for those who are desperate for Him," he said, referring to the "sinful woman" who entered Simon's house and washed Jesus' feet with costly perfume.

The woman was daring, Watkins said, to even step away from the wall where she was standing, as it violated the social custom of the day.

'Picture of desperation'

"She has the audacity to come off the wall and approach the table. And she stands right behind the visiting guest. ... I wonder to myself, 'What would cause this woman to come off the wall?'"

"There is only one answer — she is desperate," he said.

Luke doesn't disclose the name of this woman or even what her sin was, Watkins said. And he does that to invite us into the story.

"Luke wants us to identify ourselves as being as sinful as this woman.

"She is the picture of desperation," he said. "Desperation can lead to daring devotion."

This account is not given to us to be "models for morality but as mirrors." We

have been forgiven much, Watkins said, and that should influence how we treat others.

"Great grace leads to great love. If you have received great grace you will demonstrate great love — great love for God and great love for others."

Leaning forward, Watkins asked participants, "How desperate are you for Christ?"

Along with showing love, the Church also must confront believers in their sin, said Dusty McLemore, pastor of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens.



WILTON

After David commits adultery with Bathsheba, Nathan comes along and confronts him of his sin. "It's our responsibility as pastors and Christians to do what Nathan did and confront the culture," he said.

Just as David became numb to sin and the culture around him, McLemore fears the Church is becoming numb of conscience as it engages in "spiritual warfare with the culture."

"It's our responsibility as pastors and Christians to ... confront the culture (of its sin). And by the way if we don't do it, who will? ... That's why it's imperative to be salt and light, to be the Church.

"Satan is in a battle for our mind and our conscience and our culture. ... If we're filling our mind with the Word of God and the Spirit of God then we're working in the context of spirituality.

"The best protection against deception is to know God's revealed truth — the Bible," he said. "Let's not put on our religious mask. Let's not play church; let's be the Church."

Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina, added that "we're not doing what God is calling us to do in the way in which He demands each one of us." The urgency of evangelism calls each and every Christian to give their lives to Christ.

"You were made to look like God, love like God and live with God," Wilton said. "God who is holy and righteous can have no place with sin."

Pulling from the entire book of Revelation, Wilton urged participants to fully



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Dusty McLemore, pastor of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens, shares about David's progression of sin and how to avoid that in our own lives.

commit to the Lord, using the phrase "give your life to Christ" as a refrain throughout his message to drive the urgency of evangelism home.

"You see, friends, the Bible tells us in the Book of Revelation that when we have in our heart these things that are written, we're going to want to do everything we can to tell everyone we can about the true love of God and that 'the Lord Jesus loves you.'

"That's what [Christianity] is all about. ... It's not about knowing all the ins and outs and understanding the right order. ... It's about trusting Jesus."

Preaching from Acts 10, Mac Brunson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, also emphasized the need for personal evangelism.

"We should never confuse the good with salvation," he said.

Take Cornelius the centurion from Acts 10:21 for example. Cornelius was a man of dedication, of inspiration, of devotion, of devoutness, of reputation, Brunson said. By all accounts he was God-fearing.

"But don't mistake goodness with salvation," he said. "[Cornelius] was lost."

Christians also should "never confuse God's call with personal perfection," Brunson said. Each one of us has been shown immeasurable grace. Because of that, he said, we must ask ourselves: "Am I really serious about the grace of God and

can the grace of God be as great in [others'] lives as it is in my life?"

For most of the participants, God has "ordered us to preach. Preach just what He's given you — the gospel."

But preaching the gospel in the current culture may be harder than in years past, a few preachers explained.



JACKSON

Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, said, "For the first time in our history in the United States, we are a Christian in an age of terror.

"As ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ we have an awesome responsibility — even in times of peace and calm," he said. "We have to keep the people stirred up in order to move forward. We have to stay on course."

This is not the first age of terror, Jackson noted, and God gives pastors a job description for how to navigate in such times beginning in Jeremiah 1:8.

First pastors have to "root out" those heart conditions that hinder believers from having the caliber of Christianity that the persecuted Church exhibits on a daily basis. Second pastors must preach the full Word of the Lord.

"If we change it by adding something to or by subtracting something from it, it is no longer the Word of God," Jackson said.

So how are Christians to act in a day of terror?

"If we will be courageous, any giant we face will fall.

Get filled up. Get studied up. And let the Church charge."

Danny Lovett
pastor, The Church at Chelsea Westover



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Daven Watkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, shares from Luke about the 'alabaster jar breaking, perfume pouring woman' that was so desperate for Christ that she broke the rules of the culture in order to be daringly devoted.

Referencing verse 17, Jackson said Christians, both in the pews and behind the pulpit, are to arise, speak truth and speak without fear.

Danny Lovett, pastor of The Church at Chelsea Westover, agreed that believers must be courageous.

"If there's ever been a day that we need the Church to be courageous it's right now," he said. "We have been so defamed, so defeated, so discouraged because of political correctness.

"We're living in a time when there's never been a greater opportunity for the Church to stand in the gap for the lame so that God will not destroy. ... There's no doubt what we need — we need some men and women of God who will be courageous."

Preaching from 1 Samuel about the young shepherd boy named David, Lovett said, "It's not about the stature, the genius. It's about having a heart for God."

Employed by God

David was employed by God, Lovett said, and because he was employed by God the Scriptures pour out three encouragements for a Christian to be courageous:

1. Be ready for any call.

"Most of us are not ready for any call, we're just ready for our call."

2. Be ready for any circumstance.

"David rose early that morning ... and nothing took him by surprise because he knew God sent him there (to fight Goliath)."

3. Be ready for any cost.

"David was not worried about fighting Goliath because He knew God was on his side. If it meant he was gonna die that was OK too. He was just gonna do what God asked him to do. You don't worry about the outcome you just jump in and do what God says to do.

"If we will be courageous, any giant we face will fall," Lovett urged. "Get filled up. Get studied up. And let the Church charge."

Former Alabama Baptist Steve Gaines,

pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, shared seven "I wills" from Exodus 6 that God promised to do because He is the Lord and still promises today.

"I will bring you out ... I will deliver you ... I will redeem you ... I will take you for My people ... I will be your God and you shall know it ... I will bring you to the land ... I will give you the land for possession."



LOVETT

Gaines noted, "So when Pharaoh said, 'I don't know the Lord and I'm not gonna let the people go,' God told Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh and tell him that I Am will bring you out, deliver you, redeem you and give you the land — and oh, by the way, now you're gonna see what I will do.'"

Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, Pastor Ted Traylor told participants that the world's rock — what they set their value

on and hope in — is not like our Rock.

"You don't have to be in this culture very long to know that there is a group that we love and are trying to win, but their rock is not like our Rock," the Sand Mountain native said.

Drawing from Deuteronomy 32, Traylor said he came with good news: "The Rock does not move. ... It does not change course."

As we go into the culture we should build on the Rock.

That means building our house, our church and our city on the Rock, he said.

Believers also have to run to the Rock and be willing to suffer for the Rock whose message is "offensive" to the world, he said. "You must be willing to suffer for the gospel. ... You must be willing to let the gospel be an offense.

"Time is short. ... Stand on the Rock and tell it for Jesus Christ." ✝



TRAYLOR

'Always does something to the heart'

Sharing music that surrounds God's Word, Harris' ulterior motive

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

He may have his name in the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, the Amateur Radio Hall of Fame and the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame, but all those accolades and more don't allow Larnelle Harris to lose his focus — "God's grace is still at work."

"With all the noise that is going on around the world even as we speak, there's a world that still longs to hear, some whether they want to hear it or not, that God's grace is still at work and that He rewards all those who diligently seek and pine after Him," Harris told *The Alabama Baptist*.

As the featured singer during the March 1 evening session of the State Evangelism Conference held at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Harris had the entire congregation on its feet, clapping, singing along and smiling.

Heart for evangelism

"I love showing up at places where evangelism is still alive and well," Harris said of the conference.

Singing his first concert at the age of 9 in his hometown of Danville, Kentucky, Harris is no stranger to

leading those around him in worship.

He said the traveling certainly isn't what has kept him going all these years — his first CD release was in 1975.

'Give it away'

"I am still excited about what Christ did in my heart and at every opportunity my prayer hasn't really changed: 'Lord, put something in my heart and teach me how to give it away.'

"That's what I keep doing. ... In a celebrity-smitten world, I don't consider myself a celebrity but I do consider myself a person whom God has given grace, love and peace. All those things He's taught me to give away (to others)."

During the conference Harris sang one of his signature songs, "Amen," which chronicles Jesus's birth, ministry, death and resurrection.

"My ulterior motive is that the music surrounds the Word and the Word goes out and does what it's supposed to do. It always does something to the heart, even if the person doesn't want to admit it. ... I pray (while preparing for a concert) that those who listen and who know Him will want to know Him better and those who don't will seek Him out." ✝

For more information on Larnelle Harris, visit larnelle.com.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Larnelle Harris, featured singer for the March 1 evening session of the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference, had the entire congregation on its feet, clapping, singing along and smiling.



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its third Sunday night singing March 20, 6 p.m. with The King's Messengers from Hartselle. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Thomasville Church** will hold Living Proof Live with Beth Moore and Travis Cottrell at the Mitchell Center, Mobile, on Aug. 26-27. Early bird registration will end March 31. To register call the church at 334-636-4409. Ty Parten is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Kevin Garrett** is the new pastor of **Cove Creek Church, Glencoe**. His first day was Feb. 21. He previously served as minister of students and recreation and later as associate pastor of education and



GARRETT

outreach for Parker Memorial Church, Anniston. He also served at First Church, Oxford; Kinsey Church, Dothan; Paden Church, Gadsden, and Breakaway Ministries. He and his wife, Gina, have two children.

GENEVA

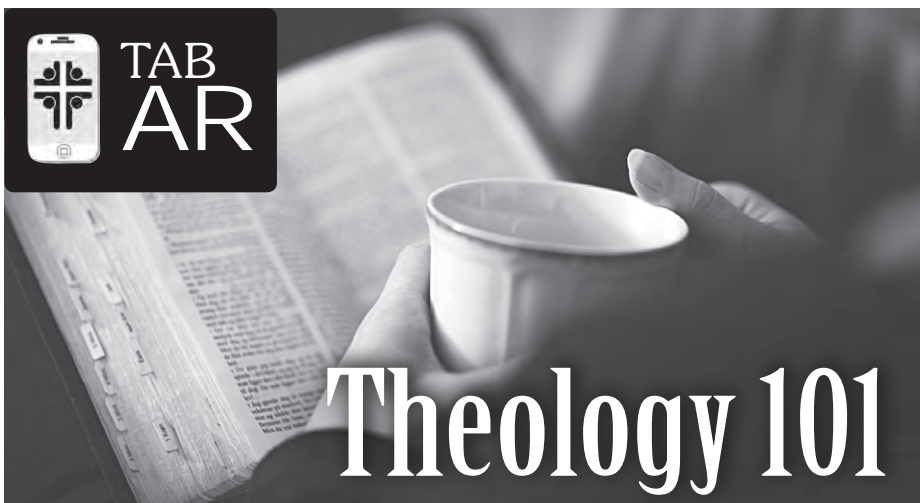
► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold a farewell reception for Pastor Mike Shirah on March 20, 2-4 p.m. There will be light refreshments and a time of fellowship. A table will be set up for cards, gifts and expressions of appreciation. Shirah's last day will be March 27.

MORGAN

► **Tunsel Road Church, Hartselle**, will host the Jim Brady Trio in An Evening of Praise concert March 17, 7 p.m. A love offering will be collected. Ralph Henderson is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Mount Zion Church, Westover**, will hold a Red Book Hymnal singing March 19, 6-8 p.m. For more information email Regina Vanoy at randrvanoy@gmail.com. Delford Isbell is pastor. †



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Knowing God

God Is Holy

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

That God is all-powerful is a reminder that no being has equal or greater power than He has. That He is all-knowing reminds us that no other being equals or surpasses God in knowledge. That God is eternal and thus uncreated sets Him apart from every created being. That God is sovereign tells us that no other entity outranks Him in position or authority. To know God to be set apart from and superior to any other being is to know Him as holy.

The basic meaning of the term "holy," which occurs hundreds of times just in the Old Testament, is "separate from" or "set apart from." As holy, God is different from all other beings. Each of His eternal attributes, as well as the totality of all of them, sets God apart as unique, unrivaled and unmatched. He is in a class by Himself. In short, God is holy.

Twice the Bible reflects God's transcendent holiness by the triplicate ascription of holiness to Him. In Isaiah's well-known vision, the prophet saw the Lord "high and lifted up." He also heard the seraphim calling back and forth, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:1-3). The other occurrence was in connection with the apostle John's vision in Revelation. He saw living creatures around the heavenly throne crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Rev. 4:8).

Set apart

God is set apart or distinct from all that is creaturely, material and earthly, being Himself uncreated, spiritual and heavenly. In the Old Testament both people and objects are described as "holy" in the basic sense of being separate or different. The people who are termed "holy" are those set apart from ordinary pursuits and unto divine service. The priests of Israel were holy in this sense. Rather than street clothes or casual wear, they also wore

holy garments that were especially set apart for wearing during their divine service. Various holy furnishings and objects in the temple were those set apart for divine service or separated from ordinary, everyday use. Thus the basic idea of "holy" is double faceted. To be "holy" speaks of being set apart from, as well as set apart unto, ordinary functions and unto specialized or spiritual use in relation to God and His service.

Moral and ethical purity

God also stands apart in moral or ethical purity. This is what most often comes to mind when we think about holiness. Since God is holy, no impurity or moral failure exists in Him. He is separate from all that is sinful, as well as all that is creaturely. God's holiness sets the standard for His people. In instructing Moses, God said, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy'" (Lev. 19:2). In like manner the New Testament repeats this standard for all who are followers of Christ, saying, "As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). The Godlike moral and ethical behavior that answers to God's holiness or separateness is expressed in the commandment of 2 Corinthians 6:17 about Christians in relation to unbelievers, "Come out from among them and be separate." In simple expression, this commandment is "be holy." †

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.



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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Christian Discipline Series

Grace or Disgrace? — 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

How people view money is an effective barometer of their spirituality. Money is neither good nor bad in and of itself; corrupt people can put it to evil uses while good people can put it to righteous uses. Though money is morally neutral, what people do with their money reflects their internal morality. In the words of Jesus, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34).

My father used to say, “If a Jew was required to give one tenth under the law; for a Christian to give less under grace is a disgrace.” Giving, therefore, should be a necessary part of Christian living just as breathing is to every living creature on earth. The least we can do to acknowledge God’s salvation by grace is to support the work of the Kingdom through giving to our local church and missions. To do less is a disgrace.

1. Grace living means I acknowledge divine ownership of all things.

I strongly support tithing not because I have an abundance of money, don’t have any debts or fear I won’t go to heaven if I don’t give to my church. It is not out of a sense of duty but out of a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for His grace, mercy and love for me. I believe along with the Psalmist that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1).

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul discusses the issue of giving. He began by calling the attention of his beloved brethren at Corinth to “the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia” whom he would use as an example of giving. The province of Macedonia consisted of the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. This area had been ravaged by wars and plundered by the Romans. But despite its deep poverty the churches were amazingly generous. One of the effects of salvation by grace is a longing to give generously and sacrificially to those in need, especially other believers.

We American Christians are distracted because God has blessed our country so much and we have given Him so little in return.

By Garner V. Clark

Garner V. Clark, pastor of Autaugaville Baptist Church, is a graduate of Auburn University; Troy University; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky; and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Betty Jo, have two children and two grandchildren.



America makes up only 6 percent of the world’s population but has a great deal of its wealth. Yet we disgrace our heritage when the average church member gives less than 2 percent to church or charitable causes.

The Jewish law only asked 10 percent. Most restaurants today expect a 10–15 percent gratuity. The prophet Malachi is candid when he states the amount that belongs to God. “You have robbed Me of tithes and offerings due Me” (Mal. 3:8). The Bible says the tithes come first — then the offerings. Offerings are like icing on the cake. Some of us just want to give God the icing and not the cake. That’s like leaving a tip at a restaurant but not paying the bill.

2. Grace living means I acknowledge God’s method for financing His kingdom.

Paul says there is a method for financing God’s kingdom work on earth — God’s grace, overflowing joy and rich generosity. If we experience God’s grace in salvation, then there is an overwhelming joy that fills our hearts and lives. This joy must find an avenue of expression. God has provided the way — giving generously to support the Church God loves most of all.

Paul uses strong language to depict the Macedonian’s desperate situation when he writes, “that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”

The Greek words used indicate they were at “rock bottom.” Some interpretations describe them as having absolutely nothing, having to beg to survive. But in

spite of their circumstance they gave generously. The Macedonian believers must have known God would supply all their needs. This confidence freed them to give generously. We shouldn’t wait until we have an abundance; we should give despite our circumstances like the widow of Luke 21:1–4.

I recall visiting one of the senior citizens of our church around Lottie Moon Christmas Offering time and noticing the kitchen was the only room with heat. When I asked why she didn’t heat the whole house, she said she lived on her Social Security check and she was saving up her offering for Lottie Moon. Heat the house or give to missions? She chose missions.

3. Grace living means I want Christ first in all things.

A Christian is one who wants to be like Jesus Christ, the One who gave Himself unselfishly for us. To buy us out of the slave markets of sin Jesus left the riches of heaven and took upon Himself the poverty of earth so you and I could become heirs to the riches of eternal life. Jesus came from the halls of heaven to the nails of the cross, from heaven’s commendation to earth’s condemnation, from heaven’s honors to Calvary’s horrors. What a price for Jesus to pay. He didn’t have to do it but thank God He did. Amen.

The law of heaven is love because God is love. My giving to God through my local church is an expression of my love for Him. The law of earth is selfishness. All of us have a tendency toward selfishness. We are taught to get all we can but God measures us by what we give and the motivation of the heart.

The response of the Macedonian churches was more than Paul expected. He had hoped for an offering, which they did freely give, “but first they gave themselves to the Lord.” The Greek word Paul uses for “first” has the meaning here not of first in time but of first in priority. The Macedonians’ first priority was to give themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord and giving to the church followed. Their giving was consistent with Christ’s command to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).✠

Most support LGBT nondiscrimination laws, survey finds

Most Americans support LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) nondiscrimination laws and oppose religious exemptions to them, according to a recent Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) survey.

The report comes as numerous bills before state legislatures would allow people to refuse service or accommodations to LGBT people based on religious beliefs.

Key findings include:

- ▶ 71 percent of Americans — including majorities in all 50 states — support laws that would protect LGBT people from discrimination in jobs, housing and public accommodations.

- ▶ 59 percent of Americans oppose allowing small-business owners in their state to refuse service to LGBT people if doing so conflicts with their religious beliefs.

- ▶ 53 percent of Americans support same-sex “marriage,” compared with 37 percent (including most evangelical Protestants and Mormons) who oppose it.

“There is notably strong opposition to religiously-based refusals to serve gay and lesbian people among groups who have historically experienced discrimination,” said PRRI research director Dan Cox, noting that African-Americans are most strongly opposed (67 percent).

PRRI CEO Robert P. Jones said in a press release that even among groups that oppose same-sex “marriage,” support for protection from discrimination crosses all “partisan, religious, geographic and demographic lines.” This includes 57 percent of white evangelical Protestants, 72 percent of Mormons and 65 percent of African-Americans.

Religious exemptions

But while the majority of white evangelical Protestants and Mormons support LGBT nondiscrimination in jobs, housing and public accommodations, they also support religious exemptions to such laws.

They are the only two major religious groups that favor allowing small business owners to deny service to gay or lesbian people if doing so violates their religious beliefs. The survey found 56 percent of white evangelical Protestants and 58 percent of Mormons feel this way.

Support for anti-discrimination laws also breaks down by party lines over religious exemptions. The survey found that 74 percent of Democrats but only 40 percent of Republicans oppose allowing small business owners to refuse to provide products or services to gay or lesbian people if doing so violates their religious beliefs.

Across the South residents are divided on same-sex “marriage” (46 percent favor, 45 percent oppose) but two thirds (66 percent) favor LGBT nondiscrimination laws.

Alabama is one of the least supportive of LGBT nondiscrimination laws as it is tied for the bottom spot with Arkansas at 57 percent. Overall 60 percent of residents oppose same-sex “marriage” in the state. (RNS, TAB)

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

FBC Rogersville intentional about reaching community

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As young girls, many of the women at First Baptist Church, Rogersville, never thought about a ministry in teaching children. Instead they were more interested in teaching their dolls. But now many have moved from “make-believe” to the real world of leading youth and children in their home church. And the men, who once raced in the Soap Box Derby as youngsters, are helping boys build their own cars in the Pine Box Derby.

“At First Baptist we have a wonderful team of dedicated people who work with our children and youth,” Pastor Brandon Rainey said. “One of our members, Daphne Love, is very active in this program.”

Although Love and her husband, Mike, have an “empty nest,” they and other families continue to work with children. By ministering to babies and toddlers, teachers come into direct contact with parents. In this position they know of challenges young parents face. And as experienced parents they are able to answer questions and offer advice to others.

Lauren Craig, a member of First, Rogersville, is a mother of three children.

“Daphne taught my daughter in Sunday School and our boys have her as their leader for Royal Ambassadors (RAs),” she said.

“Missions are so important to her but she goes beyond what is required of a children’s teacher.

“Daphne and her husband support these children in their baseball games and other sports. They’re in the stands, on road trips and let the kids know they love them. This makes all the difference in the world in our children being involved in church activities.”

A full-time real estate agent, “Miss Daphne” as she is called by the children, leaves her job to teach boys in RAs and returns to work after class. Her career never keeps her from sharing love and many acts of kindness with others.

Loving support

With a concern for all children some church families invite children into their home. If they need clothing, school supplies or loving support — they receive these from church families.

First, Rogersville, also seeks out missions opportunities in the community. Not only focusing on the children, the team also reaches out to the older generation in the area.

Church member Rhonda Galyean

has seen how fellow members have a heart for those who need assistance. “Bringing food to shut-ins, playing games or simply spending time to talk and listen to their stories are only a few ways church families make a difference,” she said.

Freedom House in Rogersville is another area in the community where the church ministers. This is a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center with a primary focus on substance abuse treatment. The center provides outpatient, partial hospitalization and residential long-term treatment care.

Assisting the residents in planting a garden has been

a recent focus. Volunteers from First, Rogersville, disk the plot and help plant vegetables for the residents to tend. Fertilizer, seeds and other gardening needs are donated. Women’s Sunday School classes sew new pillow cases and purchase diapers for babies, as Freedom House is the only facility where children are allowed to live with their mothers.

Daphne Love said, “Our church has been blessed by providing firemen and policemen

new teddy bears that provide comfort to children in times of emergencies.”

When a child is afraid or in a stressful situation, a new toy can help the child feel reassured that someone loves him or her, she said.

Cleaning schoolyards

Another missions project where Girls in Action and RAs participate is cleaning up schoolyards by picking up trash, raking, mulching and other jobs.

While each ministry outreach is important, the highlight of the year is the car races. Patterned after the Soap Box Derby races, Rogersville has the Pine Box Derby races where men and boys work together to build a racing car.

Rainey said, “Our men are very instrumental in this project. Sometimes a boy is from a single parent home and without a father present. This is when men step in as a substitute dad, help the boys build a car and recruit others to become involved.”

The church also supports Backyard Bible Club that reaches children who may not be in a church program.

In this ministry members go to the housing projects, teach Bible stories and involve children in crafts and activities. Children hear that Jesus loves them and that He is their friend.

First, Rogersville, leaders said they are blessed to have a group of people who are dedicated and passionate about service to God and others. ✝



Photo by Rhonda Galyean
Daphne Love (left) and her daughter, Meagan (center), invest in children’s spiritual growth.

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Future of IMB

Platt notes 5 'desires' for Southern Baptist missions

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

More than 900 people logged on to a livestream event March 3 to listen to David Platt talk through what he sees as the future of the International Mission Board (IMB).

Noting the past several months of changes, financial struggles and even a grieving process through the changes, Platt, IMB president, focused the event on the days to come.

"There are five primary desires that are driving us in the IMB ... as we look at the vision for missions in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

through IMB," Platt said.

"Our No. 1 desire is to exalt Christ. This seems pretty basic but I think there are dangerous tendencies and temptations, even in missions, to work apart from the Spirit of God and Word of God. ... We want to be tethered totally to the person of Christ, the Spirit of Christ and the Word of Christ.

"If we're not careful we can carry out things with what we think works and then go to Scripture and even twist it to (support) what we're doing," Platt said.

The second desire is to "mobilize ordinary Christians."

"We want to see an exponentially increasing missions force of ordinary Christians. ... God has designed ordinary people for the spread of His glory to the nations. ... I want to help us see and expand our understanding of a missionary."

The third desire of IMB is "serving and equipping the Church."

Platt emphasized that any conversation about IMB's future revolves around "the centrality and primacy of the local church."

"I'm biblically convinced that it is the local church that is the agent God promised to bless. It's the local church that is on the front line of the Great Commission.

"We're in the process of shifting structures to make sure ... we exist to help you (the local church) regardless of what size you are."

He also noted several training resources that are being created for use in the local church to help prepare a person feeling a call to missionary service.

Platt said the fourth desire is to "facilitate church planting."

"We as IMB want to facilitate that work wisely."

The fifth desire is to "play our part in the accomplishment in the Great Commission."

"By God's grace we are not the only Christians on the planet," Platt said, sharing a story about how the great-great-grandparents of a Christian leader in Brazil were led to Christ by IMB missionaries. He also noted how other Christians in China and Africa are working for the spread of the gospel and the need for IMB to "work alongside the rest of Great Commission Christian partners ... to think like Paul in the New Testament in facilitating church planting."

"That's what I mean by playing our part in what God is calling us to do right now and trusting that means all kinds of other people are playing their part. ... That's my challenge for every single church in the SBC and beyond ... to ask what is the part that God is leading you to play in the spread of the gospel and the accomplishment of the Great Commission?"



PLATT

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Reverse Mortgage News


By Jimmy Dixon

Max Youngblood is a retired pastor who faithfully served the Lord for 50 years. Several years ago I assisted him and his wife, Carolyn, in getting a reverse mortgage. Since that time I have shared their testimonies such as "Living with a Reverse Mortgage" with *The Alabama Baptist* readers. In February, Bro. Max sent me the following email to use in this article:


"November 27, 2015, was my and my beautiful wife's 57th anniversary. The next day she went home to be with the Lord after 20 days in CICU. In September 2015 we left our home and moved in with our daughter when we could no longer care for each other. Having now come full circle I can say the reverse mortgage was a tremendous blessing to us financially. For anyone considering a reverse, I recommend it along with recommending you contact Jimmy Dixon. He is an honest Christian gentleman."

I sincerely appreciate Max's words and it was my blessing to get to know Carolyn. Because of God's grace I look forward to seeing her again. To Bro. Max, she'll look more beautiful than ever before!

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy Dixon covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. For a free reverse mortgage brochure or proposal, call him direct at 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgow-inking.com.



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Samford to host mental health workshop March 14

Samford University in Birmingham will host "Mental Health Matters: Pastoral Ministry to Hurting People" on March 14 in Cooney Hall's Regions Community Resource Room 400.

The workshop will be led by Samford faculty including those in social work and is open to all clergy and church lay leaders who want to learn how to better help people who struggle with mental health concerns. It will cover challenges such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and personality disorders.

Focusing on what clergy and congregations can do to help, the workshop will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

► 9-10 a.m.: "Deconstructing Mental Health: Understanding and Supporting Congregants Struggling with Mental Health

Issues" by Rachel Copeland and Gordon Bals

► 10:15-10:45 a.m. "Biological Basis of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Drug Therapy" by Marshall Cates

► 11 a.m.-noon: "The Mental Health Stigma" by Monairee Jones and Christa Moore

► 1-2 p.m.: panel discussion with all morning presenters

► 2-3 p.m.: breakout sessions led by faculty

► 3:15-3:45 p.m.: "Theological Reflection" by Mark Gigniliat of Beeson Divinity School

► 3:45-3:50 p.m.: remarks by Samford's Michael Wilson

To register, visit eve.samford.edu. Deadline to register is March 11. For more information, contact at keburns@samford.edu or 205-726-4064. (Caitlin Lea)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Cherokee, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Send resumés to the church office. Email to: secretary@firstbaptistcherokee.org. 256-359-4325.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Elkahatchee Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 3380 Elkahatchee Rd., Alexander City, AL 35010.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION

Union Hill Baptist, Oneonta, is seeking a full-time worship leader for a growing fellowship with two blended Sunday morning services. Educational experience should include small group ministry and discipleship for all ages. Please submit resumés to: 2919 Co. Hwy. 39, Oneonta, AL 35121. 205-274-9232. bbarnett@otelco.net.

WORSHIP MINISTER

New Beginnings Community Church in Graysville is currently searching for a worship minister. This position is a part-time position. All interested parties, please email your resumé to: secretary@nbcbbaptist.com.

MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER

Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Calhoun County, Alabama, is seeking a part-time music/wor-

ship leader. Resumés may be mailed to: Oak Bowery Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 3300 AL Highway 144, Ohatchee, AL 36271, or oakbowerybaptist@att.net.

YOUTH MINISTER/ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Purpose Baptist Church, a fundamental, conservative congregation in Opelika, Alabama, is seeking a youth minister/associate pastor. We will consider bivocational as well as full-time applicants. Apply online at tgrantham@purposechurch.net.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS

First Baptist Church of Columbus, Mississippi, is seeking a minister of students. Experience preferred and seminary degree desirable. Salary range: \$50,000 to \$55,000. Please email resumés to: jlautz@cablone.net or mail to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Minister of Students Search, P.O. Box 829, Columbus, MS 39703. Please submit resumés by March 29.

YOUTH PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Alexander City, Alabama, is announcing the opening of a full-time staff position for minister to students. We are praying for the Lord to call His chosen man for our youth, grades 7 through 12. The search committee is at work receiving resumés at: P.O. Box 400, Alexander City, AL 35011. 256-234-6351. fbcc-ac.org.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN

Mount Zion Baptist Church (www.mzbc.net) located in Huntsville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister of children to develop, promote and implement a comprehensive process of religious education for children. We are an Acts 1:8 church driven by the vision to reach people for Christ. We have a combined attendance of over 1,000 in both blended and contemporary services. The ideal candidate will have a bachelor's degree and a demonstrated passion, vision and calling to children's ministries. Please send resumés to: Mount Zion Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Chair, 228 Mount Zion Rd., Huntsville, AL 35806, or mzbcsearchchair@gmail.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Calhoun Baptist Association requests resumés for the position of director of missions. Please send your resumé to: ATTN: DOM Search Committee, CBA, 1130 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, AL 36207.

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

— Taking an unconditional stand — against genocide

Pressure mounts on US State Department to recognize ISIS mass murders as genocide

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

What's in a name? Plenty when it comes to the word "genocide."

For months now pressure has been mounting on the U.S. State Department to recognize as genocide the mass murders and other atrocities committed by the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria against Christians and other religious minorities.

A recent United Nations report detailed ISIS killings of more than 18,800 people and the selling of 3,500 women and children into slavery — many as sex slaves — since 2014. Early in February the European Parliament voted resoundingly to designate the ISIS targeting of religious minorities as a genocide and called on all nations who are signatories to the U.N. Genocide Convention of 1948 to take action.

Russell Moore, president of Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, is among the 110 signers of a Feb. 17 letter to President Barack Obama urging the administration not to exclude Christians from a genocide designation at the hands of ISIS. Moore and others signing the letter became

alarmed at that possibility after a report surfaced in mid-November 2015 that the State Department was preparing to label as genocide only the ISIS campaign against Iraq's Yazidi sect.

"Thousands of our brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering targeted persecution at the hands of ISIS," Moore said. "This isn't just political unrest or a humanitarian catastrophe — it is the systematic destruction of an entire people."

Recognition that Christians are victims of a genocide would allow them to be placed on refugee lists to immigrate to safety in the West. Refugee status is a necessity since radical Islam "hit squads" target them in the local refugee camps, according to Andrew Walther, Knights of Columbus vice president of media research and development, who has launched an online petition with In Defense of Christians garnering more than 20,000 signatures urging Secretary of State John Kerry to designate the slaughter as genocide.

Looming deadline

Kerry is reported to have told committees in both the House and the Senate in late February that the legal team was still evaluating the designation and



IMB photo

Syrian youth and children gather in a refugee camp in Jordan where the number of children exceeds 60 percent, hence its name, 'Children's Camp.'

would be coming up with a decision shortly, according to cnsnews.com. A March 17 deadline is looming because the Omnibus Fiscal Year Spending Bill for 2016 — signed into law by President Obama in December 2015 — mandated that the administration offer its designation of the crimes in the Middle East within 90 days.

A February article in The Christian Post quotes White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest as saying that the Obama "administration lawyers" are looking into the possibility of a genocide designation, but are concerned about the "legal ramifications" accompanying it.

What are those legal ramifications?

Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-

Fairhope, said, "I wish I knew the answer to that. We in the Congress have been leaning on the administration to do more. But when it comes to that sort of thing, this administration is both slow and ponderous."

Byrne contends that the Obama administration is ir-resolute on dealing with terrorism as a whole. "They have no plan. They don't know what to do about ISIS or terrorism in general. That hampers U.S. efforts to take a leadership role in protecting victims and fighting terrorism."

'Absolutely genocide'

"The situation in the Middle East is absolutely genocide against Christians," Byrne said. "Secretary Kerry should stop

dragging his feet, recognize the obvious and work to ensure Christians in the Middle East receive the protection they deserve."

One action gaining traction is House Congressional Resolution 75, which now has some 200 co-sponsors, including Byrne. The resolution states that "those who commit or support atrocities against Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities — including Yazidis, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandean, Kaka'e and Kurds — and who target them specifically for ethnic or religious reasons, are committing and are hereby declared to be committing 'war crimes,' 'crimes against humanity' and 'genocide.'"

The House Foreign Affairs Committee markup on the resolution passed the committee vote March 2, although it is unclear when the measure will be brought to the floor for a full House vote, according to Elizabeth Chouldjian, a spokeswoman for the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

ANCA is one of numerous organizations, religious leaders, politicians and scholars calling for the genocide designation. Some 1.5 million Armenians, predominantly Christian, died at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, according to historians. The slaughter was characterized in 2015 by Pope Francis — on the 100th anniversary of the purge — as "the first genocide of the 20th century." Loathe to anger Turkish allies, Presidents George W. Bush and Obama both resisted efforts in Congress to condemn the killings as genocide, according to a *New York Times* article.

Some suggest that political considerations are obstructing the current genocide designation.

Aram Hamparian, ANCA executive director, said, "We must, as Americans, elevate our government's response to genocide from a political choice to a moral imperative. We cannot continue to treat the recognition of genocide as a geopolitical commodity to be bartered or bargained away. Our stand against genocide must be unconditional." ¶

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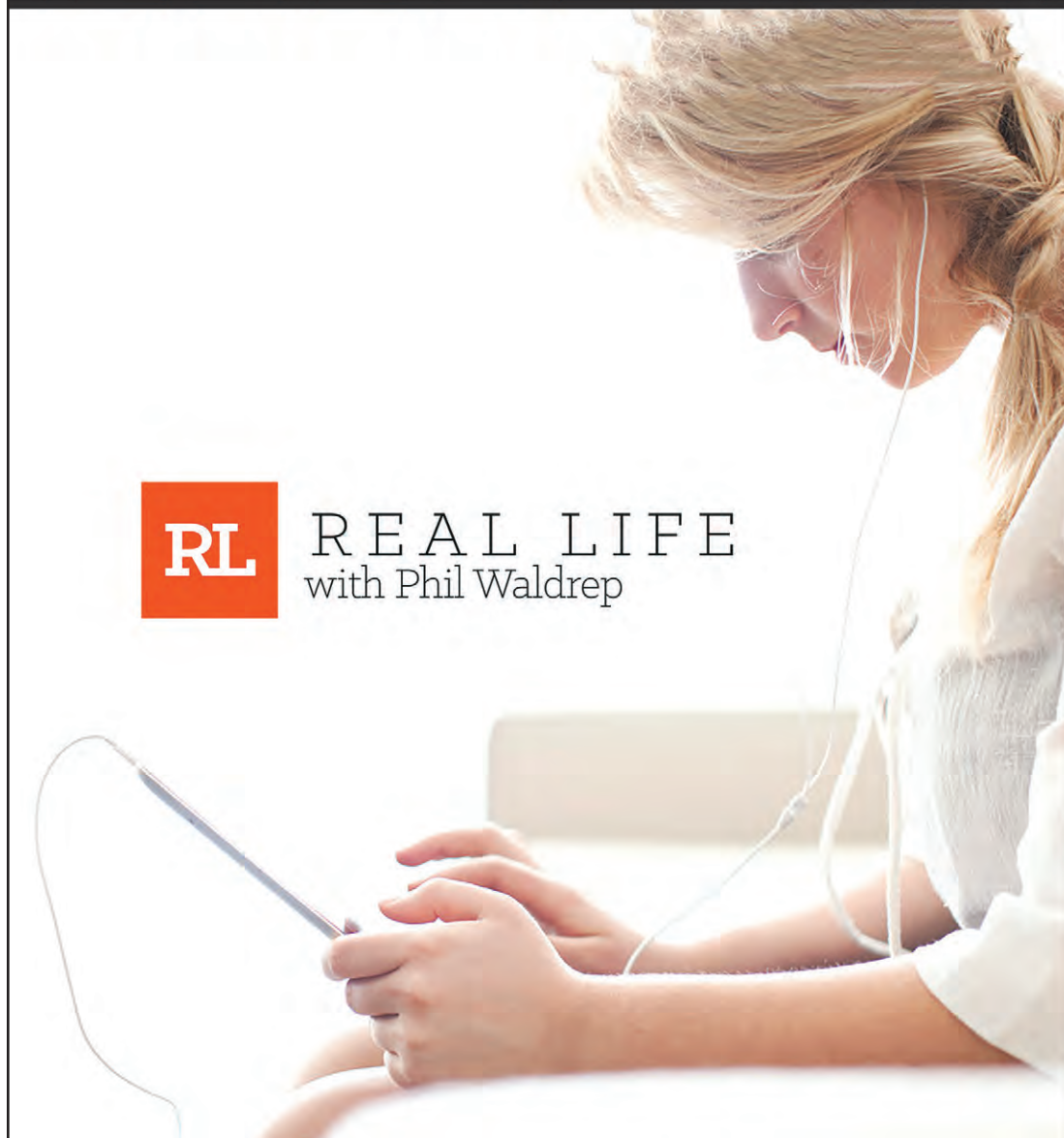
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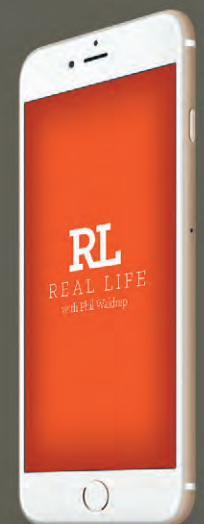
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UMobile school of music named in honor of Gospel Music Hall of Fame's Breland

The University of Mobile (UMobile) has named its school of music The Roger Breland School of Music in honor of one of the early leaders in contemporary Christian music and a member of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

Breland was surprised with the announcement March 2 during choir practice.

Breland joined UMobile's school of music in 2002 as artist-in-residence, becoming executive dean in 2003 and later vice president.

Under Breland's influence, the university's music program embraced both classical and contemporary Christian training, added academic majors, created 22 performing ensembles to provide students with hands-on experience, presented concerts worldwide and established the Christmas Spectacular concert attended by more than 8,000 annually. During his tenure, UMobile founded 8Eighty Records recording label, built a professional recording studio on campus and created the School of Worship Leadership.

"Dr. Breland's emphasis on excellence is at the heart of the



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

University of Mobile President Mark Foley (right) surprised Roger Breland (center) with the announcement of The Roger Breland School of Music in a March 2 presentation.

music program he envisioned and was instrumental in building at the University of Mobile," said UMobile President Mark Foley, who originally tapped Breland to lead the program.

While at UMobile, Breland was instrumental in launching the careers of Christian musicians such as Steve Green, Alicia, Avalon and Russ Lee. Breland and TRUTH, the contemporary

Christian group he founded, were inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2000.

Most recently Breland is credited with launching the music careers of Veritas, a male vocal group that started as a UMobile ensemble.

Prior to starting TRUTH, Breland served as minister of music and youth at Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. (UMobile)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 13

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

EMPOWERED Acts 2:1-15

The Spirit Given (1-4)

After Jesus ascended into heaven the disciples were waiting in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had told them. The day was Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks (see Ex. 34:22). The word "Pentecost" is based upon the Greek word for "fiftieth" because it takes place 50 days after Easter. The gathering of the disciples shows the value and necessity to gather with fellow believers. After Jesus ascended it was beneficial to have each other to depend on for community, support and prayer. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak in foreign languages — actual languages that other people understood. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit of which John the Baptist spoke in Luke 3:16.

The Questions Asked (5-13)

Many people were gathered in Jerusalem at this time because of the Feast of Weeks. This was an important celebration in the Jewish calendar, and so Jews from all over the Roman Empire would have been present. Many of these Jews would not have known Hebrew.

When the disciples were speaking, each person present heard them speak in their own language — yet the disciples were all from Galilee and likely spoke Aramaic. How is it they were speaking foreign languages without studying them? Some accused them of being drunk but this was the Holy Spirit using these disciples to get the gospel out to the nations. What better way to spread the gospel than by letting visitors hear it — visitors who would return to their own countries and become the missionaries there.

It's important for Christians today to realize their calling as missionaries in

their own neighborhoods and vocations. We already know English and our own culture. Since we have this advantage, we need to utilize it and recognize the ministry God has given each of us here in our own "Jerusalem."

The Opportunity Seized (14-15)

Peter stood up and explained to the people what was happening and why it was happening, taking advantage of the situation to preach the gospel. Peter was fulfilling what Jesus had commanded back in Acts 1:8 — he had received the power of the Holy Spirit and was now being a witness for Christ and the gospel. For support of this event, Peter pointed to the Scriptures providing two key examples. Peter first demonstrates the importance of supporting his interpretation from biblical texts. For any Christian, the Bible is the source of knowledge about who God is and what He wants for us. Today some Christians hold to views that go against the teaching of the Bible. If God has revealed Himself to us through the Bible, why would we look elsewhere for information about how God wants us to live? The Bible is just as applicable today as it was when it was first penned, and it will continue to be just as relevant until Christ returns.

The second example Peter provides is that the Old Testament is still valid. Many Christians downplay or overlook the Old Testament today, but for the early Church this was the Bible. When Peter was speaking at Pentecost he didn't have access to the written gospels or letters found in the New Testament. These were still to be written. But the events of the New Testament are all prefigured and alluded to in the Old Testament and it is crucial for Christians to know the Old Testament to properly understand the New Testament. †

Bible Studies for Life By James Barnette, Ph.D. Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

OUR NEED FOR DIRECTION John 8:12-19

People who follow Jesus will never walk in darkness. (12)

"I am the Light of the World" is the second of Jesus' powerful "I Am" statements in John. Jesus makes this declaration during the Feast of Tabernacles, where light was an important part of the celebrations. Ancient Jewish documents describe the lighting of four large lampstands in the Temple Court of the Women at the close of the first festival day. These lampstands emitted so much light that it reflected off of every courtyard in Jerusalem. Celebrants at Tabernacles danced before these lampstands with burning torches, adding even more light to the festivities. Here Jesus is identifying Himself as the true fulfillment of Tabernacles joy when He declares Himself to be the Light of the World. The Tabernacles' light illuminated all of Jerusalem, but Jesus is the Light of all the World.

Light is a prominent image in the Old Testament. Light was God's first creation. Later God's self-revelation to Moses appeared in the brightness of a burning bush. During the exodus God went before Israel in the wilderness as a pillar of fire at night to illuminate their way. Now the light of Jesus presents the world with two choices: to follow the Light of the World or to walk in darkness. The word "follow" refers not to mere acceptance of Jesus but rather to serious, committed discipleship.

Jesus' testimony about Himself is true and trustworthy. (13-15)

The Pharisees respond to Jesus' invitation by questioning the validity of His self-witness. Jewish law held that a man's witness on his own behalf was not legally admissible evidence. Two other male witnesses must be present. In an earlier

instance (John 5:31-40), Jesus presented other witnesses on His behalf. This time He offers His own witness as sufficient. Sadly, the Pharisees have understood His words in a purely juridical sense, as if Jesus was interested in nothing more than establishing the legal criteria for acceptable testimony. The religious leaders are judging "by human standards," literally "according to the flesh." It is because Jesus' opponents judge solely by what is visible that they do not recognize Him as the true Light of the World.

Jesus' statement that He judges no one appears confusing, especially when in the next verse He appears to say that He does so. That answer is both/and, not either/or. Jesus was sent by His heavenly Father for salvation, not judgment. But Jesus' witness calls for a decision that has bearing on one's future destiny.

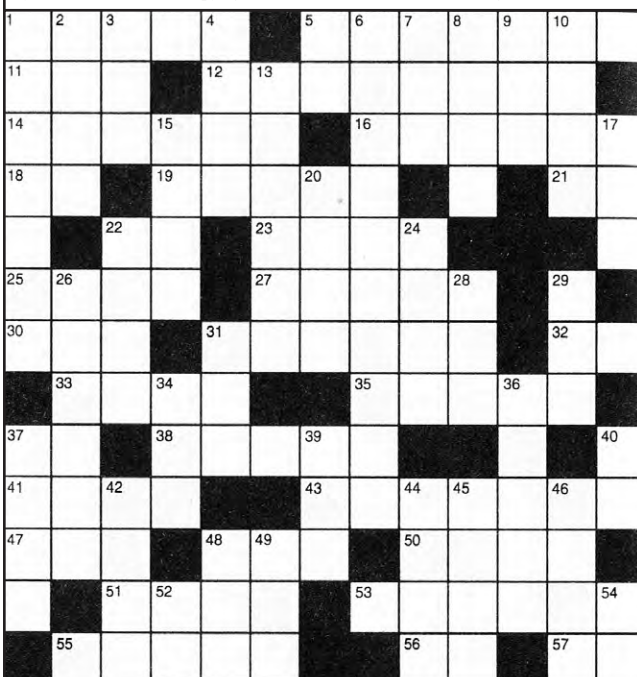
Jesus is the Light who reveals God the Father. (16-19)

Jesus ends His argument with a wonderfully ironic twist. He meets the Pharisees' demand for two witnesses by offering Himself and God the Father. Jesus gives witnesses to the Pharisees, but on His heavenly terms, not their earthly terms. But again the humor is tempered by the reality of their blindness that comes from living according to the flesh.

The question the Pharisees finally ask, "Where is your Father?" reveals the distance between themselves and Jesus. They are assuming Jesus has spoken of an earthly father. The question speaks to their profound ignorance about the identity of God. As John asserts again and again in his Gospel: to know Jesus is to know God. Jesus declares this truth at the bright, open place between the Court of the Women and the Inner Court. He is the Light and He has nothing to hide. And no one can take Him until His hour comes. †

Christian Crossword

By K.B. Liesner Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
- Hosea's wife.
 - Herod ... made an ___ unto them. (Acts 12:21)
 - Shall the ___ boast itself against him that heweth therewith? (Isa. 10:15)
 - A person from Ephesus.
 - The borrower is servant to the ___. (Prov. 22:7)
 - Greek god of music, poetry and sunlight.
 - Noah built ___ altar unto the Lord. (Gen. 8:20)
 - The Israelites had to ___ to living in the wilderness.
 - "Praise ___ the Lord."
 - Millimeter. (abbr.)
 - Ninth letter of the Greek alphabet.
 - ___ do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4:13)
 - There was silence in heaven about the ___ of half an hour. (Rev. 8:1)
 - A city belonging to Simeon. (Josh. 19:7)
 - To repeat again.
 - Verse. (abbr.)
 - Hiram's kingdom. (2 Sam. 5:11)
 - Get thee ___, Satan. (Matt. 4:10)

- A city destroyed by the Israelites. (Josh. 8:21)
- O come, let us ___ Him.
- To judge.
- Our good works are ___ without faith in God.
- Josaphat's father. (Matt. 1:8)
- A ___ of thieves. (Mark 11:17)
- For whosoever will save his life shall ___ it. (Matt. 16:25)
- The first "marked man."
- Put thou my tears into thy ___. (Ps. 56:8)
- ___ them into the pot of pottage. (2 Kings 4:39)
- I am; you are; he ___.
- "A long, long way to run."
- (Isa. 11:8)
- From the beginning of the crea___. (Mark 10:6)
- How the Israelites kept time: a sund__.
- Take now ... thine ___ son, Isaac. (Gen. 22:2)
- I will ___ thee, O Lord, with my whole heart. (Ps. 9:1)
- But he that believeth not shall be ___ed. (Mark 16:16)
- Poetic form of "over."
- Head of the Catholic Church.
- Thou shalt be a father of ___ nations. (Gen. 17:4)
- Word after "heart," "stomach" and "head."
- Lot dwelled in the ___ of the plain. (Gen. 13:12)
- An incalculable amount of time.
- Mother of Cain and Abel. (Num. 22:40)
- The color of the dragon having seven heads and ten horns. (Rev. 12:3)
- Isaac's substitute. (Gen. 22:13)
- What Jehoiada commanded set outside the temple gate. (2 Chron. 24:8)
- Eve's husband.

- Let us ___ with patience the race that is set before us. (Heb. 12:1)
- ___ the hart panteth after the water. (Ps. 42:1)
- Tongues like as of fire ... sat upon ___ of them. (Acts 2:3)
- ___, lama sabachthani? (Mark 15:34)
- ___ wife, not exactly a "pillar" of the church.
- Who his own ___ bare our sins. (1 Pet. 2:24)
- Though I should ___ with thee. (Matt. 26:35)
- For to this ___ Christ ... died. (Rom. 14:9)
- City given to Lot's children. (Deut. 2:9)
- Abbreviation for 42 down.



TOP 10

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CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



1. Trust In You

By Lauren Daigle
(How Can It Be)



2. Have It All (Live)

By Bethel Music & Brian Johnson
(Have It All (Live))



3. Good Good Father

By Chris Tomlin
(Good Good Father — Single)



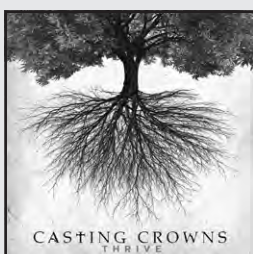
4. Be Enthroned (Live)

By Bethel Music & Jeremy Riddle
(Have It All (Live))



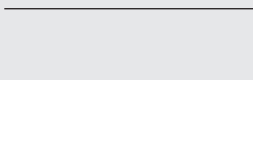
5. Faithful to the End (Live)

By Bethel Music, Hannah McClure & Paul McClure
(Have It All (Live))



6. Tell Your Heart to Beat Again

By Danny Gokey
(Hope in Front of Me)



7. The River

By Jordan Feliz
(Beloved)

8. Just Be Held

By Casting Crowns
(Thrive)

9. Breathe

By Jonny Diaz
(Everything Is Changing — EP)

10. Alone (feat. TRU)

By Hollyn
(Hollyn — EP)

Source: iTunes at press time

'Satisfied by Jesus'

Feliz finds fulfillment in following God's calling

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The path to ministry has been a winding road for Christian musician Jordan Feliz. “I grew up in the Church but I didn’t really understand my walk with Christ until I was in high school,” Feliz said. “I started writing songs my freshman year when I picked up the guitar and taught myself how to play. Through songwriting I had this amazing moment of feeling like God was calling me to sing and write music for the Church.”

Although Feliz initially began his music career in a mainstream rock band he remained faithful to his calling to reach people for Christ.

“My senior year of high school my friends and I started a heavy metal band with the purpose of being a light in the darkness,” Feliz said. “We really wanted to go out and introduce people to Jesus. In that band I kept the same desire that is still in my heart today — to go out and love people.”

While this genre provided Feliz with a unique platform and opportunities to share his faith, he soon realized the Lord was directing him another way.

“When the band broke up, God pushed me into a different direction when a worship pastor in my hometown reached out to me and invited me to lead worship,” Feliz said. “It was during this time that I really fell in love with leading worship.”

Stepping out in faith

“After a couple of months I got a phone call from a friend in Nashville who is now my manager. He said that he really felt God placing on his heart for me to start focusing on writing songs and moving there.

“During that prayerful time of seeking God’s will I really felt like God was opening this door to pursue music in Nashville.”

As Feliz desired to use his musical talents for God’s glory he stepped out in faith and walked through the doors that continued to open.

Not long after Feliz and his wife moved to Nashville he signed a record deal with Centricity Music and released his debut album, “Beloved,”

which captured the attention of audiences across the country with heart-stirring lyrics.

“The title track on the album was written specifically for my daughter,” Feliz explained. “When my wife was pregnant I was sitting in a room with two other fathers and we were discussing what this world would tell our daughters. It was a compiled list that kept growing of negative things.”

Our Father’s love

“As I was thinking about all these things it inspired me to write a song letting my daughter know that she is not only loved by her parents but by the Savior of the world more than anything.

Now being a father myself I’ve gained a whole new perspective on God’s love for His children, His beloved. The song has taken new shape knowing the depths of the Father’s love.”

While making an impressive entrance into the Christian music industry, his first single, “The River,” quickly raced up the charts and reached No. 1 on Billboard’s Christian radio chart. In addition the lyric video for the song also has garnered a tremendous response with more than 300,000 views on YouTube.

As Feliz performs concerts around the country he is greatly moved by the testimonies of God at work through these songs and reminded

of the winding path that led him to where he is today. Feliz is currently on the “Beautiful Offerings Tour” with Big Daddy Weave.

“My prayer before I go on stage is, ‘Lord, let these people be focused on only You through these words,’” Feliz said. “Ultimately the ability for that to happen through a song that’s written is incredible and so powerful — knowing that these songs can prove to people that Jesus can heal the broken-hearted and that He is the answer for those who are struggling and searching.

“More than anything I want people to know that they are loved by the Savior of the world. I want people to know that everything in life and the void in our hearts can only be satisfied by Jesus.

“It’s an incredible thing to encourage each other along life’s journey, being broken together and worshipping God together. I’ve heard from people going through a lot of pain and loss and I’m reminded that these songs are a lot bigger than me.”



Jordan Feliz

Photo courtesy of Centricity Music

'God has a plan'

Trail Blazers power forward strives to inspire others

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Teammates have a nickname for Portland Trail Blazers power forward Meyers Leonard.

Portland guard Gerald Henderson said, "We call him 'The Hammer.' If he says he is going to do something he does it. He is very helpful, an unselfish kind of guy. You can tell that he has come from a good background."

Leonard's background includes dealing with tragedy at a young age, concern over a military brother fighting a war, small-town values and faith.

"I was raised in a humble household in a small town (Robinson, Illinois) and was taught the right things from the beginning. I have had some trials and tribulations. I have been very blessed to be in the situation that I am in. I think God has a plan for all of us," Leonard said. "We didn't have much money. ... (But) I was raised the right way. I love to be around people. I love to give back."

In his fourth NBA season, Leonard says he has "such an opportunity to give back."

Along with helping youth camps in Robinson financially, he wants to be an inspiration to young kids and others.

"I think that is God's plan for me. I don't know the extent of it but I think He wants me to be someone who is willing to give and to give inspiration."

When Leonard was six years old his father, Jim Leonard, a golf pro, died from injuries sustained in a bicycle accident.

His mother, Tracie Leonard, has lived in pain from multiple disc surgeries following a horseback riding accident. Formerly a runner, many days tracking 10 miles, she could not work because of the crippling pain.

Although Meyers Leonard was young when his father died, he remembers what he was told about him: Jim Leonard was a fun-loving guy with good morals who youth liked to be around.

Robinson Insurance agent Brian Siler, who has a son Leonard's age, took him under his family's wing. They took Leonard on family vacations and to church. Leonard became a Christian when he was in the sixth grade.

"I went to church pretty often. I go to church now when I can. It's tough because we have a lot of practices and games on Sunday," said Leonard, who is a regular at NBA chapel services provided by team chaplains.

"I have been very fortunate to have my high school athletic trainer (Scott Rawlings) that I had," he said. Rawlings worked with Leonard and pushed him to reach his basketball potential.

"Then I go to college, I have Bruce Weber, my head coach. I love Bruce Weber."

Now the men's head basketball coach at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Weber coached Leonard at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

After leading Robinson High School to the Class 2-A state basketball championship in 2010, his biggest thrill in sports, Leonard played the 2010-2012 seasons for the Fighting Illini.

Weber "expected a lot from me as a man number one and obviously as a player," said Leonard, who was the 11th overall pick in the first round of the 2012 NBA Draft by the Trail Blazers.

In the NBA, Leonard, who is over 7 feet tall and weighs 255 pounds, has a career average of 5.8 points per game, 4.3 points in playoffs and 4.0 rebounds, with 3.9 rebounds in playoffs. He has 71 career blocks.

Through the 2016 NBA All-Star break, Leonard was averaging 8.8 points a game and 5.1 rebounds. He missed seven games this season because of a shoulder injury.

At Portland he found another mentor in former assistant coach Kim Hughes. "Kim Hughes was a huge part of my first three years. He took me under his wing. He taught me a lot about life, a lot about basketball," he said.

Leonard's favorite Bible verse — Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" — is displayed on his Twitter account.

"[The verse] translates in life and the basketball court," Leonard said. "Jesus is our God and Savior. I believe when I die I am going to go to heaven. I want to follow in His footsteps.

"I try to live life the right way and treat people with respect and do the right things as much as I can," he said. "I try to be as humble as possible and share with others."

Portland center/forward Mason Plumlee said, "He is very devout in his faith. He is a good example and he lives it out. He is a role model. He is a super-positive guy. He is very much about the team, whether he is playing well or not individually. He is always picking up the next person. He is a very selfless teammate. He is a great guy to have around." 🙏



Meyers Leonard

Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

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IMB transfers land title of Nazareth Baptist School

NAZARETH, Israel — The International Mission Board (IMB) has transferred the title of Nazareth Baptist School's (NBS) facilities in Israel to the institution's nonprofit.

NBS, though started by then-Foreign Mission Board (now IMB) personnel, has been financially and administratively independent from IMB for nearly 30 years.

NBS has established its own nonprofit separate from IMB with the transfer of the deed bringing the school into full local ownership.

The transfer ceremony took place at the Nazareth school Dec. 20, 2015.

Botrus Mansour, NBS general director, described it as a "sweet gathering" of IMB personnel, NBS staff and representatives from the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel. Among the speakers were Mansour, IMB vice president of global engagement John Brady and current NBS board chairman Najed Azzam. They each emphasized their gratefulness for the school's long relationship with IMB as well as their eager expectation for the school's future.

Even with its ties to IMB the school has always been a largely local endeavor. The Church in Nazareth played a large part in establishing the school that has always had dedicated Arab believers on its staff. Over the course of six decades administration and funding gradually moved more fully under local ownership.

The transfer of the land title was the final step. (BP)

Year-to-date CP giving above budgeted projection

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee (EC) are 7.19 percent above the year-to-date budgeted projection and 1.46 percent above contributions received during the same time frame in 2015, according to a news release from EC President and CEO Frank S. Page.

As of Feb. 29, gifts received by the EC for distribution through the Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget through the first five months of the SBC's fiscal year totaled \$83,293,559.57. The total is \$5,585,226.24 above the \$77,708,333.33 year-to-date budgeted amount to support SBC ministries globally and across North America.

Designated giving of \$97,411,658.13 for the same year-to-date period is 4.91 percent, or \$4,555,640.85, above gifts of \$92,856,017.28 received at this point in 2015.

February's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$17,354,857.83. Designated gifts received in February, meanwhile, amounted to \$55,161,127.22. (BP)



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