

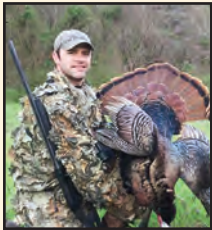


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INSIDE



New hunting ministry focuses on North Alabama residents

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Alabama, Auburn universities see staff, students sharing faith in unique ways

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Main: Antonio Lopez (left) and Odilon Mendoza (second from left), both of Virginia, pray at the block party held at Serenity Apartments on Aug. 27 in Montgomery. The weekend was the first of its kind — hosting four events across the city with native Mixtec speakers sharing the gospel with the unreached people group. **Left:** A little girl listens as the gospel is shared in Mixtec. **Right:** Antonio Lopez (right) shares about Jesus with a Mixtec man before the event begins.



Photos by Neisha Roberts

MIXTEC miracles

Outreach sees 9 new Mixtec believers, 100 copies of Scripture distributed

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

For nearly a decade, volunteers in Montgomery have been sowing the gospel in Mixtec homes, planting seeds and praying they would grow into new brothers and sisters in Christ.

And this summer, they reaped the harvest.

The Montgomery Mixtec Task Force, made up of volunteers from various Baptist churches in the area and a ministry arm of Montgomery Baptist Association, hosted Mixtec Outreach Weekend on Aug. 26-28, with four evangelistic events specifically aimed at reaching the approximately 2,700 Mixtec residents in the area.

“We’ve spent 10 years building relationships and building trust,” Lisa C. Rose said. “We’ve often offered the gospel along the way but they hadn’t trusted us yet.”

That is until now.

Nine Mixtec people placed their faith in Christ over the weekend, and six people requested Bible studies in their homes, said Rose, director of Montgomery Association’s church and community ministries.

First of its kind

The weekend, thought to be the first of its kind in the nation, was significant because the gospel was shared in Mixtec, an only oral and tonal language. That’s never happened before.

Forest Park Ministry Center hosted the Aug. 26 evening event with food, worship and a gospel message. On Aug. 27 a block party

was held at Serenity Apartments in the morning through Community of Hope and another event was held at the Nehemiah Center of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in the evening. Every Tribe Ministries hosted the evening event Aug. 28 at Hopper Gardens Apartments.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ office of evangelism participated in the outreach weekend by providing financial assistance to help with setup, food and other resources — like CD copies of the first-ever translation of the first six books of the New Testament in Mixtec — made possible

(See ‘Passion,’ page 3)

COMMENT

Lottery Dies, Medicaid Remains

Thankfully the bill to establish a state-sponsored lottery in Alabama died in the Senate on Aug. 26. But it was not anti-gambling forces that killed the bill. The bill died because the pro-gambling crowd was unwilling to accept a simple state lottery.

Gambling advocates wanted to use the lottery bill as cover to expand gambling in all its forms. Rather than take their victory after both the Alabama House and Senate authorized a statewide vote on the issue, the gamblers chose to kill the bill and try another day because they did not get all they wanted in what the Legislature approved.

As suspected, there was little concern about needed funding for Alabama's Medicaid program. Gov. Robert Bentley promoted the lottery as his solution for helping the poor and indicated that was truly his intention, but the end result proved a large number of legislators fell for the temptation to expand legalized gambling in the state.

Anti-gambling senators and House members faced an uphill fight against the state-sponsored lottery bill from the beginning and they fought valiantly. In the Senate they came within one vote of killing the bill and that was despite maneuvering by Senate leadership that was so one-sided it caused two anti-gambling senators — Dick Brewbaker, R-Montgomery, and Paul Bussman, R-Cullman — to resign from the Senate Republican Caucus.

Parliamentary ploy

On the House side, the lottery bill actually failed by two votes when voted on the first time. But a parliamentary ploy resulted in a second vote and three representatives changed their votes giving the lottery bill new life.

During the House debate, representatives sought to clarify what constitutes a lottery. You remember that Alabama has argued over the definition of bingo for more than a decade. The definition was not clarified until the Alabama



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Supreme Court gave a detailed definition limiting bingo to a game played on paper and not on electronic gambling machines.

The House adopted a similar amendment saying a lottery was a game played on paper.

That effectively eliminates electronic gambling and those wanting to expand gambling would not have it. They wanted a definition of gambling that allowed electronic gambling at the state's dog tracks — all under the guise of a state-sponsored lottery.

Unacceptable limits

The gamblers also wanted the bill to include casinos in Alabama that could have any gambling game that is allowed to be played at the state's Indian-run casinos. Limiting the lottery to paper tickets was unacceptable.

That is why the bill died when it went back to the Senate for concurrence. The lottery bill was now too restrictive for what the gamblers wanted.

Despite what may have been good intentions by a few, the whole debate was mostly a charade. Medicaid was just the latest "cause of the week" behind which gamblers have stood hoping to hoodwink citizens to looking at felt needs rather than at the evils of the cure.

Cameron Smith, state programs director of R Street Institute, said in a *Birmingham News* column Aug. 28, "Even if we're willing to ignore the political, economic and social problems with the various gambling options, Medicaid will simply eat that (receipts) as well within a few years. It buys us time, not a solution."

A state-sponsored lottery is not the magic bullet for Medicaid or any of Alabama's economic woes. It is a corrosive evil that undermines the Judeo-Christian values on which our society is built.

As Smith said, it is bad politically, economically and socially. It must be resisted.

But Alabama still faces the Medicaid crisis and it is a crisis. Medicaid patients in Alabama face cutbacks in many important services, cutbacks in physicians treating Medicaid patients, loss of drug coverage for adults and more.

Brewton pediatrician Marsha Raulerson, a member of First Baptist Church, Brewton, eloquently described the negative impacts of Medicaid cutbacks on her practice in an article in the Aug. 18 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* (visit www.thealabamabaptist.org and search "Marsha Raulerson"). Multiply her descriptions by the number of Medicaid-accepting physicians in the state and one begins to recognize the importance of this issue.

Census data shows 19.3 percent of the nearly 4.9 million people in Alabama live in poverty which is defined as an income for a family of four of \$24,300 annually. More than 1 in 4 (28 percent) of Alabama's children live in poverty. Alabama is the sixth poorest state in the nation.

Medicaid is important to our state and will continue to be important. A solution to the funding problem must be found. It seems proceeds from the BP oil spill might be part of the immediate answer but that is a stopgap measure and not a long-term solution.

Some elected officials seem hesitant to tackle the problem long term because they know Medicaid will need funding that exceeds the state's present income levels. Some of these officials refuse to examine additional income solu-

tions because they believe any new taxes or fees could cost them at the ballot box.

How long?

But how long will it be before Alabamians demand that problems be solved and not just kicked down the road? How long before citizens say they are willing to pay a little more if important services like Medicaid can be ensured?

Alabama has a problem with Medicaid funding. A state lottery is not the answer. At best it is another Band-Aid solution and Alabama is beyond the time for more Band-Aids. We need responsible leadership from elected officials to examine our entire tax and fee system with a goal of finding a fair and just state revenue structure that provides adequate funding for necessary services. †

"Alabama is beyond the time for more Band-Aids. We need responsible leadership from elected officials to examine our entire tax and fee system with a goal of finding a fair and just state revenue structure that provides adequate funding."

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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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Lisa C. Rose (second from left), director of Montgomery Baptist Association's church and community ministries, shares a CD copy of six books of the Bible with a Mixtec family during Mixteco Outreach Weekend.

Passion for Mixtec



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Volunteers in Montgomery love having 'front row seat' to see God work

(continued from page 1)

by Wycliffe Bible Translators. One hundred copies of Scripture in Mixtec were handed out over the weekend. One hundred copies of the "JESUS" film in Mixtec also were distributed.

Through a partnership with believers in Virginia, three Mixtec Christian men, along with Lloyd Rodgers, who works in global continuing education for the International Mission Board, traveled to Montgomery to share the gospel in the Mixteco heart language.

The Mixtec, originally from the mountains of Mexico and saturated in spirit and ancestor worship, often only speak Mixtec, although some in Montgomery have picked up bits and pieces of Spanish and many of the children and young adults speak English, according to Rose.

Passion for sharing gospel

Odilon Mendoza, one of the Mixtec believers from Richmond, Virginia, told *The Alabama Baptist* how he found Christ six years ago after his wife and children were invited to a Hispanic church in their city, and he eventually tagged along.

After accepting Christ and serving in the church for two years, Mendoza realized his passion for sharing the gospel. He attended the 2015 Maximum Impact National Mixtec Summit in Montgomery, where he met with other believers trying to reach the Mixtec people in the United States.

Mendoza said when he discovered his "people are very needy" and they don't know who Jesus really is, he wanted to share the gospel with them even more.

Now Mendoza works with other volunteers at his church and about 20-30 Mixteco people are attending a weekly Bible study.

Highlights of Scripture

During the outreach weekend in Montgomery, Mendoza shared his testimony along with passages from John 3, Romans 6 and Mark 4 — highlights of the gospel but also bridges to sharing the Truth in a way the Mixteco can relate to, Mendoza said.

Antonio Lopez, of Lynchburg, Virginia, also came to share his faith at the outreach weekend.

His testimony is drastically different from Mendoza's. He'd had three traffic tickets and when he was issued the fourth, he was taken to jail. But while there he heard the gospel for the first time when a Spanish-speaking evangelist came to share the good news. When Lopez was released from jail he immediately sought out a church to continue to grow in his faith, he said.

Although Lopez only speaks Spanish and Mixtec, the nearly 40 English-speaking volunteers could relate to his passion for his Savior. Lopez would open each of the four weekend events with prayer and he and Mendoza would alternate sharing a Bible story or sharing their own testimony.

Donna McCullough, director of Forest Park Ministry Center and a member of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, said of the weekend, "God is giving us a front row seat to see Him work."

"That's awesome to me. For so much of my spiritual life I would look back and see how God had worked. But I love being in the moment and seeing Him working live. It's beautiful."

Now volunteers from area Baptist churches have the task of leading Bible studies in homes and discipling the new believers, Rose said. But they are not going in unprepared. Several volunteers have already been trained as Bible study leaders and in Bible storying — a method of orally sharing parts of Scripture by telling stories in chronological order and often using visual aids.

Prior to the outreach weekend, few Mixtec had accepted the gospel and found Christ, despite years of area believers working hard to cultivate relationships and trust. But Mendoza refreshed volunteers with his passion for the Mixtec and encouraged them to keep planting seeds.

'Don't be discouraged'

"Don't be discouraged," he said. "We saw a lot of people (this weekend). It's a spiritual battle with these people that don't know Christ. But we'll continue to battle and fight and you will see a Mixtec church in this place. Amen." ☩

Ministry Tips



THE TOP PRIORITY OF THE CHURCH

By Edwin F. Jenkins
Interim director of missions
Morgan Baptist Association

Searching for the latest and greatest thing in regards to church life tends to require much of our time and energy. Hearing the latest success story of a church in the next state or even in the next county sometimes motivates us to search and to seek to discover how they did it and how we may follow their lead. We must avoid falling into the trap of jumping from one bandwagon to the next.

May I suggest that renewed attention be given to what should be the priority concern for all churches? I have become convinced that the No. 1 concern for every church and every individual is one and the same — practicing the presence of God.

Pursuing and practicing the actual presence of God in all that we are and do deserves to be stated, affirmed and then restated and reaffirmed.

Without the power of God we cannot do God's work. Without the presence of God there can be no power from God. Based on the teaching of our Lord in the Gospels and

the experience of the apostles in the Book of Acts, God's power is inextricably linked to and dependent on His presence.

While we continue to search for appropriate ways to carry out our missions and ministries let us be sure of this singular truth. Jesus clearly testified, "for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Above all else, in all that we do, we must pursue and practice the presence of God. ☩



Unsplash photo

Out of the Woods

New hunting ministry focuses on North Alabama; seeks to warm Church up for hunters, fishermen

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Before Jason Hester became a Christian he spent every Sunday in the woods or fishing.

“And now when I drive

to church on Sunday or Wednesday and I see cars pulled over on the side of the road where people are fishing or hunting, I can’t help thinking, “That used to be me,” he said.

Living for Christ

A life with Christ, he said, is “something that if they just knew what they were missing, they would want it. You can still be in the outdoors but live for Christ and do that too.”

Most of them just have never known Christ, Hester said — and they’re probably

not going to ever walk through the doors of a church if no one goes to them first.

‘Way of life’

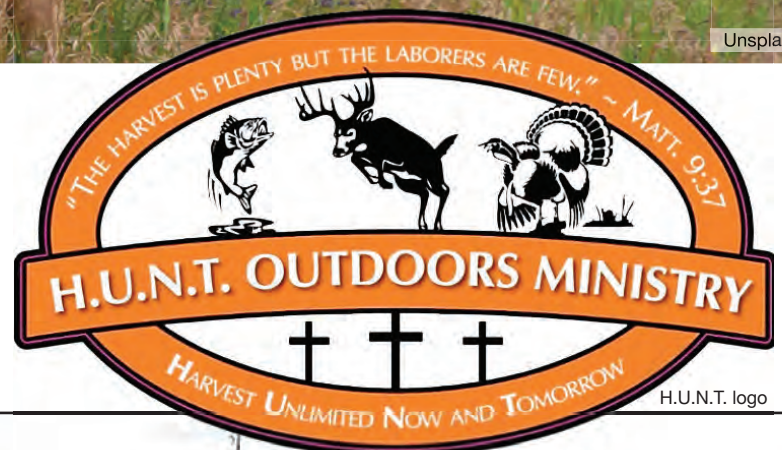
That’s why he started H.U.N.T. Outdoors Ministry, which stands for Harvest Unlimited Now and Tomorrow.

“Hunting and fishing are a way of life here in the South, and we needed a way that we could reach those people who are not in the church or saved.”

“Hunting and fishing are a way of life here in the South, and we needed a way that we could reach those people who are not in the church or saved,” said Hester, a member of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell.

One way H.U.N.T. is doing that is through hosting events that are of value to the community, like a game check seminar held in late

August at Mountain View Baptist to explain the new government laws on tagging and reporting game.



H.U.N.T. logo



Photo courtesy of H.U.N.T.



Photo courtesy of H.U.N.T.

“We’re hoping to get people accustomed to the church so that when they’re ready and God speaks to them, they will feel comfortable coming back,” Hester said.

And at a Beast Feast set for Sept. 17 at 5 p.m., the ministry will give away \$5,000 worth of door prizes, he said. “We’re hoping they will come for the door prizes and then while they’re here, they will hear the gospel.”

Various denominations

Men from about 15 area churches of various denominations are part of H.U.N.T.

They all agree on one thing — it’s needed in their demographic area, said David Evett, a member of Mountain View Baptist.

“All over most of the Southeast there are people who it may take something

outdoor related to get them to go to church or hear the gospel,” he said. “And in rural Alabama, that is definitely true.”

Hester agreed.

Bigger than sports

“In areas like ours it’s something that impacts everybody even more than sports,” Hester said. “It’s a lot of people that we have the opportunity to reach.”

H.U.N.T. is just getting off the ground, but the men have a lot of ideas for where it might go in the future.

“We want to do a lot of things with kids, like next year we’re doing a couple of hunts for the handicapped,” he said, noting that they would have trailers with wheelchair access in order to make that possible.

But a year into the ministry, Hester said he’s excited about what’s happened so far.

“We just want to use it to make a difference,” he said. ✠

A fresh START

DeKalb Association to open residential recovery ministry in Fort Payne

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Drugs took me down a downward spiral path. I've lost everything I had, including myself. I lost God first and foremost. It's just been bad. There's nothing good that has (come) from it."

Stories like this one are common from the women incarcerated at the DeKalb County Jail. Sheriff Jimmy Harris estimates that 90 percent of women arrested in DeKalb County are jailed for drug-related offenses. Most leave the jail hoping never to return, but within months, many are arrested again.

Spiritual guidance

"The only place they have to go is the same place they came from, either the drug house they came from or the abuser they were with. They need a place to go where they can get some spiritual guidance," Harris said.

Jail ministry volunteers are hoping to provide just that at The Summit. Once the legal paperwork is in order, The Summit will become a residential recovery home for women who are recovering from addiction or seeking to leave abusive situations. The program will be an independent 501c3 organization but will fall under the umbrella of DeKalb Baptist Association, according to the association's Director of Missions Ken Allen. At least in the beginning, most of these women will come straight from the DeKalb County Jail.

"It is super exciting when you begin to think about the freedom from sin and the fresh start that so many of these women are going to be able to get as a result of this ministry," Allen said.

For many years, there have been residential recovery options for men but no place

for women. Ministry volunteers began to look for options and when The Summit in Fort Payne was listed for sale, they saw an opportunity.

The Summit property has a storied history. Built by Teddy Gentry of the Fort Payne-based musical group Alabama, the 96-acre property includes one large house and two smaller homes. Most recently the property was owned by Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy, who died in 2014, and operated as a special events and retreat venue.

Allen and other leaders in DeKalb Association, along with Harris, jail ministry volunteers and community leaders put together a proposal asking the Chick-fil-A Foundation to donate the property to be used as a recovery center. At a meeting in August, representatives of the Foundation met with the local team to hear their presentation. After the presentation, the Chick-fil-A representatives agreed to donate the property.

"You could see the hand of God on the process," Allen said. "Everyone, including the men from Atlanta, was choked up. One of them wanted to pray, but he couldn't speak. We could all sense the presence of God in that room."

The handover of the property will officially take place once tax-exempt status is gained from the IRS, said Debbie Garner, an addiction recovery specialist and long-



THE SUMMIT

Photo courtesy of Debbie Garner

time jail ministry volunteer who will direct the program.

The ministry will be known as The Summit of Fort Payne: God's Sanctuary for Hope and Healing.

Transitioning from jail

In the beginning, Garner hopes to house 25-30 women transitioning from the jail. Women will commit to the program for 12 months, which is an essential part of the recovery process.

"They need to learn how to change every part of their lives," Garner said. "These women are dealing with life-controlling problems, whether it's drugs and alcohol or abuse. They have to exchange the false god of drugs for the living God or they won't make it."

To help the women rebuild their lives, the program will include training in spiritual foundations, coping skills, job preparedness and GED classes, nutrition and exercise, parenting, personal finances and budgeting and social skills.

More importantly, the women will be away from the outside influences that increase their chances of recidivism, Garner said. Even though many inmates begin a real

relationship with Christ while in the jail, most have been so ingrained in a lifestyle of abuse and addiction they have trouble living their faith outside of prison. Often they feel too ashamed to go to church and become isolated from Christian influences.

"These women need to learn to repent and how to keep their lives clean," she said. "They need an opportunity to get away from

those outside influences long enough to establish new habits. God gave us a miracle on behalf of these women who He loves so much and who so desperately need to be healed and have whole lives."

Garner said she is already getting calls from people who want to see their loved ones admitted to the program, as well as from people in the community who want to give time and money to the ministry.

Harris and Allen credit the support of

the community and churches to what has taken place in DeKalb County already and what will be accomplished in the future, but they gave God the glory for this step forward.

"Without Him, this would not have been possible," Harris said. ✠

For more information about The Summit, contact DeKalb Baptist Association at 256-638-4441.

"These women are dealing with life-controlling problems, whether it's drugs or alcohol or abuse. They have to exchange the false god of drugs for the living God or they won't make it."

**Debbie Garner
Director, The Summit**

TAB staff members would like to know about your jail and/or prison ministry efforts as well as suggestions of inmates, returned citizens and prison ministry volunteers who would be an inspiration for readers to know. We also want to know your concerns and fears so we can ask the experts for advice in those areas.

Please pray about how you and your church might participate in making a positive difference in the Kingdom and the state by intentionally focusing on the jail and prison population in some specific way.

Email your suggestions and/or information to jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BIRMINGHAM

► **McElwain Church, Birmingham**, will host a missions conference Sept. 18–21. David Black, professor of New Testament at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, will speak Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Boni and Fatima Garcia, ministry coordinators for Brasília, Brazil, and Butch Henderson, executive director of Metro Changers and church and community missions specialist for Birmingham Association, will speak Monday at 6:30 p.m. Alex and Dimity Leath of Oak Tree Ministries will speak Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Two International Mission Board missionaries in Myanmar will speak via Skype on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Jon Glass is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its third Sunday night singing Sept.

18, 6 p.m. The Kellys, of Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, will perform special music. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CENTRAL

► **Rockford Church** will celebrate Patriot Day on Sept. 11. Attorney General Luther Strange will speak and Sherri Blackerby will perform special music at 11 a.m. Birmingham lawyer Eric Johnston will speak and the FAITH Ensemble from Judson College in Marion will perform special music at 6 p.m. For more information call 256-377-4900 or email rbccoosa@gmail.com. Jeff Fuller is pastor.

CHILTON

► **Mulberry Church, Maplesville**, would like to congratulate Pastor Andy Mims for receiving his pastoral ministry certificate from New Orleans Seminary extension center at Chilton Association.

CLEBURNE

► **Josh Cheeks** is the new bivocational student minister of **Chulafinnee Church**. He previously served as youth pastor for Oak Grove Church, Talladega. He holds



CHEEKS

an associate's degree from Gadsden State Community College and is pursuing a bachelor's degree from Leavell College in New Orleans and a certificate from the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Erin, have three children. Philip Morris is pastor.

DEKALB

► **First Church, Rainsville**, will host evangelist Jay Lowder, of Wichita Falls, Texas, as guest speaker Sept. 25, 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. David Cofield is pastor.

FAYETTE

► **Pilgrim Rest Church, Fayette**, will hold "Gospel Singing Under the Tent" on Sept. 17, 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Lunch will be served. Randy Anderson is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **First Church, Montgomery**, will hold Team Night on Sept. 11, 6:15 p.m. Inquisitor "Inky" Johnson, of Atlanta and former University of Tennessee quarterback, will speak. Bring your team and wear your jersey or favorite school colors. For more information call Will Spivey at 334-320-0332. Jay Wolf is pastor. ► **Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery**, will host Lysa TerKeurst as the keynote speaker of the Women's Ministry Conference on Sept. 9–10. TerKeurst is the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries and a *New York Times* best-selling author. Special rates are available for churches bringing groups of more than 10 women. For more information visit <http://vaughnforest.com/womensconference> or contact Gail Klucking at 334-279-5433 or Gail.Klucking@VaughnForest.com. Eric Smith is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, ordained Donald Grubbs and Danny Holcomb as new deacons Aug. 21. James Blair is pastor. ☩

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Joe Joyner



JOYNER

First Baptist Church, Moody St. Clair Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Romans 8:28

FAVORITE HYMN: "Beulah Land"

HOBBIES: Fishing and riding motorcycle

FAMILY STATUS: Married to wife of 18 years, Barbara; son, Lee; stepson, Devin; daughter, Janna; three grandchildren

In 1961, 16-year-old Joe Joyner set two world records by catching a 680-pound Goliath grouper. Shortly after, Joyner felt God's call to be a "fisher of men." For 42 years, Joyner served full-time pastorates in Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina and at Westmeade Baptist Church, Decatur. In the past five years, he has held five interim pastorates and recently served as interim director of missions for St. Clair Association. He also is chaplain for the City of Moody. Joyner, 71, holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in Clinton and master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

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

A: A faithful pastor, the "Roman Road Plan of Salvation" and a loving and kind church fellowship.

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

A: I was saved at 16 and called to preach at 17 and did college and seminary. I continue to serve even today in the interim position. I expect I will be serving or preaching or doing something until I die. Thank God for a godly pastor who put me on the straight and narrow. That's what I do now is work with pastors. I have a heart for hurting pastors. There is a lot of hurt right now.

Q: What does your ministry demand?

A: All the mind, body, soul, experience and energy I have left. It's a 50- or 60-hour-a-week job. I'm not a workaholic but if I see something that needs doing, I do it.

Q: What do you get from your ministry?

A: Fulfillment. My desire is to finish well. Psalm 92:14 — still bearing fruit in old age — I want to be bearing fruit.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My wife, Barbara, was a church planter in Maine and Florida. Both churches are thriving. She continues to teach missions in our association. She is my helpmate and my best friend. She is always there for support. I couldn't do it without her.

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

A: I will probably continue to preach until I am no longer able mentally or physically. When opportunities come, if I am able and as the Lord leads, I will take advantage of those opportunities. My heart is really in preaching the Word.

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

A: The reason to continue on, to love, to pray for, to encourage, to work with pastors. I'm the pastors' pastor. I want to help these guys and do what I can for them.

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

A: He is my Reason for living. He's my Reason for serving and giving. He's the Center and Circumference. ☩

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

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Longtime minister of music retires after nearly 60 years

Randall Veazey may be retiring from music ministry after nearly 60 years, but he has no plans of slowing down.

"I don't want to just sit in a congregation. ... When you retire it doesn't necessarily mean you quit," Veazey said as he is planning to begin interim or supply work as soon as the Lord provides it.



VEAZEY

And once it comes along, he'll be riding his motorcycle to whatever church calls.

Experienced in traditional and blended worship styles, Veazey has formed and led trios, quartets and choirs at many of the churches he served as minister of music over the years. Those churches include First Baptist Church at McClellan, Anniston; Riverchase Baptist Church, Birmingham; and Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham. Whether it's the tight harmonies of a quartet or the broad range of a choir of almost 1,000, Veazey's passion

for leading music hasn't diminished since being a part of his first trio in high school, he said.

Veazey also served as artist-in-residence and assistant professor of music for Samford University in Birmingham and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). He also served as an associate evangelist with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association during the crusades in the mid-1970s.

Veazey holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Montevallo, a master of music degree from NOBTS and a doctorate from the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

He also has a passion for senior adult ministry and hopes to be able serve this generation in his retirement. "I've still got a lot to do," Veazey said. "I'm not near done."

He has four children and is married to Martha.

To contact Veazey, call 205-515-0688. (Maggie Walsh)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Person of Christ

Compassionate and Caring

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

As we read the Gospels, we are grabbed by the impact of Jesus' personality. Previously we considered Jesus as a person of humility and meekness. But He was by no means a weak person. He was not a quiet, withdrawing kind of person nor was His a colorless personality. His manner gripped people and compelled their attention. His force of personality was seen when He took a whip of small cords and singlehandedly drove out those who were making the temple a place of merchandising. Various qualities combined to make Him the person we find captured on the pages of Scripture.

Feeling others' sorrows

This week we remind ourselves that Christ was a person of incomparable compassion. The Bible calls much attention to this aspect of His person. "Compassion" is a term that conveys the idea of being able to feel others' sorrows and needs. It expresses the capacity to weep with those that weep or to feel with those who hurt. Christ's caring and compassion was a distinctive aspect of His personhood.

Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that part of His qualifications to be a great High Priest was that He could be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." The Bible urges us to cast all our cares upon Him, "for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). Those of us who have experienced His help in times of need can identify with the hymnwriter's words, "No one ever cared for me like Jesus."

Needs of people touched Christ's heart and He typically responded by ministering to them. For example Matthew 9:36 records in summary fashion that in the midst of a ministry of teaching, preaching and healing, Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd, people who were weary and scattered. While needy crowds tugged on His heart, needy and hurting individuals did also. Luke 7 tells of His compassionate response to human sorrow.

The only son of a widow was being carried out for burial when the Lord's attention was drawn to the grieving mother. "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her" (v. 13). Our caring Lord restored the son to life and to his mother. Toward the end of His earthly sojourn, Christ was entering Jerusalem. The record says, "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

His compassionate caring for individuals found demonstration even when their needs interrupted Him. The phrase "as He went" introduces such an occasion when Jesus was on the way to the house of the Jairus where the synagogue ruler's daughter lay dying. "As He went" a needy woman dared interrupt His progress by touching His robe and finding healing virtue pass into her body. Jesus stopped along the way to minister to the woman (Luke 8:42-48).

'Passing by'

On other occasions, the phrase "passing by" introduces what were almost incidental occasions when Christ displayed compassion. Christ was passing by when His heart went out to a man blind from birth, declaring, "I must work the works of Him who sent me" (John 9:4). He was moved to give sight to the man. Such was Christ's commitment to a ministry of compassion and caring that interruptions and delays were treated as unplanned opportunities to help people. This aspect of His person sets an example for us to walk in His steps by increasingly becoming persons of compassion and caring. #

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.



ERLC 2016 National Conference tackles cultural engagement

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) National Conference addressed the gospel and cultural engagement through topics such as politics, race, religious liberty, parenting, millennials and sports.

Held Aug. 26 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, the conference featured pastors, authors and professors who spoke on what the Bible says about cultural engagement and how to avoid cultural Christianity.

Russell Moore, ERLC executive director, noted that politics has weaved its way into a form of religion in the United States.

Moore referenced a statement he's heard frequently in recent days: "This is the most important election we have faced in my lifetime." But this idea leads to two things, he said.

"The people who are with you become disillusioned and angry," Moore said, noting those same people will ask, "Why don't we have all of the things you told us we would have?"

The second outcome is that some will become cynical because of the way the original sin and common grace interact with one another, The Christian Post reported. Sin and common grace have no final victor and no final defeat, Moore explained.

'Responsibility to contextualize'

"We have a responsibility not only to speak truthfully. But we have a responsibility to contextualize not only to the present culture but to the future," Moore said to the more than 900 conference participants. "We have to speak in words that we can live with for future generations of evangelical Christians and our neighbors. And as we're doing that, ensuring the fact that the gospel is clear."

Dallas-area pastor Matt Chandler spoke during the conference too, noting the Bible Belt has "churches that are filled with unregenerate [people] in a culture where any type of conservatism is just lumped in to being a Christian."

Pastors in the Bible Belt, Chandler said, often have to work hard to help "really moral folk understand that they're non-Christians."

'Hidden in darkness'

"If people in the Bible Belt don't know that what it means to be a Christian is for the rest of their life they're to be repentant in their life, then every little struggle they have will be hidden in the darkness because they will believe that they did that when they got saved," said Chandler, pastor of The Village Church in Texas. "I just can't tell you the sheer volume of people I know who are enslaved to sin and feel like they can't tell anyone about it because they got saved 15 years ago."

Robby Gallaty, pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tennessee, pointed participants to a two-fold strategy Jesus gave the Church to engage the culture — an invitation to follow Him and an investment in others.

"We're going to change the culture the same way Jesus changed the culture and that's with an invitation to follow Him," Gallaty said. "We will never affect the culture publicly until we have been transformed by the gospel privately."

"Intimacy with God always precedes ministry," he said. "Who we are in Christ trumps what we will ever do for Christ."

Other speakers included Andy Crouch, executive editor of *Christianity Today*; Greg Thornsby, president of The King's College in New York City; Trevin Wax, Bible and reference publisher for LifeWay Christian Resources; and Jackie Hill Perry, poet and artist with Humble Beast Records.

Breakout sessions were held on race, religious liberty, parenting, millennials and sports. And an all-female panel discussed women and cultural engagement.

The 2017 National Conference is scheduled for Aug. 24-25 at the same location with Christ-centered parenting as the theme. (TAB, BP)



Trillia Newbell (left), ERLC's director of community outreach, speaks as a panelist during a breakout session at ERLC's National Conference.

"If people ... don't know that what it means to be a Christian is for the rest of their life they're to be repentant in their life, then every little struggle they have will be hidden in the darkness because they will believe that they did that when they got saved."

Matt Chandler
pastor, The Village Church

Steven Clark, former Auburn University punter (2010–2013), sees God's leading in his life, despite it taking a different path than he thought — one that doesn't include the NFL.

WAR EAGLE

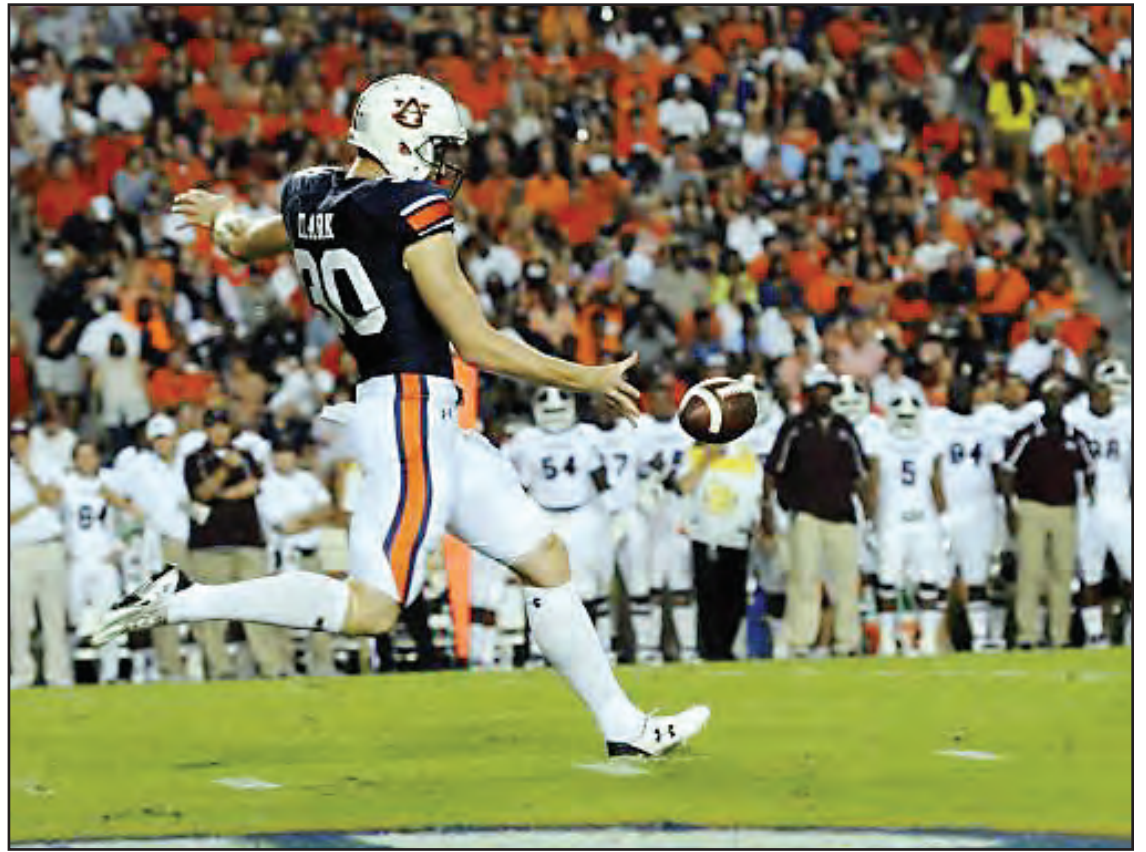


Photo courtesy of Steven Clark

Former Auburn punter sees God's plan for good

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It may look to some like Steven Clark may have had to punt on his life plans in the past couple of years.

But Clark said he doesn't see it that way at all.

The former Auburn University punter says when he reflects on every part of his life — post-college included — he can see God's hand all over it, working everything out for his good.

"Looking back I can see He's always had me right where He wanted me," Clark said.

A major part of that, he said, was moving from Kansas City, Missouri, to Auburn.

Clark started his college football career in 2010 with five games alongside Cam Newton and the rest of Auburn University's national championship-winning team.

Major high

It was a major high, he said. But he also found himself dealing with lows that he hadn't expected.

"It was the hardest year dealing with stressors of not really having any friend groups or anything

and not having time to adjust with football going on," Clark said. "I'd been a good kid in high school and I'd always had happiness in football and friends. But I didn't really have a relationship with Christ and I hadn't realized it. And I was unhappy."

'Ecclesiastes chapter'

So he began to go through what he called an "Ecclesiastes chapter" in which he tried finding fulfillment in other things — a strategy that didn't work, he said.

And right in the middle of that, Auburn football chaplain Chette Williams took Clark under his wing and things began to change.

Clark started to see God for the first time.

"I don't know if I hadn't gone down that road if I would have known the grace and the love that God offered," he said. "Chette was able to disciple me and

help me learn how to read the Bible. And I got really on fire to know God."

And because of where he's been, he says he's able to relate better now to the guys he helps disciple on the football team — who he has ministered to as Chette's intern since he graduated.

"God really changed my life

and I love being able to share that with the guys," he said. "I can relate to a lot of situations. I feel like as I develop my relationship with God and understand His calling in my life, I can see that the anxiety and pressures that I went through were preparation to be able to fulfill a role here and be a spiritual influence for the team."

But for Clark, a member of First Baptist Church, Opelika, serving in that role was never his Plan A.

The NFL was, but he didn't really land anywhere after he graduated like he'd hoped.

"It's a very small market (for punters) and as far as my NFL future goes it's very up in the air," Clark said.

No mistakes

As he's waited, he's been kicking, but he's also been studying for the MCAT and working full-time with Williams and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

And he doesn't feel like God made any mistakes with that.

"Being able to pray for some of the guys and doing Bible studies with them — I feel like I'm right where I need to be," Clark said.

Williams agreed.

"It's been really special to have him back and to see the respect that the players have for him," the chaplain said. "He shares the gospel in his own personality and it's very unique, and it impacts the players' lives in a big way. And that's the biggest blessing — seeing lives transformed." ✠



Photo courtesy of Steven Clark

Steven Clark, former Auburn University punter, shares his testimony at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting.

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ROLL TIDE

Alabama finds sports fan, talented writer in assistant athletics director Ford

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In the past few decades a lot of tickets have passed through Tommy Ford's hands.

He's worked with athletics at the University of Alabama for almost 30 years, and almost all of that has been in ticketing.

And even before that, he'd been an Alabama fan.

So it might be surprising to learn that the one ticket that stands out, the one stub he cares about the most and keeps for sentimental reasons, isn't from an Alabama game.

'For Pete's Sake'

It's from a movie he saw in December 1968.

"It was called 'For Pete's Sake' and it was a Billy Graham movie," Ford said.

"I'd just turned 13 when our youth group went to see it. Although I'd grown up literally in church, I wasn't saved until

I walked down the aisle at that movie."

His family took him to their Methodist church in Gadsden every time the doors were open, he said — "I'd never missed a Sunday School class, Boy Scout meeting or youth retreat."

But it was that movie that touched his soul and made him realize what he'd been hearing about all his life.

Old ticket stub

"I still have the ticket stub, and I have shown it a couple of times when I've given my testimony," he said.

From that night on, Ford's faith was "very important" to him, and he stayed involved in his church.

Then after he moved to Tuscaloosa, enrolled in the University of Alabama (UA) and got married to Robin — who grew up at East Gadsden Baptist Church, Gadsden — he became actively involved in First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, teaching Sunday School, serving as a deacon and

leading a men's small group.

But something else happened during that time too, something that would become a major outlet for him to share his faith.

Sports writing

As a student Ford decided to approach the sports editor of the campus newspaper, *The Crimson White*, on behalf of some friends who were on the university's swim team.

"Our swim team was world class and I didn't think they were getting enough coverage," Ford said.

But instead of offering to do more, the sports editor turned it back on him.

"He said, 'Why don't you do something?' and so I met with the swim coach, learned about the sport and became a sports writer for the newspaper."

The next year, he became the sports editor.

And that laid the groundwork for a hobby that would become a passion later for Ford, now assistant athletics director at UA.

As his career as a ticketing manager and head of Tide Pride developed, he started writing books on the side — nine, to be exact.

"All of the books I've done are totally as a hobby, sort of a labor of love. And all of them have something to do with Alabama," he said. "Writing has been fun and covering Alabama has been quite a thrill for me with all that's happened in the past 10 years or so."

He's written books on topics from Bear Bryant's leadership to the Alabama-Auburn rivalry to the deadly tornado that struck Tuscaloosa in 2011.

That book, "A Season to Remember: Faith in the Midst of the Storm," was published by



Above: Tommy Ford (right), chats with Alabama alumnus Lance Cormier (who played 1999-2002) during an Alabama Baseball Alumni Game. **Below:** Ford (right) co-authored 'A Season to Remember' with former UA player Carson Tinker (left).

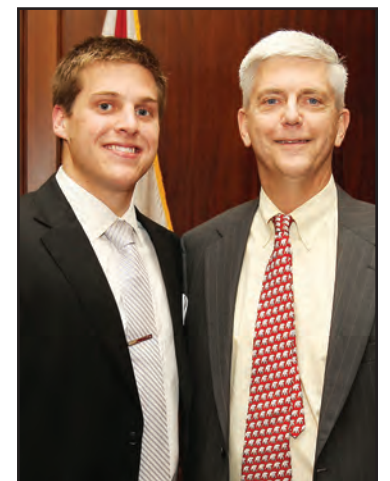
B&H Publishing Group and was co-authored by Carson Tinker, the football team's long snapper whose girlfriend, Ashley Harrison, was killed in the storm.

Blessed in work

The book told the story of Tinker's faith and how it never wavered despite his major personal loss.

Ford's latest book, "Alabama's Crimson Mission," was released in June and tells the story of how an early-season loss to the University of Mississippi in Oxford inspired the team to fight to win the national championship in 2015.


"There's not a day that goes by that I don't thank the Lord for the blessings that He's given me, for the opportunities I've had in my job at the university and how He's blessed me in my writing," he said. "It's been a fun time."



Photos courtesy of Tommy Ford

"There's not a day that goes by that I don't thank the Lord for the blessings that He's given me, for the opportunities I've had in my job at the university and how He's blessed me in my writing."

Tommy Ford
assistant athletics director donor programs
University of Alabama






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'Devastated' by removing headscarf

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a federal lawsuit Aug. 30 on behalf of a Christian woman forced to remove her headscarf for a driver's license photo in violation of her religious convictions.

The lawsuit says Yvonne Allen, of Tuskegee, is a devout Christian woman who believes the Bible commands in 1 Corinthians 11 that she show her submission to God by covering her hair in public. When she went to renew her license at a Lee County driver's license office in December 2015, she claims county officials told her a religious accommodation available for head coverings applied only to Muslims.

"I was devastated when they forced me to remove my headscarf to take my driver's license photo," Allen said in a press release. "I should have the same right as people of other faiths to be accommodated for my religious beliefs."

The lawsuit says Lee County's refusal to grant Allen a religious accommodation contradicts state rules and violates her rights under

the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the Alabama Constitution.

Susan Watson, executive director of the ACLU of Alabama, said, "The county's interpretation of state rules blatantly violates the First Amendment. The government cannot discriminate between faiths in granting religious accommodations."

Differing viewpoints

Complementarians differ over whether the Apostle Paul's admonition that it is a "disgrace" for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered applies to Christians today.

"Regardless of how widespread the practice has been historically, or how commonly it is followed today, Ms. Allen sincerely believes that her personal Christian faith compels her to cover her hair when in public," the lawsuit claims.

It asks that she be allowed to retake her driver's license photo wearing a headscarf and that the county be ordered to pay her court costs. (BNG)



A. Ray Foreman

Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies at 86

Former Alabama Baptist pastor A. Ray Foreman died Aug. 24. He was 86.

Foreman, a native of Leeds, earned degrees from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He was ordained in 1950 at the age of 20 and later served as pastor of Glenwood Baptist Church; Bemiston Baptist Church, Talladega; Salem Baptist Church, Brundidge; and First Baptist Church, Leeds.

He later served as interim pastor for several churches in Birmingham Baptist Association, including Grantswood Baptist Church, Irondale, and was a member of First, Leeds, at the time of his death.

Foreman served on the board of *The Alabama Baptist*, the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers and Alabama Citizens Action Program. He also served on the executive committee of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 59 years, Myra. He is survived by two children and two grandchildren. (TAB)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Pisgah Baptist Church, Pisgah, Ala., is seeking God's will for a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor's Search Committee, P.O. Box 10, Pisgah, AL 35765.

PASTOR

Semmes First Baptist Church, Semmes, Alabama, is accepting resumé for full-time pastor. Please send resumé to Semmes First Baptist Church, 4070 Wulff Rd. E., Semmes, AL 36575 (Mobile County) or email to semmesfirstbaptist.net or gabstrucks@gmail.com or phone 251-367-1000.

PASTOR

Bethel Baptist Church, Fort Deposit, Ala. We are seeking a full-time pastor. Resumé are being accepted. Email: cnolan@fcbi.com or bethelbap.rd@camelliacom.com or by mail to: Bethel Baptist Church, c/o Clay Nolan, 1552 Bates Road, Fort Deposit, AL 36032.

WORSHIP PASTOR

Worship is priority. Bellview Baptist in McCalla is continuing to grow in worship. Desiring a dedicated follower of Christ, called to ministry by God as full-time worship pastor; leading, organizing and administrating all aspects of worship ministry. Sub-

mit resumé: office@bellviewbc.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Catoma Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Catoma Baptist Church, 4300 Old Selma Rd., Montgomery, AL 36108.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Hopewell Baptist Church, Hanceville, Alabama, accepting resumé for bivocational pastor. Mail to: 1827 1st Avenue N., Apt. 704, Birmingham, AL 35203. Email to: HopewellPSC@gmail.com. Deadline: September 30, 2016.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Turnerville Baptist Church — Mobile County. Contact Bro. Jason Meaux at jmeaux@turnervillebaptist.org.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH

Montevallo First Baptist Church is receiving applicants for a part-time, bivocational minister of youth. Resumé and inquiries may be sent to: mfbcbellsouth.net.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Grant Street Baptist Church in Bessemer, Alabama, is

searching for a part-time or bivocational youth minister. Primary responsibility is to shepherd grades 6-12. Email resumé to Pastor Jeff Hughes at jhughes42295@gmail.com or to Personnel Committee at personnel@grantstreetbaptist-church.org.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR

The First Baptist Church of Saks, Anniston, Alabama, is searching for a bivocational children's director. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church of Saks, 4723 Saks Road, Anniston, AL 36206. Or email to CathyBain@cableone.net.

STUDENT MINISTER

The Baptist Church at McAdory in McCalla, Alabama. Minister to students grades 7-12. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, 4954 Eastern Valley Rd., McCalla, AL 35111.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Columbia Baptist Association, Dothan, Alabama, is accepting resumé for the position of director of missions. Resumé may be submitted to Search Team Chairman Allen Singley at broallen@gbcdothan.org or mail to 2400 Forrester Road, Dothan, AL 36301.

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- 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.

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

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Biblical Character Series

Moses – Finding Courage to Serve

The story of Moses begins with the miracle of his life. Moses was supposed to die but God intervened and instead of growing up a slave, Moses grew up as the adopted grandson of Pharaoh. However, Moses struggled to understand who he was because he was neither completely Egyptian nor completely Hebrew.

Struggling to “find himself,” Moses killed an Egyptian guard who was beating a Hebrew slave. Fearing he would be executed for murder, Moses fled to Midian where he became a shepherd.

God spoke to Moses through a burning bush as he was tending sheep, commanding him to return to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let God’s people go. Although Moses heard God’s call, he was reluctant to go. Exodus 4:1–17 records the story of how Moses found the courage to serve.

Moses found the courage to serve through honesty (v. 1).

► *Honesty with himself*

Moses was afraid to do what God commanded and he expressed that fear to God. His fear was at least two-fold. First he was afraid for his life because he was under a death sentence for murder. Second he was afraid that neither the Hebrew slaves nor Pharaoh would listen to him. Moses was afraid to obey God and he was honest with himself about his fears. When Moses returned to Egypt, his fears came true because the Hebrew people rejected him and Pharaoh ignored him.

► *Honesty with God*

Moses hoped God would choose someone else because he was afraid. However, God was not distressed by Moses’ honesty about his fears. In fact when Moses confessed his fears, God repeated His call and gave Moses evidence of God’s power in his life.

We are sometimes taught we must deny our fears. We are often told fear means our faith is weak. However, the story of Moses reveals that God values honesty — even honesty about our fears.

Moses found the courage to serve by experiencing God’s provision (vv. 2–14).

► *Examining God’s gifts*

God called Moses to take an inventory

By Clarke Skelton

Clarke Skelton is pastor of Valley Grande Baptist Church.

He previously served in South Korea for 15 years with the International Mission Board. He and his wife, Anita, have two children and four grandchildren.



of what he had. God’s question was, “What is that in your hand?” Moses was a shepherd. What he had in his hand was his staff. It was what he used to protect his sheep. His staff seemed useless for God’s call to go to Egypt. It seemed useless for convincing the Hebrew people that he was sent by God or for convincing Pharaoh to give up the free labor provided by his Hebrew slaves.

However, before God could use what he had given Moses, Moses had to recognize what God had given him. What has God given you? What you have may not seem significant. However, because everything you have is a gift from God, like Moses you will discover that it is significant.

► *Discovering God’s power*

God told Moses to throw his staff on the ground which was unthinkable for a shepherd. Moses always kept his staff close at hand in case he needed it to defend himself or his sheep from wild animals. Moses reluctantly obeyed. When his staff hit the ground, it became a snake and Moses ran from it. God again commanded him to pick up the snake. Once again, Moses reluctantly obeyed and the snake was transformed back into his staff. God wanted Moses to realize he already had what he needed to serve Him. What Moses needed to do was to allow God to demonstrate His power by using what He had already provided.

Are you willing to serve God, to use what He has given you for His purpose? God reminds us just as He reminded Moses that when He calls us, He equips us with what we need and empowers us to do whatever necessary to complete our assigned task.

► *Experiencing God’s grace*

Even though God had already given Moses everything he needed to serve

Him, God still gave Moses what Moses thought he needed. God gave Aaron to Moses to be his spokesman before Pharaoh. Moses did not really need Aaron, but God demonstrated His grace by giving Aaron to encourage Moses when he stood before Pharaoh.

The story of Moses demonstrates God’s grace. Because of God’s grace, God called Moses in spite of his failure, in spite of his reluctance and in spite of his fears. Because of grace Moses became one of the great prophets of Israel. The story of Moses demonstrates God also can use us not only when we are reluctant but also when we struggle with serving Him.

Moses ultimately found courage to serve through trusting God (vv. 15–17).

► *Trusting God’s call*

God’s call to Moses never wavered. God was not deterred from calling Moses by Moses’ fears. At the burning bush, although Moses’ trust of God’s call was extremely limited, He continued to call Moses and to equip him to serve.

► *Trusting God’s presence*

Moses thought he needed miraculous signs so God gave him a staff that demonstrated His divine power. Moses thought he could not serve God on his own so God provided Aaron. Yet all that Moses needed was God’s presence. God emphasized that truth in verse 15. God said, “You shall speak to him (Aaron) and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you to speak and will teach you what to do.” God’s greatest provision for Moses was not the miraculous signs or Aaron. God’s greatest provision was His presence.

Just like with Moses, God’s greatest gift to us is His presence with us. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” As God called Moses, God is calling us to serve Him. Like Moses, we too can find the courage to serve God by being honest with Him so we experience His grace and by trusting Him to be with us and to provide whatever we need. Will you allow God to help you find the courage to serve? †

NOBTS extension center now near state’s east side

For those on the east side of the state, near Chambers, Lee, Russell or Barbour counties, the latest New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) extension center could be a perfect fit for anyone looking to further their Christian education.

The center opened Aug. 22 in Columbus, Georgia, and is housed at Wynnbrook Baptist Church at 500 River Knoll Way, Columbus, GA 31904.

NOBTS graduate and Leavell College undergraduate classes are offered on Mondays and certificate program classes are offered on Tuesday evenings.

Other centers across the state of Alabama, include Birmingham, Montgomery, Huntsville, Rainsville and Tuscaloosa.

For information on undergraduate and graduate course options, visit www.nobts.edu/extensions and click on “Welcome to AL/GA Centers” on the left.

Possible certificate programs include: biblical ministry, biblical teaching, church music, pastoral ministry, preschool and children’s ministry, advanced preschool and children’s ministry, ministry wives, Christian education, church planting, women’s ministry, advanced women’s ministry and pastoral ministry in African-American church studies.

No on-campus requirements

And in 2014, NOBTS trustees approved the removal of on-campus requirements for distance learning degrees, so students can receive their degree while studying solely at an extension center.

“This is big news for our extension center students,” said Gary Myers, director of public relations at NOBTS. “They no longer have to complete any courses on the main campus unless they choose to do so.”

For more information, visit www.nobts.edu/extensions/gaal-centers/columbus-center.html or email extension center director LeBron Matthews at columbusga-center@nobts.edu or call 706-662-0731.

For more information on other state centers, email ngaadmin@nobts.edu or call 770-321-1606. (TAB)

Correction

In the May 26 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, Ken May, retiring director of missions of Montgomery Baptist Association, was incorrectly reported as having worked at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega beginning 60 years ago. May began serving at camps 48 years ago and became Royal Ambassadors camp director in 1972.

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



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DR volunteer dies while serving in Louisiana

Working on the First Baptist Church, Satsuma, disaster relief laundry unit team, Sonny Ellis was doing what he did best — serving people.

“He was showing the people of Denham Springs, Louisiana, an example of what Jesus would do,” said Roy Hill, pastor of First, Satsuma, who also was serving on the team.

On Sept. 1, Ellis, 72, lost his balance and fell out of the open door of the laundry unit and sustained brain injuries, according to Hill. Ellis was taken to Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and died later that evening.

“God is still on His throne and Jesus is still Sonny’s Savior,” Hill said on his Facebook page. “We were reminded last night at church that there are times we must prove that we believe what we say we believe. This is one of those times and (the Ellis family) is living out their faith.”

Ellis’ testimony is a unique one. His close friend, a deacon at First, Satsuma, prayed for him and shared the gospel with him frequently. About 10 years ago the Holy Spirit moved in Ellis’ heart and he accepted Christ and was baptized, Hill explained.

“Ever since he got saved he’s been a whirlwind of serving,”

Hill said. “He would serve wherever there was a need.”

Mark Wakefield, disaster relief and chaplaincy ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, “Sonny Ellis typifies the sacrifice made by so many disaster relief volunteers. All of them could and would be using their time doing other important things, but they choose involvement in the ministry of disaster relief.”

After Ellis’ death, his family requested that the laundry unit remain in operation to continue to help those in distress after the historic flooding. Hill said the unit would remain as long as there was a need and volunteers from First, Satsuma, planned to return to serve at the unit after Ellis’ funeral. Ellis is survived by his wife, Gloria; two daughters; three granddaughters; and one great-grandson. (TAB)

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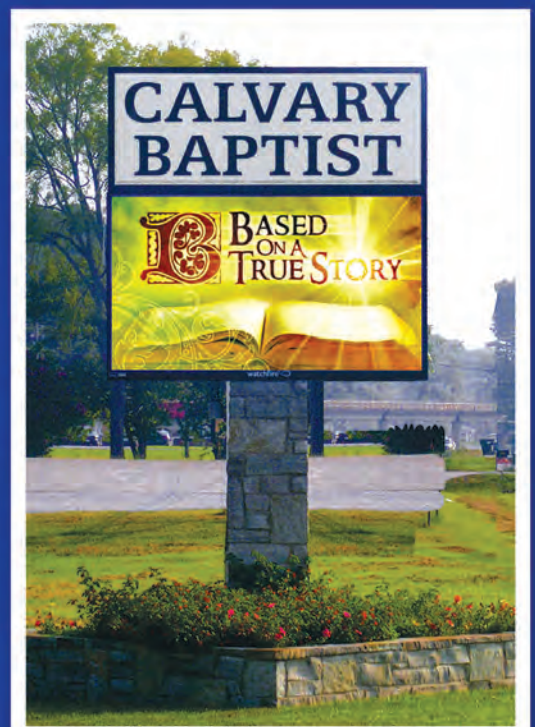
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Photo courtesy of UA BCM

Students from the University of Alabama's Baptist Campus Ministries join with students from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge to assist with cleanup efforts following historic flooding in the state.

BCMs from UA, LSU set rivalry aside; partner following historic flooding in Louisiana

By **Hannah Muñoz**
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

When deadly tornadoes ripped through Tuscaloosa in April 2011, students from Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) at Louisiana State University (LSU) tossed their long-standing rivalry with the University of Alabama (UA) aside and responded to the city's need for assistance.

And UA BCM has responded in kind.

Following the catastrophic

flooding across Louisiana, UA BCM was able to participate with several disaster relief (DR) teams and other groups from national organizations such as the American Red Cross to help families and begin the process of restoring the city.

Assisted 9 families

At the request of LSU BCM and Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) director of the office of collegiate and student ministries Mike Nuss, UA campus ministers Nate Young and Kim Andrews and 33 students left Tuscaloosa on Aug. 26 and drove to Baton Rouge to meet and work with LSU BCM.

Young said the UA BCM "wanted to provide the same support" for LSU that they had shown UA just a few years earlier.

The team served nine families by removing debris, drywall, Sheetrock, insulation, cabinetry and plumbing from affected

areas of homes in order to set up for repair. Several students also applied AfterShock, a mold-killing solution.

Included in the families was an LSU student affected by the flood, who also is trained for DR chainsaw and mud out teams and has spent several college breaks helping others in these situations.

"His family and extended family faced extensive damage to their homes and property and it was a blessing to us to be able to help his family begin the process of recovery," Andrews said.

Far-reaching ministry

The cost of UA BCM's DR assistance was covered by funds provided through the Cooperative Program and local church support. For instance North River Church, Tuscaloosa, sponsored the group's gas for traveling.

Young said, "I also really enjoyed helping UA students see how far-reaching SBC ministry goes."

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 11

Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

BE HOLY 1 Peter 1:13-25

Obedient (13-16)

The inheritance promised to Jesus followers should motivate them to set their hope entirely on their future reward and to live in the fear of God who redeemed them by the blood of His own Son. The word “therefore” reaches back to 1 Peter 13:1-12. In the following verses believers are exhorted to live a godly life. But all of these exhortations are grounded in God’s saving work explained in the opening verses. God’s commands are always rooted in His grace.

Jesus followers are to set their hope fully on the grace to be experienced when Christ returns by preparing their minds for action and by being sober. Hope, trusting God for the future — neither of these things will become a reality in your life without disciplined thinking. Thinking in a new way requires effort, concentration and intentionality. We also are to think soberly. Believers must live in such a way that does not become dull to the reality of God and anesthetized by the attractions of the world.

While living on earth, Christians have to fight the desires of sin, so we are called to be obedient children separated from evil in all we do. We are to be holy (Lev. 18:2-4), for that accords with the character of God who is holy and has called believers to Himself. For believers holiness refers to our purity and our purpose. God has saved us from our sin for Himself. To be holy is to separate ourselves from what is evil. The command to holiness embraces all of life.

Reverent (17-21)

Jesus followers should live with a reverent fear because God judges everyone according to his deeds. God is not only the Father of His people but also their Judge. Fear is not a paralyzing terror but a fear of God’s discipline and fatherly displeasure.

It is a reverence and awe that should characterize the lives of believers during their exile on this earth.

Verses 18-19 provide the reason we should fear the Lord. Believers were ransomed by Christ’s precious blood. The term “ransom” recalls Israel’s deliverance from Egypt which in turn points to the greater deliverance accomplished by Jesus. As Christians we have been delivered from a life of futility and meaninglessness to one of great significance. No one ever meets Jesus and stays the same. Christ’s sacrifice breaks the inevitability and power of “generational sin,” the idea that the sins of parents and grandparents are often repeated in later generations.

We have not been set free by perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ. The shedding of blood signifies death, the giving up of one’s life. Think about this life-changing reality: Christ poured out His life to death for sinners. Jesus Christ, the sinless One, died in our place to satisfy God’s righteous wrath against our sin.

Compassionate (22-25)

Peter’s call for his readers to love one another is rooted in their conversion, which occurred when they were obedient to the gospel. We are commanded to love one another from a pure heart. We cannot do that in our own strength. Honestly, we would not want to do so. Our ability to love is rooted in salvation and our activity of love is revealed in sacrifice. God saves us, purifies us and begins transforming us. Christ in us empowers us to love one another earnestly from a pure heart. The word “earnestly” means to stretch out, to go as far as you can and keep on going, to love without limit. Having been born again “through the living and abiding Word of God,” we are enabled by God to love one another fervently (v. 23). †

Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

ONE GREAT PURPOSE Isaiah 43:1-7

For the people of Israel, the exile of the nation to Babylonia was a cataclysmic event. In successive waves of onslaught, the Babylonians and their powerful king, Nebuchadnezzar, laid waste to the nation.

After first asserting control over the region in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned in 597 B.C. to put down a rebellion led by the Judean king, Zedekiah. A brief siege led to the surrender of the city and the exile of thousands of captives who were sent to live out their days in Babylon. Chief among these was Zedekiah himself who was forced to watch the slaughter of his sons before having his own eyes gouged out.

Just a decade later the Babylonians returned to destroy Jerusalem and the glorious temple of Solomon once and for all. Little wonder the psalmist would go on to lament, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and there we wept when we remembered Zion” (Ps. 137).

It is the fate of the captives in Babylon to which the second part of the book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-55, returns to again and again. Dominating the prophet’s oracles is one key conviction: When the long years of the exile come to an end, God will lead His people out of Babylon in an event so dramatic it will be no less than a second exodus. In Chapter 40, he comforts the nation, telling her that her hard service is at an end, her sin has been paid for (vv. 1-2). He speaks of preparing a way for the Lord, a highway for God in the desert (vv. 3-4). It is along this highway out of Babylon that God will gently lead His flock back home (vv. 10-11).

We were intended to be in relationship with God. (1-2)

As he arrives in Chapter 43, the prophet

continues to encourage the nation of Israel with words of hope for a new exodus soon to come.

In verses 1-2, he reminds the nation, here called “Jacob” and “Israel,” that it was the Lord Himself who created them. When he uses the term “bara” for “created” in verse 1, he is using a verb that Hebrew only uses with God as the subject. Israel is a people specially created by God.

But God’s purpose for the people did not end with their creation. The prophet goes on to remind the nation that God not only created them, He also redeemed them and summoned them by name. In one of the most brief but most powerful lines in Scripture, he assures them that the Lord says, “You are Mine” (v. 1).

We were intended to enjoy God’s love. (3-4)

It is because God has taken ownership and responsibility for the people that they can be assured of His loving care.

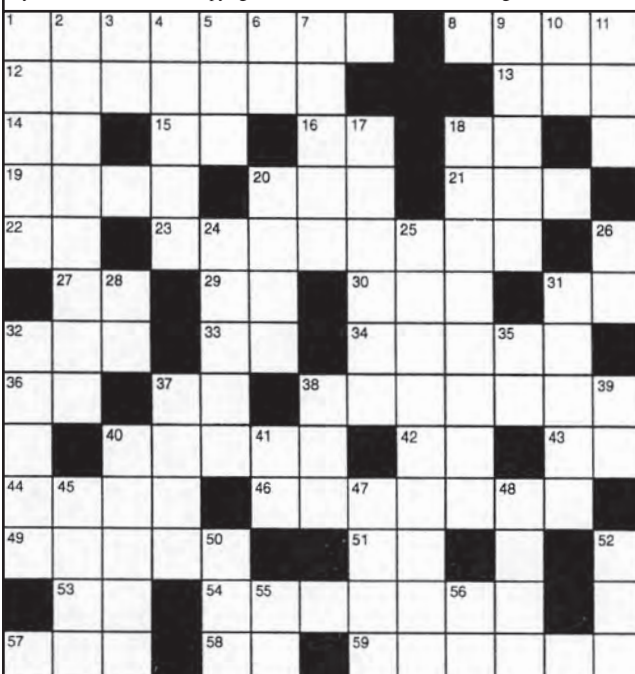
Through dangerous waters and blasts of fire, God encourages the people to trust in Him, to hear above all the din of present circumstance the comforting words, “I will be with you” (v. 2). He urges the people to trust in Him, giving them powerful reasons for doing so: “You are precious and honored in My sight and I love you” (v. 4).

We were intended to bring God glory. (5-7)

Though the years of exile were long and difficult, God speaks through the prophet to promise that those who were scattered will once again be brought home. From east and west, north and south, God declares His intention to call the exiles back to Himself. The people whom God created for His own glory will soon have occasion to glorify God once again. The years of hard service are past. It is time to come home again. †

Christian Crossword

By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Your ___ Father will also forgive. (Matt. 6:14)
- Multitude of the heavenly ___. (Luke 2:13)
- Descended to ___. (Josh. 18:16)
- ___ to your faith. (2 Pet. 1:5)
- Symbol for silver.
- Wire gauge. (abbr.)
- Here I ___. (Gen 22:1)
- ___ his feet. (Ex. 4:25)
- The ___ that is set before us. (Heb. 12:1)
- American Medical Association. (abbr.)
- Airport code for Birmingham, England.
- Tennessee. (abbr.)
- Elisha came to ___. (2 Kings 8:7)
- ___ greater joy. (3 John 4)
- Fast ye for ___. (Esther 4:16)
- Woman having ___ pieces of silver. (Luke 15:8)
- Let there ___ light. (Gen. 1:3)
- He saw a ___ tree. (Matt. 21:19)

- I will make him ___ help meet. (Gen 2:18)
- The ___ shall serve the younger. (Rom. 9:12)
- ___ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
- Battalion. (abbr.)
- Every man that asketh you ___ of the hope. (1 Pet. 3:15; 2 words)
- ___ to do well. (Isa. 1:17)
- Symbol for tin.
- Wyoming. (abbr.)
- The ___ Light. (John 1:9)
- It is ___. (Matt. 4:7)
- Indicates 100.
- Symbol for nickel.
- South America. (abbr.)
- Armies together for ___. (1 Sam. 28:1)
- Army Transport Service. (abbr.)
- Symbol for sodium.
- Russian river that flows into the Arctic Ocean.
- ___ unto the mighty God. (Ps. 132:2)
- The white of an ___. (Job 6:6)
- Symbol for neon.
- South American mammal known for its soft, fleecy wool.
- Have sworn ___. (Ezek. 21:23)
- Special delivery. (abbr.)
- Total digestible nutrients. (abbr.)
- A ___ in heaven. (Col. 4:1)
- ___ in goodness and truth. (Ex. 34:6)
- Peace be with you all. ___. (Rom. 15:33)
- Look from the top of ___. (Song of Sol. 4:8)
- Also ___ bodies. (1 Cor. 15:40)
- So ___ numbered them. (Num. 1:19)
- ___ the king of Bashan. (Deut. 3:1)
- The ___ cattle. (Gen. 30:32)
- ___ cometh by hearing. (Rom. 10:17)
- Symbol for einsteinium.

Down

- I the Lord search the ___ . (Jer. 17:10)
- Zanoah, and ___. (Josh. 15:34)
- Symbol for argon.

- Dark red bulbous root.
- Administration for National Recovery. (abbr.)
- New York. (abbr.)
- Demas, ___, my fellow-laborers. (Phil. 24)
- Right Worth. (abbr.)
- Sabbath of ___. (Lev. 23:3)
- Information. (short for)
- ___ a child is known. (Prov. 20:11)
- In thine ___ eyes. (Prov. 3:7)
- Paper and ___. (2 John 12)
- Associate in Arts. (abbr.)
- Symbol for rhenium.



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH

The Alabama Baptist, www.rashionalthoughts.com

“In His Place: A Modern-Day Challenge in the Tradition of Charles Sheldon’s Classic ‘In His Steps’” by Harry C. Griffith

I wasn’t sure what to expect from a novel built around incarnating Christ in our everyday lives, but once I started reading it I couldn’t put it down. In fact, if it weren’t for previously scheduled commitments that afternoon I would have finished the book in one sitting.

The story definitely convicted me of areas where I fall short in my Christian walk and reminded me of how many people are hurting and misunderstood around us. It challenged me to always be thinking about how to be Christ to the world around me.

I also connected with the characters in the story and bonded with them almost immediately. And along with the content I loved the weight and feel of the book itself, the torn edges of the pages and even the cute doggie on the cover.

Thank you to my friend, Betty Baggott, for sending me the book and thank you to Harry Griffith for entertaining and challenging me at the same time.

WANDA BERGERON

The Alabama Baptist

“Good or God? Why Good Without God Isn’t Enough” by John Bevere

This book shared powerful truths on recognizing the difference between what is good and what is God. There is a difference. It will enlighten you on how Satan tries to deceive us into thinking good is God. Religion is not enough to please God. It will draw you closer to God and closer to His Word. You do not want to miss the boat by believing Satan’s lies that your Sunday morning ritual is all you need to get to heaven. You will run to the Scripture to make sure you are in line with God and not just believing how you were raised or what a preacher says. I would recommend this book highly.

I have been burdened as I watch fellow Christians being deceived. I have become incredibly aware that I am as much at risk as anyone. If good is so obvious, why does the Bible say that we need discernment to recognize it? This book will do more than ask you to change your behavior. It will empower you to engage with God on a level that will change every aspect of your life. †

Tell us what you are reading, a quick summary of what it is about and your response to it so far. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org or send us a message on Facebook. You may also mail your information to 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

Digging in to His Word

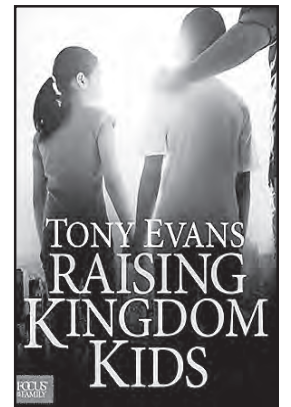
Where to start for Bible studies, small groups

School is back in full swing and with that often comes a return to midweek Bible studies and small groups. But what book or studies should a group choose from the millions out there? LifeWay Christian Resources’ book reviewer, Rachel McRae, has some suggestions for those on the hunt for their next study subject. For more of McRae’s recommendations, visit blog.lifeway.com/shelflife.

take on the assignments God has for their lives.

He then takes a practical turn, with examples and illustrations to help parents understand and provide specific training for kids in the power of prayer, wisdom, loving God’s Word, getting through trials, controlling their tongues, developing patience the surrender of service and much more.

This book is for every dad or mom who wants to fulfill the parenting role God has given them — not just in raising healthy kids intellectually, physically and socially, but in contributing to their child’s relationship with God and alignment under His plan.



5 Habits of a Woman Who Doesn’t Quit

By Nicki Koziarz

Nicki Koziarz is a woman who has thrown in the towel a time or two. In fact, she’s quit just about everything in her life. But with God’s help, she’s discovered a few habits that have helped her and others conquer the choice to quit. “5 Habits of a Woman Who Doesn’t Quit” helps readers:



- ▶ Evaluate the internal personal struggles that make you want to quit.
- ▶ Cultivate consistent habits to help you progress toward your goals.

▶ Receive a fresh dose of perspective from the Bible that will help you develop perseverance.

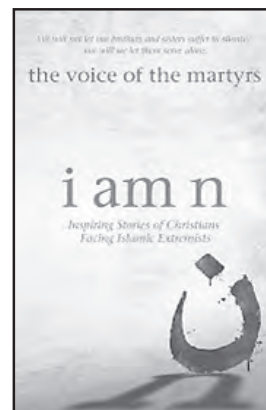
I Am N: Inspiring Stories of Christians Facing Islamic Extremists

By The Voice of the Martyrs

What can we learn from these faith-filled brothers and sisters around the world? How can we pray for them?

And what do their remarkable stories teach us about a God whose light shines in a dark world?

“I Am N” reminds us that we are each “N” — as radical Muslims in Iraq identify followers of Jesus the Nazarene. Wherever we live, we have camaraderie with those who are persecuted. So come meet their families. Read their stories. Deepen your faith in a God who gives us the courage to shine in a dark and hurting world.

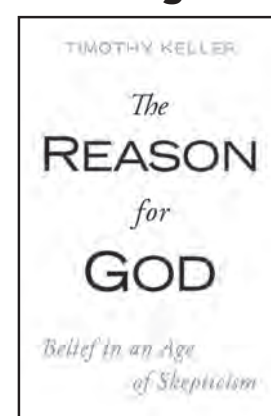


Raising Kingdom Kids

By Tony Evans

Tony Evans begins with an overarching look at the need for Kingdom parenting and our roles and responsibilities in raising God-following children. He also teaches on how to prepare children to

The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism



By Timothy Keller

Using literature, philosophy, anthropology, pop culture and intellectual reasoning, Timothy Keller explains how the belief in a Christian God is, in fact, a sound and rational one.

To true believers he offers a solid platform on which to stand against the backlash toward religion spawned by the Age of Skepticism. And to skeptics, atheists and agnostics he provides a challenging argument for pursuing the reason for God.

Missional Motherhood

By Gloria Furman

There’s no such thing as “just” a mom. Despite the routine tasks and mundane to-do lists, motherhood is anything but insignificant. God has designed motherhood as part of His greater plan to draw people to Himself — instilling all women, whether called to traditional mothering or not, with an eternal purpose in nurturing others.

In “Missional Motherhood,” Gloria Furman opens our eyes to God’s promises intended to empower each and every woman as she makes disciples in her home, in her neighborhood and around the world. (LifeWay, TAB)



'Immeasurably' changed

Atheist in Seattle responds to Baptists' service, love

Kim Menon was an avowed atheist. As a child her parents took her to church but no one could satisfy her with the answers she sought.

"I thought believers just weren't intelligent enough," Menon said.

Now a kindergarten teacher in Seattle, Washington, education is a central part of her life. Striving to get involved in her students' lives and to know their parents, she believes that's how students best learn and grow. But Menon had no idea this path would lead her into a Christian commitment.

Three years ago Andy Brown moved from Camden, Arkansas, to Seattle to plant churches, aided by Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program (CP) missions and ministry outreach.

Larry Bailey, missions pastor at Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Arkansas, a sponsor church for Brown's mission, noted, "Together we are able to [impact] places like Seattle because it's so expensive to live there."

After arriving in Seattle, Brown registered his son for kindergarten at the local school, where he was placed in Menon's class. The school building seemed to be in good shape but Brown noticed the grounds needed landscaping and care.

When Brown talked to the principal about his desire to help the school, she was hesitant. Brown agreed to work with no mention of his religious beliefs. Everyone knew he was the pastor of The Landing Church but there would be no pressure from Brown while he was on campus. He was there only to serve. Many teachers were curious why he would do all that work with nothing in return, so it piqued their interest.

Brown noted that in a small church like The Landing in Seattle's secular environment, "most of the new believers are still not comfortable being bold with their faith.

"So we have to have a lot of outside help to have a constant presence in the community" since The Landing does almost all the landscaping at the school along with some painting and catering several times a year for the teachers and other special events.

Vital missions trip

That's why missions trips from sponsor churches like Central Baptist are important. Bailey was involved in one of those missions trips as a volunteer in Menon's class, making copies, grading papers, helping with projects — anything to be of service.

"She was very suspicious," Bailey said. "She said, 'I don't get it. You fly all the way from Arkansas to Seattle to make copies for me. Why?'"

He simply explained, "Because we want to love you and show you that God loves you too."

As they worked, Menon sat in the back of the classroom and watched with tears streaming down her face.



BP photo
Kim Menon (front left) is baptized by church planter Andy Brown. She was stirred toward a profession of faith by the acts of service by The Landing Church and volunteer teams from churches like Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Arkansas.

"I had never met anyone who did things like that without wanting something in return," Menon said. "I thought Christians were predators who didn't really care about who I was."

For more than two years, the Brown family continued to minister to the school and to Menon, among others. At the same time Menon's marriage was falling apart and she wanted to save it. She knew the Browns were pro-marriage and came to them for help. Menon felt hurt and rejected by her husband, but the Browns showed her they would love her no matter what.

'I am not alone'

It made Menon wonder if there was something to all the talk about Jesus. So she began to learn about God on her own. If she heard them mention a Christian book, she would secretly buy the book and read it.

It wasn't long until Menon was ready for the "God talk." She was alone, listening to Christian music, and a song came on the radio that spoke to her. "I am not alone," she said. "Even though my husband leaves me, God will never leave me."

She called the church and Brown wasn't available, so she spoke with a woman there. "I feel something different inside me," Menon began to explain. During the conversation, the woman led her in a salvation prayer over the phone.

Menon brought 19 of her unsaved friends to her baptism, and she is now the part-time children's minister at The Landing Church.

"My life has changed immeasurably," she said. "I used to omit the words 'under God' from the Pledge of Allegiance. I was for gay rights and now I have a different definition of marriage — God's definition. I didn't even know what a gospel tract was three years ago and now I'm handing them out."

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article first appeared in Arkansas Baptist News. ☞

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Air Force major can keep his Bible out on desk

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — After Air Force Maj. Steve Lewis was investigated over placing an open Bible on his desk at an Air Force base in Colorado Springs, Colorado, officials at the base ruled that Lewis was within the rules and was allowed to keep his Bible displayed.

American secular organization, Military Religious Freedom Foundation, called for Lewis to be "aggressively punished" for placing an open Bible on his desk, saying that it violates the separation of Church and state.

Officials at Peterson Air Force Base said in an Aug. 24 statement, "We have concluded no abuse of liberties has occurred, and Maj. Lewis' behavior and the workplace environment ... are well within the provisions of Air Force Institution 1-1, Air Force Standards, paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 — 'Free Exercise of Religion and Religious Accommodation' and 'Balance of Free Exercise of Religion and Establishment Clause.'"

Col. Damon Feltman reported that Lewis had voluntarily removed the Bible from the desk when asked, as he did not wish for it "to cause attention or disruption to his unit."

"The basic premise of the Air Force instruction [on religious freedom] ... is people have an inherent right of free exercise of religion within boundaries," Feltman said. (TAB)

Few requests coming to officiate gay weddings

NASHVILLE — After gay "marriage" was legalized in 2015, some worried about how pastors would deal with requests to officiate gay weddings, but a recent survey shows Protestant pastors are rarely being asked.

More than 100,000 same-sex weddings have occurred since the Supreme Court ruling. But only 11 percent of senior church pastors, both mainline and evangelical, report having been asked to perform such a rite, according to a poll by LifeWay Research.

Mainline Protestant clergy were three times as likely as evangelical pastors to have been asked. Presbyterian or Reformed clergy are most likely — 26 percent — to have received a request to marry a same-sex couple, while Baptist pastors, at 1 percent, are the least likely.

"Most couples, if they want a church wedding, will ask a pastor they know or who they think will support them," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "For same-sex couples, this appears to be an older Presbyterian pastor." (RNS)

Federal restrooms to accommodate transgenders

WASHINGTON — More than 9,000 federal buildings must allow individuals to use the bathrooms, showers or changing areas according to the gender they identify with, the Obama administration mandated in an August bulletin.

The bulletin was issued to explain the administration's interpretation of the Title IX law, citing the Department of Justice, the Department of Education and the the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The order affects federal buildings, such as office buildings and courthouses, in more than 2,000 cities across the United States. The bulletin adds that federal employers cannot require transgender individuals to use single-user restrooms, according to The Christian Post. (TAB)

Target sales fall since boycott over restrooms

MINNEAPOLIS — The American Family Association (AFA) called Target's nationwide 10 percent discount on everything in its stores a "desperate" promotion as the retail giant faces a continued boycott over its bathroom policies amid declining sales, The Christian Post reported.

The AFA petition signed by more than 1.4 million people pledged to boycott Target until it reversed its policy allowing individuals to use the restroom for their self-identified gender.

A *Business Insider* article noted that Target's second-quarter sales "fell 7.2 percent to \$16.2 billion" overall. Target CEO Brian Cornell denied that the boycott has affected the company. (TAB)