



INSIDE



Moore, ERLC's clarifying joint statement includes apology

◆ Page 3



Int'l religious freedom group outlines requests for Trump, US Congress

◆ Page 6



Faith & Family: Children and Parenting — Dealing with disappointment (part 1 of 4)

◆ Pages 7-10



Photo courtesy of Wendy Jennings

Nehemiah Teams (NT) seek to help college students and recent high school graduates feel the urgency of reaching the nations and then fulfill the Great Commission. Since 2004, more than 2,300 young people serving on more than 500 teams have been trained and sent out.

# Lasting impact

## Nehemiah Teams, Project 52 prepare students for cross-cultural missions

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

Serving with Nehemiah Teams (NT) is not a typical summer job, but then again the organization's mission to fulfill the Great Commission in this generation is not a typical goal. "People are going to go to hell without hearing about Jesus," said Beth, a student from Florida who

will head up an NT this summer. "If so many people haven't heard, how can I stay here?"

Thousands of people groups worldwide have little or no exposure to the gospel. The goal of NT is to help college students and recent high school graduates feel the urgency of reaching the nations and then respond, said Jess Jennings, an International Mission Board (IMB) representative in Southeast Asia who provides leadership for NT.

NT began as a way for missionaries like Jennings to train local believers in church planting and evangelism. From the beginning, Jennings and his wife, Wendy, natives of Alabama who have served with IMB since 1993, hoped to see stu-

dents serve in missions too. When they saw an opportunity to start NT training in the United States, they worked with their Alabama connections to bring the program to DeKalb County.

### IMB partnership

Though the couple is passionate about getting Alabama Baptist students involved in missions, the opportunity to join NT is open to all young adults ages 17-29 who are willing to serve. As a program of IMB, NT partners with IMB personnel and other global agencies to fill requests and meet short-term needs. Missions opportunities are posted on the IMB students website, and students choose projects

that fit their interests, skills and budget.

In early summer team members gather in Alabama for one week of Bible study, team building activities and cross-cultural training. Teams then depart for their missions assignments.

The work can be intense, said Tyler, a former youth pastor from Texas who has served with NT in Africa and now trains future NT leaders and team members.

"It's definitely not glamorous but the work is rewarding," he said. "Experiencing life in another culture for the summer made a lasting impact on my life."

The teams have worked with field (See 'Immersive,' page 5)

# COMMENT

## Cooperation — A Strength, A Weakness

**S**outhern Baptists have given more than \$6.2 billion to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program (CP). That is right — billions — with a “b.”

That information was recently shared by Frank S. Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee.

The International Mission Board (previously Foreign Mission Board) received more than half the total amount — \$3.2 billion.

The North American Mission Board (previously Home Mission Board) received \$1.39 billion.

Together these missions agencies have received about 77.5 percent of every CP dollar given in the 90-plus-year history of the CP, the primary missions-giving channel for Southern Baptists.

The SBC’s six seminaries and other educational initiatives received most of the other CP funds — nearly \$1.46 billion.

Alabama Baptists have been at the forefront of supporting SBC missions and ministries. Across the years Alabama Baptists have provided \$512,291,763 for Southern Baptist causes through CP, according to state Baptist officials. That is almost 8.3 percent of every CP dollar received by the SBC and far beyond the national per capita average.

Obviously through CP, Southern Baptists have done more together than any church could do by itself. Together we have shared the gospel around the globe. Together we have undergirded national Christian bodies. Together we have founded Bible schools, colleges and Baptist seminaries. Together we have undergirded healing ministries that fed the hungry, cared for the poor, ministered to the sick, equipped people to earn their own way and demonstrated God’s love for all humanity.

### Widespread missions

It is practically impossible to go anywhere in the world without encountering marks of Southern Baptist witness and ministry.

And those efforts continue today with more than 3,500 international missionaries under appointment by IMB. Many of these men and women serve in some of the most difficult places on earth where to be identified as a Christian can result in death.

In North America, Southern Baptists missions and ministries have been equally as widespread. SBC missions and ministries touched the isolated points of the Appalachian Mountains as well as the forgotten streets of the nation’s inner cities.

As Southern Baptists changed from a regional body of believers to a national Christian denomination our witness spread to every



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

corner of the United States and Canada. To the surprise of many, a denomination that had a tainted history of race relations became the most ethnically diverse Protestant denomination in America.

### Ministry goals

Today as the North American Mission Board leads the effort to replant Baptist churches in the major cities of the nation many of those new churches focus on reaching diverse language and ethnic groups.

Again, Southern Baptist witness has been strong and remains strong because we work together. We cooperate. Cooperation is not our goal. Goals relate to the missions and ministries of the convention.

Cooperation is the primary method Southern Baptists choose to accomplish their ministry goals. Southern Baptists cooperate in giving, missions, ministry, education and all the other things Baptists do together.

Cooperation is our greatest strength, humanly speaking.

But sometimes cooperation also is a weakness. That weakness was evidenced recently when a nationally known SBC-affiliated church announced it was escrowing its CP gifts because it disagreed with the public statements of an SBC entity leader.

According to reports, that church was not alone. Others evidently threatened to take similar actions. These churches did not like their missions and ministry gifts supporting something with which they disagreed.

Interestingly these churches took this dramatic action that threatened the entire SBC-funding principle of cooperation even though the entity in question received only 1.65 percent of CP gifts.

This is not a new problem. In the 1950s and 1960s some churches boycotted CP giving because the Christian Life Commission (now

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission) opposed segregation or because Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, invited Martin Luther King Jr. to preach in chapel or some other such reason.

There always have been those who opposed CP giving because they disagreed with a ministry or did not like a program leader or differed with someone’s theological position on a particular issue.

Some outside the convention have long enjoyed attacking Southern Baptist cooperation by pointing to something or someone receiving CP support with which they differed and then asking, “How can you support that?”

Because Southern Baptists are so deeply committed to cooperation, it is not unheard of for an entity leader to nix innovative and creative ideas for fear someone will find the new ministries wanting and criticize the whole SBC support system. No one wants to be the cause for questioning SBC’s primary system of missions giving.

Occasionally churches decide convention budgets (state or national) do not reflect the church’s priorities and reduce CP giving. Churches have every right to make such decisions. What is unfortunate is when those churches did not participate in decision-making processes that resulted in the budget recommendations.

Cooperation is about more than supporting final decisions. Cooperation includes participation in the process by which decisions are made. Working through established channels to express opinions and convictions often can solve problems, further understanding and reinforce cooperation without creating denominational shockwaves that rock the financial foundation of all Southern Baptists do together.

### From weakness to strength

Even in governance and decision-making, Southern Baptists cooperate.

When final decisions become the focus and participation in the process ceases to be a priority then cooperation has disappeared. Control seems a more appropriate descriptive.

Because the SBC is made up of human beings there will always be problems. Mistakes will be made. Corrections will be needed. History clearly illustrates that reality. But the way to make those changes is not to automatically cease CP missions support.

Cooperating with one another, even in times of disagreement, could be one way of turning a potential weakness into a strength. ✚

Cooperative Program  
Sunday is April 9.



# 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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# 'Too much at stake to be divided'

## Moore, ERLC's clarifying joint statement includes apology

**W**hen I look out across our denomination, we have too much at stake and too much for which to be grateful to be divided," Russell Moore wrote as he concluded his 1,691-word clarification and apology statement released March 20. The statement was praised by Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Steve Gaines.

Moore, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said, "The gospel wins over everything in the end. I pray that the gospel would win in our denomination, in our churches and in my own heart."

His statement is combined with a 536-word statement from ERLC's executive committee. The "Seeking Unity in the Southern Baptist Convention" combined statement comes after the "bridge building" meeting between Moore and Frank S. Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee.

The March 13 meeting between Moore and Page took place after several churches expressed concern about alleged disrespectfulness by Moore toward evangelists and supporters of President Donald Trump and about a friend of the court brief signed by ERLC in support of a New Jersey Islamic society's right to build a mosque.

An initial joint statement was released from that meeting noting "we fully support one another and look forward to working together on behalf of Southern Baptists in the years to come."

The follow-up statement from Moore and ERLC sought to clarify criticism he had leveled at Christians who supported Trump for president and affirm Moore's ongoing leadership as president of the SBC entity, respectively.

The ERLC executive committee acknowledged criticisms of Moore and stated: "We are convinced that Dr. Moore has sought to be attentive and responsive to those who have brought concerns to him.



BP file photo by Bill Bangham

ERLC President Russell Moore (right) — pictured here at a 2015 press conference with then-SBC Resolutions Committee chairman Steve Gaines — was commended by Gaines following the release of a March 20 extended statement, 'Seeking Unity in the Southern Baptist Convention.'

"We realize that divisions do not heal overnight and as needs arise our board will be happy to address them. But in terms of leadership and support Dr. Moore is the man to whom it has been entrusted to lead this entity — speaking prophetically both to our culture and to our convention. He will continue doing so with the confidence of our support," the ERLC executive committee stated.

Moore acknowledged that he had spoken "often quite sharply" about

Christians who said moral issues and character didn't matter in the election.

He said he was not intending, however, "to talk about Southern Baptists and others — and there were many — who were open about all of these issues but believed in supporting candidates, however flawed, who would appoint good people and carry out good policies on some issues."

### Friends 'wounded'

And he was "not meaning to suggest it was sinful for Southern Baptists or others to advise candidates or to serve on advisory boards in order to bear some influence there," Moore said. He said close friends were among those

quarters, and more importantly our gospel unity and clarity, go out to our first-rate Southern Baptist missionaries and church planters and evangelists and seminary students for the sake of what will outlive our ministries and will outlast the Southern Baptist Convention — the glory of God and the souls of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb."

In response to the statement, Gaines said the SBC should put division over ERLC "behind us" and move forward in support of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified method of funding missions and ministries in North America and across the globe. (See more of Gaines' comments in story, this page.)

Also responding to the statement was Jack Graham, pastor of Dallas-area Prestonwood Baptist Church. He tweeted, "This is a gracious and unifying statement from [Moore]."

### Original concerns

Graham has been the face of the churches concerned about Moore since he announced in February that Prestonwood Baptist would escrow CP funds over "various significant positions taken by the leadership of [ERLC]."

Graham had complained previously of alleged "disrespectfulness" by Moore toward evangelical supporters of Trump.

To read the full statement from Moore and ERLC, visit [www.bpnews.net/48540/moore-erlc-trustees-issue-seeking-unity-statement](http://www.bpnews.net/48540/moore-erlc-trustees-issue-seeking-unity-statement). (Compiled from BP stories)

## Gaines' response to Moore

**I** am grateful for the statement from Dr. Russell Moore and the ERLC executive committee," Steve Gaines, pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church, said in written comments.

"Regarding [Moore's] work at the ERLC, I have agreed with most of his statements. ... However, I have disagreed with some of the statements he made during the election and I especially disagreed with the tone with which he made

some of those statements," said Gaines, who also serves as SBC president. "He has genuinely apologized ... and that is good enough for me.

"I believe all of us who are recipients of grace and forgiveness should grant him the same forgiveness that we desire from the Lord. It is high time that we put all of this behind us. ... It is time to move ahead and work together to double our efforts to take the gospel to our nation and the nations." (BP)

# Interested in polishing your communication skills?

## Samford, TAB endeavor may be your answer

Today's technology provides a multitude of ways to communicate with our friends, relatives and acquaintances but that connectedness has come with a price. Increasingly people report feeling alone and isolated in social situations, at work and even in church.

As believers we often wonder: How can we counter this increasing divide in

our relationships with others?

One answer is to improve our interpersonal communication skills.

The act of communication simply means to transfer information from one place to another. However, communicating with others is so much more than providing information. We must choose the right words, speak them in the right tone and even share them with appropriate body language. In addition influences like the setting and the emotional mood of each

person in the conversation can affect the communication effort as well.

With all these factors to consider, technology may seem like an easier way to share a message — and sometimes it is. But our faith is about more than communicating

a message. It is about relationships, first with Jesus then with others. As a result, improving our relational

communication skills is of utmost importance for small group leaders, pastors, church staff, Bible study teachers, lay leaders and others involved in ministry and discipleship.

### Online course

To help, Samford's Ministry Training Institute (MTI) is offering Interpersonal Communication, an online course designed especially for those who want to brush up on their communication skills.

The eight-week course will

explore several aspects of communication, including nonverbal communication, communicating one-on-one and in community, expressing emotions, conflict management, gratitude and forgiveness. Lessons will include instructor-led discussions on these topics as well as practical exercises to observe and practice interpersonal communication. Participants will leave the course with a renewed sense of the value of communication in all aspects of life. The course began March 28 but it's not too late. Sign up by early April and you will be able to easily catch up on the assignments in the course.

Interpersonal Communication is part of MTI's Online Communication Certificate program, a new certificate launched in August 2016 in partnership with *The Alabama Baptist*. The course is being taught by TAB's Carrie Brown McWhorter. The other three courses in the certificate program are Writing Communication (taught by TAB's Jennifer Davis Rash), Verbal Communication (taught by Samford's Bryan Gill) and Digital/Social Media Communication (taught by McWhorter). (TAB)

**For more information or to register, visit [www.samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute/current-classes](http://www.samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute/current-classes) or call 205-726-4055.**

## UM presidential inauguration events begin with prayer service



**Full story next week**

Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

University of Mobile (UM) President Dr. Timothy L. Smith (center, bowtie) is surrounded by more than 300 students as they pray for a revival on campus and the university's leadership. Smith then called faculty and staff to the stage to pray for students. The nearly two-hour, student-led praise and worship service March 21 was the first event of several leading up to the inauguration of Smith as the fourth UM president. The inauguration and investiture ceremony was March 24 at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile.

## Platt serving as interim pastor

As a Northern Virginia megachurch's pastor stepped down, International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt has stepped up to serve as interim pastor.

Lon Solomon, who served as pastor of McLean Bible Church (with five campuses) for 36 years, announced his de-



PLATT

cision in February and Platt shared his first message Feb. 26.

IMB spokeswoman Julie McGowan said, "Dr. Platt and IMB trustees mutually agree that it would be a good, wise and right use of his time to be a part of leadership in a local Southern Baptist church," according to

The Christian Post. (TAB)

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# ALABAMA

## UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

### Pastor Wood retires after 48 years of ministry

It was through the ministry of a church in Decatur that Darryl Wood felt called to be a pastor. Forty-eight years later, Wood retired from First Baptist Church, Vincent, on March 26, where he's served as pastor for the past nine years.

"I have never doubted that call," Wood said, thinking back to when he was 18 and heard the Lord "clearly speak to me about His will for me to pursue vocational ministry."



WOOD

He earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree and a doctor of theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Through the years he's also served as pastor of Moulton Baptist Church (for 23 years); Bluff Creek Baptist Church, Clinton, Louisiana; and Goodyear Baptist Church, Picayune, Mississippi. Prior to that he served in youth ministry in Alabama and Louisiana.

Wood currently serves as an Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) trustee and previously served on SBOM's executive committee in the 1990s. He also served as chair of the Committee on Boards and Commissions for the Alabama Baptist State Convention. He serves on the board of governors for Judson College in Marion and the board of ministerial mentors for Samford University in Birmingham.

He and his wife, Marcie, have two children and two grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)

### Larry Hyche joins State Board of Missions

The Alabama State Board of Missions (SBOM) recently welcomed Larry Hyche to its team. Serving as a state missionary, Hyche will work as an associate in the office of global missions and focus on men's spiritual development.

Hyche earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) in 1998 and went on to earn his master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 2003.

While at UAB, Hyche felt his call into full-time ministry. "I wanted to help teenagers to commit their lives to Christ — not to a church or youth program, but to Jesus," he said.

Hyche has held numerous ministry positions throughout the years. For the past nine years he served First Baptist Church, Decatur, as minister to students and later as pastor of discipleship. He previously served First Baptist Church, Selma; Corinth Baptist Church, Cordova; and New Bethel Baptist Church, Jasper.

In his role with SBOM, as well as in his whole ministry, Hyche said he hopes to "glorify God by helping others to understand who God is, what Christ has done and what a Christian's role is as a result of these eternal truths."

With his focus being on men's spiritual development, Hyche said, "I am excited to equip guys of all ages to make disciples throughout our state. I'm also looking forward to connecting guys with the Word and with each other."

He currently attends Mount Hebron West Baptist Church, Elmore. (Caleb Jones)

### Brookwood Baptist Health names 2 new CEOs

Brookwood Baptist Health recently announced Mike Rickman as the new CEO of Shelby Baptist Medical Center in Alabaster, succeeding Bob Phillips, who will return to his role as CEO of Walker Baptist Medical Center in Jasper. Phillips was CEO of Walker Baptist for several years before taking on the position at Shelby Baptist.

Rickman most recently served as regional chief development officer for Tenet Eastern Region-Central Division.

They both will begin their new roles immediately. (TAB)

# Immersive missions experiences challenge students to consider long-term missions

(continued from page 1)

personnel in remote villages and urban centers sharing the gospel in areas where Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and tribal religions are dominant.

Noah, a student from Gadsden who spent summer 2016 in Southeast Asia, said the experience opened his eyes to the view of missionaries in a country with little evangelical presence.

"I didn't realize how much cultural norms influence how people accept you," he said. "Just our presence can affect the view people in the community have of Christians."

Recognizing that many of the world's unengaged people groups have large populations in the U.S., the Jenningses began a separate ministry, Project 52 (P52), in 2011. Similar in approach to NT, P52 prepares students for strategic opportunities of service among refugees and immigrants in several large U.S. cities, including Charlotte, North Carolina, Detroit and San Francisco. Like their NT counterparts, P52 team members spend a week in training and then complete their assignment on the field.

Sarah, a student from North Alabama who has worked among refugees for the past several summers and now serves as P52 coordinator, said that as a teen she thought missions service could only be overseas. Working with P52 opened her eyes to the opportunities God has presented in the U.S.

"The Lord is about saving people, and being involved in the Great Commission is about making His name known here as well as in other countries," she said.

Because of their short-term service, many students answer the call to career missions. To disciple those young people in the U.S.,

## Nehemiah Teams by the numbers

Since the program's beginning in 2004, more than 2,300 young people serving on more than 500 teams have been trained and sent out by Nehemiah Teams to more than 60 unreached people groups in 30 countries.

About 180 students are deployed each summer.

Each Advance Operations Training (AOT) class can accept 12 trainees, evenly split between males and females. Classes will begin each August and January. Applications for the next class set to begin in August 2017 are due by July 17.

The AOT Training Center in Mentone is under construction.

Plans for the 60-acre campus include 40 trail shelter-style cabins, eight outhouses, 12

meeting tents and six to eight RV sites to accommodate missions teams.

Immediate needs include:

- ▶ Laundry room for trainees (\$4,000)
- ▶ Lawn care equipment (\$1,200)
- ▶ Trail shelters for housing trainees (\$6,000 each)
- ▶ Outhouses (\$1,000 each) (TAB)

To see how your church can help, visit [www.ntp52aot.com/donate](http://www.ntp52aot.com/donate).

Jess Jennings and his staff began Advance Operations Training (AOT), a six-month leadership development program for missions volunteers. Through AOT, students who have participated in NT or P52 commit to 16 weeks of Bible study and leadership development and an additional eight-week missions assignment.

### Investing in young people

AOT is a strategy that has worked well in Southeast Asia where approximately 60 national believers have been trained in church planting and evangelism. Jess Jennings recognized a need to "make the same investment in American young people."

In January 2017, AOT began its first class in Alabama at the newly opened AOT Training Center in Mentone, where participants spend

mornings in Bible study, prayer and quiet time and afternoons in various team-building and cross-cultural missions activities.

Jess Jennings believes students who have an immersive missions experience like those available through NT, P52 and AOT will be challenged to consider career and long-term missions. Alabama Baptists play a significant role in making that happen, he said.

"We pray that pastors, youth leaders, students and parents will become more aware that there is a gap-year type program in Alabama that is very much Southern Baptist and very much a part of IMB's strategy to reach people groups throughout Southeast Asia," he said.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons.✚



HYCHE



Photo courtesy of Wendy Jennings

**Students needed for Kingdom-focused assignments. Opportunities include playing soccer with teens in Africa, working out at CrossFit gyms in Central Asia and planting churches in Southeast Asia. Travel required. Training available.**

For more information about AOT, Nehemiah Teams and P52, visit:

- [www.ntp52aot.com](http://www.ntp52aot.com)
- [www.goproject52.com](http://www.goproject52.com)
- [www.nehemiahteam.com](http://www.nehemiahteam.com)
- [www.imbstudents.org](http://www.imbstudents.org)
- [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)

# Religious freedom group outlines suggestions for Trump, Congress

Three-quarters of the world's population live with virtually no freedom of religion, and while the United States is not responsible for this injustice, "we could do more and must do more," said Thomas Farr, president of Religious Freedom Institute (RFI).

With that in mind RFI and the Center on Faith & International Affairs at the Institute for Global Engagement released a list of recommendations March 20 they say the Trump administration and Congress should take seriously, according to The Christian Post.

The diplomatic measures were compiled and released not only on behalf of the people living without freedom today but also "for our own children and grandchildren, for our own national security, for our own fundamental interests," Farr said.

The policy brief, "U.S. Foreign Policy and International Religious Freedom: Recommendations for the Trump Administration and the U.S. Congress," laid out nine sets of recommendations, the Post reported.

**1. "State clearly" to the world that religious freedom is "vital" to the U.S. and the world and back that statement with the institutional and financial resources needed to succeed.**

The brief requests the president to regularly raise the issue of religious freedom when talking with other nations, even U.S. allies such as Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, where laws exist that specifically target religious minorities.

**2. Appoint a task force to create a strategy for international religious freedom policy.**

The brief asks for an interagency task force to be named that would create a national security strategy that would address counterterrorism, post-conflict stabilization, development and other related issues. That strategy would lead to a presidential directive on international religious freedom policy that would be incorporated into all executive agencies that have responsibilities dealing with foreign policies, the Post reported.

**3. Give more authority and resources to the Office of International Religious Freedom.**

The post of ambassador at-large for international religious freedom was vacant for the first 845 days of Barack Obama's presidency, but Farr said he is hopeful President Donald Trump will make a nomination by spring or early summer. The brief also asked

for various positions dealing with religious freedom to be elevated in authority and given more staff, the Post reported.

**4. Make religious freedom training mandatory for diplomats.**

The brief asks the State Department to implement a component of an act passed in December 2016 that requires "mandatory training on religious freedom for all Foreign Service officers."

**5. Mandate the allocation of embassy resources to engage religious actors and communities.**

The brief asked for required development of a religious freedom strategy as part of the annual program planning of U.S. missions overseas. It also called for expansion and institutionalization of training initiatives begun under the previous ambassador for international religious freedom, the Post reported.

**6. Refocus attention on religious freedom within democracy planning and programs.**

"Increase support, via foreign aid and democracy funding, for religious and secular nongovernmental organizations around the world who seek to advance religious freedom as part of democratic development," the brief said.

**7. Engage communications and diplomacy more strategically for religious freedom.**

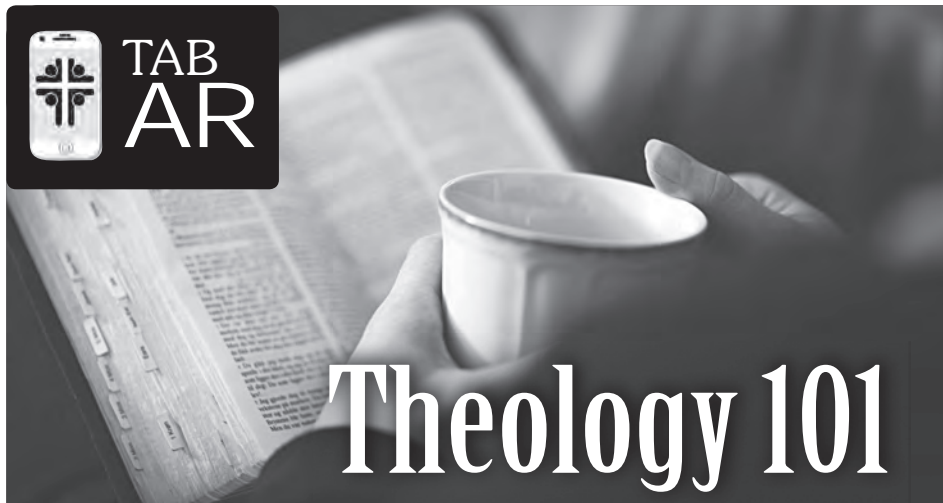
The brief asks the State Department to provide more religious freedom training for foreign policy officials who are responsible for the nation's strategic communications, according to the Post. It also asked for expanded religious freedom programming on Voice of America and other public media and for government officials to consult with religious leaders and scholars more regularly.

**8. Engage institutions and international law related to religious freedom.**

The brief calls on the Trump administration to place a senior official specializing in international religious freedom to be an adviser to the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.

**9. Work closely with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).**

The brief asked the State Department to work closely with USCIRF and for the commission to "publicize the administration's progress toward integrating international religious freedom policy into the mainstream of foreign policy," according to the Post. (TAB)



## Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### Soteriology

## Salvation as Adoption

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

The Bible speaks of salvation in two ways — in terms of a spiritual birth with a new heart and new spirit and as adoption into God's family.

When looking at salvation as a new birth there also is an emphasis on new nature. And in looking at salvation as adoption there also is an emphasis on our legal status in God's family.

### Legal right

We hear these emphases in our reading about saving faith in John 1:12: "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believed in His name."

By adoption we understand that a legal right has been granted us. So as Christians we not only possess the renewed nature of a child of God but also legal standing as an heir. The most complete statement of adoption is found in Galatians 4:4-7: "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons ... you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

### 'Joint heirs with Christ'

Being children of God by adoption also is found in Romans 8:16-17: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

People living in the Roman world would likely have been familiar with Roman regulations concerning adopted sons (daughters might be adopted as well but was apparently infrequent).

If a Roman father did not have a biological son and chose to adopt a boy as his son, that adopted son had all the legal standing in the family as a natural born son would have. Quite often the adopted son was from a slave family. Adoption immediately lifted the adopt-

ed son out of the ranks of slavery and gave him social standing. More than that, Roman adoption law provided that an adopted son could not be disowned, having been freely screened and chosen by the adoptive parents. An adopted son gained not only new status but also full legal rights to the family inheritance.

Ancient Roman adoption laws furnished a good illustration of the permanence of a believer's place in God's family. Since by adoption God has made believers His children with full legal standing, we are joint heirs with Christ.

Salvation as adoption not only looks back to Christian conversion, but it also looks forward. Romans 8:23 put it like this: "We ourselves groan inwardly, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

### Membership becomes complete

Under the analogy of salvation as adoption, we are able to say we have been adopted and we also are awaiting adoption.

Membership in God's family will be brought to completion when the spiritual membership also becomes a physical one through a resurrection body like Christ's resurrection body. We might say that at this future time we receive the full benefits of adoption by having new resurrection bodies.

Philippians 3:20-21 tells us, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." †

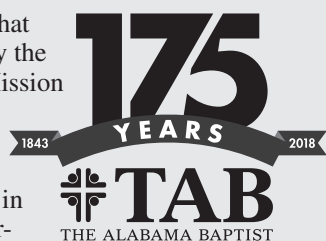
Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



In March 1975, *The Alabama Baptist* reported that Dewey and Phyllis Mayfield were appointed by the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board). Dewey Mayfield would serve as director of Christian Social Ministries in Huntsville.

TAB also reported that Forest Hicks, a former dean of admissions at Hannibal-LaGrange College in Hannibal, Missouri, became the new pastor of Four-mile Baptist Church, Wilsonville.

Hicks was previously a pastor in several other churches including Centreville Baptist Church; Goode Street Church, Montgomery; Vinesville Baptist Church, Birmingham; and First Baptist Church, Arab. (TAB)



# Dealing with disappointment

## Helping kids face fear of failure

### Afraid to tell his parents

It's the second semester of his junior year and Marcus is worried.

Midterm progress reports will be sent home next week and his chemistry and English grades are not good. In fact he's close to failing those subjects. He wanted to get a tutor but he was afraid to tell his parents how poorly he was doing. Now it's too late.

Not only did he not get a tutor, but his parents also will know how bad his grades are. They are already talking about college applications and admissions tests so he knows they assume his grades won't be an issue.

Maybe he should go ahead and tell them but he dreads their disappointment. Marcus thinks he is such a failure.

### Parents should offer teens opportunities to be responsible

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

**R**od Campbell loves to show teenagers pictures of his Suburban lodged sideways in a ditch, the front left tire suspended two feet off the ground. The photo is hilarious to him now, though at the time the photo was taken the situation didn't seem quite so funny to him or to his daughter, who had backed the car into the ditch.

"She was nervous about telling us and a little scared of getting into trouble," Campbell said. "But she handled it well and learned to be very careful backing out of that friend's driveway."

Learning to drive is just one of the rites of passage teenagers face. Changing schools, making a sports team, earning a spot in a school play, going on a first date, getting a job and graduating from high school are just a few more.

Each new step represents a change and even good changes can bring stress, according to Campbell, a counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH).

The size of the change very often correlates to the amount of stress an individual feels, he said.

"Moving from one classroom to another at Sunday School might cause a child to have a small amount of anxiety, while mov-

ing with the family to a new town in the middle of a school year might cause that same child to experience tremendous levels of anxiety," Campbell said.

Though change is not new to today's teens, parenting styles such as "helicopter parenting" and "lawnmower parenting" have led to an increase in the stress teens experience when change happens, he said.

#### Levels of change

"These days it is not unusual to meet people, especially young people — children, teens and college-aged kids — who are having seemingly exaggerated responses to what ought to be fairly typical levels of change in their lives," Campbell explained. "Instead of feeling a bit anxious about the changes in their lives and finding ways to meet them, some kids are finding themselves paralyzed by fear and anxiety, unable to decide how to proceed."

Research supports the increase in teen stress. A 2014 report by the American Psychological Association

(APA) found that teen stress levels were higher than levels reported by adults. Teens reported that school was the top source of stress, followed by the pressure of getting into a good college or deciding what to do after high school.

The survey found that more than one-third of teens reported feeling tired, nervous, angry or anxious as a result of stress.

Parents often want to step in and manage  
(See 'Teaching,' page 9)

***"To help our children gain responsibility we must offer them opportunities to be responsible rather than order them to do what we think is responsible."***

"Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility"  
by Foster Cline and Jim Fay



# FEAR of failure

## 'Helicopter, lawnmower parents' miss opportunities for children to learn important life skills

By Rod Campbell, MAMFT, LPC-S  
Pathways Professional Counseling

**M**y wife and I were 23 and 27 when our first child was born. She showed up exactly on her due date and just a couple of days later, there I was pulling the Accord up to the entrance of the hospital to bring mom and baby home. As we pulled out of the parking lot, my wife turned to me and said, "They just let us leave with a baby. They have no idea if we know what we're doing."

Truthfully we really didn't know what we were doing. Our oldest laments that fact on a regular basis. She is amazing as a young college student and is much more of a testimony to God's faithfulness and grace than to our knowledge or wisdom back then. Or now for that matter.

### Daily struggle

The truth is that parenting is a daily struggle filled with choices that always seem to have great significance. Almost all of us face the fear that we will get it wrong, mess it up or utterly fail as we guide the young lives entrusted to our care. Those fears can lead us to make decisions that are not in the best interests of our children.

You've probably heard the term "helicopter parent" to describe those who cannot let their little ones out of their sight for fear that something bad might happen — even if their "little ones" are heading off to college as young adults.

A related description is the term "lawnmower parents." Lawnmower parents tend to go out before their children, smoothing the way and making sure their kids never meet with any obstacle they cannot easily hurdle. They may not require children to do chores.

They may complete homework assignments and school projects for their children. Or they may intervene in conflicts instead of letting their children work out the problems on their own.

I've probably been told a thousand times by parents of school-aged children, "It's just easier to do it myself and get it over with than it is to teach them how to do it."

Of course they are absolutely right — in the short-term. But these parents are missing something incredibly important: their children also are missing hundreds or thousands of opportunities to learn very important skills. In the long term, children who are not held accountable for their own responsibilities and/or who have not learned to interact well with others lack important life skills.

Being intentional about allowing our kids to face challenges gives them the opportunity to learn life skills. Not only do they learn how to cook, clean, repair things, earn money, arrive on time and meet expectations, but they also learn what to do when their decisions go wrong.

I would venture to say that 90 percent of people who use an electric hand mixer the first time make the same mistake: they pick the beaters up out of the mixture while they are still spinning. The result of that action is always the same — batter sprays all over the kitchen. But I'll also bet that most people never make that mistake again because cleaning up that mess reinforces the lesson



learned and reminds the user not make that mistake again.

Clearly we have to keep a balance and be certain our kids' limits are being expanded thoughtfully, strategically and carefully. But our kids will learn far more by cleaning up their messes than they ever will by being held back from making choices.

When we withhold these lessons from our children, we also run the very real risk of unintentionally sending the message that our kids are inept. When we withhold age-appropriate levels of challenge we send the silent message that we don't really trust our kids to handle important decisions. The result is

that they begin to doubt themselves at a core level.

Often this doubt and fear expresses itself as anxiety-driven perfectionism. In sensing that their parents are fearful they won't get it right, kids begin to fear what might happen if they get it wrong and they over-compensate by trying to be perfect. Our kids need to experience both successes and failures so they understand that no one is capable of perfection.

We all are capable of perseverance, how-

ever. The process of learning from failure will help our kids develop self-confidence, core competencies and a robust skill set that will see them have success well into adulthood.

### Lessons learned

Parents, please don't fear failure. It often makes for the best stories. Think back on the lessons you learned because you had the chance to get it a little wrong. On my first date I thought I knew which house my girlfriend lived in and ended up going to the wrong door. The 85-year-old man who answered said he was flattered but didn't need a corsage. Then he pointed me in the right direction. Sure I was embarrassed but that story has brought far more laughter than pain over the years.

As parents we need to help our children experience challenging situations, face their fears, learn from their mistakes, grieve their losses, endure hardship and trust that God is faithful in their successes as well as their mistakes.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Rod Campbell is a counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry that helps individuals and families seek solutions to their problems through professional, affordable counseling from a Christian perspective. Pathways is a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. ✝*



## Teaching decision making is a process

(continued from page 7)

these stressful situations but that is a mistake, according to Foster Cline and Jim Fay, authors of "Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility." For children to learn to make decisions they sometimes must fail.

"One thing we definitely cannot make teens do is 'be responsible.' Responsibility cannot be taught; it must be caught," the authors write.

### Having responsibility

Teaching decision making is a process that begins when children are young and continues through their teen years, says Tamar Chansky, author of "Freeing Your Child from Anxiety." Younger children can choose their clothes, choose foods and make social plans. Older children should be encouraged to ask questions of their teachers and to order in restaurants. Children of all ages should have assigned tasks like finishing homework or cleaning their rooms but they can be given flexibility in managing their own time to get their chores done, Chansky suggests.

As children mature into teenagers, parents can help them make decisions by talking through the options even as they allow the teen to choose which option seems best. These opportunities to be responsible and think on their own without being told what to do are essential for teens, Cline and Fay write.

"To help our children gain responsibility we must offer them opportunities to be responsible rather than order them to do what we think is responsible," they explain.

### Dealing with worry

Parents also can help teens understand that while worry is part of life, worry can quickly get out of balance. Worry that leads to physical symptoms like overeating or not eating, sleeping too much or too little or feeling irritable all the time are signs of anxiety. When these behaviors persist for at least three months with no improvement or when a teen experiences an abrupt, dramatic change in mood or behavior, Cline and Fay suggest seeking professional help.

"Seeking professional help is not an admission of failure. In our complex society with its countless social problems, our teens quite naturally face dilemmas that we never had to cope with during our childhood," they write. "One session with a trained and competent counselor may be enough to straighten out the problem."✦

# TIPS for helping children face fear of failure

## 1. Become a great consultant.

Look for opportunities to think through decisions with your kids. Teach them how to weigh cost versus benefit before they take action. Teach them how to make decisions not just fulfill a list of decisions you want them to make.

## 2. Give them lots of chances to get it wrong.

Don't just swoop in and fix things when you see something going wrong. Let your kids fail so they can see that life goes on.

## 3. Debrief the mishaps.

When it goes wrong help them think it through. Go through the process of looking at how they originally assessed the situation versus how it actually turned out. Did they listen to advice? Did they

make an honest mistake? Did they discover after the fact that they did not have all the information they needed?

## 4. Do not say, "I told you so."

Once it has gone wrong it doesn't matter if you were right. It matters that they took ownership, gave it a chance and learned a life lesson in a safe environment. If you gloat in your wisdom, then you take away the safety they need to be willing to try again.

## 5. Celebrate the successes.

Look for every chance to celebrate when good things happen. Positive feedback helps children understand how to respond to success. Recognizing that your child got it right or did a good job can be a very powerful tool in helping him or her develop the skills they need to succeed as an adult.✦

Source: Rod Campbell

## SOURCES THAT CAUSE TEENS TO STRESS OUT



78%  
SCHOOL WORK



68%  
PARENTS



64%  
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS



64%  
FRIENDS' PROBLEMS



64%  
YOUNGER SIBLINGS

SOURCE:

<https://www.teenhelp.com/stress-anxiety/teen-stress-statistics/>

Graphic by Nicole Walker



## HOW TEEN BOYS MANAGE STRESS

25%  
AVOIDED OR REFUSED TO DEAL WITH IT

17%  
SOUGHT SUPPORT

23%  
SOUGHT WAYS TO DISTRACT THEMSELVES

35%  
ACTIVELY TRIED TO REDUCE THEIR STRESS



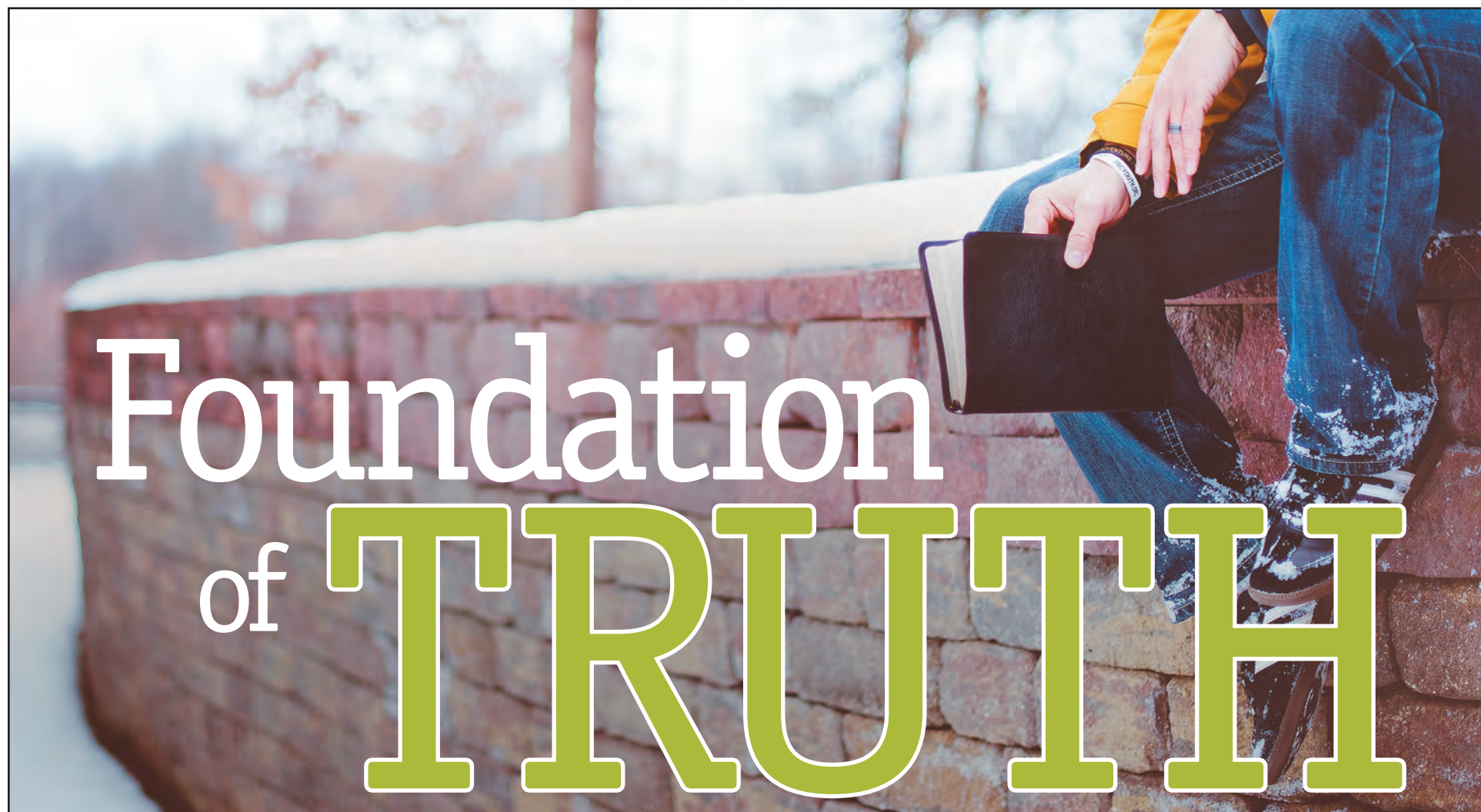
## HOW TEEN GIRLS MANAGE STRESS

19%  
AVOIDED OR REFUSED TO DEAL WITH IT

22%  
SOUGHT SUPPORT

14%  
SOUGHT WAYS TO DISTRACT THEMSELVES

45%  
ACTIVELY TRIED TO REDUCE THEIR STRESS



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## Responsible kids don't just happen; it's up to parents to coach, guide them toward success

By Amber Lia and Wendy Speake  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

**A**s parents who are followers of Christ, we share a common desire to establish a biblical approach to teaching our kids responsibility and a godly response when they fall short.

Some of us believe our kids will only obey us if we yell at them. But that's simply what we have trained them to do. Yelling at our kids as a way of getting them to do the things we want them to do is simply not a biblical response.

Proverbs 29:11 says: "A fool gives full vent to his spirit but a wise man holds it back." Parents who scream and let their words tumble out unchecked are considered foolish. We can feel the tension mounting yet still be like the wise man who "quietly holds it back" and finds a gracious way to communicate. It will take time and patience to turn this around but it's absolutely possible.

Foundationally it's up to us as the parents to teach and train outside of times of chaos or in the aftermath of conflict. This is especially true when it comes to messes our kids have made or when they don't do their designated chores. We don't need to get embroiled in an argument or lose our tempers over laziness. Nor do we need to scream at them as if they can't hear us.

We simply need to keep doing the good parenting — going back to the idea that we are coaching our kids toward success.

### Loving authority

Here are a few tips and reminders that will help you remain in a position of loving authority while training your kids to do the things you ask of them:

- ▶ Keep in mind the goal is to let the kids feel the weight of the natural consequences that come with irresponsibility. Loving consequences look very different from mean-spirited or angry punishments. Angry punishments crush our children's

spirits but loving consequences correct their hearts.

- ▶ Use calm and sincere consistency in place of arguing. When my kids begin to protest I simply say, "I know. It's not always easy to do the right thing. I'm sorry you are feeling so crummy about it. Now go ahead and clean your room. You can do it now or in 20 minutes." Repeat this dialogue again and again if necessary.

- ▶ Study your child as an individual and see what motivates them. For some it will be words of affirmation, so praise them as a starting point to lead into chores. For others it will be quality time — they like to do things with others, so offer them chores they can do with a partner or with you. Notice what makes them tick and then play off their unique strengths.

- ▶ Remind your kids the reasoning behind working hard and being responsible: "Whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23–24). Let's model this work ethic in our own lives too. Even the patient process of training our kids in responsibility should be an act of worship.

- ▶ Don't take away past rewards. This discourages a kid who worked hard for that incentive in the first place. If they earned something, then keep it in place and use other methods to reach their hearts instead of demerits that will simply make them angry with you and motivate them to give up trying. The Bible reminds us in Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate

your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." We don't want to provoke our kids to anger and this is a surefire way to do just that.

- ▶ Let them do it their way. It's tempting for parents to hover and correct but there is a difference between loving and helpful input and micro-managing. Give your kids space to mature and become proficient in their chores. Affirm the parts they do well.

### Serving the Lord

Responsible kids don't just happen. It's up to us to train our kids and to lay a foundation of truth that serving the Lord often looks like mopping the floors or feeding the cat. At the end of the day our kids will answer to the Lord for their part but for the angry mom or dad, the only thing better than a child's clean room is their own clean conscience.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This article was used with permission. Adapted from "Triggers: Exchanging Parents' Angry Reactions for Gentle Biblical Responses," available in e-book and paperback, by Amber Lia and Wendy Speake. Lia and her husband, Guy, are the parents of four young sons and owners of Storehouse Media Group, a faith-friendly and family-friendly TV and film production company in Los Angeles. She writes to encourage families on her blog at [www.MotherofK-nights.com](http://www.MotherofK-nights.com). Speake ([www.WendySpeake.com](http://www.WendySpeake.com)) is an actress, Bible teacher and writer who resides with her husband and three sons in San Diego. ✠*

Coming up in part 2 of 4:

### DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

**A**s parents we need to embrace our past and remember the lessons we learned so we can help our children experience challenging situations, face their fears, learn from their mistakes, grieve their losses, endure hardship and trust that God is faithful in our successes as well as our mistakes.

For many of us, that has not been our experience. Our past may have led us to the place where we still struggle, even as adults with fear, anxiety or disappointment with life. For those of us who struggle, who maybe didn't learn these lessons when we were young, there is still hope. **Coming soon in part 2 of 4 of this series, we will explore what we can do to address those issues as adults.** ✠



# Rashional THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist



## SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

### Helping carry their pain

*It's been four years since I wrote this particular Rashional Thoughts. I wanted to share it again because of the number of people I've encountered lately who are carrying loads and loads of pain.*

The man carried himself with confidence and purpose. He walked into the church and up to the welcome desk without hesitation.

"I'd like to go to your singles Sunday School class," he said.

"No problem," one gentleman said and pointed the man my way. "She will help you find your class."

As I moved toward the gentleman, I noticed several people walk by and greet him, speak to him, pat him on the back, etc. Our church is a friendly church and the members are good about welcoming guests, but in this particular case no one spent more than a few seconds with the man before moving on.

When he turned to look at me, all I could see was pain in his eyes. He said all the right words and knew what to do in a church setting but something wasn't right. I purposefully didn't take him to a class right away. I spent some time trying get to know more about him.

Within a few minutes he was sharing his real story with me and he definitely needed to talk. He also needed a different class than the one he came in requesting.

### Being intentional

The more I heard his story, the more I could narrow down which class would be best for him. I also knew exactly which leader would connect with him and personally located the class leader so that I could introduce them immediately.

The experience that Sunday shook me a bit. What if I had not slowed down long enough to really look into the man's eyes? What if I had not noticed

the pain? What if I had not shown compassion and truly cared about him as a person?

Of course the next person may have done all the right things and taken even better care of the situation, but it reminded me that we shouldn't leave these opportunities for the next person.

What if the next person isn't paying attention?

### Not always convenient

God gave me the opportunity to encourage a fellow believer who was in a world of hurt that day. It meant I had to rearrange my schedule. It meant I didn't finish a project for one of the ministers when I said I would. It meant I missed catching up with many of my friends. But it also meant receiving a tremendous blessing.

As I drove home from church, I thanked God for allowing me to participate in the experience.

I also wondered how many other hurting people had walked up to the welcome desk and received a friendly greeting but nothing deeper. How many others had I not noticed?

What about in everyday life outside of church? How many people do we see every day and never slow down long enough to read their eyes, observe their body language or notice their words?

And if we are honest, how many times do we sense someone needs to talk or needs a friend, but we don't want to invest the time, change our schedule or deal with it in general?

How many times have we been so focused on talking and sharing everything on our mind that we missed noticing the sadness in the eyes of the person listening to us?

As Christians and church families, what difference could we make if we all slowed down and served others through the gifts of awareness, listening and encouragement? ☩

# RASHIONAL Extras ...



## Things to do before you fire off an angry email, tweet or Facebook post

By Cameron Strang  
Founder and publisher of *Relevant*

I vote that we actually read the article and see what a person has to say instead of just scanning the headline, assuming the rest and lobbing grenades," Strang said in the January/February issue of *Relevant*.

His tips are:

1. Read the full article not just the headline.
2. Read more than one media source's article on the topic.
3. If there isn't more than one source, then proceed with caution. Is the source a legitimate news outlet? Can you prove the source has solid credentials?
4. If it is a legitimate news story, then credible news outlets will report on it.
5. What is actually making you angry? Is it because of a serious injustice? If so, then be willing to share how you are personally fighting that injustice when you respond.
6. Check your heart and motive before pressing send. Make sure the reason you feel compelled to send an angry response is not only because the topic makes you uncomfortable or you disagree with sources quoted in the article.
7. If your reasoning is because you think the article is not being

fair as it is reported, then take some time to check to see if the media outlet has reported the other side of the story in previous articles. Sometimes both sides are fully reported but not in the same article. If you truly cannot find where both sides have been explained, then use that as an opportunity to send a private letter to the editor of the news source to ask why and offer some calm and helpful pieces of information.

8. Remember that being respectful and showing grace even when you feel you and/or something you stand for are being mistreated will provide more opportunity for productive conversation than screaming at a publication as if there are no people who work there.

9. Also make sure you have determined clearly whether the article is opinion or reporting. If opinion, then the person has the right to his or her opinion. If it is reporting, then the presentation should be reported in a fair and unbiased manner.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Excerpts from Cameron Strang's commentary in Relevant magazine. To read more of the editorial or to learn more about the magazine, visit [www.relevantmagazine.com](http://www.relevantmagazine.com).*

### Beyond the Veil

Beyond what was hidden underneath and unseen, beyond obscure visions my heart reflecting images outwardly reaching for faith.

Eyes of hope revealed from light blue tattered and torn cloth that hanged over my eyes.

My hands slowly removing shiny sleek red satin to open my eyes to love with an open heart that blossoms with care.

Removing the dark draped cloak that hanged with fear that weighed me down where doubts and despair dove deep within my skin that weeps for the light of heaven.

Light removed the veils with a courageous heart seeing the unseen truth and beauty within.

A reflection of hope, love, honor and truth when you see within and beyond the obvious toward the glorious unseen when your focus becomes the light.

**Mysti Milwee**

"Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

### @desiringGod

Pastors, get on your face before the living God over His Word on behalf of your own people and their own needs.

Far too often, we think, "If I just work harder, I'll be successful." But the hustle economy is bankrupt. In a fast-paced working environment, we suffer from a lack of clarity about what's important to us — not to mention permission to pursue those priorities on our own terms.

**Author and productivity coach Michael Hyatt**  
[www.michaelhyatt.com](http://www.michaelhyatt.com)

Follow me on Twitter  
@RashionalThts or  
email me at [jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org).



## Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

### BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host the Johnson Brothers with Dora Lee Johnson on April 7, 7 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

### CALHOUN

► **Parker Memorial Church, Anniston**, will host Veritas in concert April 9, 6 p.m. at the Oxford Performing Arts Center. Doors will open at 5 p.m. To register visit

[www.oxfordpac.org](http://www.oxfordpac.org). Mack Amis Jr. is pastor.

### COFFEE

► **New Home Church, Enterprise**, will hold a spiritual life event April 6-8, 7 nightly. Kyle Johnson will speak. April 8 will be family night. Cliff Quincey is pastor.

### COOSA RIVER

► **Westview Church, Sylacauga**, will hold a cruise-in for Relay for Life on April 8, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Noble Park. For more information call 256-487-1410. Jimmie Roberts Jr. is pastor.

► **Ridgecrest Church, Montgomery**, will host a Priscilla Shirer and Anthony Evans simulcast April 8, 9 a.m.-4:35 p.m. To register call Carolyn Jones at 334-277-0011. Bobby DuBois is interim pastor.

### MONTGOMERY

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Wetumpka**, will celebrate homecoming April 9, 10:30 a.m. George Smith is pastor.

### ELMORE

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host the 39er's CLUB on April 4, 11 a.m. with Susan Wegmann as guest speaker. For more information call 334-684-9617. Steve Wegmann is pastor. ✝

### GENEVA

► **Westview Church, Sylacauga**, will hold a cruise-in for Relay for Life on April 8, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Noble Park. For more information call 256-487-1410. Jimmie Roberts Jr. is pastor.

## 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](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### PASTOR

Saraland Baptist Church in Saraland, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 749, Saraland, AL 36571 or contact Autrey Key at 251-675-6681.

#### FULL-TIME PASTOR

Christian Valley Baptist Church in Sumter County, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking and patiently waiting for God to send us His chosen pastor. If you feel God could be leading you to our community and this position, please email your resumé to: [PastorsearchCVBC@gmail.com](mailto:PastorsearchCVBC@gmail.com).

#### PASTOR

Southside Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 1101 Cherry St., Talladega, AL 35160 ([www.southsidetalladega.org](http://www.southsidetalladega.org)).

#### STUDENT PASTOR

Hepzibah Baptist Church is seeking a full-time student pastor to join us in our mission of connecting people to God, to each other, to ministry and to the world. Please send resumé to: [hbcjobapp@gmail.com](mailto:hbcjobapp@gmail.com).

#### STUDENT PASTOR

Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Northport, Alabama. Accepting resúmes for full-time student pastor. Send to: [jnichols@chapelhillbc.org](mailto:jnichols@chapelhillbc.org) or to: Student Pastor Search Committee, 8790 Highway 43 N., Northport, AL 35473.

#### STUDENT PASTOR

Calera Baptist Church, Calera, Alabama, is seeking a part-time student minister to lead/grow our student ministry of 45+ students. Email resúmes to: [info@calerabaptist.org](mailto:info@calerabaptist.org).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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#### BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

Silver Run Baptist Church, Seale, Alabama. Submit resúmes to: Cheryl Boutwell at [justshert@gmail.com](mailto:justshert@gmail.com).

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# 'I am privileged' – thank you message for Alabama Baptists

**O**n Jan. 21 my youngest son was in a near-fatal auto accident.

As I pulled up to the scene of the accident that day my heart dropped and I began to cry out to God. What I saw was a parent's worst nightmare.

Looking at my son's 1992 Chevy Blazer, I feared the worst and expected, at best, a severely broken child — who had already been airlifted to Baptist South in Montgomery.

The officer I spoke to was the first one on the scene; he also is an Alabama Baptist bivocational minister (like me). He gave me words of comfort right when I needed them most. That was a privilege.

I also am privileged because in the days that followed God sent His love through so many people. Many pastors, most I have never had the privilege of meeting, sent messages with words of encouragement, support and prayer. I had no clue what God was doing and I still do not know everything but He used you, Alabama Baptists, as His feet, hands and mouth to speak to us, to let us know He was with us.



**DENVER AND ORLANDO BUCK**

While walking through this valley I can stand on the promise that God is right there with me. I am privileged.

I also am privileged because God has allowed me to feel just a little of the pain and sorrow He felt when His Son was dying on the cross for me. This experience, the pain, raw emotions, the fear, has brought me ever closer to God and for that I am truly privileged.

We ask for your continued prayers and please accept this prayer of blessing as my sincerest thank you: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace" (Num. 6:24-26).

**Pastor Orlando and Kelly Buck  
Emmanuel Baptist Church,  
Ariton**

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Orlando Buck was recently elected president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Ministers and received the statewide Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award for bivocational work in 2016.*

I am privileged. As my son laid in a coma we found out he had a severe brain injury called Diffuse Axonal Injury (DAI) and that he could be in a coma for at least three months. During this time more Alabama Baptists showed their love and care for our family.

I am privileged. Denver woke up after three weeks of being in a coma. We are now in Birmingham with him at Children's Hospital helping him through grueling and tiresome therapy. (At press time, Denver was set to be released from Children's to go home March 24.) My son is walking again ... and saying "I love you." Yes I am truly privileged.

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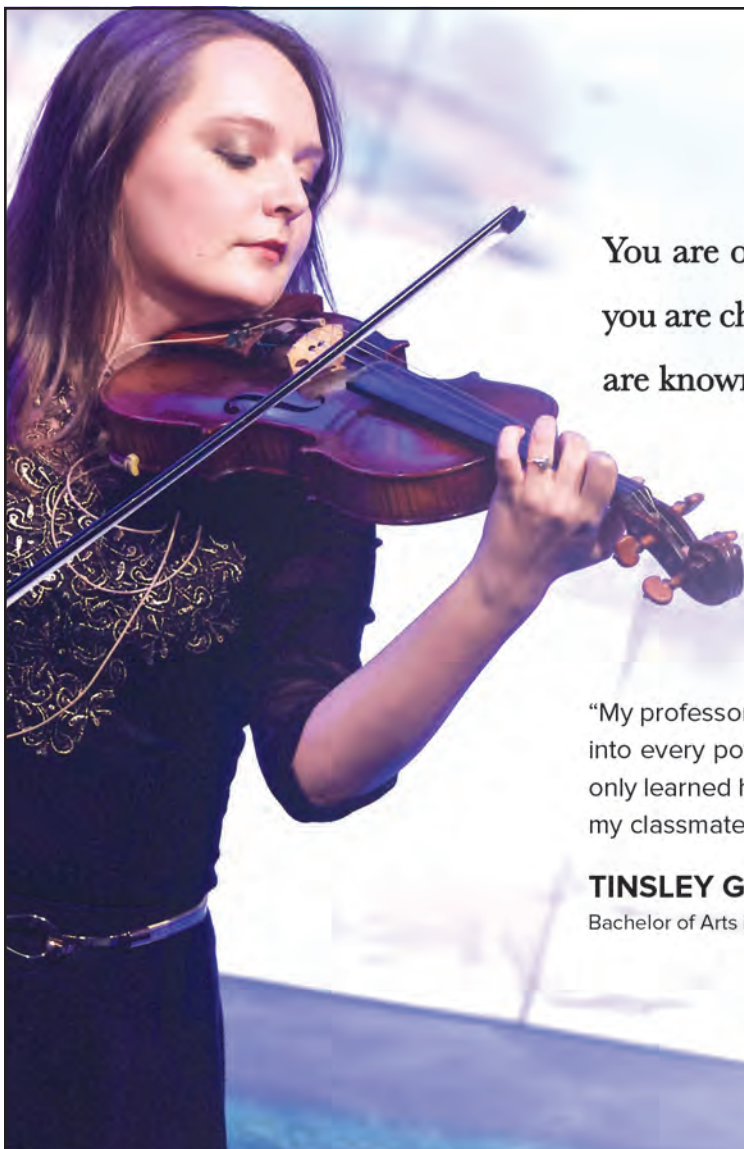
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 2

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

**IF I REJECT JESUS?**  
**Matthew 21:33-45**

**The Son Sent (33-37)**

In this parable Jesus is reflecting Isaiah 5. In Isaiah, God uses the allusion of a vineyard to represent Israel and Jesus continues this symbolism. God is the one who planted the vineyard just like God established the nation of Israel. God gave the land of Canaan to His chosen people and provided caretakers — the priests — to help shepherd the people.

However, these religious leaders of Israel turned from God and went their own ways, following the gods of the people in whose land they now lived. Jesus compares the religious leaders of Israel to the farmers who are supposed to take care of the crops.

However, in the Old Testament, the religious leaders rejected the prophets of God time and time again, often resulting in the demise of the prophet. Finally, God decided the time was right to send His own Son to collect His due.

At this juncture in human history, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to the people of Israel.

**The Son Rejected (38-39)**

Instead of embracing the Son's rightful rule and authority, the "farmers" decided to kill Him, effectively taking hold of the vineyard for themselves. This is an obvious allusion to what the Pharisees and teachers of the law were going to do to Jesus.

For Christians today, it seems alarming to reject the Son of God, but for these religious leaders, their authority was based off of their rules and teachings. To accept Christ's teachings meant these Pharisees would lose their place of leadership and authority.

For the Pharisees their position was based upon their obedience to the law — but not only the law in the Old Testament, but also their interpretation of the law. Their additions made the Old Testament law even harder to follow, a point which Jesus criticizes in the Gospels.

Regardless of the Pharisees' attitudes, Jesus points out salvation is not found in obedience to the law but in belief in Christ. This salvation by grace rejects a salvation of works and makes salvation available to everyone regardless of their position in society.

This is still good news for people today. Acceptance by God is not based upon what we can do for God but what God can do for us. All we have to do is accept this gift.

**The Son Vindicated (40-45)**

The Pharisees and teachers of the law had no choice but to answer Jesus' question and draw from it Jesus' intended conclusions. They knew that those who rejected the rightful authority of the vineyard had to be punished, and they understood Jesus was using this parable against them.

However, they refused to give up their authority for God's rightful authority. Instead of choosing Jesus' rightful reign, they decided to kill Him and end the threat.

From our vantage point we can see the mistake in the Pharisees' thinking. But we need to be careful we do not do the same thing.

It is easy for us to get caught up in the things of this world — our jobs, money, families — and reject the things of God. It is one thing to call Jesus "Lord," it is another to make Him Lord.

Be careful not to fall into the trap of the Pharisees' thinking. If Jesus is calling you to do something, obey — don't reject His leading. †

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

**VICTORY OVER FEAR**  
**Romans 8:31-39**

Today's passage continues the argument from Chapters 5-7. There Paul talked about how all should now live a new life of faithful obedience to Christ because all (both Jews and Gentiles who turned to God through Christ) were justified by Christ's death on the cross. In Chapter 8 he begins laying out how the Spirit of God makes this possible even though all live with the limitations of their current bodies. Paul says we are not free from the contingencies of life in the current age, including suffering and death, but we can begin living now according to the values of the next existence confident of Christ's victory not only for ourselves but for all of God's creation.

**God is greater than anything that tries to come against us. (31-34)**

The words "these things" refer both to the persecutions that Christians were enduring in Paul's day and to the claim Paul made in verses 28-30: Glorification is assured for those whom Christ justified through His death and resurrection. Paul does not express our modern understanding of predestination. After all, Paul knows that those whom God calls and those for whom He has chosen a destiny can reject their callings and stray from their destinies.

The question of verse 31 is really two-fold. "If God is for us" implies "Is God for us?" The answer to that question is "yes." The answer to the second question ("Who is against us?") is "no one of any consequence." The questions of verses 33-34 expect the same answer. People may indeed oppose God's faithful, bring charges and condemn (i.e. to death; see verse 36), but who are they in comparison to Christ Jesus who died, was raised, is seated at God's right hand and intercedes with God

for us? The Christians of Paul's day knew that when they turned from their former lives to follow Christ, real suffering was a possibility. But their hope in Christ and the help of the Spirit, rather than suffering, guided their choices.

**God is greater than anything that tries to separate us from His love. (35-39)**

The questions of verse 35 expect a stronger answer: "Nothing at all can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." In verse 36, Paul says that Psalm 44:22, which originally was about Israel suffering for the sake of God, now means that followers of Christ suffer for the sake of Christ.

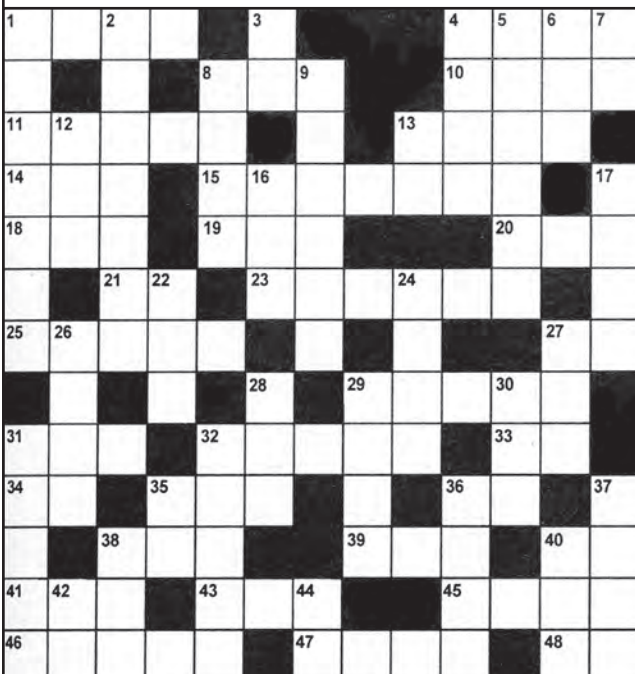
Paul knows the things he mentions, which cover all earthly and spiritual powers, really do threaten the lives of believers in his day. Some of the people to whom he writes might die in persecutions or of natural causes, but neither the realities of life nor death itself has any power over God's love. We cling to these verses as bodies fail, jobs terminate, marriages end and other hardships beset us. Our brothers and sisters in Syria and Iraq can cling to them in the face of oppression and flight for safety.

Here in America we can stand unashamed for Christ because absolutely nothing can keep us from Him and His love for us.

The New Testament Church drew its ideas about God from its Scripture, what we now call the Old Testament. God's "lovingkindness" didn't translate into Greek any better than it does into English, so they used two words for it. One was "grace," God's favor. The other was "love." When it seems like nothing is right and even our own love fails, Paul tells us God's love for us never will. Thanks be to God. †

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

- To carry something.
- Call thy land \_\_\_\_ ah. (Isa. 62:4)
- Shish \_\_\_\_ ob.
- Seen his star in the \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 2:2)
- Him only shalt thou \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 4:10)
- To go on a \_\_\_\_.
- Also.
- Thy word ... I will \_\_\_\_ it. (Ps. 119:105-106)
- Anna. (var.)
- Just a little bit.
- Samuel ran unto \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Sam. 3:5)
- Printer's measure.
- That my joy might \_\_\_\_ in you. (John 15:11)
- Gives medicine to.
- In the country of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Praises.
- A little while, and ye shall not \_\_\_\_ me. (John 16:16)
- To tie a rope off.
- As he \_\_\_\_ pure.

(1 John 3:3)

- Not B.C.
- They \_\_\_\_ the ship aground. (Acts 27:41)
- To exist.
- Give \_\_\_\_ all ye inhabitants. (Joel 1:2)
- Parent Teacher Association. (abbr.)
- A two year college degree.
- Medical specialty. (abbr.)
- To rest.
- Better ... he were \_\_\_\_ into the sea. (Mark 9:42)
- Or the \_\_\_\_ be not darkened. (Eccles. 12:2)
- I have fed you with \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Cor. 3:2)
- Professional engineer. (abbr.)

**Down**

- To sit or \_\_\_\_\_. (2 words)
- For there are set \_\_\_\_ of judgment. (Ps. 122:5)
- Mommy. (var.)
- Thou shalt not \_\_\_\_

false witness.

- (Ex. 20:16)
- What cannibals do.
- Teach Judah the \_\_\_\_ of the bow. (2 Sam. 1:18)
- Light. (abbr.)
- When I \_\_\_\_ silence. (Ps. 32:3)
- Or touch the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 19:12)
- Length of time.
- To perform something.
- Cut off his right \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 22:50)
- Lord of lords, and \_\_\_\_ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)
- Cast the \_\_\_\_ on the right side of the ship. (John 21:6)
- When fowls came Abram drove them \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 15:11)
- Ephlal begat \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 2:37)
- Office of Strategic Services. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_\_ men that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)
- Thy word is a \_\_\_\_ unto

- my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
- That we may \_\_\_\_ with him. (John 11:16)
- Jesus \_\_\_\_.
- So shall thy \_\_\_\_ be filled. (Prov. 3:10)
- Egyptian sun god.
- Rolled \_\_\_\_ the stone. (Matt. 28:2)
- Jesus also suffered without the \_\_\_\_\_. (Heb. 13:12)
- Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
- Snake.
- New Testament. (abbr.)
- Not a.m.



## Dove Channel launches first original series

By Caleb Jones  
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

**O**n March 21 the Dove Channel, Cinedigm's family-friendly streaming service, aired its first-ever original series, "Frankly Faraci."

"Frankly Faraci" features host Matthew Faraci who takes viewers behind the scenes with influential and inspirational people in many facets of life — politics, sports, entertainment, music and business.

The show highlights people in these various fields who seek to use their platforms to "bring good and positivity into the culture," Faraci's marketing firm, Inspire Buzz, said in a news release.

### Featured guests

The first episode featured The Piano Guys and focused on the group's tour and international success as well

as how the members ensure their faith is what drives their music.

The rest of the season will feature sketch comedy group Studio C; YouTube sensations Daniel and Lincoln Markham of What's (In)side?; former NFL linebacker Bryan

Schwartz and his wife, Diane, founders of Family Goals; hip-hop artist Propaganda; and many others.

Faraci uses his past experiences as a journalist, political strategist, government

spokesperson, entrepreneur and even standup comedian to help "highlight personalities the whole family can celebrate."

The Dove Channel, where "Frankly Faraci" airs, can be found on Roku players and Roku TV models, AppleTV, Android and iOS. The show also plays on Amazon Prime's streaming program. †



# Media reviews



## MUSIC

### Hannah Kerr

"Overflow"

Black River Entertainment, 2016

**T**wenty-year-old Hannah Kerr's 2015 debut extended play (EP), "I Stand Here," was well received.

Her follow-up debut album, "Overflow," should be embraced.

It starts off catchy — really catchy. Almost Katy Perry catchy. Though not as in your face, "Warrior" almost has the same sort of anthemic structure that made Perry's "Roar" so addictive. The songs even share a similar message of personal empowerment.

Perry has the eye of the tiger. Kerr has Christ.

"You'll never stop me, I'm a warrior. When I fall down I get stronger. My faith is my shield, Your love is the armor."

You'll like it — and there are still 10 tracks to go. Some are pop-like. Some are solemn. Some, like the great title track, are both. Stylistically they're nothing new, but if an album works they don't need to be. Her comments make me think she feels the same way.

"Musically I want what pours out of me to be the overflow of what God is pouring into me," she wrote on her website before the album's release. "It's not about my ability or my talent, but about letting God pour truth and wisdom into me and then writing and singing songs that matter."

Lucky us.

Lyrically "Overflow" is solid ("I want to dance to the beat of Your glory. I want to sing Your redemption song.") Vocally, it's spot on throughout.

Kerr has been singing publicly since she was five (mostly in church — her father is a worship leader) and sounds like it. Her voice is powerful yet soothing; soulful yet unpretentious.

The record wraps up in a great duet with Casting Crowns lead vocalist Mark Hall, whose Made To Thrive records released Kerr's EP.

He has to be proud.

### Aaron Shust

"Love Made A Way"

Centricity Music, 2017

**W**orship music is about creating a sense of intimacy. So are live recordings. Aaron Shust can apparently do both.

The winner of the 2007 Dove Awards for both New Artist of the Year and Songwriter of the Year has spent the past decade becoming one of modern

worship's most dependable voices (especially come Christmastime — Shust's version of "O Come O Come Emmanuel" has been the most played song on Billboard's National Christian Audience chart 10 Decembers in a row).

And his first hit — 2005's "My Savior My God" which was written for his home church in Pennsylvania — has logged more than 4.7 million listens on Spotify.

His most critically acclaimed song, "My Hope Is In You" (14 weeks at No. 1 in 2011) has tied that in six years.

"Ever Be" is currently at 5.5 million and it's only been out for a year.

All are among the 11 outstanding tracks — more than half of which are new — on "Love Made A Way," Shust's first live album.

There's an authenticity to the record stemming not only from Shust's time as an actual church worship leader, but also in the voices of those who are both enjoying the experience and helping to create it.

"I've always said that in a concert setting I want people to worship, so to have people singing along on the album is pretty magnificent," Shust wrote leading up to the album's release March 10. "When I invited people to be a part of this live album recording, I wanted to make sure they wanted to worship. I didn't just want them to be spectators. I wanted them to be desirous of entering into the presence of God, raising their hands and closing their eyes if they wanted to, and that's how the night was. It was a genuine experience of worship." †



# TOP 8

best-selling Christian books

## NONFICTION

### 1. Divine Direction

By Craig Groeschel (Zondervan)

### 2. The 5 Love Languages of Children

By Gary Chapman (Moody)

### 3. Jesus Always

By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)

### 4. The Magnolia Story

By Chip and Joanna Gaines (Thomas Nelson)

### 5. This Life I Live

By Rory Lee Feek (Thomas Nelson)

### 6. Jesus Calling — Hardback

By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)

### 7. Uninvited

By Lysa Terkeurst (Thomas Nelson)

### 8. Nothing to Prove

By Jennie Allen (Waterbrook)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time

## Meet the reviewer

Jeremy Henderson reviews music for The Alabama Baptist. He is co-host of Rich and Jeremy in the Mornings on Wings 94.3 FM, editor of The War Eagle Reader and attends Parkway Baptist Church, Auburn.



[news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

If you have an album you would like reviewed, email a link to [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or mail a CD to: TAB, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



Photo by Gary Gnidovic/NAMB

Pastor Garth Leno (right), of The Gathering, and associate pastor Phil Siebenmorgen (left) baptize Nathan Langlois during a July 10, 2016, church service, which included other baptisms and a baby dedication.

# 'Kingdom-focused'

## Canadian pastor finds new flock with AAEO help

**J**ohn D'Antonio's family knew his four-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's Disease, would soon be over. Many of his Italian-Canadian family and friends had gathered in his Windsor, Ontario, hospital room to say goodbye to the 30-year-old father and husband.

Just before D'Antonio's diagnosis four years earlier, his family had moved next door to the Lenos. Garth Leno was pastor of one of Windsor's largest churches, and D'Antonio's mother was a faithful member. On this most difficult of days, the family called Pastor Leno.

He arrived at the hospital and entered a packed hospital room. The family had requested a reduction in morphine so that D'Antonio could communicate with them. D'Antonio's wife gave permission for Leno to be alone with her husband.

D'Antonio couldn't talk and he was having trouble breathing.

"John, if you can hear me just squeeze my fingers," Leno said, then felt pressure from D'Antonio's weakened hands.

Leno then explained the gospel, God's grace, the plan of salvation and that it's available to any man or woman at any stage of life.

"Do you believe this?"

D'Antonio squeezed Leno's hand and they prayed together.

As the pastor of a large church in the city, Leno could have dispatched any 1 of his 20 staff members to the hospital that night. Now as the pastor of a Canadian National Baptist Convention church plant called

The Gathering, he has only two additional staff.

Leno and his wife spent more than 30 years serving churches in a denomination that began to alter important doctrinal positions and has seen no net gains in Canadian churches in many years. Then, during a three-month sabbatical, struggles within the church erupted that eventually led to Leno's departure.

He found himself in a lonely place. He never expected that church planting would be so difficult and isolating. Leno and his wife started a Saturday night Bible study mostly with people who were "disillusioned with church." What started in their home in September 2013 soon grew rapidly.

Leno later met Wayne Parker, pastor of Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City, Michigan. Parker is the North American Mission Board (NAMB) Send Detroit city missionary and knew about Leno's Bible study.

Leno also connected with Andrew Lamme, Canadian National Baptist Convention's lead church planting catalyst for Southern Ontario. Multiple calls of encouragement to the Lenos soon followed, along with emails and help, something they rarely received in

more than 30 years with the other denomination.

With counsel from Parker, Lamme and an affiliate with the Canadian convention, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds soon helped Leno and his following of "disengaged and disenfranchised" people secure and renovate a warehouse for The Gathering. And The Gathering also is now part of Send Detroit, NAMB's church planting strategy for the metro area surrounding the city. (BP)

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Princeton reverses decision to honor Keller

PRINCETON, N.J. — Faced with mounting criticism for its decision to give a major award to Tim Keller, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Manhattan, New York, and one of the country's best-known conservative Christian thinkers, Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey has reversed course and said Keller will not receive the honor.

In an email to faculty and students March 22, the president of the venerable mainline Protestant seminary, Craig Barnes, said he remains committed to academic freedom and "the critical inquiry and theological diversity of our community."

But he said giving Keller the annual Kuyper Prize for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Witness — named after a famous Dutch neo-Calvinist theologian — might "imply an endorsement" of Keller's views against the ordination of women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people.

Barnes said the seminary would not award a Kuyper Prize to anyone in 2017.

But he said after he and Keller talked, and after discussions also with the chairs of the Kuyper Committee and the board of trustees, Keller had agreed to deliver the annual Kuyper Lecture on April 6 as planned.

"We are a community that does not silence voices in the Church," Barnes wrote. "In this spirit we are a school that can welcome a church leader to address one of its centers about his subject, even if we strongly disagree with his theology on ordination to ministry. Reverend Keller will be lecturing on Lesslie Newbigin and the mission of the Church — not on ordination."

Newbigin was a British theologian renowned for his writings on missions, and Keller is known for his success at church planting.

Barnes acknowledged that the entire episode had been "a hard conversation" but one "that a theologically diverse community can handle."

In its announcement earlier in March that Keller had been chosen to receive the Kuyper Prize, the seminary's Kuyper Center for Public Theology had praised Keller as "an innovative theologian and church leader, well-published author and catalyst for urban missions in major cities around the world."

But critics quickly noted that Keller also is a leader in the Presbyterian Church in America which is the more conservative wing of U.S. Presbyterianism and does not permit the ordination of women or LGBT people.

Princeton Seminary, one of the oldest in the U.S., is associated with the more liberal Presbyterian Church (USA). (RNS)

### NH National Guard defends praying chaplains

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. — The New Hampshire Air National Guard says it will continue to allow chaplains to pray at on-base events despite receiving a letter from the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) demanding they stop.

FFRF, a Wisconsin-based advocacy group that fights for a strict separation of Church and State, sent the letter on behalf of a guardsman who complained about the prayers that took place in official ceremonies, according to The Christian Post.

A spokesman for the New Hampshire National Guard, which oversees the state's Air National Guard, said no "formal complaints" from airmen have been received by the base about the prayers and they have no plans to respond to the letter.

"We will continue as we've done before," said spokesperson Greg Heilshorn. "It's our tradition. We believe our chaplains ... [are a] vital part of our organization."

The First Liberty Institute, a Texas-based law firm that defends religious liberty, said uniformed chaplains are legally protected and permitted to give such convocations. (TAB)



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