



INSIDE



Effective gospel-sharing in Ecuador requires both hearing, seeing gospel

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Pastor isn't 'hired gun' but needed to lead, cast vision

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Americans are fond of Bible but don't actually read it, LifeWay Research shows

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StudentNet

Morgan County students participate in DNow 2017. The annual joint event is a result of StudentNet — a network of more than 20 churches.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Albright

Partnership among Morgan County student pastors continues to strengthen churches

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

About 20 years ago some youth pastors in Morgan County decided that when it came to putting on a Disciple Now (DNow) weekend, they could do more together than they could apart.

"They were from Priceville, Hartselle, Decatur and the surrounding areas, and they had a vision for reaching students that's been passed from one generation to the next," said Jeremy Albright, associate pastor to students and college at Central Baptist Church, Decatur.

Except that now the network of more than 20 churches — called StudentNet — has expanded so far past the annual joint DNow event that the student pastors sometimes forget that's the reason it started, Albright said.

Now the network is based in a weekly lunchtime get-together for student pastors to share what's on their heart, catch up on each other's lives and help each other with needs specific to student ministry. It's expanded into monthly gatherings, conferences and fellowships including paintball and crawfish boils.

A brotherhood

Allen Stover, a bivocational student pastor who serves at The Ark Family Worship Center in Hartselle, said it's become a brotherhood that's great for mentoring and support.

"The issues that we face are different issues than the senior pastor would face and for us to be able to network with these other guys is so great," he said. "That's been especially helpful for me because we are a smaller congregation."

Travis Flannagin, student pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Deca-

tur, said it's been a great communion of ministry for churches to get-together to reach area students without competing.

And, he said, his students love DNow.

"It's been a wonderful experience," Flannagin said.

Because of StudentNet, between 20 and 25 churches are able to combine to put on a much higher-caliber event than anything one church would be able to do on its own, Albright said. About 1,200 students and adult volunteers participate in StudentNet's joint DNow each year in February.

"We're able to share our resources to put on a top-notch DiscipleNow, and we are able to work hand in hand in a way that benefits our students and promotes Jesus Christ among our schools and our neighborhoods," he said. "Many hands

make light work and we're working together for the same thing."

And they'll keep pushing to expand its ministry and reach, Albright said. For instance this year StudentNet will award three high school students and one student pastor a scholarship for a missions trip to Valencia, Spain, through Romanian-American Mission based out of Decatur.

"StudentNet has expanded this year to invest in our students this way," Albright said. "We're coming together for the Kingdom work and the glory of God and reaching students."

Leaving a legacy

That's the legacy left for them by the prior generations of youth leaders, he said.

"Those pastors laid a great foundation," Albright said. "We just want to build on it more and more." ✠

Coming next week ...



Dealing with disappointment

Part 2 of 4 — ADULTS (relating to God/each other)

COMMENT

Balancing Principle and Expediency

Whether or not the apostle Paul intended to do it, when he told the Corinthians that “all things are lawful for me but not all things are expedient” (1 Cor. 6:12), he summarized the unending debate between principle and expediency.

Part of the tension comes from the inability to define the terms. Instead of understanding “principle” as the comprehensive truth or primary element from which other conclusions are derived, many equate “principle” with the way things used to be. In other words — the past.

An element of this understanding survives in Christian circles today. One sees it in the insistence that every item of New Testament polity and practice be reproduced in today’s Church. For example, New Testament churches did not have musical instruments so today’s Church should have none. Ministers in the New Testament did not receive fixed salaries nor did they possess theological degrees. That means educated preachers should be rejected and no pastor or preacher should ever get a salary.

New Testament pattern

Using the past as principle also is illustrated in churches that rule out church organizations because they were not present in New Testament times or in churches that insist on doing missions through churches rather than cooperating with others to reach the world for Christ because that is the New Testament pattern.

Expediency, on the other hand, is often characterized by an “ends justifies the means” attitude. Advocates promise “whatever it takes” to accomplish a goal and will do “whatever works.” Expediency seems to have no anchor. It seeks to accomplish the goal at all costs.

Many Christians have been in situations, sometimes even church services, which were deliberately manipulative in order to achieve a predetermined goal. Sometimes half-truths or even lies have been employed to drive church members toward a specific decision or action.

“It is for the greater good,” is the frequent response of those confronted about their expedient behaviors. Such people seem to not understand that the means of achieving something eventually become the end one achieves.

Recognizing the dangerous outcomes of unfortunate choices in the name of expediency caused the apostle Paul to declare, “I will not be mastered by anything” other than his commit-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ment to Jesus Christ as Lord (1 Cor. 6:12).

Identifying and holding on to unchanging principles while being expedient enough to recognize change is a challenge for everyone. During the last 25 years there have been incalculable changes in communication, manufacturing, social relationships, politics, ethics and more. Our world is different. Change from past ways is necessary to survive.

The Church has changed too. It is not the same as in New Testament times nor is it the same as in the 10th century or the 19th century. Today’s Church is even different than the Church of the 1950s.

So how does one balance principles and expediency in today’s Church?

Perhaps a starting point is to identify changeless principles. Consider the Lord’s Supper as an illustration. The Bible indicates the disciples gathered in the upper room that night and drank from a common cup (Matt. 26:27). Is drinking from a common cup the principle to be preserved from the story? Not necessarily. The principle is the memorializing of the broken body and shed blood of Christ in atoning for sin through His death on the cross.

Most churches today use individual cups as a matter of hygiene. It is a decision based on expedience that does not detract from the principle of the sacrament.

Learning about Christianity

After being converted on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians, Paul went into the desert to study about his newfound faith. Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos into their home and taught the young preacher about faith in Christ.

Is the principle the method by which Paul or Apollos learned about Christianity or is the principle that the Christian faith should be propagated through education?

Baptists generally have concluded the latter. In

local churches a variety of methods are used to teach new believers about their faith. And Baptists have an extensive network of Bible schools, colleges and seminaries to train pastors, preachers and other vocational church workers for the tasks ahead of them.

That Christians are to do together what they could not do alone is a basic New Testament principle. How that is carried out is a matter of expediency. The Cooperative Program is an expedient expression of that basic New Testament principle. By working together Baptists have a cohesive witness in the local community, through the state, across the nation and around the world.

Working together

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board and North American Mission Board — as well as the state missions board and local associations — are other examples of expedient ways of living out New Testament principles. All embody the principle of sharing Christ with others and all allow believers to work together to do more than any could do alone.

Another way of saying this is that the Christian message is unchanging but the methods for communicating that message are ever-changing. The message is principle. The methods are expedience. One could add that methods must always be consistent with the message and must never undermine or detract from the message.

Tomorrow’s Church will be different from the Church today. It has to be for the Church to relate to an ever-

changing society. It will take divine wisdom to distinguish between principles and expediences tomorrow as it does today. And it will take divine wisdom to find expedient ways to communicate this ageless message to particular audiences under particular circumstances.

May God continue to guide His people as we wrestle with the tensions between principle and expedience. †

**“By working together
Baptists have a
cohesive witness in
the local community,
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around the world.”**

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

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TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Forming relationships

Effective gospel-sharing in Ecuador requires both hearing, seeing gospel

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

For Afro-Ecuadorians living in Ecuador, everyday life is often a mix of witchcraft, moral degradation and poverty. The people group was originally made up of Africans brought to South America to be slaves. For many years they lived in isolated areas of the country, leaving them marginalized and forgotten, and often taken advantage of.

It's this people group that Johnny Maust and his wife, Donna, have been sharing the gospel with since 2013 through their work as International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries.

But because areas of Ecuador where the Mausts work are especially "spiritually dark," they don't have any notion of being able to do the work alone. That's why they enlist the help of volunteers from the United States. Right now they partner with groups from Alabama, Illinois, Texas, Missouri and Kentucky.

"We encourage these groups to come repeatedly and form relationships with the people, not just come for a one-week trip," said Johnny Maust, who has served in different areas of Ecuador since 1999. "We want to develop these relationships and emphasize discipleship ... and seeing the people that have (become Christians) to begin to mature in Christ."

That's where Mike Watts comes into the picture. Watts, who previously served as pastor of Cedar Hill Baptist Church, East Brewton, learned that Escambia Baptist Association sent teams to share the gospel in Rocafuerte, Ecuador, multiple times a year. Since only about one percent of the Afro-Ecuadorian population has heard the gospel, Watts felt called to go too and went on his first trip in spring 2015.

That year Watts and a mentor/friend, Charles Jackson, who is a deacon at Catawba Springs Baptist Church, Brewton, handed out Spanish New Testament Bibles and shared the gospel with people they met each day. The pair also invited people to small group Bible studies led by the Mausts on Sundays.

But one trip wasn't enough for Watts. Now pastor of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Foley,



Photo courtesy of Mike Watts

Mike Watts (right), pastor of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Foley, shares the gospel in Rocafuerte, Ecuador, on a 2017 missions trip.

Watts committed to serve in Rocafuerte for three years in a row. Each year he's fulfilled that commitment, serving alongside Jackson and others from churches across Alabama.

"It's about relationships and we go and make new relationships and we reconnect with them from previous years," Watts said.

Softening 'The Bull'

During the 2015 trip, Watts and Jackson met a man near their hotel who "seemed very resistant and not interested" in anything the two Americans had to share. Watts and Jackson nicknamed the man "The Bull." In 2016 the two men tracked down The Bull to say hello again, Johnny Maust explained. But it wasn't until spring 2017 that The Bull began to soften.

Watts and Jackson brought The Bull a framed photo of him and Jackson from the previous year. The Bull "promptly hung it up

in his home," Johnny Maust said. "He listened to what they had to say and although he has not yet made a decision for Christ, he is a long way from where he was when they first met him. This man is now open because of the relationship they have developed over time."

Watts said it's amazing to see how the seed, the Word of God, takes root in people's lives. During his 2017 trip, March 27-31, Watts witnessed five people choose Christ as their Savior, two baby dedications and two baptisms.

"The Holy Spirit is moving and people are becoming more accepting of hearing the gospel," he said. "Three years ago we would have people slam the door in our faces but we kept coming year after year and we finally built relationships."

Those relationships are vital not only for those who have yet to hear the gospel, but for those who are new believers, Johnny Maust said.

"We feel that many new believers here need spiritual intensive care," he said, "because there are a lot of cults and churches with poor biblical doctrine. ... It's important that they hear the gospel but also see the gospel being lived out in a believer's lifestyle. It has been slow work but we are now involved in eight communities on a regular basis." And many of those groups have been "adopted" by churches and associations back in the U.S., he said.

Watts said he has now seen firsthand how those long-term partnerships are meaningful after observing "the Holy Spirit moving," making people more accepting to listen and talk about Jesus. †

Mike Watts (right) pastor of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Foley, helps baptize a new believer in Rocafuerte, Ecuador, on a missions trip in 2017.



Photo courtesy of Mike Watts

Definition of a PASTOR



unsplash.com

Leadership abilities, preaching, pastoral care all dimensions needed in pastor, Fenton says

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Gary Fenton said he had a defining moment in his ministry after he preached a message one Sunday and it really connected.

“It was a vision sermon and you could tell people really got it,” he said.

And then that afternoon, his phone rang. “A lady called me and told me how good it was and then asked what they needed to do to make this vision a reality,” he said.

Fenton told her that the sermon had explained it. And she said no, it didn’t — it painted a picture but it didn’t tell them how to get there or what to do next.

“The next day I talked with a friend about it and he said, ‘You don’t know what’s next, do you?’”

Fenton, who retired in 2016 from Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, after 25 years as its pastor, said this moment shifted his entire ministry.

“My friend basically said, ‘You’re a cheerleader but you don’t know how to be a leader.’ I could point to the goal line but I couldn’t get them there,” he said. “I had just turned 40. I determined then that I was going to do everything I could to be a good leader.”

Recent articles from Christianity Today and Baptist News Global note that some experts in church life say the pendulum is swinging toward more and more churches wanting their pastors to be CEOs more than they want them to be spiritual teachers.

CEO-style model

Preaching ability, which used to be the most important aspect churches looked for in a pastor, has slid down in the list and been replaced by abilities to bring in people and money, the articles suggest.

This CEO-style model “keeps the church from having any spiritual depth and it keeps the minister from having any

real depth,” said Brett Younger, pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, New York, and former associate professor of preaching at Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta.

It’s a trend he and other experts say are dangerous for the Church.

But Fenton said he feels churches shouldn’t throw the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to considering whether strong leadership matters.

To him, three dimensions make up a pastor — preaching/teaching, pastoral care and leadership.

“When you look at the New Testament writings of Paul, they appear to focus as much on leadership as the other two,” said Fenton, who now serves as senior advancement officer for Samford University in Birmingham.

Baptists are “people of the Book,” he said, so churches should begin with the assumption that a pastor will both preach the Bible and live the Bible. The letters to the New Testament churches often deal with leadership issues, he said.

“Use the Bible as a book that governs how you lead the church, not only how you teach the church,” he said.

Before Fenton’s defining moment after preaching that vision sermon, he neglected the leadership dimension of his pastorate, he said.

“I found that leadership was the one that if I didn’t give special attention to it, it got neglected because it wasn’t natural for me,” he said. “I understood pastoral care and the purpose of teaching and preaching, so I began in my scheduling to look over my week to make sure I had some time dedicated to learning about leadership and identify what my leadership opportunities were and how to prepare for them.”

If focusing on leadership is done to the loss of preaching, teaching and pastoral care, it becomes damaging, Fenton said.

But if it is left out, it is damaging as well, he said.

Mike Jackson, director of the office of LeaderCare and church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said when he meets with pastor search committees he talks through the three roles of a pastor and gets churches to rank them in order of importance to them.

“The preaching/teaching and pastoral care are No. 1 and No. 2 almost always,” he said. “Occasionally you will get somebody who says ‘we really want a leader’ and that’s probably going to be one of our larger churches.”

Ranking them provides good insight into what each church is looking for, but it also provides the opportunity for Jackson to talk to them about the importance of keeping the roles in balance, no matter which way they rank them.

Often the ones who say they are looking for a leader first are looking for someone who can cast a vision and lead the people to follow it, Jackson said — and that’s not an inherently negative thing.

The “CEO model” some are criticizing implies a situation where the pastor has distanced himself from the people, he said.

Working with excellence

That letting go of personal relationships doesn’t need to happen, but “at the same time we have to be professional in our leadership and preaching and caring for people,” Jackson said. “We’ve got to do that with excellence. To do it in an unprofessional way doesn’t serve the local church well or the body of Christ.”

Leadership should happen in a way that doesn’t sacrifice caring for people’s needs and teaching them the truth of God’s Word, he said.

“Anytime a leader becomes aloof and distanced from his people (he’s) not serving effectively like the biblical role of pastor is all about,” he said. “It’s all about people — it’s got to be people-oriented.”

Ministers’ Golf Tournament set for May 15-16

Alabama Baptist ministers, it’s time to pull out your golf clubs again.

The 55th annual Ministers’ Golf Tournament, sponsored by Judson College in Marion, will take place May 15-16 at the Marion Military Institute golf course and is open to all pastors, ministers of youth, music and education who serve through an Alabama Baptist church or agency.

Organized as a “restorative outlet for Alabama Baptist ministers” after a busy holiday season, the tournament also is

meant to bring “relaxation, rejuvenation, good food and of course friendly competition,” according to Judson President David Potts.

For more information or to register, email Kristin Stormont at kstormont@judson.edu or call 334-683-5109.

“It is so very important for those in ministry to have some downtime,” Potts said in an article on Judson.edu.

Flights will be assigned after the May 15 round and prizes donated by local businesses will

be awarded at the tournament’s banquet dinner that night and again at the end of the tournament. (TAB)

Pastors: Avoid getting lost in 'whirlwind'

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Wise pastors focus on one or two goals rather than a multiplicity of them," said Dan Garland, director of pastoral ministries and church consulting at LifeWay Christian Resources. "Research demonstrates that (working on too) many goals limits achievement. We focus on less in order to do more."

Garland was featured at the March 28 "The 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX)" conference at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster. The conference was sponsored by LifeWay in partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Daniel Edmonds, state missionary responsible for SBOM's Sunday School and discipleship efforts, said, "We're committed to disciple-making ministries and this training is another of the events we're sponsoring for pastors and other staff."

Garland said every pastor must be involved in strategic planning in his church.

Vision-casting

"Strategic planning has been called vision-casting," Garland said. "The pastor has to cast vision and then develop strategies for reaching goals. Of the two, executing strategies is the hardest task."

He quoted Chicago Pastor Bill Hybels who often says, "vision leaks."

"Pastors must talk constantly about a vision but they must also train leaders to help them. They can't do the work of ministry alone," Garland said. "In

fact, according to Ephesians 4, the pastor's main job is to equip believers for ministry. The pastor isn't a 'hired gun' who is supposed to do all the work. He and his people work together in ministry."

In his presentation Garland used concepts from the book, "The 4 Disciplines of Execution," by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and Jim Huling.

"These writers talk about 'the whirlwind,'" Garland said. "This is the stuff of daily life in the church that grabs our time and changes our schedules, such as sickness and death. Some have called these tasks 'paying the rent,' and they are important.

But the pastor also has to set goals over and beyond the daily demands of ministry."

McChesney, Covey and Huling suggest "wildly important goals" or "WIGS." Garland said the pastor must devote at least 20 percent of his time meeting with leaders to establish WIGS.

"If we don't continue to talk about goals, then they get lost in the whirlwind," he said.

"President Kennedy said in May 1961 that the United States would put a man on the moon and bring him home safely within the decade," Garland noted. "This goal was attainable, measurable, time-limited and specific. And we did it. Every goal should have a finish line."

Pastors also should lead their churches in celebration at the finish line, he added.

"The church is a joyful place. And part of that joy is commending people for good work and celebrating what God is doing among us." †

"Research demonstrates that (working on too) many goals limits achievement. We focus on less in order to do more."

Dan Garland
director of pastoral ministries and church consulting
LifeWay Christian Resources

For more information on disciple-making strategies, contact Daniel Edmonds at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285 or dedmonds@alsbom.org.



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

Henry Webb (left) and SBOM's Mike Jackson (right) share with ministers and ministry leaders about the importance of transitional pastors at Shoco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

Making most of interims

Transitional pastor program 'great way to help churches'

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The time between one person leaving a position and a new person moving into that role is a good opportunity to do some evaluating and refreshing — and this is true for church ministry positions as well.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) offers assistance with this exact concept through its transitional pastor program, designed to help churches during interim periods to evaluate their ministries and to prepare for the coming of their new pastor.

Some 60 ministers and ministry leaders, primarily from Alabama, gathered at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega in April to learn more about the program and the work of transitional pastors.

A transitional pastor enters a covenant relationship with the church and promises he will serve for a limited time, said Henry Webb, who helped develop the program.

"Interim pastors are sometimes seen as caretakers but many churches wanted more than this," said Webb, who retired from LifeWay Christian Resources in 2005. "So (LifeWay) developed the transitional pastor program and then bequeathed it to our state conventions.

"Transitional pastors serve usually from 12 to 18 months,"

he said. "And the covenant states that they will not be considered for the pastor's job. It is his task to help prepare the way for the new pastor."

Webb said congregations normally feel anxiety when a pastor leaves and may rush too quickly in calling a new pastor.

"Sometimes the transitional pastor serves for three to seven months before a pastor search team is chosen," he said.

"The transitional pastor helps the church deal with some issues that will make the new pastor's ministry more fruitful and his tenure longer."

Brett Selby, pastoral leadership specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, said the transitional pastor will schedule a number of listening sessions in the church in order to assure church members they're being heard.

Listen to the people

"A traditional interim pastor preaches, to be sure, and this is his most visible role," Selby said. "But only God can speak things into existence. ... We also must listen to people and help them redeem the dream of the church."

The most critical issue in the church is relationships, Selby said.

"Relationships trump everything else," he said. "Even an introverted minister must learn to be a 'compensated introvert' and invest in people. The transitional pastor will form positive relationships with church leaders in order to learn about possible conflicts in the church and deal with them."

Selby has served as a transitional pastor seven times and each time he tried to have lunch with a different family every Sunday to develop friendships.

The transitional pastor serves at the pleasure of the church and may or may not work with the pastor search team, Selby noted.

Mike Jackson, director of SBOM's office of LeaderCare and church health and host for the event, said with the completion of the April event his office can now pair ministers who have received transitional training with interested churches.

"We have about 3,200 Baptist churches in our state and this means some 300 churches will be searching for pastors at any given point," said Jackson, who is trained as a transitional pastor himself. "Having a transitional pastor is a great way to help the church make the most of an interim period." †

For more information, contact Mike Jackson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 210 or mjackson@alsbom.org.

Controversial student group at Samford clears faculty hurdle

Another step has been taken in the process of approving a new student group at Samford University in Birmingham promoting discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity.

The group, Samford Together (ST), was given provisional recognition in the spring semester 2016 and approved by the student senate in fall 2016. A divided faculty senate narrowly approved ST earlier this year and a majority of the full faculty voted for approval April 27.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said it would likely be September before there is formal consideration of any proposal related to the organization. There are several other steps remaining in the process, he said.

The description of ST on Samford's website says the group will provide a forum for Samford students "who want to discuss topics relating to sexual orientation and gender identity."

'Find community'

"In an open-minded and accepting environment, students will find community and opportunities to study an array of ideas and opinions on these subjects," the description reads. "[ST] hopes to encourage students' academic development, social consciousness, spiritual formation and relational clarity, all within a community of peers who might share experiences, concerns, fears, difficulties, opportunities and hopes.

"[ST] is rooted in the Samford motto and core values, and its members strive to follow Christ on

a path of learning and communication, knowing that the world will be better as a result of the contributions of all Samford students."

Matthew Kerlin, assistant vice president for student development and university minister, pointed out the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement oversees student organizations to be certain they comply with their stated mission. He said ST's mission is to foster conversation and dialogue and not to engage in theological and political advocacy.

The faculty approval drew immediate response from Alabama Baptist leadership — John Thweatt, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, and Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"Reports are that the faculty ... voted to affirm the recognition of a student group that identifies with values contrary to biblical teachings on sexuality. We are saddened by this decision, which provides recognition for an agenda that we believe to be contrary to Scripture," Thweatt and Lance said in a joint statement.

"We strongly believe that the Old Testament and New Testament each speak unequivocally against homosexuality. When addressing same-gender sexual relationships, the Bible without exception never affirms such behavior as an approved lifestyle," they said.

"We continue to affirm the biblical truth of God's love for the whole world and that Christians should reach out in love to all, including those who identify with the

LGBT lifestyle and agenda.

"In the days to come, Alabama Baptist leaders will be in dialogue with the leadership of Samford as to the serious implications this action has for the relationship between Samford University and the Alabama Baptist State Convention," Thweatt and Lance said. "We request your prayers as this situation is handled in a biblically correct way."

Before the faculty vote was taken Westmoreland addressed the group noting his effort to walk in truth and grace.

'Tortured route'

Noting that while he believes in the traditional view of marriage as between a man and a woman, he said he also believes "we are people who are capable of discussing differences without rancor, perhaps modeling for our students and others a way to move along this most tortured route.

"I view as relatively timeless some biblical teachings regarding human sexuality which others find to be outdated," Westmoreland said. "In speaking of these things that I believe, I tend to refer to them as biblical truth, even as I recognize that others hold different views and interpretations of Scripture. I am not angry toward others who believe differently.

"I don't have to agree with them to love them and to listen." (TAB)

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Prestonwood Baptist to resume giving to CP

PLANO, Texas — Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas, has announced it will resume giving through the Cooperative Program (CP) after two months of evaluating its support of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missions and ministries.

Prestonwood Baptist had announced in mid-February it would escrow CP funds over "various significant positions taken by the leadership of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC)." During the escrow period, the congregation said it would evaluate how to proceed with future financial support of SBC and state convention ministries.

In a December 2016 interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Prestonwood Pastor Jack Graham, a former SBC president, alleged "disrespectfulness" by ERLC President Russell Moore toward evangelical supporters of Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign. (BP)

Baylor University names first female president

WACO, Texas — Linda Livingstone will be the first female president of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, when she begins her role June 1.

Livingstone has led The George Washington University School of Business in Washington since 2014 but served at Baylor from 1991 to 2002, rising from assistant professor to dean of the Hankamer School of Business. She led Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management from 2002 to 2014. She is a scholar in organizational behavior/leadership and is extensively published. (BP)

NOBTS to add program at Huntsville site

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees approved April 12 the addition of an undergraduate program at the extension center in Huntsville for students transferring from the onsite but now closed Legacy Christian University.

NOBTS currently has four other extension sites in Alabama. They are located in Birmingham, Montgomery, Rainsville and Tuscaloosa. (TAB, BP)

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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Beautitudes series — Matthew 5:3-12

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst' (v. 6) — Cravings

Have you ever had a craving for something you wanted but could not find it, and then you sought to fill that craving with something else but were left feeling empty? This is the contrast we find hidden in Matthew 5:6.

Jesus' private ministry has ended and His public ministry has just begun. According to Matthew 4:23-25, there was a multitude of people — including the sick and afflicted, the demon possessed and tormented, the epileptic and paralytic — gathered around Jesus. It was amazing. There was no social division, no caste system, just people who had gathered to hear Jesus. And Jesus, seeing the multitude and knowing their deepest need and craving, went up on a mountain and began to teach the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1).

There are many different thoughts about the meaning of this message. Some suggest this is God's plan for salvation, and if we ever hope to spend eternity in heaven, then we must live according to this message. Others suggest this message is more for the nations of the world. This is truly how our world can live in peace and harmony, by following Jesus' message. Still others suggest this message has no application at all for us today but rather pertains to the millennial reign indicated by the Book of Revelation. There is a group that believes this message has a deeper meaning and that it did apply to them, as well to us today.

Definition of righteousness

But some also suggest a deeper meaning that centers around one word — "righteousness." Many consider Matthew 5:20 to be the central verse in understanding this entire section of Scripture and I would agree.

Righteousness is whatever conforms to the revealed will of God, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

But how does this apply to our deepest cravings?

First we must look at the words themselves. Both "hunger" and "thirst" are present tense verbs. This carries the idea of being hungry and thirsty in this very moment. I am hungry in the morning, at

By Jerry Roberson

Jerry Roberson is pastor of Chatom Baptist Church. He earned his bachelor's degree from The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, master's degree from Luther Rice College and Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia, and doctorate from Southwest Bible College and Seminary in Humble, Texas. He has been serving in ministry for more than 19 years. He and his wife, Monica, have three children.



lunch and then again at supper. This entire process then occurs in the same manner every day of our lives. So it is a continual hunger and thirst that never ceases.

Next we look at various options we have to fulfill these needs. Everything around us is vying for the opportunity to fill this craving within us. Let me explain what I mean.

Little Debbie Snack Cakes — I personally love them — strive to create a craving within you. You pass by the aisle loaded down with these goodies and it seeks to appeal to your sweet tooth.

Other brands such as Costa, Apple and Michael Kors strive to create a craving within you. These brands seek to capture your attention to buy what you don't need with money you don't have to impress other people — and some of those people you don't even like.

The world strives to create a craving within you. It seeks to proclaim that you deserve it, that you are not hurting anyone and no one will ever know. The world entices us to fulfill our desires — envy, vengeance, intimacy and social status — in ways contrary to what we find in Scripture. It is an enticement to fulfill these desires instantly and in any manner possible.

But each one of these options leaves us unfulfilled.

But here Jesus explains how we can be filled with righteousness. Righteousness is whatever conforms to the revealed will of God, right? Here we discover what we have been looking for and what will wholly sat-

isfy us — His righteousness. We should all know the general will of God.

It begins with salvation.

Salvation provides for our basic needs through forgiveness, a new start, purpose and hope for the future. We can find all of these things when we acknowledge that we have sought to fulfill our appetites contrary to the will of God. Once we acknowledge this we can ask our Lord to forgive us, standing on the promise of Romans 10:9-11: "Whoever confesses Jesus as Lord and Savior will be saved."

It begins here but it does not end here. There is so much more to this concept of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. It means to allow the Word of God to transform your life so that you will see sin as our Lord views it. We would then have a desire to abstain from it or, as Paul pens so many times, "flee or run from sin." This leads us to righteousness.

This can only take place by reading and meditating on the Word of God. Careful study will ensure that we know and see the difference between what is acceptable in society and what is righteous before the Lord.

Responding in obedience

But reading will only take us so far if we do not obey what we have read. As a pastor, one of my favorite responses following a message is, "I sure wish ol' so and so were here to listen to your message, preacher." We need to realize that what we hear and read applies to our lives. Our Lord expects us to respond in obedience. He expects us to change and not someone else.

Salvation is complete when we share with others what Jesus Christ has done for us. We are a blessed people. Our Lord has done so much for us, yet we act as if He has told us, like the leper in Matthew 8:4, not to tell anyone. He has commanded us to share (see Matt. 28:18-20) because there are so many who are looking and longing for what will completely satisfy them, and we have experienced the answer.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for (long for, search for) righteousness, for they will be filled." You, my friend, are just one step away. Don't delay. Come today. ✠

Princeton Medical first in Southeast to use new heart valve

Birmingham's Princeton Baptist Medical Center recently became the first center in the southeast area of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and the panhandle of Florida to implant the newly FDA approved CoreValve Evolut PRO TAVR for the treatment of severe aortic stenosis for patients at high or extreme risk for open heart surgery.

Recently unveiled clinical data showed high survival, low rates of stroke and minimal paravalvular leak for the valve.

Aortic stenosis is a common but serious condition that occurs when the heart's aortic valve narrows, restricting blood flow from the heart to the aorta, which can severely weaken the heart muscle. If left untreated it can lead to heart failure and even death. Mustafa Ahmed, director of the Structural Heart Disease Program at Princeton Medical Center; Clifton Lewis, cardiac surgeon at Princeton; and their team have performed several hundred cases involving TAVR.

'Strive to advance'

Ahmed said, "One of our strongest areas of expertise is treating patients with aortic stenosis who likely could not undergo open-heart surgery. As established leaders in the field of cardiac surgery and advancing the field through research and the use of cutting-edge technology, we continue to strive to advance new minimally invasive treatments for our patients and surrounding communities."

The Evolut PRO device is created to be repositionable, so accuracy in placement and control during the procedure is increased. It also is delivered through the EnVeo R Delivery Catheter System, which is the lowest delivery platform currently on the market and provides a greater opportunity to treat patients with smaller vessels.

For more information, visit brookwood-baptisthealth.com/our-services/heart/structural-heart-and-valve. (Brookwood Baptist Health, TAB)



In the spring of 1975, Birmingham Baptist Medical Centers (BMC) appointed Emmett Johnson as its new CEO, according to *The Alabama Baptist*. He was previously the administrator of High Plains Baptist Hospital in Amarillo, Texas, and began his role as president of BMC in mid-June. While Johnson was with BMC the health care complex consisted of 912 beds. (TAB)

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

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BESSEMER

► **The Grace Place in Bessemer Association** will hold its annual Race for The Grace Place on May 13 at Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park in McCalla. There will be a 5K and a one-mile family fun run. To register visit www.imathlete.com/events/thegraceplace. Roger Boaz is director of The Grace Place. Barry Cospier is director of missions.

COFFEE

► **Faith Community Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival services May 7–10, 6 nightly. Hector Ramirez, former Faith Community church member, will speak. John Gunter is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **County Line Church, Camp Hill**, will celebrate its 182nd anniversary May 7, 10:45 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Mike Beck is pastor.

ELMORE

► **Ray McKenzie** was named the new director of missions for **Elmore Association**. He previously served as pastor of Cloverdale Church, Dothan. He also served at First Church, Leeds; Shiloh Church, Saraland; Stave Creek Church, Jackson; Dauphin Way Church, Mobile; First Church, Fairhope; as professor of religion at the University of Mobile (UM); and on various boards



MCKENZIE

and committees for Columbia Association, Samford University, Birmingham Association, Mobile Association, Clarke Association and the Alabama Baptist State Convention. He holds a bachelor's degree from UM and a master's degree and doctorate from New Orleans Seminary. McKenzie and his wife, Sandra, have two children and three grandchildren.

MARSHALL

► **Brad Johnson** is the new minister of worship and media of **Gilliam Springs Church, Arab**. He previously served as worship pastor at Agape Church, Scottsboro. He also served at Double Oak Community Church, Birmingham. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile. Johnson and his wife, Sarah, have two children. Jamey Pruett is pastor.



JOHNSON

ETOWAH

► **First Church, Hokes Bluff**, will celebrate its 175th anniversary May 7. Jerry Starling will speak in the 11 a.m. service and Pastor Ryan Morris will speak at 2 p.m. Allen Hudson will perform special music.

MUSCLE SHOALS

► **Faith Midway Church, Moulton**, will host The Kempters in concert May 14, 10:30 a.m. For more information call the church office at 256-974-9351. Jeff Griffis is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Mount Zion Church, Warrior**, will hold a 5K race May 13, 9 a.m. Proceeds will benefit Woman's Missionary Union's "Pure Water, Pure Love" project which provides water filters to the people groups with wells to provide clean drinking water. To register visit www.mzbc.com. Sammie Reid is pastor. ► **North Highland Church, Warrior**, will host revival services May 7–12, 7 nightly. Guest speakers will include Andrew Johnson and Pastor Steve Abney. Special music will be provided by The Davison Family. For more information call 205-913-0446.

RANDOLPH

► **William "Billy" Allen** is the new bivocational pastor of **Pleasant Grove Church, Roanoke**. He previously served as pastor of Stovall Church, Greenville, Georgia. His ministry began in 1985 and he took Bible classes from Bethany Divinity College and Seminary in Dothan during his early years of ministry. Allen and his wife, Patsy, have one child and two grandchildren.



ALLEN

SAND MOUNTAIN

► **New Home Church, Pisgah**, will hold its first camp meeting May 15–18, 7 nightly, in the newly built tabernacle. Guest speakers will be Phil Hoskins, Benny Hatfield and Jeff LaBorg. David Smith is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Fourmile Church, Wilsonville**, will celebrate homecoming and its 193rd anniversary May 6, 10 a.m.–noon. Joe Stone, pastor of Kline Church, Harpersville, will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Roger Chambers is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Seddon Church, Pell City**, will host the **St. Clair Association Evangelism Conference 2017** on May 12, 6:30 p.m. Scott Dawson and Cody Hale will speak. The Seddon Church praise team and choir will perform special music. Chris Crain is director of missions. Dale Foote is pastor. ☩

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Kathleen Oswalt



OSWALT

*Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery
Montgomery Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSES: Hebrews 13:5, Genesis 1:26

FAVORITE HYMN: "Out of Ivory Palaces into This World of Woe"

HOBBIES: Studying the Bible and gardening

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed for 31 years after 47 years of marriage to husband, David Parrish Oswalt Sr.; sons, the late David Parrish Oswalt Jr. and Don Lee Oswalt; daughter, Barbara Ann Pouncy; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren

Kathleen Oswalt, 94, of Wetumpka, has been teaching Sunday School for 74 years — 31 years at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery. Teaching the Bible "is where I get more satisfaction than anything I do," she said. Currently she teaches the Hope Sunday School class, a large class of senior ladies dubbed "the Go-Go Girls" because they are "on the go." They focus on helping prepare others for eternity, she said. In 2002 an injury paralyzed Oswalt and she was told she would not walk again. Miraculously within three months she was walking and has not slowed since.

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

A: When I was seven years old, we used to have what they would call protracted meetings, where visiting preachers would set up tents and have intense teaching morning and night. I walked the aisle during a meeting at night. My mother's songs and the things around me made Christ the most important thing. My parents did not attend church. I attended by myself.

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

A: I think it was when my baby, David, was born and I was carrying him to church and they needed someone to keep the nursery. From that, I just grew. I started out with the little ones, to the high school, to the singles, the young married couples. ... I've been studying the Bible all my life and I still

don't know it (completely). It is a joy and illumination to my life.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: I never thought of demand, but what I get out of it. It demands consistency of belief. I have to live what I teach. It is a pleasure. It is not a job to me. It is a privilege, an opportunity and a blessing to me. It is not something I have to do; it's something I want to do.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: The joy of the Lord. It feeds me with joy and satisfaction and a hunger to know more and do more.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: Every day they feed me with love. We love one another because God is love.

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

A: As long as God lets me live, I will do what I'm doing and try to do it better.

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

A: Just to spread God's joy and God's love. More importantly, we have to be saved before we can enter eternity with Jesus, which isn't very far for me. The best things on earth are nothing compared to being with Jesus.

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

A: My security, my strength, my joy — Jesus means everything to me. ... I want to reflect the joy and the love of God. ☩

More adults living together

Fewer adults are getting married, and more and more are opting to live together instead, according to U.S. Census Bureau data from 2016.

About 18 million are cohabitating, up 29 percent from 2007. About half of that number is under the age of 35. But another quarter is from a growing sector — Americans age 50 and older. According to a Pew Research Center analysis, the number of older adults living together grew by 75 percent in the past nine years.

"This increase is faster than

that of other age groups during this time period and is driven in part by the aging of baby boomers," wrote Renee Stepler, a research analyst at Pew.

The rising number coincides with divorce rates, she wrote. "With the higher divorce rates ... more individuals are unmarried and available for partnering or re-partnering."

Most 50-and-older adults living with an unmarried partner have previously been married. But 27 percent have never married, according to Pew. (TAB)

Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**

**Focus
on**

ONE MISSION

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission **ONE PROGRAM:** The Cooperative Program **MANY MINISTRIES:** Great Commission Ministries

news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions | (800) 264-1224 | alsbom.org

Did you know that one out of four girls and one out of six boys will be sexually abused before age 18? Further, two out of three victims will not tell until adulthood, if ever.

The church should be the safest place on earth for a child, but sometimes it is not. Richard Hammar, nationally-known CPA and attorney, reports that for almost a decade, sexual abuse is the number one reason churches end up in court.



By Lee Wright
State Missionary

The cost is \$25 for the first person and \$20 for each additional person in a group.

Our speakers will be attorneys Greg Love and Kimberlee Norris who are recognized experts in legal standards of care related to child sexual abuse, providing crisis response to ministries

the church. The abuser can be an adult, an adolescent or even an older child.

"Is Your Ministry Safe?" Workshop

There is no physical profile of an abuser; we must observe behavior. The "Is Your Ministry Safe?" Workshop will teach church leaders, teachers and others involved in preschool, children and youth ministries how to be aware of dangers in the church and the behaviors that could lead to an incident.

The workshop will be held on Tuesday, September 19, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at Canaan Baptist Church, 2543 Morgan Rd., Bessemer. Registration and fellowship will begin at 9 a.m.

'Is Your Ministry Safe?' Workshop

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2017
10 A.M. - 3 P.M. • CANAAN BAPTIST CHURCH,
BESSEMER

and churches nationwide. They litigate sexual abuse cases across the United States and have a unique perspective, providing valuable counsel to churches.

What's different about this conference?

Greg and Kim will train participants in how a predator selects and grooms victims:

1. so that all will be aware of potential inappropriate behavior.
2. so that we can adopt standards of appropriate behavior.
3. so that a potential predator will realize that this church knows how the game is played and will opt out from serving with minors.

Greg and Kim will train churches how to better screen volunteers:

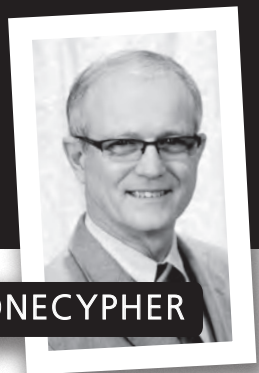
1. so that some will opt out (who should opt out).
2. so that we may know the right questions to ask and items to look for while conducting background checks.

For registration information, go online to alsbom.org/ministrysafe or contact Ministry Assistant Nancy Cornett at **1-800-264-1225, ext. 208**, or **(334) 613-2208**, ncornett@alsbom.org. For other information, please contact State Missionary Lee Wright at

1-800-264-1225, ext. 241, or **(334) 613-2241**, lwright@alsbom.org



Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



STONECYPHER

Where

do I start, and how do I end? The Cooperative Program of Great Commission Baptists is our Lord's anointed means of effectively fulfilling the Great Commission.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 provides this principle: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor."

However, the Cooperative Program goes well beyond the "two." More than 45,000 Southern Baptist churches with an approximate total membership of 16 million support the Cooperative Program.

Think about the force of this unprecedented missions movement. Every faithful Southern Baptist church – whatever the size, circumstances or location – shares in the wonderful, incredible, global missions involvement.

The greatness of this missions movement is seen in how these offerings flow from individuals through churches into the 42 state conventions and then into the Great Commission ministries of Southern Baptists. This is the same way streams flow into rivers and rivers flow into the ocean.

I have always been pleased by the effectiveness of the stewardship of Cooperative Program resources. Our Southern Baptist Convention, through the Cooperative Program, invests more than 70 percent of receipts in world missions ministries (international and North American). More than 22 percent is invested in theological education ministries of our six fine seminaries.

May I give a word of personal testimony here? I have family members who serve as IMB missionaries.

Their ministry would be impossible without the Cooperative Program.

My opportunity to earn degrees from Southwestern Seminary and Southern Seminary would have been impossible without the support of the Cooperative Program for our seminaries.

Our Lord greatly blesses and uses the Cooperative Program, which affords all Southern Baptist churches to tithe. Each church encourages church members to tithe. I believe if we ask our membership to tithe, we as churches should tithe also. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse..." (Malachi 3:10). We have a wonderful opportunity as churches to tithe through the Cooperative Program.

Ray Stonecypher, pastor of Piney Grove Baptist Church in Ardmore, serves as a trustee for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.



ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

Super Summer Alabama

July 9-14, 2017, Samford University

Super Summer Alabama is an intense week of discipleship and leadership training for students

8th-12th grade (completed). An amazing "beyond the basics" discipleship experience!

For registration, cost, camp schedule and other details, please go online to: supersummeral.org

For more information, please contact State Missionary

Scooter Kellum, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 280, or (334) 613-2280,

skellum@alsbom.org or State Missionary Jamie Baldwin,

ext. 240, (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.

super summer
ten
samford university - july 10-14

FOCUS on One Mission

THERE IS HARDLY ANY WAY TO OVERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A SIMPLE WORD OF AFFIRMATION LIKE "THANK YOU."

Perhaps it is because words of affirmation are one of my primary love languages, but I believe saying thank you is more than just southern hospitality. None of

us has gotten where we are in life without the help and encouragement of many others along the way.

David Williams, pastor of First Baptist Church, Slocomb, shared with me while we worked together in upstate New York, "We all got into the river while it was already running, and it will continue to flow after we will get out."

I recently received a handwritten, hand-delivered thank you note for an expression of sympathy that I had presented for this person. I was blown away as to how such a simple gesture could make such a profound difference.

Contrast that with reports I have heard recently of pastors failing to thank their flock

for their faithfulness and my experience with church planters who hosted mission teams and failed to thank them for their service. It is simple but powerful. It can be done through spoken word, written note, email, text, gift card and many other ways.

Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for the privilege

By Lamar Duke
State Missionary



to be one of your missionaries. It is a joy to serve among you!

State Missionary Lamar Duke, lead church planting strategist, may be contacted at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

on **ONEPROGRAM**: The Cooperative Program **MANYMINISTRIES**: Great Commission Ministries



alabama ACTS 1:8 connections

Thursday, August 3, 2017
9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

First Baptist Church, Birmingham

a18c.org/a18c

COST: \$10 per person (includes lunch)
REGISTRATION: a18c.org/a18c

Join us for the third annual celebration of Acts 1:8 Connections. It's an opportunity to meet:

- ▲ representatives from all IMB affinities.
- ▲ church planters from NAMB.
- ▲ church planters who are in Alabama.

Learn about their work. You will have the opportunity to connect with them and their work during three sessions to meet with these Alabama folk who are sharing the Gospel in Alabama, across the U.S. and around the world.

For more information about Acts 1:8 Connections, please contact State Missionary Scotty Goldman at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 387, or (334) 613-2387, sgoldman@alsbom.org.

SPRING CELEBRATION

Saturday
May 20, 2017

First Baptist Church, 305 S. Perry St.,
Montgomery

REGISTER ONLINE AT ALSBOM.ORG/SPRINGRING

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, 1.800.264.1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613.2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

SpringRing is a handbell gathering workshop. We meet, greet and ring together with handbell favorites of the groups participating. Each leader of the group (can appoint a leader) will conduct the piece that you choose for the whole group. We will learn new music, perfect it together and then end our day with a Worship Ring Celebration.



Myers-Mallory

State Missions Offering

WMU

WEEK OF

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SEPTEMBER 10-17, 2017

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Myers-Mallory.org



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

State Goal:
\$1,000,000



Speak

Voice of Influence
(formerly Youth Evangelism Conference)

July 21-22

Vaughn Forest Church, 8660 Vaughn Rd., Montgomery
Cost: \$30 per person

messages from
Acton Bowen
Rick Burgess
Josh Holland



worship with
Rush of Fools

speak.ymlink.org

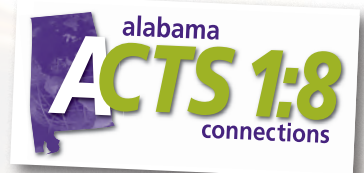
For more information, please contact State Missionary Scooter Kellum at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 280, or (334) 613-2280, skellum@alsbom.org.

Faith-Focused Safe Travel Training: Level A

State Board of Missions,
2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery
9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

CHOOSE FROM THREE DATES:

- ~ Thursday, June 1, 2017
- ~ Thursday, August 31, 2017
- ~ Thursday, October 26, 2017



Cost: \$25 per person (*non-refundable, includes training, brunch and snacks*). Limited to 20 participants.

These generic Faith Focused Safe-Travel Trainings will be led by **David Dose**, founder and president of StrongHold Security Stewardship. The training will be taught via webinar/Skype. The completion of Level A training will provide you and your team Emergency Traveler Support while traveling overseas.

This training is highly recommended for all churches taking mission trips and is required for participants in State Board of Missions projects.

For more information or to register, go online to a18c.org/ffst or contact Ministry Assistant Sheron Poole at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 298, or (334) 613-2298, spoole@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPP Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

TRAINING FOR CHURCH LEADERS

THE SUMMIT

Maybe you have been teaching Sunday School, facilitating a discipleship class, leading a missions study, or working with a men's, women's, singles, seniors, children's, preschool or other group in your church for years.

Maybe you are a long-time pastor or have served on a church staff for quite a while. Maybe you feel like there's

nothing new to learn. Really?

Well, several people who came to **The Summit: For Church Leaders at Shocco Springs** in August 2016 told us that so much training is offered at this event that they couldn't take in all the sessions in which they would like to participate. That's a great problem to have!

Here are some of the comments participants wrote

on their evaluation forms:

- "The course selection was so diverse and informative. Fantastic opportunity for any staff or lay person."
- "As a leader, I can always learn more to become a better leader. When I attend The Summit, I am always encouraged and challenged."
- "I always learn new concepts, and I am always

reminded of proven and valuable concepts I have neglected. Excellent!"

- "The only problem was having to choose from so many good conferences."

There are always new things to learn, so whether you have extensive experience as a church leader or none, begin making plans now to come to **The Summit: For Church**

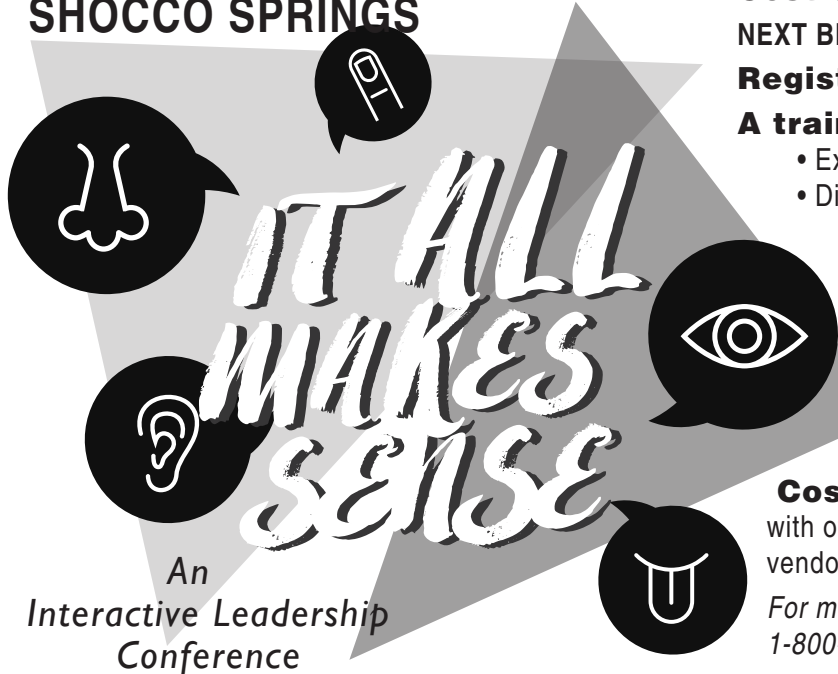
Shocco Springs
August 4-5, 2017
Register online:
shoccosprings.org or
call 1.800.280.1105

Leaders at Shocco Springs,
Friday and Saturday, August
4-5, 2017.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission

**JULY 7-8, 2017
SHOCCO SPRINGS**



Cost: \$125 per person (3-4 people per room), \$20 deposit per person due at registration.

NEXT BEST PRICE DEADLINE: MAY 11

Registration: alsbom.org/children-summit or 1-800-280-1105

A training event for children's choir leaders:

- Experience the fun of teaching music to any age preschooler or child.
- Discover new ways to make choir or music time a favorite for kids.
- Watch the love for worship come alive.
- Mingle with others in similar situations.
- Learn to use games and toys to add more excitement in your music time.
- Hands-on learning and fun in children's choirs.
- Great conference for day care workers.
- Can be used for CEU credits!

**children's choir
summit**

Cost includes interactive sessions from top-notch clinicians, breakout times to interact with other choir workers, lodging, three meals, "munch & mingle" fellowship, Pine Lake music vendor to purchase whatever needs you might have in your choir, and much more.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

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Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

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(girls completing grades 9-12)

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(coeds completing grades 2-6)

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(girls completing grades 2-6)

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 WorldSong Camp
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For more information go to alsbom.org/boyscamp or contact Ministry Assistant Monica Thompson at (334) 613-2227, mthompson@alsbom.org.

North Regional Sunday School & Discipleship Leader Training

Saturday, August 26, 2017
8 a.m.-noon

Lindsay Lane Baptist Church
1300 Lindsay Lane South, Athens

Age-graded leadership training for teachers and workers in Sunday School and Discipleship, as well as training for staff members, Sunday School/Discipleship directors and general leaders will be available. Each leader will have the opportunity to attend as many as three conferences with multiple topics from which to choose.

Registration:
alsbom.org/north
 You will also find a complete list of speakers, topics and schedules on this web page at least six weeks prior to the event.

Price:
 Early registration is \$5 per person if registered by August 24.
 Registration received after August 24 will be \$10 per person.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Soteriology

Salvation as Forgiveness

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

The common term translated into English in the New Testament as “forgiveness” can be found in a variety of contexts with a whole cluster of ideas and images. For example the word sometimes carries the idea of “sending away.”

Behind this image of “sending away” is most notably that of the scapegoat in the ritual of the annual Hebrew celebration of the Day of Atonement. In one part of the ritual, the high priest placed his hands on the head of a goat, confessed the nation’s sins and allowed the goat to be led into the wilderness. It was a vivid picture of the forgiveness of confessed sins in terms of those sins being sent away.

In another context the same term is used with the idea of “release from captivity” as in Luke 4:18. That passage tells of Jesus reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth. Among the listed functions of the Messiah in that passage was “to proclaim liberty to the captives.” Forgiveness carries the idea of liberation from sin’s bondage.

Forgiving debts

That same term was used in yet another context to speak of the cancellation of a debt or obligation. Jesus used this word in His parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:27 to describe the action of a compassionate master toward his indebted servant, saying he “forgave him the debt.”

In the financial world we often speak of making payments on financial obligations as “remitting” them. This common term for forgiveness lies behind the use of “remission” to speak of forgiveness. Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection as the basis for a worldwide preaching of “repentance and remission” (Luke 24:47). A debt may be cancelled not only when a compassionate creditor chooses simply to forgive the debt and thus forego collection on it, but also when the debtor makes full payment.

The good news of the gospel is that,

while the debt belongs to us, Christ paid it in full for us — a debt He did not owe and one we could not pay. As the songwriter put it, “Jesus Paid It All” for all who trust Him as Savior.

Saving work of Christ

God is the subject of all these meanings of forgiveness. Only God can take away or send away sins, release captives caught in sin’s bondage, cancel a sinner’s sin debt or make full remittance for that debt.

In forgiving the sins of repentant sinners, God’s action centers in the saving work of Christ. After referring to Christ as the Beloved, Ephesians 1:7 declares, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.” In speaking of the saving death of Christ, Hebrews 9:26 reminds us that “at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Blessed future

We do well to remember that divine forgiveness frees us from our sinful past and secures for us a blessed future. We also do well to ponder the fact that when God scans the earth for someone whom He can use in the present time, He is not in search of angels disguised in human flesh. In His search, God also is not looking for perfect human beings, since there are none.

He is searching for ordinary men and women like you and me who have been forgiven and are thereby prompted to respond in worship and praise, as well as freed to serve Him out of gratitude and love. †

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.



Religious freedom, fantasy sports hot topics in Legislature

Doctor-assisted suicide, fantasy sports, church security, faith-based adoption and church daycare bills all saw movement through the Legislature in April.

The forward motion of the Alabama Child Placing Agency Inclusion Act and the Child Care Safety Act were positives for religious freedom, but gambling proponents also gained ground when a fantasy sports bill was approved by the House of Representatives. The latest updates are as follows:

► **HB 277 (sponsored by Rep. Pebblin Warren, D-District 82)** — Child Care Safety Act; keeps church-run daycares free from requiring DHR licensing but adds a few safeguards including annual inspections by DHR to ensure daycares are run by a church and children are physically protected; annual inspections by local fire and health departments of church daycares; and reporting of some additional information to DHR. *(Passed out of the House, waiting consideration by the Senate.)*

Birmingham lawyer Eric Johnston, on behalf of the Southeast Law Institute, said in a memo that this bill initially burdened religious freedom, but that “as amended, HB 277 does not require much more than under current law” and that the added requirements “are the least burdensome method” of legally protecting the children in church-run daycares.

► **HB 354 (sponsored by Rep. Alan Boothe, R-District 89)** — Fantasy Contests Act; requires registration of fantasy sports operators and promises consumer protection procedures. Exempts fantasy sports from prohibition against gambling. Partner bill is

SB 270. *(Passed out of the House, waiting consideration by the Senate.)*

In a close vote (43–38), the House decided fantasy sports betting like FanDuel and DraftKings are more a game of skill than chance, which led to the majority’s conclusion that fantasy sports don’t fall under Alabama’s anti-gambling regulations.

► **HB 24 (sponsored by Rep. Rich Wingo, R-District 62)** — Alabama Child Placing Agency Inclusion Act; protects faith-based adoption and foster care agencies from placing children into homes that go against agencies’ religious beliefs. Partner bill is SB 145. *(Passed out of the House and Senate, awaiting Gov. Kay Ivey’s signature.)*

According to the Alabama Political Reporter, Ivey is considering adding an executive amendment to the bill which would send it back to the Legislature for another round of votes. No specifics of the possible amendment had been released at press time.

► **HB 36 (sponsored by Rep. Lynn Greer, R-District 2)** — Alabama Church Protection Act; establishes church security programs and authorizes designated members to carry firearms. *(Passed out of the House, then passed out of the Senate with one amendment. Back in the House.)*

► **HB 96 (sponsored by Rep. Mack Butler, R-District 30)** — Assisted Suicide Ban Act; prohibits anyone from providing aid in dying and enacts penalties under certain conditions. *(Passed out of the House and Senate, awaiting Gov. Ivey’s signature.)*

For additional bills TAB is following, visit thealabamabaptist.org and search “legislature.” (TAB)

FBC Leroy holds note burning ceremony



Photo courtesy of FBC Leroy

First Baptist Church, Leroy, celebrates paying off its \$750,000 remodeling mortgage more than two years early with a note burning April 2. Committee members are (front row, l to r): Kent Ikner (chairman), Wayne Moseley, Elsie Patrick and Don Elmore. Also participating in the service are David Delegal (back row, left), associate pastor of music and senior adults, and Chris Giles (back row, right), associate pastor of youth. Giles is preaching on Sundays as the church searches for a new pastor.



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ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Lineville pastor Colquett to retire June 30

After serving Lineville Baptist Church for 33 years, Pastor Jerry Colquett will retire June 30.

Colquett, a native of Opp, became a Christian at age 12 and was baptized by then Pastor Andrew Tampling at First Baptist Church, Opp.



COLQUETT

At age 18, Colquett felt called into full-time ministry. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama and a graduate degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Prior to taking on his role as pastor of Lineville Baptist, Colquett also served as pastor of Little River Baptist Church, Uriah, and Carrville Baptist Church, Tallassee.

In a letter to the congregation Colquett wrote, "We love you. You are our family and have been faithful to us and have tended to

our needs throughout the years. ... We have shared God's Word with you and watched you grow in your love of our Lord and in your service to Him. ... We believe we leave you a strong, vital and growing church and that you will continue to be the church God has ordained in this place."

Colquett said he is looking forward to a redirection of his ministry to interim work, short-term missions and having "a clean slate for God to use."

He and his wife, Carolyn, have two children and four grandchildren with one more on the way. (Neisha Roberts)

World's 25 most populated countries vary greatly in freedom of religion

Twenty-five of the world's 196 countries hold more than 5 billion of the world's 7.5 billion people. In those nations, two thirds of the world's residents live out their life and faith, and according to a Pew Research study released in April, the amount of restriction on just how they do that varies widely.

Those 25 nations contain some of the worst offenders, Egypt and Russia, as well as some of the least restrictive — Brazil and Japan.

"Among the most populous countries, Egypt and Russia were the only ones to be among the top five (worldwide) in both government restrictions and social hostilities," wrote Michael Lipka, a senior editor focusing on religion at Pew Research Center.

But even though they weren't in the top five, India, Pakistan and Nigeria are still populous countries with significant limits on religious beliefs and practices, Lipka wrote. These limits could be in the form of pressure from the government or from the culture and society at large.

"In India, for example, some state governments restricted religious conversion and others banned cow slaughter," Lipka wrote, noting that this favors the widespread Hindu view that cows are sacred and limits those views and actions of other religions.

But the social pressure there was



CAIRO, EGYPT

Reuters photo

even greater, he wrote. More than 560 incidents of communal violence happened in India in the first 10 months of 2015, resulting in 90 deaths and 1,688 injuries.

And Nigeria's social hostilities were deemed even worse, largely in part to the thousands of deaths attributed to the extremist group Boko Haram.

Extreme level

Egypt, on the other hand, had the most extreme level of religious restrictions imposed by the government.

"For example the Egyptian government 'failed to protect Christians targeted by kidnappings and extortion,' the State Department reported, a sign that a lack of security for Egypt's Coptic Christian community was an issue long

before the [Islamic State group] bombings at two churches in Egypt on Palm Sunday this year," Lipka wrote.

Russia's government restrictions also were noted as "very high," up a little from the year before thanks to an anti-extremism law that imposes limits on religious minority groups, Pew reported.

In some of the world's most populous countries — including Brazil, Japan, South Africa and the Philippines — government restrictions were low. But there were social hostilities across the board for all 25 nations, according to Pew data. This, Lipka wrote, might indicate "that large populations carry an inherently greater risk of incidents of social hostilities involving religion, simply because there are more people." (TAB)

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LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



CHURCH ATTENDANCE

I'm an old member of a Baptist church and I keep seeing articles in *The Alabama Baptist* about how to grow your church and keep attendance up.

I thought I needed to remind our pastors that they seem to be forgetting two things about the message that God is good — God is also righteous and just.

I haven't heard a message about hell or totally focusing on Christ for sometime.

We keep telling people they are going to hell when in fact they are in hell and we want to get them to heaven through Christ who died for them.

We need to tell people there is more than just coming to church on Sunday and then forgetting

about Him through the week.

We need to remember WDJJ (what did Jesus do). Matthew, Mark and John all tell you.

We like to form our prayer groups and pray about the condition of the church but not about the people around us who need some aid. Instead of forming a prayer group why don't we just talk to God all day long. It does me good.

Lets get back to the gospel of our grandfathers and Peter and Paul and let God do the rest.

James E. Sartain
Semmes, Ala.

EASTER MUSIC

The "Easter Music" letter to the editor in the April 13 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* stirred my deep appreciation for those who attend

and support our churches and worship services on a regular basis.

Thank you for your faithful involvement. It is encouraging to see you on the third Sunday of January, the first Sunday of March, the fourth Sunday of July, etc.

Your faithfulness means more to the Lord's work than you can imagine. Your faithfulness sets the tone for our regular worship experiences. See you next Sunday.

Robert W. Kirkland
Fruitdale, Ala.

GROWING CHURCHES

I am writing in response to the article "Pastors: A quick tip for growing your church" which was published in the April 20 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

While I understand the challenge posed to the church and our denomination in a culture that is increasingly syncretistic and skeptical of mainline Christianity, it should be noted that men and programs do not grow churches. Only the Holy Spirit can add to the body.

We may plant and others may water but only God gives the in-

crease. The Church grows spiritually before it grows numerically.

Therefore the pastor's focus must not be on what's absent but building relationships among those present.

Indeed the words of Luke in Acts 2:42-47 establish that as the early Church continued in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, prayer, loving care, faithfulness to the holy exercises and praising God, He added to the Church such as should be saved.

An article in the Spring 2017 edition of *Facts and Trends* magazine supports this biblical precedent, pointing out that growing churches are characterized by the frequency of prayer, Bible study and strong orthodoxy.

Believing in the power of submission and obedience, may we do likewise.

Leander C. Jones
Tuscaloosa, Ala. †

UPCOMING EVENTS

To address the financial issues that mid- to smaller-sized churches face daily, Samford University's Ministry Training Institute in Birmingham will host "Small Church, Big Responsibility: How to be Financially Savvy No Matter Your Size" on June 3.

The event will be held on the third floor of Samford's Cooney-Sullivan Field House from 9 a.m. to noon and will feature longtime pastor Gary Fenton and state missionary Jim Swedenburg as guest speakers.

For more information or to register for the event, visit www2.samford.edu/eve/index.php?formid=1643. (TAB)

Aspiring writers from across the Southeast will have the opportunity to hear from editors, agents, seasoned writers and authors at the 26th annual Southern Christian Writer's Conference (SCWC). Set to be held June 2-3 at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, SCWC will feature 15 speakers in various panel discussions, keynote addresses and breakout sessions.

For more information or to register, visit www.scwconference.com. (TAB)

175th

ANNIVERSARY

First Baptist Church of Hokes Bluff

May 7, 2017

11 a.m. — Jerry Starling

12 p.m. — Fellowship Lunch
(catered)

2 p.m. — Ryan Morris

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TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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Full time for FBC Chalkville, Birmingham, Alabama. Please send resumé to: 2100 Old Springville Rd., Birmingham, AL 35215, Attn: Burl McWaters or email fbccchalkville@att.net.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in Russellville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please

send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 37050 Hwy 724, Russellville, AL 35654.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pineywood Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Requirements will be discussed between the candidate and church committee. Please forward resumé with references to: office@pineywoodonline.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER TO STUDENTS

Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church in Cordova is seeking a minister to students. The ideal candidate is called to youth ministry with a desire invest in the lives of students. Email resumé to: fred.mpbcb@outlook.com.

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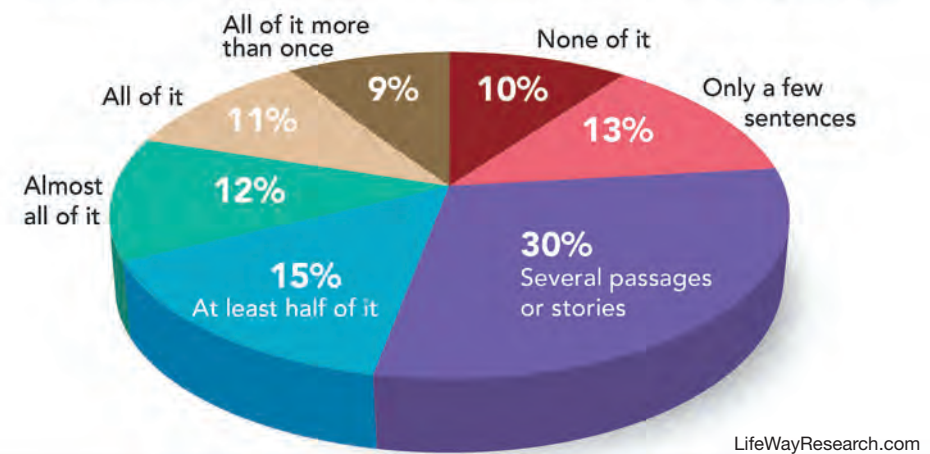
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- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

'Living and effective'

Among Americans:

How much of the Bible have you personally read?



Americans are fond of Bible but don't actually read it, LifeWay Research shows

By Bob Smietana
LifeWay Christian Resources

Americans have a positive view of the Bible. And many say the Scriptures are filled with moral lessons for today.

However, more than half of Americans have read little or none of the Bible.

Less than one-quarter of those who have ever read a Bible have a systematic plan for reading Scripture each day. And one-third of Americans never pick it up on their own, according to a new study from Nashville-based LifeWay Research.

Small wonder many church leaders worry about biblical illiteracy, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"Most Americans don't know firsthand the overall story of the Bible because they rarely pick it up," McConnell said. "Even among worship attendees less than half read the Bible daily."

Many copies at home

Almost 9 out of 10 households (87 percent) own a Bible, according to the American Bible Society, and many households have three.

But Bible reading remains spotty. LifeWay Research surveyed 1,000 Americans about their views of the Bible and found significant splits in how familiar they are with the Christian Scripture. One in 5 Americans, LifeWay Research found, has read through the Bible at least once.

That includes 11 percent who've read the entire Bible once, and 9

percent who've read it through multiple times. Another 12 percent say they have read almost all of the Bible, while 15 percent have read at least half.

About half of Americans (53 percent) have read relatively little of the Bible. One in 10 has read none of it, while 13 percent have read a few sentences. Thirty percent say they have read several passages or stories.

Americans also differ in how they approach reading the Bible. Twenty-two percent read a little bit each day, in a systematic approach. One-third (35 percent) never pick it up at all, while 30 percent look up things in the Bible when they need to. Nineteen percent reread their favorite parts, while 17 percent flip open the Bible and read a passage at random. One-quarter (27 percent) read sections suggested by others, while 16 percent say they look things up to help others.

Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely (49 percent) to

read a little bit each day than those without evangelical beliefs (16 percent).

Correlation to services

The more often Americans attend church, the more likely they are to read the Bible daily. Thirty-nine percent of those who attend worship services at least once a month read a bit every day, while only 13 percent of those who attend services less than once a month pick up a Bible daily.

Overall, Americans have a positive view of the Bible. Thirty-seven percent say it is helpful today, while a similar number call it life-changing (35 percent) or true (36 percent). Half (52 percent) say the Bible is a good source for morals. Few say the Bible is outdated (14 percent), harmful (7 percent) or bigoted (8 percent).

Americans are split over the nature of the Bible as a book. Four in 10 say it's a book worth reading over and over.

Overall Americans seem to like the Bible but don't have much ur-

gency about reading it, McConnell noted. One place Americans are still likely to hear the Bible read is in church.

A LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors found most give out free Bibles to those who need them (86 percent), include reminders about reading the Bible in their sermons (86 percent) and include Bible readings in worship services (76 percent).

A little like exercise

McConnell said Americans treat reading the Bible a little like exercise. They know it's important and helpful but they don't do it. The key for churches, he said, is finding ways for people to experience how reading the Bible can change their lives.

"Scripture describes itself as 'living and effective,' according to the Book of Hebrews," McConnell said. "Those who have a habit of reading through the Bible a little each day say they have experienced this ... life-changing quality." ✠

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 7

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

DO I HAVE THE STRENGTH?
Matthew 26:36-46

Committed to the Task (36-39)

Having completed the Last Supper, the disciples went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus said all of the disciples would abandon Him in order to fulfill Zechariah 13:7. Everything had to go according to God's plan and Jesus knew this because He is God. Matthew, of all the Gospel writers, continually pointed out how Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection were all fulfilling Scripture. This is important because it shows that Jesus is the prophesized Messiah; it shows that God was in control of the events surrounding Jesus' ministry; and it gives us confidence that God will be true to all of His prophecies.

Peter refused to believe he would deny Jesus. But he proved to be more disloyal than the others, not only abandoning Jesus at His most difficult hour, but also denying Him later on. However, in spite of this, Jesus forgave and restored Peter, ultimately using Peter as a pillar in the Church. What a powerful testimony of forgiveness. This should give us hope that even when we sin against God, He forgives us and still uses us for His glory. There is no room to wallow in guilt. The gospel frees us from guilt when we confess our sins and repent.

Jesus was genuinely fearful of the crucifixion. As a human, Jesus knew the pain He would face. As the Son of God, He knew how He would be carrying the sins of the world on Him. However, despite

these fears, Jesus prayed for God's will to be done. He knew the Father's way was the best way and He was obedient to following the will of the Father, even to His own death. This should inspire us to do the same. Even though we face trials, we know we have a Savior who faced trials for us. God knows what we are going through and He promises to be there for us even through death.

Asleep on the Job (40-43)

The disciples were committed to Christ yet they still fell asleep. As humans we have weaknesses and we need to be mindful of these and do our best to overcome them. One way to be ready when we face temptation is to know Scripture. Jesus used Scripture when He faced temptation, and it would behoove us to know what the Bible says to help us know what God wants from us and how to respond when we are faced with temptations.

Realizing the Moment (44-46)

When the guards came to arrest Jesus, the disciples were asleep. They would soon abandon Jesus and go into hiding even though they said they would stay with Him even unto death (see John 11:16).

God's plan was going to go forward with or without the disciples because God's plans cannot be thwarted. This does not give us an excuse to sit by idly and do nothing for God's kingdom but it should encourage us to participate in God's kingdom knowing that nothing can come against us that will stop God's will from coming to pass. We should have a confidence that the success of our ministry is not dependent upon us, but dependent upon God. We do the best we can, but even when we fail God still loves us and forgives us, lifting us up to move on again in the victory of the resurrection. †

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

LIFE AT HOME
Ephesians 5:22-28; 6:1-9

In today's passage the instructions to wives and husbands; children and parents; and slaves and masters work their way down the rigid tiers of the Roman household. The "father of the family" outranks everyone, including his wife, and slaves rank lower than children even when they are in charge of the children's education. Similar passages appear in Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Timothy 6:1-2, Titus 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 2:18. These teachings are examples of conventional moral instruction in Paul's day ("household tables" or "household codes") and appear in secular writings as well.

Identity in Christ defines human relationships. (5:22-28; 6:1-9)

Some read these passages to say that in today's Christian family structure God has established a role for each member. In such a reading God has ordained the wife's submission to her husband as He has established children's obedience of their parents. Hierarchy is seen as a reflection, not of value, but of the divine created order.

However, in Roman society, people did indeed place a value on social rank and status, including a person's sex. Moreover we cannot simply import the passage unaltered into modern practice. If we did, in light of the many forms of slavery that exist today, we should have to inform slaves everywhere that God tells them to obey their masters and that they should not seek freedom any more than the buying and selling of human beings should be abolished.

Christians who wish to establish godly families might also wish to read other parts of the Bible. They might read Genesis 2 in which God makes (literally "builds") the woman from the man's side to be "a helper who stands beside him." As we know happens, the humans disobey God and the woman's subordination re-

sults from sin rather than from God's plan.

Other biblical passages help Christians understand the possibility that wives and husbands can build relationships based on cooperation. For example in Matthew, Jesus proclaims a coming Kingdom in which earthly hierarchies, which do indeed reflect value, will be upended. God's people start living now as if the Kingdom is fully present and realized.

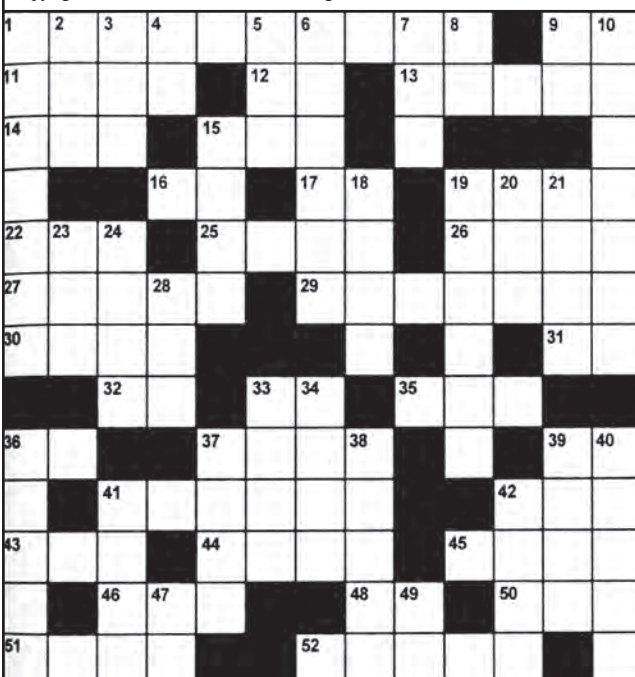
Paul himself proclaims a new reality for believers "in Christ." He calls that reality a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), suggesting the brokenness of creation that results from sin, including Eve's subordination to Adam, is passing away. Similarly in Galatians 3:27-28, Paul declares: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul appears to be saying all such distinctions between people no longer pertain. Of course, they still exist. It would be silly to say that baptism erases one's ethnicity or slavery or sex. What is gone then? Apparently, for those who have been baptized "into Christ," what no longer remains are distinctions that result in one person's subordination to another, whether the distinctions are human-made or God-created.

Finally take a look at what Paul says at the very start of the passage. He may well be saying, in Christian families, everything that follows is governed by this commandment: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Paul envisions a Christian household that contrasts with the Roman norm, in which the dominant male has the authority of life and death over every other member. Romans arbitrarily established the male as the household head without regard for his capabilities or ethics. Paul suggests that mutual submission, first to Christ and then to one another, is a better model. †



Christian Crossword

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Across

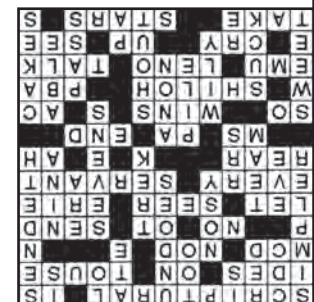
- Having to do with the Bible.
- There _____ none good but one. (Mark 10:18)
- The _____ of March.
- _____ the money.
- To utilize.
- 1,400 in Roman numerals.
- To drift off to sleep.
- Your children ... received _____ correction. (Jer. 2:30)
- Old Testament. (abbr.)
- Whom the Father will _____ in my name. (John 14:26)
- They _____ go the man. (Judg. 1:25)
- Art not thou a _____? (2 Sam. 15:27)
- One of the Great Lakes.
- They came to him from _____ quarter. (Mark 1:45)
- Paul, a _____ of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:1)
- To raise a child, or to _____ a child.
- Sound of satisfaction.
- Manuscript. (abbr.)
- Dad.
- The harvest is the _____ of the world. (Matt. 13:39)

- _____ Abram departed. (Gen. 12:4)
- The one who gets to the finish line first _____ the prize.
- Alternating Current. (abbr.)
- Israel assembled together at _____. (Josh. 18:1)
- Policeman's Benevolent Association. (abbr.)
- A tall, flightless bird.
- Talk-show host.
- I will come down and _____ with thee. (Num. 11:17)
- Hear my _____, O God. (Ps. 61:1)
- They filled them _____ to the brim. (John 2:7)
- Ye shall not _____ me hence forth. (Matt. 23:39)
- To _____ away our sins. (1 John 3:5)
- A crown of 12 _____. (Rev. 12:1)

Down

- Less complex.
- Centers for Disease Control. (abbr.)
- God led them by the way of the _____ sea. (Ex. 13:18)
- God _____ a Spirit. (John 4:24)
- Also.
- Does, then _____.
- I took the little book, and _____ it up. (Rev. 10:10)
- And, _____, the heavens were opened. (Matt. 3:16)
- God _____ my strength and power. (2 Sam. 22:33)
- And _____ rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
- Someone who can't mind his or her own business is _____.
- "Star _____."
- Fives, sixes and _____.
- Equal Rights Amendment. (abbr.)
- _____, *Pinta* and *Santa Maria*.
- Adam's wife.
- Go, _____, go!
- Railroads. (abbr.)
- I will even make the _____ for fire great. (Ezek. 24:9)
- Most-quoted author in the world.
- He made the pure incense of _____ spices. (Ex. 37:29)

- Clever coyote's name.
- All the people shall _____. (Josh. 6:5)
- For God is _____ to make him stand. (Rom. 14:4)
- They baked unleavened _____ of the dough. (Ex. 12:39)
- He made him to _____ honey out of the rock. (Deut. 32:13)
- As the flower of the grass he shall _____ away. (James 1:10)
- About. (abbr.)
- Dad.





Media reviews

MUSIC

Jaci Velasquez

"Trust/Confio"

Integrity Music, 2017

Hard to believe it's been five years since the wonderful Jaci Velasquez hit the studio for a full-length album, but it's nice to report that it's been worth the wait. Especially since we kind of got two albums out of it.

"Trust/Confio" is the first bilingual release for the multi-platinum-selling contemporary Christian music mainstay. Disc One is in English; Disc Two features the same songs sung in Spanish. (Velasquez counts five Spanish recordings among her 17 albums; she's also won a Billboard Latin Music Award.)



Also hard to believe given her prolific, 25-year career is that "Trust" is her first worship record. Thankfully, she nails it.

Musically, some praise and worship can broach monotony. "Trust" doesn't.

It's poppy for a praise album. Until it isn't.

It's electronic. Until it's acoustic.

It's mid-tempo. Until the final song, "Sound of Your Kingdom."

Lyrical, it stays focused on the Lord from start to finish (or "de principio a fin").

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

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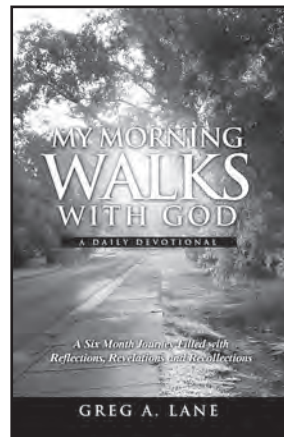
My Morning Walks with God

Greg A. Lane. Hartselle, Alabama: *Inspired Design & Graphics*, 2016. 190 pp. (Paperback).

I have been reading Greg Lane's Facebook and blog posts for a long time and am always blessed by them. He has the ability to take simple everyday objects and events and draw deep, spiritual conclusions from them then apply them to life.

"My Morning Walks with God" is exactly what I expected when I heard he was coming out with a book — all the spiritual depth and insights, without having to wait for Lane to post another of his eagerly anticipated messages of encouragement. For example he noticed the bar of soap had been dropped and had a gash in it. Even though it was scarred, it was still soap and could still be used for the purpose it was intended. Like that soap, people often become damaged, even bearing the marks of the fall, but "a fall doesn't nullify a person's purpose or negate the gifting that is within them."

The book is designed to be used as a six-month devotional, with dates to keep the reader on track. It is, like any good devotional, also good for quick pickup inspiration. It would have been helpful to have a table of contents to help the reader find favorite selections to re-read. As it is, I find myself thumbing through often, stopping here and there to draw spiritual encouragement.



Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches

Mark Clifton. Nashville: *B&H Books*, 2016. 176 pp. (Paperback).

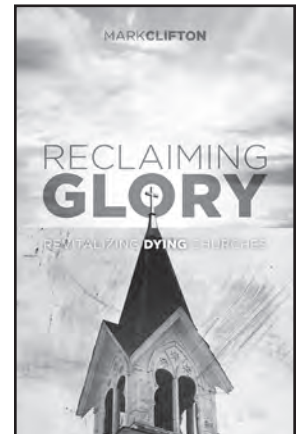
Here's a startling statistic for you: every year 900 Southern Baptist churches disappear. Most of them, according to author Mark Clifton, simply close their doors. And, according to LifeWay Research, only 15 percent of our churches are "healthy, growing and multi-

plying." As Clifton notes, we hear a lot about planting churches, but little about revitalizing churches that have plateaued or are in decline.

Clifton has a suggestion: Perhaps we should consider salvaging those unhealthy churches. Knowing what I do about dying churches, I had the same thought many of you will have — churches die for a reason, don't they? I mean, isn't it easier just to start a congregation from scratch than to deal with old squabbles, turf wars and changes in demographics? The author has a ready answer for us: Yes, it is easier, but "what's right and what's expedient are rarely the same in Jesus' economy." Ouch.

The book is a kind of "how-to" for those who might feel called to lead a dying church into new life, but also a call to arms for leaders to put themselves and their ministry on the line by attempting to turn these churches around. "What is there about a dying church that brings glory to God? Nothing."

Clifton is lead national strategist for replanting/revitalization at the North American Mission Board. †



Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



BookReviews@charter.net

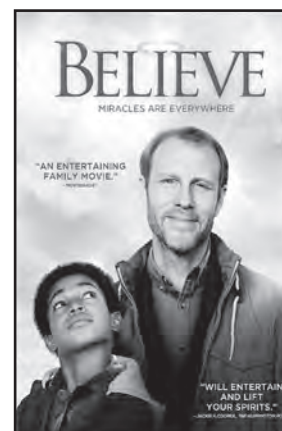
MOVIE

By Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D.

Believe

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment
I love clean movies with a wholesome theme and a happily-ever-after ending. This one fits the bill. It is a story that revolves around a Christmas pageant, and I thought at first it would be odd to watch it in the spring, but it is not really "Christmassy" at all — it would work at Christmas, but the story is really timeless and works year-round.

The story revolves around Matthew Peyton, who owns a factory in a small town; the factory, the town and Peyton are struggling to keep afloat financially. In dealing with labor issues and cash flow problems,



Peyton is besieged from all sides and is in a quandary about continuing sponsorship of the annual Christmas pageant. A "chance" meeting changes everything — like a 21st century version of "It's a Wonderful Life."

I would describe "Believe" as more of a family values movie than a Christian one; faith is spoken of often, but the references are bland and generic. If you are looking for a movie you can show your children or grandchildren without worry, you are safe in choosing this one. It is clean, it is entertaining and it has just enough suspense to get viewers involved in trying to guess what is about to happen.

"Believe" was released in April on DVD. †



GHR photo

Iraqi Christians rest in the basement of an unfinished education center in a northern Iraq city. Nearly 500 people from a village near Mosul fled here to escape persecution by IS extremists.

Open hearts

Muslim parents follow in children's footsteps, turn to Christ

As Muslims have fled the violence of the Islamic State (IS) group in Iraq, hundreds of their children have found their way into programs run by Christian aid ministries along the way. And as those children have embraced the stories of Jesus and His love for them, they've gone back and shared those stories with their families.

The result is whole families of Muslims turning to Christ, according to The Christian Post.

According to a ministry director with Christian Aid Mission (CAM) in northern Iraq, 600 children participated in one program — and the result was that adults came to Christ too.

One night after sharing the gospel with the children “we asked the kids to go tell their parents about what they had heard and share the story of Jesus with everyone,” the director said. “Mahmood’s father came the next day complaining to us about our influence in his kid’s decision to accept Christ.”

The man, whose son was 10, had never heard about Jesus, so CAM staff had the opportunity to share the gospel with him.

“Not long after that he accepted Christ and took Bibles for his wife and two daughters,” the director said.

In the time since, the father has embraced the Christian faith and started a Bible study in his home on Friday mornings, the day of Muslim prayer, according to the Post.

CAM also reported that a number of other parents

have decided to follow Christ because of the influence of their children, and they’ve done so in the face of possible backlash and persecution.

CAM has stepped into provide for their humanitarian needs as much as possible, as well as those of other fleeing families, hoping to introduce them to Christ as much as possible, according to the Post.

CAM’s ministry leader said, “Despite the region still being in a state of war, large groups of displaced inhabitants are risking their lives trying to return home. Although this is dangerous, because of the living conditions in the camps, the lack of resources and the cold weather, many are still trying.”

The widespread refugee crisis caused by IS has opened hearts, according to Voice of the Martyrs Canada (VOMC), which supports Christian radio broadcasting in the area.

“There are thousands upon thousands coming to Christ,” VOMC told BosNewsLife. “We are in regular contact with our FM stations in

Iraq and have talked with many people who have family in the Middle East.”

Missions group Elam Ministries said church leaders believe that discontentment with Islam has caused a spiritual hunger that could bring millions to the Church in the next few years, according to the Post.

In addition to the new Christians reported in Iraq, many conversions to Christianity have happened in refugee communities in Europe. (TAB)

“We asked the kids to go tell their parents about what they had heard and share the story of Jesus with everyone.”

**ministry director
Christian Aid Mission**

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Senator asks for removal of college ‘shame list’

WASHINGTON — An Oklahoma senator who serves as co-chair of the Congressional Prayer Caucus has asked President Donald Trump to remove a “shame list” of faith-based colleges from the Department of Education’s website.

The list, which includes colleges that have asked for an exemption to Title IX discrimination law, was posted more than a year ago by the Obama administration in response to lobbying from LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) activists and politicians who called for “transparency.” Title IX law states that no person can be discriminated against on the basis of gender, but the law provides an exemption for faith-based colleges and institutions that believe complying with the law compromises their convictions.

Sen. James Lankford, R-Oklahoma, sent a letter to the White House mid-April telling Trump the list should be removed in the name of protecting religious freedom. The letter said “the posting has been used to ‘shame’ institutions of higher learning that are structured according to a faith mission and provides an inference that these schools are somehow guilty of discrimination.” (TAB)

US military to recognize more minority faiths

WASHINGTON — The Department of Defense announced a near doubling of its list of recognized religions. It will now formally recognize humanism and other minority faiths among members of the armed forces.

The move, which came at the end of March but was made public in late April, means servicemen and women who are adherents of small faith groups are now guaranteed the same rights, privileges and protections granted to their peers who are members of larger faith groups.

Previously, the U.S. military recognized more than 100 religions. The new list has grown to 221 to include the earth-based faiths, such as heathens and Asatru, and an additional eight Protestant groups. Jewish servicemen and women may now choose among Orthodox, Conservative and Reform instead of just “Jewish.”

More than 22 percent of service personnel identify as “no religious preference,” and slightly more than 1 percent identify as “atheist” or “agnostic.” (RNS)

UMC urged to recognize LGBT clergy

PORTLAND, Ore. — Nearly 150 United Methodist Church (UMC) clergy and clergy candidates signed a letter requesting the mainline Protestant denomination recognize LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) ordination, The Christian Post reported.

The letter is partly in response to the trial of openly gay Bishop Karen Oliveto before the United Methodist Judicial Council, the denomination’s highest court. The trial took place late April.

The United Methodist Queer Clergy Caucus released the letter April 17 saying the “questions, briefs and complaints filed against some [LGBT individuals] ... can also be considered as a general attack on the evangelism, discipleship and mission potential of the United Methodist movement.”

At the 2016 UMC General Conference delegates approved a resolution creating a commission that would examine the Church’s position on LGBT issues, the Post reported. (TAB)

Muslim man faces terrorist charges in SD

SIoux FALLS, S.D. — A Muslim man who allegedly threatened participants of a Christian conference in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in early April has been arrested and charged with a terrorism-related offense.

Ehab Jaber was escorted from the Christian Worldview Weekend conference April 9 by a retired police officer after Jaber identified himself as “the Muslim John Smith” and was found to be carrying a handgun. He then went to his car and began shooting a Facebook Live video that included him displaying various handguns and an AK-47, saying “be scared” each time he showed a gun.

He was arrested April 21 and charged with one count of terrorist threat. (TAB)