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Photo courtesy of Shades Mountain Baptist Church

Members and friends of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, intentionally look for ways to engage the community around the church.

# ‘From pew to pavement’

Adapting church life toward disciple-making, community engagement ‘key’ strategy

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

It’s not new information for Baptists. Leaders have been discussing it, studying it and preaching on it for more than a decade now. And research proves it over and over.

Christians in North America are becoming less and less like Christ, and the church experience is losing more and more of its luster.

And it’s not something that will go away without intentional effort and church leaders re-imagining congregational life, church vitality expert

Kennon Callahan said, according to Baptist News Global (BNG) in January. “One of the reasons some churches are weak, declining and dying is they create a motivational gap,” Callahan said in the BNG article. “What draws (people) in our time is movement not institution. Institution has had its day.”

**Lack of disciple-making**

For Southern Baptists, baptisms tell the story. The decline is now a definite trend and church membership numbers are following suit (see story, page 4).

When the North American Mission Board (NAMB) studied the decline of baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 2014, it determined a lack of disciple-making was one of the key challenge areas for churches.

“We, as pastors, are seeing the loss all around North America,” said Robby Gallaty, chairman of the task force on disciple-making appointed by NAMB and LifeWay Christian Resources in May 2016.

“It’s all over social media,” he said in an October 2016 Baptist Press (BP) article. “There appears to be a

very shallow concept of Christianity and it’s sad to think about. But in order to understand how to disciple, we’ve got to understand the culture we’re discipling.

“Discipleship is the effort to push back lostness, push back against the trends in a holistic way,” Gallaty said in the BP article. “It’s the solution for everything we’re talking about in the world today.”

Bill Wilks — pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, and author of D-Life discipleship resource published by Life Bible Study — agreed. (See ‘Making,’ page 13)

**Southern Baptist Convention**  
annual meeting coverage

Phoenix, Arizona

COMING  
NEXT WEEK



# COMMENT

## Resurrection Still the Only Hope

It was not the kind of news one expected to hear during Holy Week. Perhaps that is why the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) chose to release the results of its survey at a time Christians focused attention on the events leading up to Jesus' vicarious death on a Roman cross and His resurrection on Easter morning.

In the midst of Holy Week, the BBC announced that its most recent survey found almost 25 percent of self-described Christians in Great Britain did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The report said 31 percent of Christians did not believe in any form of life after death.

The report further found that half of all the people surveyed did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus at all and nearly half (46 percent) of British people did not believe in any form of life after death.

### 'Constantly questioned'

Responding to these results, Lorraine Cavanaugh, acting general secretary of Modern Church — a liberal Christian group in Great Britain — contended that Christians today should pick and choose what they want to believe.

"I think (people answering the survey) are being asked to believe in the way they might have been asked to believe when they were at Sunday School," she said. "You're talking about adults here. And an adult faith requires that it be constantly questioned, constantly reinterpreted. ...

"Science, but also intellectual and philosophical thought has progressed. It has a trickle-down effect on just about everybody's lives. So to ask an adult to believe in the resurrection the way they did when they were at Sunday School simply won't do and that's true of much of the key elements of the Christian faith," she declared.

For Cavanaugh human intellect and scientific study are ultimate authorities and, according to her, both judge the Bible to be unreliable and untrue.

It was encouraging to read an immediate challenge to the BBC survey findings by Gavin Ashenden, former chaplain to the Queen of England. Ashenden argued that the survey confused British culture with Christianity.

"Those people who neither believe in the



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Resurrection nor go anywhere near a church cannot be 'Christians,'" he said. "As with so many things the key is in the definition of terms. Discovering the evidence for the Resurrection having taken place to be wholly compelling is one of the things that makes you a Christian; ergo, if you haven't, you are not (a Christian)."

Ashenden could easily have added the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." We believers, of all people, are most to be pitied (v. 19).

Thankfully the clear message of the Bible is: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (v. 20).

Belief in the Resurrection is a distinctive of the Christian faith. Jesus believed in and taught resurrection. In John 5:25–29 Jesus affirmed the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked outlined in Daniel 12:2. But he adds a new twist. In verse 27, Jesus says God gave "Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man."

### Jesus' teachings

More specifically, Jesus taught His own resurrection. Four times in the days before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus told the 12 disciples He would be arrested, crucified and would rise again on the third day (Matt. 16:21, 17:9, 17:22–23, 20:18–19).

Like the Pharisees, the disciples believed in Daniel's prophecy of a general resurrection at the end of time. What they had trouble hearing was a resurrection of a single person. That was not consistent with what they had been taught.

That was part of the reason the disciples first called "nonsense" the announcement by the women that Jesus had been raised from the grave. Luke 24:11 says plainly the disciples "would not believe them."

The apostle Peter was one of those who on Easter morn could not believe in Jesus' resurrection. But a few weeks later Peter stood before the throngs of Jerusalem and loudly preached of Jesus, "This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again" (Acts 2:22–23).

The apostle Paul looked at the Resurrection and said Jesus "was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

So important was Jesus' resurrection to the apostle Paul he added in Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead,

you shall be saved."

Paul and Ashenden evidently have something in common. They both seem to say the believing in the Resurrection is part of being a Christian.

On the cross Jesus offered the one sacrifice for sins for all time (Heb. 10:12). In the resurrection of Jesus God demonstrated the triumph of His Kingdom. The sting of death and the power of sin were broken by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And there is more.

The apostle Paul adds that Christ is "the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20). Paul says in verse 23 "But each in his own order: Christ the first fruit, after that those who are Christ's at His coming."

Earlier in his first letter to the Corinthian church Paul wrote, "Now God has not only raised the Lord but will also raise us up through His power" (1 Cor. 6:14). That teaching is repeated throughout the apostle's writings.

Resurrection is and has been an essential part of the Christian faith whether one is an innocent Sunday School child or a crusty adult of some undetermined age.

Our hope is not in intellectual insights of the modern mind or the latest scientific discoveries no matter what the so-called Modern Church teaches.

Hope for eternity is not in ourselves. It is always and only in our resurrected Lord.✠

**"Hope for eternity  
is not in ourselves.  
It is always  
and only in our  
resurrected Lord."**

## LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

### REFRESHING ARTICLE

I have been subscribing to and reading *The Alabama Baptist* for more than 40 years and have always appreciated your coverage.

Thank you for the article in the May

11 issue, "Rejoice in His fellowship."

It was so refreshing to read Maggie Walsh's article and the impact Dr. Junior Hill's message made on her life. As a long-time fan and admirer of Bro. Junior, I praise God for his continued

ministry.

Thanks again for such a refreshing article.

Sam McElroy  
Memphis, Tenn. ✠





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;  
USPS 011-080)

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Individual — \$22.25

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Church Budget — \$8.50  
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# Why fathers matter

Father's Day is June 18.

## Human dads carry weight of depicting heavenly Father for their children

By Denise George  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

During a family dinner many years ago my then 5-year-old son, Christian, sat at the food-laden table eyeing my dad, his grandfather. He watched closely as Daddy — a tall, strong man with a deep kind voice — lead us in prayer and then skillfully carved the giant turkey, serving generous portions to every member of the family.

Christian turned to me and with eyes wide he whispered: "Mommy, is Granddaddy God?"

"No son," I said and smiled. "Granddaddy's not God but he's real close."

Why do fathers matter?

Fathers matter to their children. Whether for good or bad, human dads paint a portrait of the heavenly Father for their little ones.

If a dad is trustworthy, dependable, kind, compassionate and loving, his children will view their heavenly Father with those attributes. If a dad is emotionally distant, unloving, critical, harsh or abusive, his children will believe God behaves in the same ways.

Fathers carry a huge responsibility in rearing up godly, well-adjusted children who may one day become parents themselves.

### What makes a good father?

What makes a good father? The same characteristics we find in our heavenly Father.

Good fathers:

► **Protect, provide and teach.**

A godly father points his children to Christ, teaching them to pray and study God's Word, encouraging them to love and connect with their heavenly Father. He protects his children when they are young and then teaches them how to operate their developing wings. When their wings are fully grown, he blesses them, allows them to fly and teaches them to bear spiritual fruit. He guides them throughout their developing lives, giving them both sturdy spiritual roots and strong capable wings.

► **Are welcoming, compassionate and approachable.**

In his book, "Soul Survivor," Philip Yancey tells of an old Japanese saying that lists the four most awful things on earth as "fires, earthquakes, thunderbolts and fathers." How sad that a child would fear his father. Christian fathers love their children, discipline with loving kindness and open their arms in the same way Jesus Himself welcomed the little children into His life (Matt. 19:13-14).

► **Accept, affirm and encourage.**

When a father accepts, affirms and encourages a child, he offers a lifelong blessing. Chap and Dee Clark, in their book "Daughters and Dads: Building a Lasting Relationship," write: "To bless our children is to hand them a lifelong gift of emotional, relational, familial and spiritual rootedness. When we express to our kids how we believe in them as people, we help create an environment where their minds

and hearts are shaped according to that blessing."

► **Are role models who are dependable, trustworthy and present.**

Scripture tells us that our heavenly Father's name is Yahweh-Shammah, meaning: "the Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35). God's Word makes promises to His children about His constant presence and availability — promises that can be depended upon and trusted. Children need fathers who are physically and emotionally present, keep their promises and are actively involved in their everyday lives.

► **Love their children consistently and unconditionally.**

Children need to know their father loves them and will stand by them through good and bad times, no matter how they might disappoint or fail their father. A dad's unconditional love ensures consistency and security and

helps guide the child into an eternal relationship with his loving heavenly Father. H. Norman Wright, in his book "Making Peace with Your Past," writes: "In our Father God we have absolute stability and security. We have a parent who is consistently wise and good and our position as His children is assured." Consistent unconditional love is a father's precious gift to a child — a love that won't quit.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Denise George is author of 31 books, including "Teach Your Children to Pray" (Christian Focus Publishers). She is married to Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.*



Grandfathers matter too, such as the investment Alabama-Crenshaw Association Director of Missions Ben Chandler has made and continues to make into his grandchildren.

Photo courtesy of Ben Chandler

## My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram  
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

I try to enjoy special days on the calendar but honestly Father's Day is one I have dreaded since I lost my father in 2009. But I read recently that while you may have lost your earthly father you will always have your Heavenly Father.

Even during the darkest days I could feel God's presence. In fact on my Daddy's last day, as my Mother and I stood near his bed and he was in his last moments, a distinct smile came to his lips. His breathing relaxed, his body relaxed and a few hours later he was gone.

I believe with all my heart he was seeing Heaven, maybe even his mother and father, maybe Jesus, but he was at peace.

I have been with several people as they passed from this earth into the arms of Jesus and I can say in the cases of Christians, there was a peace that passed all understanding with them. That peace is something that God promises us in Scripture.

In John 14:27 it says; "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

This peace is something a relationship with Jesus brings to your life. This world is full of pain, illness, death, struggles, etc. But Jesus came and established for His children a life full of joy even in the hard times.

Is this peace something you want? I urge you to ask Jesus for a relationship with Him.

# Baptisms, membership decline even with more new churches

The number of churches cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) increased in 2016 but several key measures such as baptisms and membership declined, according to the latest Annual Church Profile report (ACP).

The ACP, which is compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in cooperation with Baptist state conventions, also reported a decline in average worship attendance and total giving.

The number of churches cooperating with the SBC grew by 479 to 47,272, a 1 percent increase over 2015. The number of Southern Baptist churches has increased the last 18 years. Southern Baptist churches also reported 4,492 church-type missions in 2016.

Although the number of cooperating Southern Baptist congregations grew, reported membership of those churches declined by 77,786, down 0.51 percent to 15.2 million members. Average weekly worship attendance declined 6.75 percent to 5.2 million worshippers.

Southern Baptist churches baptized 280,773 people in 2016, a 4.89 percent decline from the 295,212 reported in 2015. The ratio of baptisms to total members was one baptism for every 54 members.

## 'Lack of engagement'

"We would be remiss in not giving thanks for every baptism and every new follower of Christ," said LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer.

Southern Baptists have seen a decline in the number of baptisms for several years, he said. "It's clear that evangelism and

discipleship are waning. I don't believe it is due to the lack of opportunities though. Instead there is a lack of engagement (see story, page 1)."

## Giving also down

Giving among Southern Baptists was down slightly in 2016. Undesignated church receipts increased 0.67 percent to \$9.2 billion. However, total church receipts reported through the ACP decreased 0.73 percent to 11.5 billion.

Total missions expenditures also decreased 1.3 percent to \$1.19 billion.

Giving through Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program (CP) missions initiative is not broken out in the ACP annual report. Instead CP totals are reported by the SBC Executive Committee (EC), which facilitates the missions gifts to the SBC's national and international missions and ministries.

With the release of the total number of churches through the ACP report, the EC has calculated the average CP percentage from the convention's cooperating churches for 2015–2016 as 5.16 percent, down 0.02 percent from the previous year's 5.18 percent, said SBC EC CEO Frank Page.

The states reported receiving a total of \$475,212,293 in CP gifts in 2015–2016, of which \$190,468,781, or 40.08 percent, was forwarded to the EC for distribution through the SBC CP allocation budget.

The ACP is an annual statistical report churches voluntarily provide to their local Baptist associations and/or state conventions. National totals are compiled and released after all cooperating state conventions have reported. (LifeWay)

# Lottie Moon offering short of goal

Southern Baptists gave \$153 million to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions in 2016, which fell \$2 million short of the goal.

And while giving was more than \$12 million shy of the record \$165.8 million given in 2015, the 2016 amount was in line with giving in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

"Our goal for the (2016) campaign was \$155 million based on projected need and wise stewardship of Southern Baptists'

gifts," said International Mission Board treasurer Rodney Freeman.

"We see [the 2015] total as an exceptional response from Southern Baptists in light of past financial challenges but not as the beginning of a new trend," he said.

The LMCO campaign year has historically run from June 1 to May 31 but that will change to an Oct. 1–Sept. 30 schedule if approved by messengers at the SBC annual meeting June 13–14. (IMB)

## Corrections

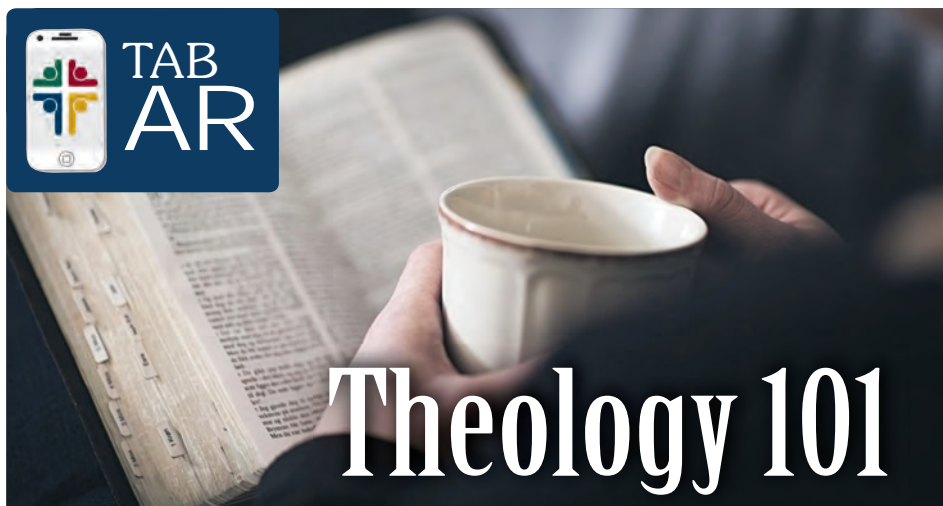
In the article about University of Mobile's recent graduation in the **May 25 issue**, the outline referenced a new tradition of touching the Great Commission Globe after receiving diplomas.

The sentence noted "the first graduating class" but it should have been "the graduating class of 2017" or "the first graduating class to have graduation on campus in 41 years." The first graduating class was in 1967 (then Mobile College).

In the **June 8 issue**, the article "Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia intensifies, targets children" incor-

rectly described Jehovah's Witnesses as "an evangelical Christian group."

Also in the **June 8 issue**, the article "Associations partner, support Alabama Children's Homes" gave credit to East Cullman Baptist Association for the golf tournament in the area. The tournament actually is sponsored by First Baptist Church, Fairview, and has raised more than \$100,000 for the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries since it began. The church is part of East Cullman Association. David Chambers is pastor. ☞



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Doctrine of Sin

# Sin as Transgression

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

Sin is the underlying reality of all human life in relation to God. Human sin began with Adam and Eve when they chose to disobey God's command concerning forbidden fruit. Sin had become a reality even earlier when angels sinned and God "cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4). Clearly, whether angels or humans, sin is serious in God's eyes.

Many of us who are older came along when it was customary in many places for the public school day to begin with a reciting of The Lord's Prayer. The version most of us learned used the wording, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." In that oft-repeated prayer, we were introduced to the idea that sin has the character of transgressing or trespassing some divine expectation. God's law revealed in the Bible is His way of saying to us, "No Trespassing."

In ordinary terms we think of a trespasser as a person who climbs over a fence into a fruit orchard when the fence is clearly posted "No Trespassing" or drives 65 mph in a zone clearly posted as a 45 mph zone. Such offenses are termed transgressions when we know they are forbidden but choose to disobey anyway.

Sinning when knowing better lies at the heart of sin as transgression.

If we knowingly run a sign that tells us to stop, intentionally tell a lie or blatantly disregard those in authority, we are transgressing. If God says "Don't" and we do it anyway or if He says "Do" and we don't, we have transgressed.

In order for sinful people to see themselves as sinful, God gave commandments. Galatians 3:19 puts it this way: "What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions." God's commandments set a standard to which people could compare themselves.

The Old Testament term for transgression was one that carried the idea of "crossing over" or "passing by." When God set His expectations by declaring

what people should or should not do, He was giving them a standard by which to understand sin as acts of bypassing or ignoring His commandments.

Sin as transgression means that we act in such ways that ignore or bypass what God has decreed. Sin as transgression means that God has set forth standards by which He measures our behavior.

In fact, 1 John 3:4 puts it simply: "Sin is lawlessness." So integral are God's commandments and our sins that Romans 4:15 declares, "Where there is no law there is no transgression." The revelation of God's standards set forth in commandments form the basis for our understanding that among the ways sin must be viewed is that of sin as transgression in which a standard has been set that we have not met.

## God's expectations

While sin is sin, it takes on the added character of transgression when people ignore or discount what God has expressed as His expectations. The Bible's way of putting this is to say that transgression means that "sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful" (Rom. 7:13).

God's revealed will as expressed in His commandments furnishes the backdrop against which sinners may come to see more clearly and feel more deeply the seriousness of sin.

Upon having a clear understanding of sin as transgression, we appreciate all the more the feeling of David when he wrote, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1). ☞

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.



# GENEROSITY & GIVING

## for believers



### Focus on becoming financially healthy so there is freedom to give

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

It's a big topic, figuring out how to plan well for the future and give generously in the here and now. But the underlying truth is really simple, said Barry Bledsoe, president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama. It's not either give now or have money later, he said — it's both. And it's accomplished by examining

your lifestyle and determining whether you're hoarding or helping.

"Just spend less on yourself, because you feel compelled to be a good steward," he said. "Make decisions about your lifestyle beforehand so you can make good decisions in the moment. Don't let yourself get boxed in financially or you won't have freedom to give."

A lot of great books and websites are out there to help Christians work through what wise financial planning and generous giving looks like in their own lives, Bledsoe said.

One is Generous Giving, the company for which John Cortines works (see story, page 9), which aims to help Christians have meaningful conversations about how they spend their resources.

Another, Bledsoe said, is a book by Randy Alcorn called "Money, Possessions and Eternity."

In the book, Alcorn tackles the topic of good stewardship in planning for retirement.

#### Examine your savings

"We must ask the same question about our retirement savings as well as all savings. Is this reasonable planning, exercising foresight as Proverbs commends? Or is it an alternative to trusting God, a backup in case God doesn't come through?"

Alcorn goes on to encourage Christians to examine how saving for retirement lines up with the story of "the rich fool storing up for his later years to live out his life in comfort and security" in Luke 12.

"We know what Jesus thought of that man's retirement plans," he writes. "Why should we assume He thinks differently about ours?"

#### When in doubt

Where is the line, Alcorn asks, between reasonable saving for retirement and greedy hoarding? If someone were to take his or her retirement savings and invest them in meeting needs, would God say that was jeopardizing retirement or investing in eternity?

Alcorn quotes financial guru Larry Burkett: "When in doubt — give, don't hoard." Help hungry neighbors. Meet present needs.

"If God commended the widow for giving away her last two pennies, wouldn't he commend people who use their resources to help others?"

Alcorn writes that he believes the answer is "yes." He wrote that he personally

has given away a portion of his retirement savings and is praying often about how much to keep and how much to give away.

"If the countless billions of dollars now invested in earthly accounts were freed up and poured into helping the needy and fulfilling the great commission, what eternal impact might result?"

Bledsoe said he believes it's vital that all Christians spend time understanding how to be financially healthy and reorder their lives so that they are free to give generously.

#### Desire to be generous

"You have to be objective and realistic and deal with real numbers and have a desire to be generous," he said. "Using money well always starts from your perspective of money and God's directions regarding it. It's good stewardship. It's good spiritually and practically to work through that. And it leads to a more fulfilling life."✠



BLED SOE

*"Using money well always starts from your perspective of money and God's directions regarding it. It's good stewardship. It's good spiritually and practically to work through that. And it leads to a more fulfilling life."*

Barry Bledsoe  
president, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama

### RESOURCES

#### WEBSITE:

▶ [www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org)

#### BOOKS:

▶ "The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving" by Randy Alcorn

▶ "Money, Possessions and Eternity" by Randy Alcorn

▶ "Jesus' Terrible Financial Advice: Flipping the Tables on Peace, Prosperity and the Pursuit of Happiness" by John Thornton

Source: Barry Bledsoe, TBFA

# Does e-giving make sense for my CHURCH?

## Digital giving options 'essential' for churches as Americans write fewer and fewer checks

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**oday's givers vary widely in their giving preferences and interest in electronic giving is rising. But does e-giving make sense for your church? The answer is worth considering.

Americans are writing fewer paper checks and roughly eight in 10 people carry less than \$50 cash in their wallets on a regular basis, according to a 2014 report from Bankrate.com. That probably means many people in the pews are passing on the offering plate because they simply don't have anything to put in it.

"Current information about checking accounts and actual paper checks tells us that the average family in the United States now writes less than one check a month on average," said Jim Swedenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "It is essential for churches to provide digital giving options if they want to be successful at collecting offerings from the generation that is dependent on the cell phone for almost everything."

And consider this: the typical church takes up an offering only on Sunday, usually during Sunday morning worship and sometimes on Sunday nights. The downside? Givers who miss a service may not follow through with the offering they intended to give.

The upside? There are approximately 166 hours in the week outside of Sunday church services when an individual might be inclined to give.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Jim Swedenburg of the State Board of Missions shares research about online giving during the June 3 'Small church, big responsibility' finance workshop (see story, page 10).

Whether that's a memorial donation after someone's death, a gift spurred by a Facebook post about a missions trip or simply a missed weekly offering, those moments when individuals are inspired to give may be lost if the person doesn't have an easy way to follow through with a financial gift.

### Potential increase

"Different giving studies show that the potential for most churches is around a 17 percent increase in giving simply by adding an option that allows them to give electronically," Swedenburg said.

Churches today have many options for accepting gifts, including:

▶ **Traditional giving.** Checks and currency are placed directly into the offering plate. Occasionally a check may be mailed to the church but most of the time givers in attendance make their offering when they are present.

**Pros:** Procedures are generally in place for accepting and recording the offering.

**Cons:** Sundays missed for vacation or illness may result in unpredictable offerings, including decreased giving during summer months and holidays. Administrative costs generally include banking fees and/or salaries for accounting staff.

▶ **Electronic checks or e-checks.** These are online payments, similar to bill pay, initiated through the giver's bank. E-checks are paper checks sent from the bank through the mail so in order to receive them, the church should provide a specific

recipient who will record the check and add the amount to the church's account of total offerings.

**Pros:** Givers can set up regular offerings and avoid delayed or missed giving opportunities.

**Cons:** A system of accounting for offerings received outside of traditional giving opportunities must be in place and the church must provide specific instructions to givers.

▶ **ACH transfers.** Similar to e-checks, Automatic Clearing House (ACH) payments are initiated from the giver's personal bank account but instead of a check, the money goes directly into the church's account. ACH payments are direct transfers from one account to another. The church generally will need to provide an Authorization Agreement for Automatic Withdrawals (ACH Debits) Form to a giver to start this process.

**Pros:** Like e-checks, ACH gifts happen on schedule. Also, ACH donations tend to

have no fee attached but the ones that do are inexpensive.

**Cons:** A system must be in place to acknowledge and report gifts.

▶ **Credit and debit card payments.** These two forms of payment work essentially the same. However, a credit card is a promise to pay later whereas a debit card draws from the user's bank account. That difference is significant to many churches who teach against credit card use as an issue of stewardship, and for good reason. A 2016 study by NerdWallet.com found that the average U.S. household with credit card debt carries balances totaling \$16,748. Many churches choose only to accept debit card payments if they take plastic.

**Pros:** Ease of use and preferred over cash and checks by many. Apps and/or software make gifts possible 24/7 through the church's website.

**Cons:** Fees are generally higher for card transactions than for checks or ACH transfers. Church may want to set up a giving kiosk or swipe station, which will incur additional costs and/or fees.

▶ **Text-to-give and mobile giving.** These options also rely on electronic transactions utilizing ACH transfers, credit cards or debit cards and are generally completed using a smartphone or other device.

**Pros:** Americans are increasingly spending money using their smartphones so texting and mobile giving fit their lifestyle.

**Cons:** Additional costs or fees may be incurred to set up or use these options.

Swedenburg said a church finance committee should carefully consider the options for online and mobile giving before entering into an agreement. And just as with traditional giving, a plan should be in place that protects confidential account

information and provides digital security to all givers.

Sound accounting procedures should be in place to account for all donations, regardless of whether they are given in a traditional way or electronically, he said. ✝

## Alabama Baptist COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIVING

Year to date through May 31, 2017

### MAY

CP Challenge Budget Goal .....\$3,333,333

CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....\$3,355,269

Over Goal for Month.....\$21,936

### YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal ....\$16,666,665

CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....\$16,492,378

Under Goal for Year.....\$174,287

The monthly and year-to-date totals include CP base, CP state causes and SBC causes.

## Generosity and Giving Resources

▶ **"More than Money: Being a Steward of All God's Given You"** by Calvin T. Partain

▶ **"Leading a Generous Church: Making Disciples without Chasing Money"** by Todd McMichen

▶ **"The Money Challenge: 30 Days of Discovering God's Design For You and Your Money"** by Art Rainer



unsplash.com background photo

## GENEROSITY & GIVING

The services listed below are used by Alabama Baptist churches (listed in no particular order). Each service offers e-giving through credit, debit and ACH (eCheck).

Most offer kiosk, text-to-give and card reader options for giving as well as website integration for online giving. Most offer customizable interfaces and integrate with popular church management software packages.

Users can set up accounts with these services but there is also the option to give a one-time donation without setting up an account. Most allow churches to record cash and check donations given outside the app, create annual giving statements and be listed as the payee for completed transactions.

Each service offers a variety of pricing packages depending on a church's needs.

- ▶ **Echurch (powered by Pushpay)**
- ▶ **ShelbyNext Giving**
- ▶ **Tithe.ly**
- ▶ **EasyTithe**
- ▶ **Square (does not support ACH transfers)**
- ▶ **Vanco Payment Solutions**
- ▶ **LifeWay eGiving**
- ▶ **Egiving**
- ▶ **SecureGive**

# Questions to ask about e-giving

## Evaluate fees, flexibility, services provided with electronic giving options

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**E**-giving technology is a rapidly developing field with changes and innovations being introduced every day, said Jim Swendenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Online giving also poses some interesting questions about empty offering plates and giving as an act of worship. What does it say to others, especially children, about giving if one never puts anything into the offering plate?

Dan Wunderlich, a blogger at Defining-Grace.com, writes that “when we invite worshippers to place their tithes and offerings in the plate, basket, bag, joy box, etc., they (online givers) are left out.”

He recommends providing an “I Gave Online” card, which allows online givers to participate in giving as an act of worship and serves as a tangible reminder to the giver and those around them that an offering has been given.

### Possible increase

Research suggests church offerings will increase when givers have the option to give online (see story, page 6).

But online giving does come with associated costs so churches must choose an e-giving service that works best for them. Here are some basics to consider:

E-giving services generally are free to givers. The church will pay a credit card transaction fee (an average of \$.30 per transaction) plus a percent of the charged amount (an average of 3 percent of total transaction).

Using these averages, a church would receive \$484.70 for a gift of \$500 completed in a single transaction. Though transaction processing fees are relatively similar across these services, monthly fees and equipment costs for kiosks, card readers or other hardware differ widely among e-giving providers.

Some services charge a fee to process ACH transfers. Churches usually will save money if donors who want to give this way set up a giving plan through their bank instead of through the e-giving service provider.

### Other questions to ask before choosing an e-giving service provider are:

- ▶ What monthly fees are associated with this service?
- ▶ How much are transaction fees and charges?
- ▶ Can I personalize my giving page or

app to look like the rest of my website?

- ▶ Are there monthly minimum requirements for transactions?
- ▶ Does the service support one-time gifts and regular giving?
- ▶ Will the user/giver be directed to a page outside the church website in order to give?
- ▶ Is text giving an option and if so, what is the fee for this service?
- ▶ Are kiosks available?
- ▶ How much does each kiosk cost and is there a monthly maintenance fee?
- ▶ Will this app or software integrate with other software used in church accounting or website development?
- ▶ What steps are required to set up the church account?
- ▶ How quickly will payments post to the church account?†

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 Name of 2<sup>nd</sup> Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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J. Rodney Bledsoe, J.D.  
Chief Development  
Officer

## GENEROSITY & GIVING

# Lasting LEGACY



Photo by Carolyn Tomlin

The Bellingrath Gardens and Home has four seasons of plants and flowers. Pictured are cascading mums hanging from balconies of the Bellingrath estate.

## Bellingrath family continues to serve God, man through garden, estate in Theodore

By Carolyn Tomlin  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**F**rom the northern highlands to the Gulf Coast, Alabama is a unique and interesting state. And within this southern state, remarkable families left their mark on history. Some of the most noted were the Bellingraths — Walter and Bessie.

Many Baptist church groups in Alabama tour the Bellingrath Gardens and Home, located in Theodore, about 20 miles south of Mobile. Within the 65 acres of gardens open to the public and the 10,000-square-foot home, visitors may view the beautiful plants, flowers and grand estate. However, they may not be aware of the lasting legacy of the Bellingraths that continues today. This is the story of how one wealthy Alabama family served God and man while living and left a provision to continue this giving after they died.

### Social Security remains relevant, part of plan for many looking ahead

The season of assuming Social Security would not be around for those younger than the Boomer generation may have passed. A May 25 Gallup report indicates Americans planning on Social Security as part of their retirement is rising from the previous drop in confidence. Of those age 18 to 29, 25 percent expect to rely on Social Security. This is nearly twice what that age group reported in 2007, the Gallup research finds. (TAB)

The grand estate has been called the “House that Coke Built.” That’s because in 1903 Walter and his brother, William, began Mobile’s first Coca-Cola bottling operation. The franchise territory was divided and Walter took Mobile, joking that he liked to fish. As an entrepreneur, Walter’s leadership with the Coca-Cola Bottling Company became one of the most successful in the United States.

In a letter to his mother, Walter wrote, “I want to make the world better and brighter by my being here.” As a member and deacon of Central Presbyterian Church, he wrote checks to cover annual financial shortfalls of the Mobile Chamber of Commerce on at least two occasions.

Marrying Bessie Mae Morse of Mobile in 1906, the couple lived in that city for several years. Bessie’s azalea garden was considered one of the city’s largest and drivers often took visitors to this address.

Meanwhile, because of the stress of his work, Walter started to develop health problems. On the advice of his doctor, Walter was advised to “learn how to play.” Buying an abandoned fishing camp on Fowl River, called “Belle Camp,” the Bellingraths soon started spending time at this location but travel was a problem because of the distance and poor roads between Theodore and Mobile. They sold the house in Mobile and lived in a small house on the property of Fowl River.

But wherever Bessie went, she wanted to bring the beauty of God’s creation. Transplanting some of her beloved azaleas and camellias, she found the climate on the Fowl River ideal. In a few years, she wanted to expand the gardens and realized the need for professional help. George B. Rogers was hired to turn the primitive fishing camp into a grand estate and gardens. Included in the original design were flagstone pathways, fountains, a formal rose garden and conservatory.

Wanting to share their garden with oth-

ers, the couple placed an ad in the Mobile newspapers where they opened the gardens to the public. On an April Sunday in 1932, more than 4,700 people accepted the invitation to visit Bellingrath Gardens. It was said the road between Mobile and the gardens became one long traffic jam. For a Depression-weary public, a day of wandering through the gardens brightened their day. With this phenomenal response, the Bellingraths decided to share their garden with others.

Three years later, in 1935, a 15-room home was designed by Rogers. Blending in with the landscape, antique local bricks, cast iron galleries and mossy flagstones add character to their estate. One unusual feature of the house is that the original furniture and collections the family added are still in the home. A small chapel

was built for the family and guests.

Bessie and Walter had no children of their own but they provided education for others. Employee’s children were often the recipient of cash and college scholarships.

### Helping during Depression

Realizing the poverty of local people during the Depression, Bessie would hear of a family in need. She would knock on their door, ask about a “rare” plant in their garden and pay them several hundred dollars for a cutting. It was known she kept numerous businesses from losing their shops by paying top dollar for merchandise — never asking for a lower price. And she always paid in cash.

Bessie died in 1943 at the age of 64; Walter in 1955 at the age of 86. After Bessie’s death, Walter dedicated himself to maintaining and caring for the gardens his beloved wife started. At the age of 80, Walter created the Bellingrath-Morse Foundation, a privately owned nonprofit to perpetuate the existence of his beloved home and gardens for future generations to enjoy. Through their generosity, Bellingrath’s Gardens and Home is one of the top attractions in Alabama. ✠

**For more information about Bellingrath Gardens and Home, visit [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org) or call 1-800-247-8420.**

### A closer look at the foundation’s earnings:

**Two-thirds** of the current operations are financed entirely by admissions and donations.

**Three Christian colleges and two churches** receive **85 percent** of the foundation’s earnings:

▶ **Huntingdon College in Montgomery**

▶ **Stillman College in Tuscaloosa**

▶ **Rhodes College (formerly Southwestern University) in Memphis, Tennessee**

▶ **Central Presbyterian Church (Walter Bellingrath’s church)**

▶ **St. Francis Methodist Church (Bessie Bellingrath’s family church)**

# ‘HOW MUCH do I need to keep?’

## Harvard business school alumni find freedom, joy in ‘audacious’ giving

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

If you found \$1,000 lying on the ground somewhere, what would you be excited about doing with it? Would you save it? Spend it? Or would you give it away?

A few years ago, John Cortines knew exactly what he would’ve done with it — it would’ve gone straight into his savings account. He’s been a lifelong saver — he finished high school with \$10,000 in the bank from mowing lawns.

“I grew up in a Christian home learning to give and save and be responsible with my money, but the message I really internalized was the message of saving,” he said. “I was really passionate about building wealth.”

Fast forward a few years, and Cortines was a petroleum engineer going for an MBA at Harvard University just so he could move overseas and make more money faster.

“I got my dream job offer and was planning to move overseas with my wife, save all we could and retire early,” he said.

But then something happened before he graduated — he and his friend, Gregory Baumer, took a class that changed their lives. In the months leading up to the course, the two had been meeting weekly with a small group of business students to study the Bible and talk about wise stewardship.

### ‘God and Money’

Baumer said, “John was a saver, but I was a spender, and up until then I’d thought of my tithe as my price of admission with God and I could spend the rest on myself. But I began to have more questions about how to handle money the way God wanted us to.”

And as the two started going to the class — called “God and Money” — the saver and the spender both saw God begin to turn their point of view upside down.

“When the final paper assignment could be on any topic we wanted, we chose to do ours on how we could be good stewards if we were ever to receive more financial re-

sources than we needed,” Baumer said.

They interviewed 200 Christian Harvard business alumni about their wealth management and spending habits, and the response “astonished” them and drove them to reach a conclusion they never saw coming, he said.

### ‘God wants something for us’

“There are wise people out there who have come to the conclusion that God wants something for us, not from us, when He draws us to a life of audacious generosity,” Baumer said.

Cortines agreed.

“We met people who were living incredibly generous lives, and through seeing their lives and stories we kept seeing ourselves challenged,” he said. “They seemed to have a greater sense of freedom, purpose and joy than we were expecting to see.”

And both Cortines and Baumer knew they wanted to experience that.

So they started on a journey of giving their money away, and they wrote about it in a book called

“God and Money: How We Discovered True Riches at Harvard Business School.”

“If you boiled the whole book down to one point,” Cortines said, “it would be that we learned that we should not ask God, ‘How much do I need to give?’ but rather ‘how much do I need to keep?’”

He explained that there are two key principles of this lifestyle:

#### 1. Understand that all we have belongs to God.

“In 1 Chronicles 29, King David gives a huge gift to the temple, but just after that, he says to God that he had nothing to offer God that wasn’t God’s already,” Cortines said. “I think that’s the foundational idea — all we have belongs to God and comes from God.”

#### 2. Use what God has given us for His purposes.

“The independent American spirit says, ‘OK, I’ve earned this salary, so I’ll

use it how I see fit,’” Cortines said. “But living generously says, ‘God has given me all that I have, and God has a mission and a plan for the world, so I should use what He’s given me for that mission.’”

Prayerful wisdom is involved in deciding how much you should keep — “that includes being responsible, putting a roof over my family’s head and not letting my kids starve,” Cortines said. “But should I consume everything He’s given me to live a greater and greater lifestyle when I know that His mission is for the gospel to go out?”

There’s a higher calling, he said, than consuming it all ourselves.

But there shouldn’t be a sense of guilt and obligation, Cortines said. “It’s more of an invitation to walk in line with God and His purpose.”

### Fulfilling God’s kingdom

But it’s not an invitation that everyone accepts, Baumer said.

“If you polled 100 Christians, 45 would be spenders, 45 would be savers and only 10 would have figured out the generous life of serving through your money,” he said. “The life that those 10 have is a unique opportunity

to step alongside God in the fulfillment of His kingdom.”

And it’s something Cortines, now chief operating officer of Generous Giving in Orlando, Florida, said he’s glad he’s found.

“We have experienced so much joy through this lifestyle,” he said. “For my wife and I, it has been much more than writing a check. When the Holy Spirit prompts us, it’s been really exciting for us to invest in others.”

It would be selling the wrong idea to say that if you give generously, it will all be good in your life, Cortines said. At times, he said, they’ve felt the “pinch” in their lifestyle from dying to flesh and giving sacrificially.

“But to get to walk with Christ in that way — we wouldn’t trade it for anything,” he said. “It’s brought joy. It’s been life giving.” ✠



CORTINES



BAUMER



**‘All we have belongs to God and comes from God.’**

John Cortines  
author, Harvard University graduate

## GENEROSITY & GIVING

Gary Fenton shares scriptural references related to generosity and giving during the June 3 'Small church, big responsibility' finance workshop.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

# WHY and how

## Biblical truths of stewardship, generosity learned disciplines that must be taught, Fenton says

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

There's something that happens in a church when it starts to give its money away," Gary Fenton said. "It will revitalize the church if the church is a good steward."

Fenton — senior advancement officer at Samford University and retired longtime pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, both in Birmingham — led two sessions during the June 3 "Small Church, Big Responsibility: How to be Financially Savvy No Matter your Size" workshop.

Presented by Samford's Ministry Training Institute and co-sponsored by the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions (SBOM) and *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper, the workshop focused on a biblical understanding and how-tos related to teaching and preaching on stewardship.

SBOM's Jim Swedenburg (see story, page 6) shared information on budgeting, increasing tithing and basic financial management.

Both workshop leaders agreed stewardship and generosity are learned disciplines that must be taught.

Fenton said, "Generosity is not a personality trait. It is a spiritual discipline.

"Paul's last instructions to the Ephesians, his last quote of Jesus to this group, involves steward-

ship," Fenton said. "Lack of stewardship is not lack of faith; often it is rejection — 'I don't give because I don't believe.'

"Teaching stewardship is not something you do to help your church do what it wants, it is something you do to help Christians grow deeper in their faith," Fenton noted. "It is helping a person become what they ought to be."

### God as creator, owner

Almost all Old Testament stories have some type of offering connected to them, he said, noting the focus is on God as creator.

"In the Old Testament stewardship was commanded and not vol-

untary. It was created for the good of the community."

In the New Testament, the focus is on God as owner rather than as creator, Fenton said.

"There are at least 20 parables that discuss stewardship," he said.

"In the Old Testament, the idea is that you use everything for God. In the New Testament, you take what you have and you enlarge it for the glory of God.

"Whatever we have we are not just to hold on to it but we are to use it," Fenton explained. "One of the things that stymies Christians is to become selfish. When we start thinking possessions are just for us, then we start to grow smaller.

"When we start thinking money is just for our church, then we start focusing just on us," he said.

Fenton described stewardship as using one's resources for God's glory. And to be a generous person is to give with the right attitude.

"Believers are commanded to be stewards and managers of material wealth," he said.

"We are accountable to God for the stewardship of our possessions. We are accountable for how much and the spirit for which we give it."

For more information and resources on stewardship and generosity, email Fenton at [gdfenton@samford.edu](mailto:gdfenton@samford.edu) or Swedenburg at [jswedenburg@alsbom.org](mailto:jswedenburg@alsbom.org).

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# Pray for Mount Zion

## Huntsville student killed in bus crash, with missions team headed to Botswana

By Margaret Colson  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In an instant, their world was turned upside down.

Thirty-eight students and adult chaperones traveling from Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport for a missions trip to Botswana

were involved in a horrific accident June 8, with their bus flipping onto its roof on a busy Atlanta thoroughfare, injuring dozens and ending the life of at least one student.

Prior to the accident, some of the students were napping; others were chatting or looking at their cell phones. They were doing what students do on church bus trips.

At least one student, Sarah Harmening, was reading her Bible and writing in her journal. As she read her Bible, she wrote, "So mostly I am just reminded of why I'm here and that God has called me here and He's done so for a reason. So I know He's going to do incredible things." Harmening lost her life in the bus crash.

Injured students and adults were rushed to several Atlanta-area hospitals with injuries ranging from minor to critical. Thirty-three individuals were treated at Atlanta hospitals, according to ajc.com.

### Concern and sympathy

As medical personnel jumped into action, family members and friends rushed to the bedsides of their loved ones. Area ministers gathered at the hospitals, ready to offer prayer and listening ears. Even those in the hospitals' emergency rooms for reasons unrelated to the crash expressed concern and sympathy.

Some questioned why the accident occurred, how God could let such a tragedy strike a group of students who were setting out to share His love.

Mostly though they prayed and sought answers about the condition of each person on the bus.

"How's Emily?" "Does anyone know if Anna is OK?" "What about Tanner?"

One of the first to arrive at Grady Memorial Hospital in downtown Atlanta was Terry Slay, adult education minister at Mount Zion Baptist. Holding a list of

missions trip participants in one hand and his cell phone in the other hand, Slay worked feverishly and methodically to identify where individuals had been taken, what their conditions were and whether family members had yet arrived. He went back to Grady trauma rooms to pray with and encourage those injured.

At Atlanta Medical Center South, Austin McBride, student ministry intern who had been on

the bus, met in a separate room with family members and friends to update them on the status of those injured. When the bus crashed, McBride reportedly helped get students off the bus, tending to their injuries until emergency responders arrived.

Within hours those with less serious injuries were released from the hospital, even as some parents were still arriving. Yet the students who were released were still desperate to know about their friends.

One young man, limping and with his arm in a sling, walked silently through the waiting room of Atlanta Medical Center South, his parents walking nearby. His eyes barely blinked; shock etched his face. He was going to be OK physically, but he



HARMENING



Screenshot by Jennifer Davis Rash

wanted to head back to the trauma rooms to check on a friend.

Recent high school graduate Allison Thrasher was asleep when the bus crashed. Sitting toward the back of the bus, she crawled through a shattered window onto

the pavement. Her seatmate had to be helped off the bus. Thrasher escaped with a fractured wrist and a knot on her head; she would be released from the hospital, but her mind wouldn't release the names of her friends on the bus.

Losing her cell phone in the accident, Thrasher reached for the cell phone of her cousin, who was able to get to her side quickly. She had to find out anything she could about her friends.

Thrasher's grandmother, Kathy Lankford, a member of Southside Baptist Church, was out of town when she and her husband got word of the

crash. Because they were in Chattanooga, Tennessee, they were able to get to Grady Memorial Hospital quickly.

Giving a big hug to her granddaughter, Lankford said, "Thank you, Lord, for keeping Allison safe."

### 'I prayed'

Still she and her husband said, "Let's pray for everyone else."

Praying is what young Harmening wrote she was doing before, as her mother shared on social media, she "went Home"

Harmening wrote in her journal, "I prayed." And then she went Home. ✝

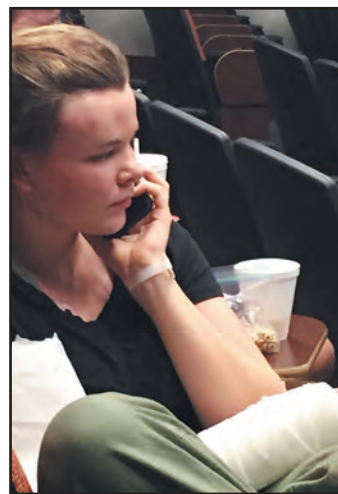


Photo by Margaret Colson

Allison Thrasher was asleep when the bus crashed. She escaped with a fractured wrist and a knot on her head.



Photo by Margaret Colson

Terry Slay (right), adult education minister at Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, was one of the first to arrive at Grady Memorial Hospital in downtown Atlanta.



*"So mostly I am just reminded of why I'm here and that God has called me here and He's done so for a reason. So I know He's going to do incredible things."*

Sarah Harmening's journal entry from the day she lost her life

# Unprecedented move by Muslim religious leaders in United Kingdom

The perpetrators in the recent terror attacks in London and Manchester will not receive the traditional Islamic funeral prayer, according to the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), which represents more than 500 groups.

The ritual is normally performed for every Muslim regardless of their actions, but the more than 130 imams and religious leaders said not this time.

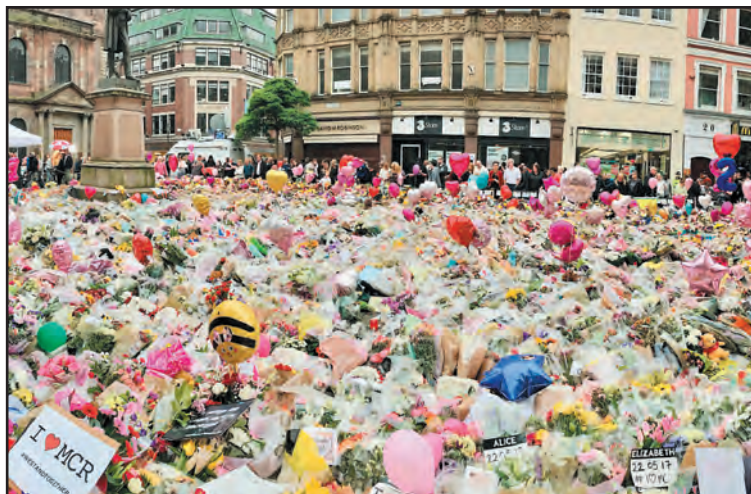
“Consequently, and in light of other such ethical principles which are quintessential to Islam, we will not perform the traditional Islamic funeral prayer over the perpetrators and we also urge fellow imams and religious authorities to withdraw such a privilege,” the religious leaders said in a statement released by MCB. “This is because such indefensible actions are completely at odds with the lofty teachings of Islam.”

The religious leaders come from different schools of Islam as well as different parts of the country but all were saddened and shocked at the terrorist acts.

## Four attackers

Three suspects were killed by British authorities following the early June attack on London Bridge and in Borough Market. And a suicide bomber died in the attack at a concert in Manchester in late May.

“We, as Muslim Imams and religious leaders, condemn the



commons.wikimedia.org

Floral tributes cover St. Ann's Square in Manchester, England, following the bombing that took place at Manchester Arena on May 22.

recent terror attacks in Manchester and London in the strongest terms possible. Coming from a range of backgrounds and from across the UK [and] feeling the pain the rest of the nation feels, we have come together to express our shock and utter disgust at these cold-blooded murders,” the leaders said in the statement.

“We are deeply hurt that a spate of terror attacks have been committed in our country once more by murderers who seek to gain religious legitimacy for their actions. We seek to clarify that their reprehensible actions have neither legitimacy nor our sympathy.

“Though at no time is it acceptable, that such ruthless violence was perpetrated during the season of Ramadan — [when] Muslims worldwide focus on pious devotion, prayer, charity and the cultivation of good character — dem-

onstrates how utterly misguided and distant the terrorists are from our faith and the contempt which they hold for its values,” the religious leaders said.

## ‘Mourn this attack’

“Alongside our friends and neighbors we mourn this attack on our home, society and people and feel pain for the suffering of the victims and their families. ... These vile murderers seek to divide our society and instill fear; we will ensure they fail. ... In the face of such dastardly cowardice, unlike the terrorists, we must uphold love and compassion.

“We commend our police and emergency services — with whom we stand shoulder to shoulder — for their rapid response, arriving at the scenes while risking their own lives to protect the victims and public.” (TAB)

## Across ALABAMA'S Associations

### BUTLER

► **Tim Skipper** is the new pastor of **Ebenezer East Church, Greenville.**

He has served churches in Butler Association for 25 years, most recently at Bethel



SKIPPER

Church, Georgiana. His great-grandfather and son also served as pastors of Ebenezer East. Skipper and his wife, Pat, have three children and six grandchildren.

### COFFEE

► **Coffee Association** will host a Widows' Banquet on June 20, 6:30 p.m., at the association office. Dan Lord with the Alabama Securities Commission will speak on fraud prevention and scams. Dessert and coffee will be served. To make reservations, call 334-894-6411. John Granger is director of missions. ► **Newbia Church, Elba,** will hold VBS on June 23, 6 p.m.–8:30 p.m.; June 24, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.; and June 25, 11 a.m.–noon. ► **Whitewater Church, Elba,** will hold VBS on June 25–29, 6 p.m.–8 p.m. Richard Collier is pas-

tor. ► **Lee Street Church, Enterprise,** will hold VBS on July 10–14, 5 p.m.–8:30 p.m. A registration party will be held July 8, 2 p.m.–4 p.m. Slade Stinson is pastor. ► **County Line Church, Enterprise,** will hold day camp June 29, 12:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m. for preschool–6th grade. Hoobler Music will present the music and art program. Camp activities will include Bible study, art, music and hands-on activities. A family meal and activity will end the day. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

### COLUMBIA

► **Mount Enon Church, Dothan,** will celebrate its 129th anniversary and homecoming July 9. Sunday School is at 9:30 a.m. and worship is at 10 a.m. Coley Hollaway will speak. Former minister of music James Nance and his wife, Debbie, will perform special music. Covered dish lunch will follow the service. Jerry Hood is pastor.

### SHELBY

► **Peggy Miller Dean,** wife of former **Liberty Church, Chelsea,** pastor Herman “Jimmy” Dean died June 1. She was 82. Dean served as pastor of Liberty for 15 years in the 1980s and 1990s. Dean served as pastor of Marble City Church, Sylacauga, prior to serving at Liberty.✝



According to the Feb. 10, 1844, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

The paper reported the departure of new foreign missionaries Rev. and Mrs. Albert N. Arnold who were aboard a boat “bound for Smyrna.” The missionary couple was to be dropped off in Corfu, Greece, where they had been appointed to serve. Of the sailing, the paper reported, “The parting scene was one of deep and touching interest; the most fervent desires of many hearts united and ascended upward for the safety and success of the missionaries.” (TAB)

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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.

# Making a difference

## Meeting needs of community while sharing gospel 'exciting' for church

(continued from page 1)

"Discipleship is the only way to reclaim the Church in America today," Wilks told *The Alabama Baptist*. "Jesus never called us to a church-planting movement but a disciple-making movement."

Roland Brown, pastor of Golden Springs Baptist Church, Anniston, uses the D-Life model and is a strong advocate for churches returning to the basics of disciples making disciples.

"Who we are in Jesus Christ matters more than anything," he said. "Love God, love people, look like Jesus. Perhaps I oversimplify but I believe that is how we are to reach this generation."

Callahan added in the BNG article that grassroots gatherings and movements — similar to Wilks' and Brown's efforts with D-Life and what others are doing with outreach efforts — are key to engaging church members which in turn will reach the community.

Junior White, pastor of North Valley Church, Odenville, calls it "from pew to pavement."

"While many say that all hope is lost I totally disagree," White said. "Because of technological

advancements and an ever-growing society of truth seekers, the Church has an amazing opportunity to reach the lost for Christ.

"People want to be involved in a movement that spreads outside the four walls of a building called the Church," he said. "If we believers want the community to come to the Church, then the Church has to first go to the community."

Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, added that short-term missions trips along with community engagement can make all the difference.

"It will not only increase the involvement of your members but also pique the interest of those in the community who are not members," he said. "Millennials are drawn to those who are on the front lines of meeting needs and

addressing wrongs. When they see the Church on the front lines side by side with them, they just might give that church and their Jesus a look."

**"If we believers want the community to come to the Church, then the Church has to first go to the community."**

**Pastor Junior White  
North Valley Church  
Odenville**

Millennials (the generation born between 1982 and 2004) are more interested in compassionate justice and making a difference through activity rather than participating in meetings, Wood said.

And they are not alone, he added. Some in older generations have the same interests.

With that understanding churches should make needed adjustments, he said. "There are plenty of causes and needs out there — orphan care, adoption, human trafficking, clean water, homelessness, abused women, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, etc. Find ways you can tangibly involve the members of the church to address these needs.

"But the key is to not just meet a physical need," he added. "Make sure you share the gospel and deal with their greatest spiritual need."

Shades Mountain members are

taking community engagement seriously, Wood said. The church even created a new staff position recently — minister of community engagement. Steve Browning serves in the position and works to identify the greatest needs around the church, Wood said.

"Part of the process is bringing together members who live in the community and having them share about the needs of educators, first responders, public works employees, etc.," Wood said. "With their input we are creating a plan to meet needs."

### 'Hands and feet of Jesus'

"People are excited to help those who serve in our community and be the hands and feet of Jesus," he said.

Browning agreed.

"In less than five months we have had more than 120 people jump in at some level with community engagement — and that's just the ones we know of," he said.

"Some are individuals who want to make a difference in their neighborhood. Others are leading their entire Sunday School class to join the effort," Brown said. "Almost every day we get an email or phone call of someone else who wants to get involved and make a difference in the community where they live." ✝



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 18

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

**THE SHEPHERD**  
**Psalm 23:1-6**

Our psalm this week comes from Book One (Ps. 1-41), attributed almost exclusively to David. Even a psalm without superscription from this section of the Psalter was understood to have been written by David (see Ps. 2 and Acts 4:25-26). This psalm accompanied by musical instruments (mizmor) is significant in that Israel's shepherd-king identifies the Creator as his Shepherd-King.

As Christians we cannot study this psalm without bearing in mind Jesus' self-identification as the Good Shepherd and the Gate (or Door) to the sheepfold (John 10:7-14). The One whom David knew in spiritual context revealed Himself in physical form to the apostles. They referred to Him not merely as their Good Shepherd but also as the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

**He Provides (1-3)**

Yahweh, the one true God who entered into covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, is Shepherd to the descendants of Abraham, the sons of Israel, the tribe of Judah, the house of Jesse and David himself. Though part of a collective culture, David enjoyed the intimacy of a personal relationship with God.

David knew and loved the Torah, the law of God. He may have had the account of Abraham and Isaac in mind while writing this text (Gen. 22). After all, it was Abraham who called the place of sacrifice "Yahweh Yireh," meaning "the Lord provides." Knowing the Lord takes care of His own, David acknowledged that he lacked nothing.

Like a sheep David needed nourishment, fresh water to drink and a place of safety to rest. As a believer David also needed to know the right paths to take, paths pursuing the righteousness of God. In the fullness of time, the Father sent the Son, who is the Pathway, the Truth and the Life (John

14:6). David looked forward to the coming Redeemer with the eyes of faith, with only glimpses of the Anointed One (Ps. 2:2; Ps. 16:10; Ps. 22).

God provides for us because we are His. He draws us to follow Jesus, not for our sake, but for the sake of His Name. We must be on guard to look to our Provider rather than merely focusing on His provision.

**He Guards (4)**

Yahweh is our Provider but He also is our Protector. He walks with us through joyful and jubilant times in our lives, and He is our light as we tread dark and dangerous paths. The Lord uses His rod to keep the predators at bay, and His staff keeps us from wandering off on our own. David was not suggesting he would never face danger; rather he would never face it alone.

This verse is particularly meaningful for me, as the Lord used it to prepare, comfort and guard my heart when my father died. Death casts a dark shadow, and His light is a gentle comfort in times of grief and loss. As followers of the Good Shepherd, we have nothing to fear as He walks with us. We have confidence that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

**He Hosts (5-6)**

Yahweh is our Provider, our Protector and our Peace. The cities of refuge laid out in the Torah are reflections of the character of God (Num. 35), offering peace in difficult times. While the enemy pursues, the host city provides sanctuary for their guests. They also serve as protectors and an avenger cannot touch the guest while in their care. The Lord is our peace (Judg. 6:24).

The Lord offers us peace in the midst of our broken world and invites us to ultimate peace through eternal life in Jesus, the Shepherd of our salvation. With this confidence David wrote: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."✠

**Bible Studies for Life** By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D.  
Professor of Religion, Samford University

**RESPECT AUTHORITY**  
**1 Samuel 24:3-12**

Living as a disciple in a culture that doesn't always affirm Christianity and a way of living according to the commands of Christ can be challenging. How do we live in our attitudes and actions as believers when political, business and educational leaders who are in positions of authority over us do not share our ethical or moral framework for daily living?

This passage, which appears to be archaic, can perhaps help us to see principles of respecting authority figures while not sharing their particular perspectives.

**Act with grace toward those in authority. (3-7)**

David is fully aware that Saul is king, anointed by the prophet Samuel. In a similar way Paul says, "Every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God" (Rom. 13:1-2). The specific person may not be living a godly life, such as Saul or the Roman emperor in the time when Paul wrote, but they are still people of authority.

David was probably tempted to take advantage of having Saul in a precarious position and he "cut off a corner of his cloak" but very soon realized that he had done something wrong because despite a life which was being lived in disobedience to God, he was still the "Lord's anointed."

Although we can see parallels between David's situation and our own, it is not always as simplistic as this might suggest. None of our business, industrial or political leaders have actually been anointed as Saul was. We do not live in a theocracy. But as Christians we are to treat those in positions of authority with respect and like David, be careful how we respond to their

attitudes and action within our own lives.

**Speak with grace and conviction toward those in authority. (8-11)**

The second section of the text indicates that one way we can respect people in authority is the way in which we speak to them and about them. He addressed Saul as "my Lord the king" and then, in the manner of the ancient world, he "bowed with his face to the ground." Respect — taking time to speak to and about people with whom we have to interact with grace and generosity — doesn't cost us much, apart from some humility.

However, David takes the opportunity to try to help Saul understand his situation, to appeal to him, to change his mind, to make him think differently. In a democratic society we have many opportunities to show respect and also indicate where we disagree with people by speaking out when opportunity arises without losing respect for the office which a person may occupy. This is also the case in the workplace where the rights of workers are not protected and people are not treated with dignity by their employer. Our world is different from that of Saul and David but some principles remain the same.

**Leave conflict with authority figures in God's hands. (12)**

In the end, after David stops acting or speaking, he treated Saul with respect although David has been clear about the way in which he believes he has been misunderstood and mistreated. However, at the end of the day he decides to leave it in God's hands, turning everything over to God.

*"My times are in Thy hand,  
Whatever they may be;  
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,  
As best may seem to Thee."*

— W.F. Lloyd ✠

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

- Let him deny \_\_\_ and take up his cross. (Mark 8:34)
- \_\_\_ Lincoln.
- Spirit of the Lord came up \_\_\_ David. (1 Sam. 16:13)
- Being exceedingly \_\_\_ against them. (Acts 26:11)
- We.
- \_\_\_, and also our fathers. (Gen. 46:34)
- Tower, whose \_\_\_ may reach unto heaven. (Gen. 11:4)
- Defeats.
- Environmental Protection Agency. (abbr.)
- To and \_\_\_.
- The \_\_\_ was upon the earth forty days. (Gen. 7:12)
- Take the widow's ox for a \_\_\_. (Job 24:3)
- Tool for weeding.
- Mary anointed the Lord with \_\_\_. (John 11:2)
- God gave them up unto

\_\_\_ affections.

- New Testament. (abbr.)
- United States. (abbr.)
- Mary \_\_\_ Joseph.
- And thine \_\_\_ as the grass of the earth. (Job 5:25)
- Is able to.
- Is the correct size.
- Hereafter ye shall \_\_\_ heaven open. (John 1:51)
- A grain.
- As he is Christ's, even \_\_\_ are we Christ's. (2 Cor. 10:7)
- Pound. (abbr.)
- Mother.
- Yea.
- Teach us to \_\_\_ our days. (Ps. 90:12)
- Unclean animal. (Deut. 14:18)
- It \_\_\_ not good. (Gen. 2:18)
- And to \_\_\_ is gain. (Phil. 1:21)
- Jesus went \_\_\_ to Jerusalem.
- For \_\_\_ are his workmanship. (Eph. 2:10)
- Remember all thy \_\_\_. (Ps. 20:3)
- Christian Era. (abbr.)
- The Lord heard ... and looked on ... our \_\_\_. (Deut. 26:7)
- Sickness. (French)
- He was \_\_\_ at that saying. (Mark 10:22)
- One of the king's most \_\_\_ princesses. (Esther 6:9)
- What every director hopes for.
- Charged particle.
- Cast the \_\_\_ on the right side. (John 21:6)
- Be not among ... riotous \_\_\_ of flesh. (Prov. 23:20)
- \_\_\_ top of that ...

**Down**

- A prophet is not without \_\_\_. (Matt. 13:57)
- Not out.
- O thou \_\_\_, go. (Amos 7:12)
- 950 in Roman numerals.
- Do, re, me, \_\_\_.

- Something worn to warm the ears or hands.
- A form of car.
- 450 in Roman numerals.
- I have commanded my sanctified \_\_\_. (Isa. 13:3)
- Physical therapy. (abbr.)
- A group of people working for a common cause.
- Hear, O Lord, when I \_\_\_. (Ps. 27:7)
- Yes, in the navy.
- Printer's measure.
- Pound. (abbr.)
- To exist.



Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## 2017 marks 325th anniversary of English theologian Grantham's death

**T**homas Grantham (1634–1692) was the leading theologian of the English General Baptists in the 17th century. As a minister he started many churches and made petitions on behalf of Baptist beliefs to King Charles II.

2017 is the 325th anniversary of his death.

He was born at Halton Hologate, near Spilsby, Lincolnshire, in eastern England. Few facts about his early life are known.

A nonconformist congregation formed near Spilsby in 1644. Four people seceded from this congregation in 1651 and became General Baptists. Grantham joined them and was baptized in 1653. In 1656 the group chose him to be their pastor. He assembled a congregation, which met in private homes at Halton and other places. After much opposition, he received a grant of Northolme Chapel at Thorpe Northolme.

Grantham and his evangelists started a

number of small congregations in the south of Lincolnshire. They were General Baptists who held Arminian views. Arminianism teaches that people receive the gift of salvation when they, of their own free will, choose to accept God's offer of grace.

### Differing views

But Grantham differed from the Anglican Arminians of his day in that he advocated more reformed doctrines of human depravity, the inability in spiritual matters apart from the convicting and drawing grace of the Holy Spirit, penal substitutionary atonement and justification by the imputed active and passive obedience of Christ as well as a more reformed view of sanctification.

His view of perseverance also differed from other Arminians of his day in that Grantham believed salvation could be forfeited only by apostasy from Christ through unbelief, a condition from which one could not recover.

On July 26, 1660, Grantham and Joseph Wright of Westby went before King Charles

II (1660–1685) and presented a "narrative and complaint," signed by 35 General Baptists in Lincolnshire. They also had a copy of a Baptist "brief confession" and a petition for toleration, which detailed the harassment, fines and imprisonment their fellow Baptists had experienced. Later the Lincolnshire Baptists drew up two addresses, which were presented to the king. Grantham presented the second one.

In 1662 the authorities arrested him twice. His Arminian preaching led to the rumor of his being a Catholic. He stayed in a Lincoln jail for 15 months and was released when he petitioned the king.

Grantham became a supervisor of congregations in 1666. He developed the office into an itinerant ministry-at-large to plant churches. Under the Conventicle Act of 1670, which forbade religious gatherings outside the Church of England, Grantham was jailed again for six months. During the remainder of the reign of Charles II, he suffered several imprisonments.

Even though he wasn't formally educat-

ed, Grantham displayed great theological skill in his most famous work, "Christianismus Primitivus" (ancient Christianity). Written in 1678, the 600-page book covers everything from believer's baptism to original sin to instructions on Christian marriage.

He moved to Norwich, where he founded three General Baptist congregations.

### Facing controversies

During his last years, many controversies arose with other dissenters in Norwich. He had a pleasant relationship though with the Anglican clergy. John Connould, vicar of St. Stephens, was a good friend.

Grantham died Oct. 27, 1692, at the age of 58. A crowd attended the funeral with Connould conducting the service. Grantham was buried inside the west door of St. Stephen's Church. Connould was buried in the same grave in May 1703.✠

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M-Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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#### PASTOR

Parrish First Baptist Church (SS avg. 100) is currently accepting resúmes for a senior pastor. Please email resúmes or inquiries to: searchcommittee@parrishfbc.com or mail to: P.O. Box 49,

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### MISCELLANEOUS

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## Southeastern Bible College shuts down

**W**hile not a Southern Baptist school, Southeastern Bible College (SEBC) in Birmingham has many Alabama Baptist connections.

Along with students and alumni from Alabama Baptist churches, the college also was housed on the former campus of Valleydale Baptist Church until June 1 when it suspended operations because of insufficient resources.

"The board of trustees reached the somber conclusion that the best course of action ... is to implement a significant operations reduction, using the resources remaining to support the transition for our community, while keeping hope alive for a future Southeastern Bible College," said SEBC President Alexander Granados.

Students were alerted by email following the board meeting and learned June 6 that Point University in West Point, Georgia, will work with them to complete their programs of study. (TAB)

# 'I am thankful'

## Grizzlies' power forward Wright leans on God at all times

By Bill Sorrell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**M**any professional basketball players develop a style or trademark move of some type. And those are frequently displayed after a great play.

But Memphis Grizzlies power forward Brandon Wright pulls his move out even in the routine moments — pointing his index finger upward — to acknowledge the Lord.

"I started doing it in high school," said Wright, 29. "I think we get to a point where we become unthankful. God says be thankful for everything. I am thankful for the little things. I am thankful for waking up, thankful for family, thankful for scoring a basket, for being able to run the court, just little things you cherish because they are not guaranteed."

Three "little things" he and his wife Tucker cherish are their three healthy daughters, Olivia, 3, and Reese and Zoe, twins born on March 3 in Nashville.

"Having twins, that is all God," he said. "It's one of the rarest things that can happen. I am special enough to be father of twins, only God can produce that. It's an amazing thing in my life. I can't believe those little girls are mine. It's one of those things that is surreal."

Family, he said, has helped take the basketball pressure off him and helps keep things in perspective.

"I don't mean this in a negative way but basketball means less than family," he said. "You have a bad day in the game and have a good day when you go home. That means more to me."

### God is always there

Wright said he's learned he has to continue to lean on Christ both when things are going well and when life gets rough.

"You have something to lean on when times are good," he said. "When times are bad you can have a purpose. That is the purpose no matter how the day goes. When you feel like things are terrible, as soon as you start to give up, He always lets you know, 'Hey I am here.' That is always big. You can always come back to Him. It's going to be tough sometimes."

And for Wright, there have been plenty of tough

times. He has been on the roster of six different teams and, during his eight years in the NBA, he has suffered five injuries. He had shoulder surgery that caused him to miss the 2009–10 season, a right knee injury in November 2015 that caused him to miss all but five games of the 2015–16 season and a preseason left ankle injury that required arthroscopic surgery and limited him to 28 regular season games this past season.

### Love for family and basketball

"Those things always put into perspective how blessed you are," he said. "What opportunity you do have can all be taken away, just like that. It's been tough. It's tough moving your family from place to place and being away from your family. It's tough on your body. It's part of the business and you really have to love it."

As he continues to lean on God he reads the Bible along with inspirational messages from friends and colleagues.

"I always try to put something in my mind that is Christ-related right before I go to sleep," he said. "God being on my mind when it is time to lie down, when it is time to rest, He is the last thing I think about and hopefully He is the first thing I think about when I wake up. It's awesome. The biggest thing is obedience. I try to get in the Word every day."

Wright also intentionally surrounds himself with people who have a similar belief system, which he says will "create a great atmosphere" and is something that can be felt and not necessarily communicated verbally.

Memphis guard Wade Baldwin IV said Wright is one of those individuals who lives his faith.

"He is a tremendous teammate," Baldwin said. "From all that I have seen he is an amazing family man. He has a wonderful wife, two new twin girls. You can tell that he is the total package: player, father, teammate."

Being in the NBA, Wright said, has given him an opportunity to reach many more people.

"It's amazing — you can do so much more," he said. "You can touch so many lives ... (and) kids listen to us. I want to lead young people to Christ (and) allow them to experience what I have experienced." ❖



Brandon Wright

Photo by Joe Murphy/NBAE via Getty Images

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Religion still relevant in 21st-century life, study finds

WASHINGTON — According to a May poll done by Gallup and reported June 2, 55 percent of Americans say religion can answer most or all problems.

The research also shows this thought has remained steady for the past year and a half and is up from the all-time low of 51 percent in 2015.

"Americans' beliefs about religion are evolving," the Gallup article reported. "The percentage of Americans who say the Bible is the literal word of God and who believe in creationism are at record lows, and the number of those who say religion can answer all or most of today's problems has declined in recent decades.

"Still a slim majority of Americans believe religion can answer problems, a vast majority think that God played some part in the process of human creation and most believe God also had a role in the contents of the Bible.

"Religious fervor may be declining, but with these questions Americans still assert religion and topics relating to religion as having relevance in 21st-century life." (TAB)

### Couple charged with murder; faith played role

OREGON CITY, Oregon — Faith-healing prayers and oil chosen over medical assistance has landed an Oregon couple in jail charged with murder, according to The Christian Post.

Travis and Sarah Mitchell, 21 and 24 respectively, were arrested June 5 and charged with murder by neglect and first-degree criminal mistreatment in the March 5 death of their newborn Ginnifer. Ginnifer, a twin, died after developing breathing issues during birth, according to the Post article.

The Mitchells are members of the controversial Followers of Christ Church in Oregon, a 1,000-member Pentecostal church not affiliated with any denomination, the Post reported.

Sarah Mitchell is the granddaughter of the church's founder, Walter White. Sarah Mitchell's sister, Shannon Hickman, is already in prison with her husband, Dale, for second-degree manslaughter in the death of their infant son. He died two hours after delivery in 2009. (TAB)

### Illinois pastor, wife steal from kids' food program

CHICAGO — Pastor Robbie Wilkerson and his wife, Tasha, admitted taking more than \$100,000 from a summer food program for low-income children. They are both set to spend time in prison along with three of their associates, according to The Christian Post.

Known as the Summer Food Service Program, the meals are funded by the Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In Illinois the funds for this program are administered by the State Board of Education.

Robbie Wilkerson, founding pastor of New Birth Christian Center church in Chicago, pleaded guilty to wire fraud and money laundering, the Post reported.

Tasha Wilkerson pleaded guilty to theft of government funds. Sentencing is set for Oct. 6. (TAB)

### Half of U.S. adults consider abortion morally wrong

WASHINGTON — While Americans have yet to find consensus on making abortion either completely legal or completely illegal, the largest segment of the population falls in the middle, according to a June 9 Gallup article. They say it should be legal but with restrictions.

And nearly half of U.S. adults consider abortion to be morally wrong, Gallup reports. This view has remained steady for the past year, according to Gallup.

"Slightly more U.S. adults today believe the procedure is morally wrong (49 percent) than morally acceptable (43 percent)," the article reported. "This has also been the case in most readings since Gallup started tracking this annually in 2001." (TAB)