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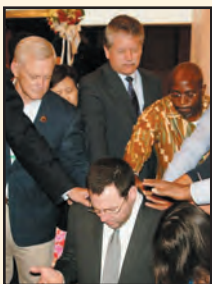
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The Nehemiah Teams Training Center in Mentone seeks to prepare young missionaries age 18–29, like the young woman pictured above, to finish the Great Commission in this generation.

Photo courtesy of Nehemiah Teams

'Toolbox' of resources

Alabama program trains, equips, mobilizes young adults to reach world

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

At the Nehemiah Teams Training Center in Mentone, the view is expansive and so is the mission — to prepare young missionaries to finish the Great Commission in this generation. “IMB President David Platt has called for limitless missionaries going out to the nations and for more pathways to get them there. Nehe-

miah Teams Advance Operations Training (AOT) is working toward that goal,” said Jess Jennings, an International Mission Board (IMB) representative in Southeast Asia who provides leadership for AOT.

Residential experience

Open to young adults ages 18–29, AOT is a residential training program held at the Nehemiah Teams Training Center at the top of Look-out Mountain in DeKalb County.

Whereas Nehemiah Teams are deployed for summer-long international missions assignments, AOT trainees spend four months on campus and are then deployed to work alongside IMB and North American Mission Board (NAMB) personnel for assignments ranging from two months to two years.

“With AOT, we strive to fill longer-term requests through the normal channels of the IMB and also meet

strategic needs in North America among refugees and unreached people groups,” Jennings said.

The AOT model is part of the strategy Jess Jennings and his wife, Wendy, have been using in the Philippines for the past six years. There, Filipino believers engage in discipleship training and are mobilized to go to unreached communities in their homeland to evangelize and plant
(See ‘Well-prepared,’ page 6)

Coming next week ...



Dealing with disappointment

Part 3 of 4 — traumatic and/or disappointing situations

COMMENT

The Paradox of a Pastor

A paradox is something that combines qualities that seem to contradict each other and a pastor's life is full of them.

Perhaps the most obvious relates to the pastor's use of time. He is expected to spend time alone with God studying, praying and preparing to present a word from God in each sermon. At the same time he is expected to be available 24/7 for organizational meetings, visitation, pastoral care and emergencies.

The contradiction between the two expectations is a paradox a pastor faces. While he is consumed by serving others, a pastor must never neglect his own prayer and preparation for the ministry of the Word.

There are other paradoxes a pastor faces.

For example, when the pastor stands before a congregation on Sunday morning people expect the sermon to be inspiring, insightful and uplifting. To Baptists preaching is important. What is said is important and so is the way the message is presented.

Baptists also expect the sermon to be practical and helpful, providing guidance on how to live out the Word from God in everyday life. No one wants to end up being "so heavenly minded that one is of no earthly good." But combining the two different aspects of content and application can be challenging, a paradox.

A team builder

The pastor is a leader. The pastor is the catalyst for most things that happen in a church. It is commonly said a church does not rise above the vision or character of its pastor. Yet the pastor is a team builder for no pastor can do everything alone.

A church is an organization. It offers many expressions through which the gospel is channeled into the lives of members. It provides numerous opportunities for Christian service to express gospel truths to its community. That means the pastor must be a team builder to enable the church to reach its fullest potential.

A pastor must be a leader and a team builder although the two are not synonymous and require different skills.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

A pastor is a specialist in representing God's presence. That is as true when the pastor is beside the bed of a sick person as it is when he stands in the pulpit. It is as true in a community meeting as it is in a counseling session.

To represent God's presence and concern requires the pastor be a student of the Bible and a number of other academic disciplines. A pastor must spend time reading and training and praying so he is prepared to reflect God — His word, His care, His comfort, His guidance.

Almost as important is the pastor's ability to understand human nature and conduct. That means a pastor must have a general knowledge of many things. He must be sensitive to what goes on around him. He must be intuitive toward others.

A pastor's specialized training is complemented by a breath of general understandings and his academic training is displayed through a filter of common sense.

Much of a pastor's work is done independently. Whether it is sermon preparation, counseling, recruiting or any one of the many tasks done by a pastor, most of it is done in an independent manner. A pastor has to be a self-starter, able to set personal goals, hold himself accountable for shortcomings and find personal fulfillment in independent actions.

At the same time a pastor works with small groups — deacons, Sunday School teachers, church committees, ministry partners. That means skills in small group dynamics are a must. He must be a team player, able to participate in and facilitate group decision making, even support things when decided differently from his personal preference.

The ability to work alone yet be effective in small groups is an unusual combination in anyone yet that is the expectation of every pastor.

A pastor must stay in touch with the problems of real people. He cannot hide in a cloistered environment behind the church walls. Church members and members of the community must know

the church is a relevant resource for their hurts and heartaches, their doubts and fears.

The pastor must know the complexities of society's struggles. He must understand them emotionally, physically and spiritually. But an understanding mind and a compassionate heart does not mean compromised truth as presented in Scripture.

Holding up truth with grace is difficult. The temptation is to be rigid on the one hand or sentimental on the other. Loving God and loving others often seems like a paradox.

Like a runner, the pastor must pace himself for the demands of his calling. Sometimes the pace of life is so fast it seems like one is a sprinter. At other times the demands are so exhausting it seems like one is running uphill.

A pastor must learn to conserve strength and energy to respond to either demand. If a runner

begins a race too fast he may not finish. Too often, a pastor expends personal resources in one part of the ministry only to be depleted in the face of another ministry demand. Occasionally a pastor may give up and never finish his course.

As a pastor cares for himself, he must help his people learn to conserve their energy and strength for the pressures of their

own lives. A life of leisure is a figment of imagination for most people. Instead most are hard pressed with problems, expectations and responsibilities.

For both the pastor and people, finding a sense of balance between faithfulness to God and care for the person God created and gifted with life is a difficult thing to achieve.

Teacher of teachers

A pastor is a teacher in the best sense of the term. He is a teacher through what he says as well as what he models. The pastor also is a teacher of teachers. He multiplies himself so the Good News of the gospel might get to places where he could never reach. A pastor invests himself in others so they might learn, might lead, might live before God in ways that bring honor and glory to the Lord.

Being a teacher is demanding. Being a teacher of teachers is even more so.

Perhaps you can add to this list of paradoxes faced by a pastor. But no matter how long the list, the paradoxes illustrate the complicated and demanding roles filled by a pastor. Perhaps being more understanding of situations faced by your pastor (by every pastor) would be helpful. Certainly supporting your pastor through prayer would be a blessing to him and to you. It certainly is for me. ✠

***“Certainly supporting
your pastor through
prayer would be
a blessing to him
and to you.”***

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

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'Relationship remains crucial'

Samford to withdraw from state convention funding channel

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Samford University in Birmingham — described by many as Alabama Baptists' "crown jewel" — plans to no longer receive annual budget allocations from the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) after 2017.

As of Jan. 1, 2018, the \$3-plus million Cooperative Program (CP) allotment for Samford will be reduced from Alabama's CP budget, assuming the request to eliminate funding for Samford is approved by the State Board of Missions (SBOM) and convention messengers. This was a voluntary action taken by the school, Samford officials announced July 7.

The school's board of trustees executive committee approved the decision June 27 as a result of an ongoing dialogue among the senior leaders of Samford and ABSC. The dialogue revolved around tensions concerning a proposed student organization — Samford Together — whose stated purpose was to facilitate the discussion of topics related to human sexuality.

The Samford Relationship Study Group was appointed to work out concerns between the state convention and its 175-year-old educational institution.

ABSC and SBOM leadership see the student group as more than a discussion group and are concerned it is an LGBT-oriented organization, officials noted.

Concerns were publicly expressed through a joint statement from ABSC President John Thweatt and SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance and later affirmed and approved by State Board trustees.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said the intent and purposes of the proposed organization were widely misunderstood.

But even before being notified by convention officials that there could be financial consequences if the group was officially recognized by Samford, Westmoreland confirmed he had determined not to seek formal recognition of the proposed student organization by trustees. Instead his plan was to work to address topics related to human sexuality and "other important issues at the intersection of Christian understanding and cultural reality."

"I will involve (the students requesting official recognition for Samford Together) and others across campus in taking essential steps to create new and ongoing opportunities for robustly engaging these and other important issues," he said. "Our actions at Samford, irrespective of financial considerations, must demonstrate fidelity to God's truth, abiding compassion and respect for all people and solidarity with the timeless ideals of a strong university."

Thweatt, chair of the Samford Relationship Study Group, released the following statement



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Samford University recently wrapped up a yearlong celebration of its 175th anniversary.

from the group in response to the Samford announcement: "The matter of recognition of the student organization is in the hands of the leadership of Samford University. They know our concerns about the organization as expressed in person and in print."

He also acknowledged that SBOM was prepared to recommend Samford's CP allotment be cut entirely starting in 2018 if the student group was given official recognition.

"In the coming days, the leaders of Alabama Baptists and Samford University hope to ascertain what areas of ministry cooperation — that do not involve Cooperative Program allocations — could be developed for the future which will honor our 175 years of ministry

together," the study group said. "As always, we will pray for Samford, its leadership and its students."

Westmoreland said, "I believe the action taken by our trustees is something that both parties have been anticipating for some time and will serve the best interests of both Samford and the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Our longstanding educational and ministry relationships with Alabama Baptists have always been more significant than money, and these relationships will continue and flourish."

This will be the third time since 2008 that Samford has voluntarily reduced the annual funding it receives from the ABSC.

The original plan was for Samford's CP allo-

cation to be reduced by \$300,000 to \$400,000 per year for five to seven years beginning in 2015 until the amount was down from its then \$4-plus million to around \$2 million.

Westmoreland told Alabama Baptists at the 2014 annual meeting, "This is a step of faith that in some measure God will help us replenish that which we are relinquishing."

And with Samford's recent step, he said, "We acknowledge that reducing reliance on financial support from the [state convention] will require careful stewardship of the university's resources, but I am confident of Samford's ability to maintain financial integrity."

Samford is among the 54 colleges and universities affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention through 19 state conventions and is the largest of the three Alabama Baptist schools. It operated under a \$163 million budget for the July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017, school year.

Both state convention and Samford leaders maintain the relationship is not one of true separation and will remain friendly, cooperative and vital.

Samford houses the historical documents for Alabama Baptist life and serves as host to a variety of events sponsored by ABSC-affiliated groups. These and other connections will be part of the ongoing discussions for how to work together going forward.

"The relationship between Alabama Baptists and Samford remains crucial to the mission of Samford and the ongoing work of Baptists in Alabama and Christians throughout the world," Westmoreland said. ¶



WESTMORELAND



THWEATT

BWA elects American Elijah Brown as next general secretary

The winds of change were swirling during the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Annual Gathering in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 5-7 as the organization formally approved the appointment of Elijah Brown as the next general secretary of BWA. Brown, a Texas native, will assume the position Jan. 1, 2018.

"Elijah understands the BWA, values human rights, is a champion of religious freedom, connects with all generations, is a passionate speaker (and) a skilled administrator," said John Upton, former BWA president and chair of the General Secretary Search Committee.

Brown, 36, is the son of a Texas pastor and has had a decade-long involvement in BWA that started in 2007 when he was named 1 of 35 global emerging leaders by BWA. He is currently BWA's regional secretary for North America and general secretary for the North American Baptist Fellowship.

He also serves as executive vice president of the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, a Christian human rights organization based in Virginia.

Current General Secretary Neville Callam, who has led BWA for 10 years, said the newly elected leader "has been gifted by God," adding that he "expects Elijah's service with the BWA to be marked by robust advocacy in the cause of social justice and enthusiastic engagement witnessing to



BWA photo

BWA participants hold an induction prayer for incoming BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown, who will take office Jan. 1, 2018.

the transformative power of the gospel."

Brown's specialties are in human rights and religious liberty.

He has conducted research on, led training events in and done advocacy work in South Sudan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Iraq and Nepal, according to BWA.

Brown will be BWA's ninth general secretary.

Also during the BWA Annual Gathering, three organizations were welcomed into BWA membership, adding two new countries to the BWA family.

The Turkish Baptist Alliance and The Baptist Evangelical Church of Chad each became the first BWA member organizations from their respective countries.

The Turkish Baptist Alliance and The Baptist Evangelical Church of Chad each became the first BWA member organizations from their respective countries.



BROWN

The Zomi Baptist Churches of America also became a BWA member, bringing the umbrella organization's total membership to 238 across 124 countries.

Resolutions

Resolutions on the following topics were approved by BWA's General Council on July 7:

- ▶ modern-day slavery and human trafficking,
- ▶ religious freedom in Russia,
- ▶ religious liberty in the U.S.,
- ▶ refugees in East Africa and
- ▶ the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. (BWA, TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Kenneth L. Maddox

Mud Creek Association DOM dies at 65

Kenneth L. Maddox, director of missions for Mud Creek Baptist Association, died June 23. He was 65.

Maddox was traveling back from the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Phoenix in mid-June when he was hospitalized at the University of Arkansas Medical Center in Little Rock for several days before he died.

The family's prayer was that "through all of this may people see Jesus," one family friend shared.

Maddox accepted Christ at the age of 7, later accepting the call to full-time ministry at age 18. He held degrees from Samford University in Birmingham and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Maddox served as pastor of several churches before serving Mud Creek Association. Churches he served include New Providence Baptist Church, Quinton; South Highland Baptist Church, Gadsden; and Pine Flat Baptist Church, Selma, among others. He began his ministry as minister of youth for Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer.

Well loved by the pastors in Mud Creek Association and many Alabama Baptists across the state, Maddox was known for his encouraging spirit. He has been described by several Alabama Baptist leaders and pastors as a "special friend," "mentor in ministry" and "great encourager."

"Bro. Ken represents what is right and good in America," said Daniel Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, who preached Maddox's funeral June 30.

Maddox is survived by his wife of 43 years, Vicki; three children; and seven grandchildren. (TAB)



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'Freedom of conscience' law

Alabama among states allowing faith-based foster care agencies to restrict child placement

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Homosexual and transgender issues are playing out in faith-based child placement agencies across America, and Alabama is no exception.

Alabama recently became one of the latest states to enact a "freedom of conscience" law that allows faith-based foster care agencies to restrict child placement based on the provider's religious beliefs. Similar laws have been passed in Texas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Virginia and Michigan, while legislation is being considered elsewhere as well.

Alabama's law applies only to those agencies not receiving any state or government funds. According to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, South Dakota's law applies to all foster and adoption agencies, including those with government contracts. Texas' law, which goes into effect Sept. 1, does too, according to Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Gov. Kay Ivey signed the Child

Placing Agency Inclusion Act into law in May. Baptist Press reported that the governor's office heard from numerous religious leaders in support of the bill, quoting Joe Godfrey, religious liberty advocate and executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP).

The bill was vehemently opposed by LGBT (lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender) activists who feared the law would be used to discriminate against them.

About 30 percent of all Alabama adoptions are placed through faith-based agencies, according to ALCAP.

Shutting down

Faith-based child placement agencies in several states have shut down rather than obey non-discrimination laws covering sexual orientation.

Ivey suggested that the fear of child placement agencies shutting down in Alabama drove her decision to sign the bill.

"This bill is not about discrimination," she told the Associated Press, "but instead protects the ability of religious agencies to

place vulnerable children in a permanent home."

But some scholars suggest such laws will only reduce the number of adoptive parents.

Writing in the May issue of the Journal of Legislation, Samantha R. Lyew said same-sex couples throughout the U.S. are raising some 58,000 foster and adopted children. An Auburn University graduate currently pursuing her law degree at Notre Dame Law School, Lyew said some 400,000 children are in foster care in America, with nearly 102,000 awaiting adoption. Same-sex couples are more likely to adopt their foster children, according to Lyew's research.

Lyew's article traces the ongoing tension between gay rights

and religious freedom, noting the conflict is handled disparately according to state laws and political leanings.

"State treatment of same-sex couples seeking to foster or adopt

children falls across the spectrum — from one extreme prohibiting child placement with same-sex couples, to treading a middle ground of indifference, to the opposite extreme promoting child placement with same-sex couples," she wrote.

That certainly appears to be the case when contrasting Alabama's approach with that of Illinois.

"This bill is not about discrimination but instead protects the ability of religious agencies to place vulnerable children in a permanent home."

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey

"The state of Illinois' social services policies now bar social workers from employment and foster families from caring for children if they refuse to facilitate a child's gender transition," the Christian Post reported in June.

Transgender semantics

But the word "transgender" is not easily defined and has become so politicized and emotionally charged that Christians should be aware of that label, said Andrew T. Walker, director of policy studies with the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

A doctoral candidate in Chris-

tian Ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, Walker is the author of the forthcoming book "God and the Transgender Debate."

"Unfortunately, to most, the semantics of transgenderism do much more than simply describe someone's subjective psychological experiences," Walker wrote in a recent article for the Witherspoon Institute. "Apparently the majority of those in our culture now subscribe to the idea that transitioning from one sex to another sex is something actually possible, despite this being physically, and metaphysically, impossible."

Semantics or not, much of the politically charged debate about LGBT rights versus religious freedom, especially with regard to child placement, can be directly traced to the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that made same-sex "marriage" legal nationwide.

Same-sex 'marriage'

Legalizing same-sex "marriages" removed certain roadblocks for prospective LGBT parents as it overturned some states' laws requiring that joint adoptions be limited to "a husband and a wife." And other court challenges eliminated more direct legal prohibitions against allowing homosexuals to adopt, such as Florida's law, which was overturned in 2010, according to Pew Charitable Trusts.

Following the same-sex "marriage" ruling, Alabama and other states began changing their child placement policies and forms accordingly. But that doesn't mean the fight is over, Pew noted. ✠

SBOM's SPEAK conference to be held at Vaughn Forest

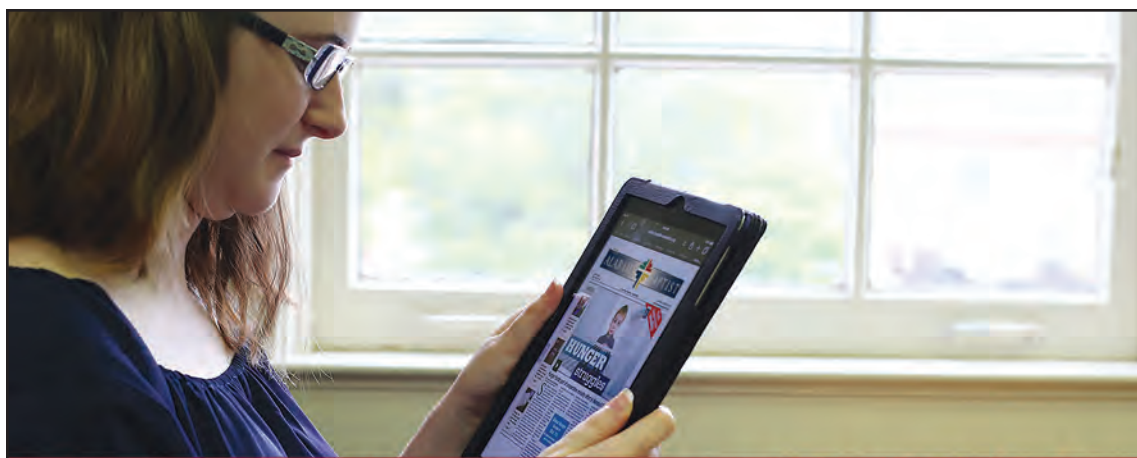
Today's students have an amazing ability and opportunity to be an influence in their world," said Mike Nuss, who works with the State Board of Missions' student ministries division. "We hope SPEAK conference will serve as a catalyst for that kind of change."

Formerly named the Youth Evangelism Conference, the theme of the event — set for July 21–22 at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery — is "Voice of Influence." Speakers will be Acton

Bowen, a Gadsden-based speaker and author; Rick Burgess, co-host of the nationally syndicated Rick & Bubba Show, based in Birmingham; and Josh Holland, a church planter serving in New Orleans.

Rush of Fools, a musical group from Alabama, will lead worship and New Orleans native Shantrice Coleman will be back again this year with her trademark spoken word.

For more information or to register, visit speak.ymlink.org. (TAB)



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Well-prepared volunteers more effective in missions strategy

(continued from page 1)
churches. About 60 Filipino national believers have been trained in church planting and evangelism so far, Jennings said.

AOT in the U.S. will serve the same mission for American believers though their missions field may be anywhere in the world, according to AOT trainer Tyler Faught, who lives and works at the training center.

“We focus on evangelism tools and a church-planting framework that our team members can use in a variety of situations,” Faught said. “We also see a big part of our focus as mobilizing Americans to be involved in supporting and sending missionaries.”

For trainees time spent at AOT is not unlike a college semester though the focus is on nurturing a closer relationship with God and with other participants. Mornings are spent in Bible study and prayer. Afternoons focus on team-building and cross-cultural missions activities, once again focused on strategies that can be applied in a variety of contexts. The goal is to give trainees a “toolbox” of resources to serve effectively anywhere in the world.

Building community is another important part of AOT, Faught said.

“For many in this generation, communication and hanging out are done online. They’re not doing as much in person as they used to. So AOT is an opportunity to demonstrate what a healthy, gospel-centered community looks like,” Faught said. “Trainees see the value of having accountability, of working with others who are passionate

about their relationship with the Lord and of supporting each other in striving for Christ-likeness together.”

Training is about developing independence as well as nurturing team dynamics, both of which are important in the missions field, he said. When he travels to Africa in July to assist Nehemiah Teams in the region, Faught will be evaluating whether the teams are meeting the goals set by the missionaries and how well team members are working together.

“It’s all about trying to find out ways we can better prepare students to help missionaries carry out their strategies,” Faught said.

Sending well-prepared volunteers into the field makes a big difference in their effectiveness, said Chad Stillwell, IMB student mobilization leader.

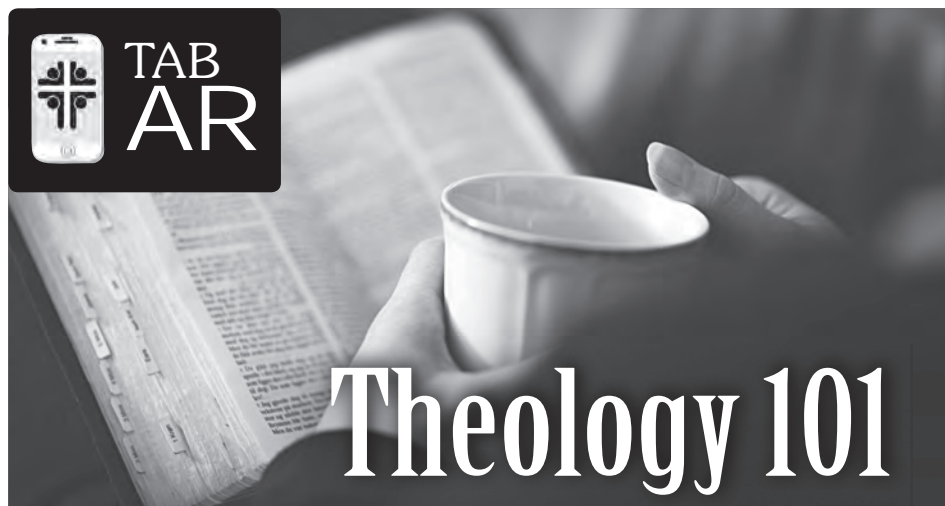
“For every hour of discipleship or training students in programs like AOT receive prior to missions service, we see real rewards in both their

confidence and effectiveness in sharing the gospel, discipling new believers and starting churches,” Stillwell said. “AOT is a model for training and discipleship of student and young adult missionaries.”

AOT also offers an opportunity to experience the church like it was in the beginning, Faught said.

“In Acts we see how the church grew and how determined believers were even in the midst of persecution to share the gospel and go where the gospel had not been spread,” Faught said. “This semester really shows you how you can be part of what Scripture calls us to do. To me, that’s pretty exciting.” †

AOT fall semester will begin Aug. 17 and run through Dec. 17. No prerequisites are needed to apply for AOT. Applications and more information about program costs and expectations are available at www.ntp52aot.com. Applications received by Aug. 1 will receive first consideration.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Sin

Sin as Iniquity

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

Some of the terms that describe or speak of sin seem to be weightier than others. Sin as “iniquity” sounds more sinister than sin as “missing the mark,” even though sin is sin whatever term is used to speak of it.

“Iniquity” denotes something deeper than a sinful action; it gets at the very character or nature of that action.

David is a case in point. He lusted after Bathsheba in his heart. Failing to repent of his lust, he progressed in his iniquity to an act of adultery with her. Continuing in unrepentance and ignoring God’s law about adultery, David went deeper into iniquity when he arranged for the murder of Uriah.

Iniquity in the heart has a way of growing. The iniquity in David’s heart grew and grew as a willful and progressive violation of God’s law that dominated his actions. Only later did David realize that iniquity filled his heart. Thus in Psalm 32:5 he used the phrase “the iniquity of my sin” where “sin” refers to David’s actions and “iniquity” speaks of the seriousness or character of those actions.

What David did weighed heavily on him because of the uncommon grossness or sordid depth of his adultery with Bathsheba followed by his reprehensible action of engineering the murder of her husband. We might say that iniquity connotes the horrible depth of sin against our infinitely holy God.

The word most commonly used in the New Testament for “iniquity” is one built on the root term for “law,” with a negative prefix added to give the idea of lawlessness or illegality.

First John 3:4 says it succinctly, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness.”

People who ignore God’s law and act without regard to what He prohibits are in essence choosing their own will instead of God’s will.

Such is the idea in Isaiah 53:6: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and

the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Choosing one’s own way over God’s way amounts to iniquity, which the anticipated Man of sorrows would one day bear in the sinner’s behalf. Sin as iniquity puts the focus on a person’s heart condition in relation to God’s standards.

Jesus characteristically looked past outward actions to focus upon people’s hearts. He called what He saw in the heart “iniquity” or the sinful character that lay behind outward deeds.

Jesus observed certain religious people whose hearts were bent on ignoring God’s law and called their behavior “iniquity” or lawlessness, putting the emphasis on the inward condition more than the outward acts.

On one occasion He spoke about some who outwardly called Him “Lord” and even appeared to perform outward deeds of power but inwardly followed their own wills rather than God’s will. In the estimation of Jesus, such empty words that were used to call Him “Lord” were only camouflaging the sinister condition of their hearts.

He said they were practicing iniquity or lawlessness: “Not everyone who saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity’” (Matt. 7:21–23). †

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.



Randolph WMU helps missionaries



‘Diapers for Missions’

Photo courtesy of Brenda Brown

Randolph Baptist Association Woman’s Missionary Union had ‘Diapers for Missions’ Day on June 8 at the associational office. Diapers were made to be sent to missionaries in third world countries. Fred Cooke is director of missions.



The Alabama Baptist & women (1843-1920)

Contributions of early Alabama Baptist women chronicled, praised

By Elizabeth Wells
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Even in the era of hoop skirts and big hats, even when the best way for them to get from one town to another involved a horse and buggy, even before they were given the right to vote — women have always played a vital role in Alabama Baptist life.

Through the years Alabama Baptist women have served as leaders concerning issues affecting the moral and religious fiber of local, state, national and international life and as catalysts developing programs and organizations for spreading the gospel.

Every step of the way, *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) chronicled and encouraged the contributions of these deeply committed Christian women.

Do you want to turn a dream into reality? Then call on Alabama Baptist women, who were at the forefront of doing just that in the early 1800s. When today's Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Judson College, Samford University and TAB were only dreams, women were front and center in their establishment.

At the organization of the Alabama Baptist Convention in 1823, half of the funds given were raised by women and contributed by the Ladies Societies, a precursor to today's Woman's Missionary Union (WMU).

Early Alabama Baptist leader Julia Tarrant Barron gave the land and funds for establishment of both Judson Female Institute (now Judson College) in 1838 and Howard College (now Samford University) in 1841. She was one of the Association of Brethren who owned and operated TAB when it was birthed in 1843.

Setting aside space

Early in its existence, TAB reported news of women's missions efforts and work in the local church. In the days before the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was founded in 1845, TAB printed personal letters from Adoniram and Ann Judson, America's first foreign missionar-

ies who served in Burma for almost 40 years. The state Baptist paper recognized the importance of reporting on matters of specific interest to women — allotting equal space for announcements of activities and work in women's educational institutions as well as their advertisements.

After the flurry of activity in the early 1800s, Alabama Baptist women kept the momentum going. In 1888 the Alabama WMU was formed, with a full report including the organization's constitution published in TAB. News from WMU was often on TAB's front page.

Alabama WMU

In the 1890s the national WMU's annual meetings were held simultaneously with the annual meeting of the SBC but often at another venue. In 1893, Alabama WMU held its first annual meeting.

In planning sessions for the 1893 Alabama Convention, the "Ladies" meeting was discussed:

"It is useless to fight against women. Better not, unless you want to get whipped. Paul ran when women opposed him. When the nations of the earth are coming to freedom, why not liberate women?"

L.L. Gwaltney
TAB editor, 1920

"Resolved that hereafter, Ladies Societies of our churches be and are hereby invited to hold by their delegates, a meeting of one day at some time during the session of this body; provided that said meeting shall not interfere with the meetings of the Convention."

WMU Secretary Mrs. J.C. Brown reported in TAB:

"The first annual meeting of the Woman's Missionary Union of Alabama, auxiliary to the State Convention, met Wednesday, October 8, 1893, in the Presbyterian church of Greenville, Alabama.

An attractive program had been prepared by the Central Committee and was heartily participated in by a number of the workers. Reports from the associations were rendered by the vice presidents, which, with the discussion of mission topics, filled the hearts of the hearers."

Ever try "to dam up the Mississippi or to stop a cyclone"? Rather than trying to do the impossible, messengers to Alabama Baptists' 1895 annual meeting voted to admit women to Howard College.

The Howard College representative pre-

sented rationale for admission, noting that 90 percent of all teachers were women and that intellectually women were equal to men. The proviso was that women would not take the complete four-year course but would enter at the junior level, concluding: "The movement has come to stay. Auburn, Tuscaloosa and Greensboro have wheeled into line and Howard purposes to stand abreast of them. The colleges need the gentle, refining influence of women in the formative period of life."

In the July 19, 1895, issue, TAB Editor John Harris commented on women at Howard College. He supported women's education but considered co-education a part of the "woman craze," writing: "We predict that in the South, at least, the time will never come when any considerable number of our young women will attend the male college, which are throwing open their doors to them."

In another column, Harris affirmed women for their commitment to missions. He noted that banks might fail and the cotton prices were low. Still, he wrote, "Baptist women of Alabama go on raising what they can, sending boxes to frontier missionaries, presenting an example of 'patient continuance in well-doing.'"

'Our Women's Page'

In 1899, TAB printed correspondence from missionaries Willie Kelly and Lula Whilden in China with Annie Armstrong sharing their strength and work. Kelly was in the walled city of Quin San, and Whilden traveled to Canton with a guard because work in her area might be considered a disturbance by authorities.

When Frank Willis Barnett became editor in 1902, he dedicated "Our Women's Page" to share correspondence and business for women statewide, "presided over by Mrs. L.F. Stratton, president of the Central Committee." He asked readers to

support all the missionaries, particularly those with Alabama ties, with prayers and finances.

In 1909, Alabama WMU moved its headquarters to Montgomery. Women were not only teaching about missions, but also encouraging missions giving.

The 646 Alabama Baptist women's and children's organizations gave one-fourth of the \$44,000 given to home and foreign missions by Alabama Baptists. The women expressed appreciation for TAB: "The merits of the page so kindly given them in *The Alabama Baptist* proves their appreciation of this organ as well as their loyalty to it before the people whom they urge to subscribe to it and support."

Women had long had a voice in TAB and that voice continued to resonate even as new editors took the reins.

In one TAB column in 1913, Barnett commented on the woman's page: "For it took only a short time after coming back to Alabama to become editor that we made up our mind that the WMU was going to have a voice in *The Alabama Baptist*. So, we gave them a page, not merely because they were women of refinement and culture but because we realized that they had definite ideas and were consumed with an ardent desire to do things for the Master."

In 1920, Editor L.L. Gwaltney supported women for their work in missions and their leadership in the temperance movement, writing: "It is useless to fight against women. Better not, unless you want to get whipped. Paul ran when women opposed him. When the nations of the earth are coming to freedom, why not liberate women?"

Editors supported, praised and publicized the role of women as they actively lived out their Christian commitments in local, state, national and international settings.✠

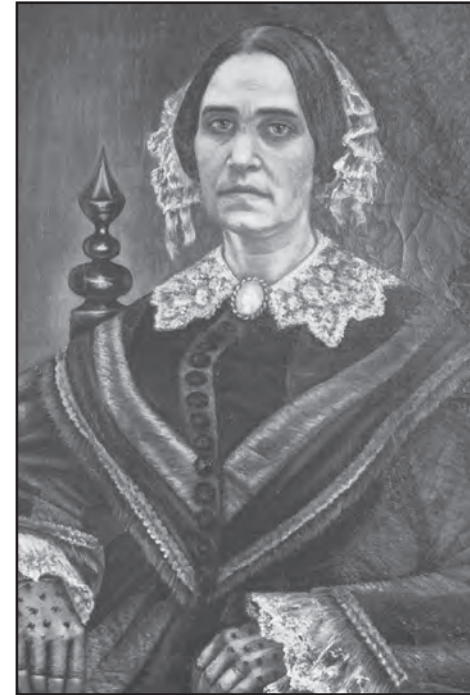


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Julia Tarrant Barron is one of the Association of Brethren who owned and operated TAB when it was birthed in 1843.

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September 7	5	Dothan	Ridgecrest BC
August 8	6	Greenville	Southside BC
September 5	7	Satsuma	FBC Satsuma
August 22	8	Linden	Linden BC
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Church ANNIVERSARIES



Slocomb's New Hinson hits 75 years

The 75th anniversary celebration of New Hinson Baptist Church, Slocomb, was so joyous that church members are still talking about it.

During the 10 a.m. service June 4, former and current church members gathered to sing old hymns together and listen to the children's choir sing. Former pastor Tony Barber brought the message.

Special guests for the celebration included Ellen Dewberry, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative who presented a certificate to the church, and Dicky McAllister, director of missions for Geneva Baptist Association.

Bryan Klobe is pastor.

Round Island BC marks 200 years

The past was greatly celebrated by the approximately 500 participants who gathered to mark the 200th anniversary of Round Island Baptist Church, Athens, on June 4.



Photo courtesy of ABHC

During an open house June 3, the public was welcomed in to view the various historical displays that included eight timeline banners, photos of former pastors, furniture from past buildings and an old typewriter.

In the 10 a.m. service the next day, former pastor

William "Bill" Bailey brought the message and former member Jo Dare Conn sang special music. Certificates were presented to the 10 longest-standing members and Kevin Ward, director of missions for Limestone Baptist Association, presented a certificate to the church on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

But the real celebration came when a profession of faith was made.

Pastor Mike Green said he felt "a tremendous sense of fulfillment in seeing the people work together to honor God in celebrating 200 years of service."

Demaris BC celebrates 150 years

The 150th anniversary celebration of Demaris Baptist Church, Cedar Bluff, on June 4 was a "spectacular" affair, according to Pastor Mike Odom (pictured, right).

During the 11 a.m. service, which also doubled as the church's homecoming service, the congregation heard a sermon from evangelist Clyde Painter, of Sugar Valley, Georgia. Special music was provided by The Anointed, a quartet from Tunnel Hill, Georgia.



Photo by Phyllis Odom

Wendell Dutton (pictured, left), Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a plaque to the congregation in Lookout Mountain Baptist Association.

The service kicked off a Monday-Friday revival featuring Painter as guest speaker.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB



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AUTAUGA

► **Boones Chapel Church, Prattville**, will hold its REignite Summer Harvest Revival one night each month at 7 p.m. The events and speakers are as follows: July 19, Ted Traylor; Aug. 23, Daniel Wilson; Sept. 6, Robert Smith; Oct. 4, Kevin Hamm. Phil Winningham is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **The Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will host the Bessemer Association deacon celebration Aug. 1. The theme is "The Challenges of a Modern Deacon Ministering in a Culturally Changing World." Bob Terry will speak. Bill McCall is pastor. Barry Cosper is director of missions. ► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate homecoming July 16. Special music will begin at 9:30 a.m. and worship will follow at 10:45. Former pastor Thomas Perkins will speak. A covered dish lunch will follow the service. Tommy Chesser is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold

revival services July 16–21. New Ground will perform special music Sunday at 6 p.m. Randy Hale will speak at the 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. services Monday–Friday. Lunch will follow each morning service and the prayer band will lead worship daily at 10:15 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Pisgah Church, Selma**, will celebrate homecoming July 16. Sunday School is at 9 a.m. and worship is at 10 a.m. Pastor Harold Arnold will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Pisgah also will hold revival services July 17–19, 7 nightly. Jim O'Neal will speak in each service.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** held a Gospel Sing on July 8 featuring 3 Days Out, of Wicksburg, and The Byrd Family, of Newville. Hosea Parker is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Lee Street Church, Enterprise**, will host the Macie Adams Band in concert July 23, 6 p.m.

An ice cream social will follow the concert. A love offering will be collected. For more information call 334-347-4981. Slade Stinson is pastor. ► **Park Avenue Church, Enterprise**, will celebrate homecoming July 23. Worship begins at 10:30 a.m. Lanny Shepard, pastor of New Hope Church, Enterprise, will speak. Mark Donaldson will lead music. Lunch will follow the service. The Jubilee Quartet will perform at 1 p.m. For more information call 334-347-8264. Leon Adams is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Snowtown Church, Dora**, will celebrate homecoming July 23, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. The Gospel Barn Quartet will perform special music at 1:30 p.m. Bob Thomason is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, will celebrate homecoming July 16. The Kempters, of Slapout, will perform special music at 10 a.m. Don Johnson will speak at the 11 a.m. service. Lunch will begin at noon. There will not be an evening service. Mike Stephens is pastor.✠

Coffee Assoc. helps with disaster relief




Photo courtesy of Coffee Baptist Association

Coffee Baptist Association Disaster Relief committee members are (l to r) Director of Missions John Granger, Ray Helms, Lynda Berry, Jimmy Clark, Randolph Hudson, Ricky Snellgrove and Mike Dickerson, chairman. Not pictured is William Griffin. The disaster relief team was called out four times in May to help neighboring counties after tornadoes. The associational disaster relief trailer has recently been updated with name and logos for the county.



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- 3** Tap the  icon at the bottom of the screen.
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- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Johntown Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Johntown Baptist Church, 5201 Vance Rd., West Blocton, AL 35184.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church, Talladega, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music to lead blended worship services (20 hours/week). Send resúmes to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 696, Talladega, AL 35161. Attn: Music Search Committee or email to: fbcpublishings@bellsouth.net.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Indian Springs First Baptist Church is seeking a spiritually mature person for the bivocational position of minister of music to lead our worship service, rehearse our choir and praise band and give overall direction to our music program. Send resúmes to

Pastor Charlie Dale at charleshoustondale@gmail.com.

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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Beatitudes series — Matthew 5:3-12

'Blessed are the pure in heart' (v. 8) — Who Will See God?

In Matthew 5, Jesus is teaching His disciples what it means to be a true member of the kingdom of God. He opens the "Sermon on the Mount" by giving what seems to be a random list of spiritual proverbs — the Beatitudes. Though they may seem random and disconnected, the Beatitudes in verses 3-11 are actually structured by the gospel message.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones helpfully explains that the first three beatitudes describe a heart ready to hear the gospel. We cannot embrace the gospel while believing we have merit to offer God; we must be poor in spirit. We cannot embrace the forgiveness of Christ while dismissing the seriousness of our offense against a holy God; we must mourn our sin.

Theologian Charles Spurgeon rightly notes that "pride cannot live beneath the cross" — we must be humble. Humility acknowledges that as sinners in need of grace, we are the problem.

A person who understands these three truths knows they need a savior. From there, verse 6 shows us the natural response to seeing our need: we hunger and thirst for a righteousness that is foreign to us. It is not in us but is made available to us in Christ. Through His work on the cross, we receive His righteousness before God. When we understand this, verse 8 becomes a treasured promise: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Those who would truly see God are those who mourn their sin and admit their need for Christ's purity.

Seeing God

The Scriptures teach from start to finish that seeing God is the end goal of our spiritual life. The psalmist asks one thing of God in Psalm 27:4 — "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord." Isaiah comforts the people of God by promising their "eyes will behold the King in His beauty" (Isa. 33:17). Job's heart "faints within" him as he longs to "see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:26-27). Even Moses asks to see the glory of God though it would mean his certain death. Seeing the God of glory would be your and my constant

By Curt Mize

Curt Mize is associate pastor for FBC Dadeville. He holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University and a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Jennifer, have one daughter.



desire if we knew our greatest need.

Yet our tendency as we read Jesus' statement in verse 8 is to quickly usher ourselves into the category of "pure in heart."

Whether by comparing ourselves with others or mitigating the extent of our wickedness, we all look for external evidence that we are truly pure in heart. No one naturally imagines they are excluded from Jesus' blessing. Yet Jesus is clear that He is not judging our church attendance or giving records or ordination certificates. Jesus is concerned with our hearts.

I love the specificity Jesus uses when He sets the bar for who can see God. He leaves no room for ambiguity. The focus of purity is within us. The heart is the very core of who we are. It is the origin of the thoughts we think that no one hears; it is the motivation for our every action and word. It is this center of our being that Jesus says must be "pure."

Pure doesn't mean merely unstained, it is much deeper than that. This word "pure" carries the idea of a single direction; it is undivided love and affection. The same idea is captured in His command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Matt. 22:37).

Just as a husband's love is impure if split between a wife and a mistress, so too are our hearts impure if they pursue anything but the Lord — even for the briefest moment. The split second of lust or the flash of anger are enough to disqualify us from being "pure in heart."

At this point in Jesus' sermon, anyone with a shred of spiritual life is panicking. Later in Matthew, the disciples asked incredulously, "Who then can be saved?"

(Matt. 19:25). We must mourn our sin when we hear this standard, for it condemns us all — unless someone can meet that standard for us.

And in this we see the glory of the gospel. What we need most — purity of heart — has been accomplished for us by Christ and is freely given to us when we respond to the good news of the gospel.

The gospel begins by crippling our self-reliance, showing us the impossible standard we cannot meet. Then it thrills us with the glory that our deepest needs have been provided for in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He has succeeded where we failed and His righteousness is imputed to us, so that with no purity of our own, we are counted pure and righteous before a holy God. It is only if we are united with Christ that we can see God. That is the gospel in Matthew 5:8: Those who are truly pure in heart are those who mourn their impurity. They will see God.

Key to growth

Furthermore, understanding this truth is the key to growth in the Christian life. All of our "turning from sin to serve the living God" (1 Thess. 1:9) is dependent upon our continual pressing in to "behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

If we make it our daily goal to marinate in the greatness of what Jesus has done, we will "with unveiled face [behold] the glory of the Lord, being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18).

This is the process called "sanctification" and we who have believed the gospel have the ironclad assurance that He will complete what He began, for "those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

Because of this we press on, knowing that though sin partly clouds our vision of Him now, one day "no longer will there be anything accursed, but be the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will worship Him. And we will see His face" (Rev. 22:3).✠

My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram

Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

I am about to do something totally out of character for me. I have an opportunity to go on a trip, a long trip — a missions trip no less.

This is major because I am disabled. I have extremely limited mobility and I have never been on a missions trip. At this time I cannot sit for long periods of time. I cannot walk more than a few feet at a time before I have to stop. And most of all I am impatient.

How in the world did I convince myself that God wanted me to go on this trip?

If it does work out for my husband and me to go, then I fully believe God has a purpose for us to be there.

What is cool to me is that every time I prayed about this, whether with my husband or by myself, I got this sense of total serenity about it.

Then, as if to solidify our conviction about going being the right thing, I spoke to the missionary that we will be working with and she was excited I would be able to be an office person for her.

Boom — there is my purpose.

I can sit and work for the Lord while others go out and do what I cannot.✠

What happened to Robert Bentley's gambling council?

Remember when then Gov. Robert Bentley created the Advisory Council on Gaming? It was in October 2016 and its goal was to research and compile a report that presented a variety of options to the Legislature for consideration.

The council's original deadline was Jan. 31 and was then extended to June 30. But the council believed it would finish the report early and would be of use to legislators during the spring legislative session.

Then Bentley resigned from office and Kay Ivey became Alabama's governor.

Where did that leave Bentley's council? "With the change in administrations, Gov. Ivey has put all of the task forces that were previously created by Gov. Bentley on hold," said Clinton Carter, council chairman and state finance director.

The report is completed, he said, but hasn't been discussed or ratified by the full council. As of July 5, there weren't any plans to complete the report, Carter said.

"I don't consider our efforts to be in vain. ... We hope that should any group, person, legislator follow along this path that they would be able to pick back up right where we left off." (Maggie Walsh)

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

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Dadeville's Lake Pointe seeks missions opportunities near, far

It began with one woman, then grew to two. Now there are eight women from Lake Pointe Baptist Church, Dadeville, who get together to sew dresses, duffle bags, coats — anything that might be of use to someone in need.

The women have made dresses for little girls in Kentucky; sent 30 coats to Maryland; sewed duffle bags for foster children; and collected items for the Mississippi River Region's backpack ministry.

Two of the women are homebound but are still seeking ways to serve the Lord at ages 87 and 94. Combined, the two ladies have made more than 100 dresses and 14 pairs of shorts.

But it's not just the women of Lake Pointe Baptist who are active in missions projects.

Members of the Tallapoosa Baptist Association church volunteer at the area food bank quarterly and continually collect items to contribute to the food bank.

The church also participates in the association-wide Love Tallapoosa County, which encour-



Above: Carpenters for Christ and hundreds of volunteers are helping build Lake Pointe Baptist Church, Dadeville, this summer while (right) WMU continues its many projects including sewing dresses for children in need.



Photos courtesy of Glenda Eubanks

ages members and churches to show the love of Christ in their communities. For instance, members of Lake Pointe took to Bill Nichols Retirement Home to visit and share a devotion with the residents there. (TAB)



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 16

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, Office for Global Engagement, University of Mobile

GOD REVEALED Psalm 19:1-14

Our psalm this week addresses God's revelation of Himself. First He reveals Himself through the order, design and magnificence of creation, otherwise known as general revelation. The apostle Paul concurs with the psalmist that all humanity experiences the work of God in creation so that we are without excuse. The next section of the song focuses upon God's special revelation, which He revealed through Moses and the prophets. Finally David points out that covenant believers, including himself, are accountable to respond to God's revelation.

Seen in Creation (1-6)

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The heavens declare His glory. That message has gone out to all the earth. Here the psalmist is not suggesting that the sun, moon, stars and planets communicate verbally. Instead his point is that God's glory is revealed through His creation throughout the world.

This is precisely the point Paul makes in Romans 1. In fact, it is possible this former Pharisee had Psalm 19 in mind while writing this section of his letter to the church at Rome: "What can be known about God is evident among them because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result people are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude" (Rom. 1:19-21a).

Seen in His Word (7-11)

The instruction, testimony, precepts, command, fear and ordinances of the Lord — these are terms used to characterize God's special revelation through the prophets. This

section of the psalm is like a primer to the Great Acrostic (Ps. 119), which highlights the special revelation of God through 22 alphabetic sections and 176 verses. His instructions guide us. His testimony reminds us of His faithfulness. His precepts enable us. His command commissions us. Reverent fear of Him leads us to worship Him. His ordinances direct us to obedience.

David describes God's Word as perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure and reliable. In his closing remarks within the letter to the church at Philippi, Paul instructed them: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true ... honorable ... just ... pure ... lovely ... commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise — dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8). What could be better than to meditate on the Word of God?

Celebrated in His People (12-14)

God's Word is worth more than gold. Material wealth is temporal. Fire, tornado or hurricane can destroy a beautiful home in moments. A collision can total an expensive car in an instant. A carefully invested portfolio can lose inestimable financial value with one bad day on the stock market. The Bible never loses its value. Through His Word, God teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us, trains us and equips us, in order to conform us into the image of Christ.

God's Word is sweeter and more satisfying than honey in the comb. When we fail to recognize this within the church, we suffer spiritual drought and famine. May our pastors, deacons, Bible study teachers and church members find joy in hearing, reading, studying, living and sharing the message with a world in desperate need of the gospel.

God's Word informs us that we will give account for our individual words, actions, attitudes and the thoughts we entertain. May God shape us through His Word. †

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

FIRST THINGS FIRST Haggai 1:2-13

Haggai is one of those short little books toward the end of the Old Testament that gets overlooked by most Christians. It's a short book — only 38 verses in all. Pastors usually preach on it when they are beginning a building project.

Buildings are a great resource but buildings don't by themselves do ministry. Yet a building project is what is at the heart of this message from Haggai. Rebuilding the temple seems to be the answer to all of Judah's troubles, at least according to Haggai.

Obedience to God takes priority. (2-8)

The people of Israel have been given the opportunity after 70 years of exile in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the walls of the city. Haggai's message came 18 years after the return of the Jewish people from exile.

The problem was that the returning exiles had been filled with enthusiasm when they returned to Jerusalem. They began some work on the temple but gave it up and concentrated on their own houses. The mantra going around the city seemed to be: The time has not yet come to build the Lord's house. So they built their own homes — what Haggai described as paneled houses.

It wasn't customary in Jerusalem for houses to be paneled and certainly not perhaps using the cedar wood Haggai refers to. The cedar wood was the very wood that had been brought down from the mountain ranges of the day in Tyre and Sidon where cedar trees grew. The timber had been bought and purchased and brought to Jerusalem to build the temple.

Not only had they deviated from the

specific command that God had given to them to rebuild the temple, but they had actually employed the very wood that was meant for the temple to build their own houses. So the word of the Lord comes: Give careful thought. Just stop and think for a minute — what are you living for?

We lose out when we place ourselves ahead of God. (9-11)

Haggai takes time to set out, step by step, the consequences of putting our own will before the purposes and plans of God for our lives. We suffer. We lose out on His blessing.

Our spiritual lives shrivel up and instead of being fruitful we discover a "drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labors" (v. 11).

Haggai uses the past not to discourage these folks but to encourage them. He speaks of God as the Lord of Hosts — an archaic term which would be better read as "armies." It is intended to speak of His power and ability to fulfill His promises toward His people.

God is with those who place Him first in their lives. (12-13)

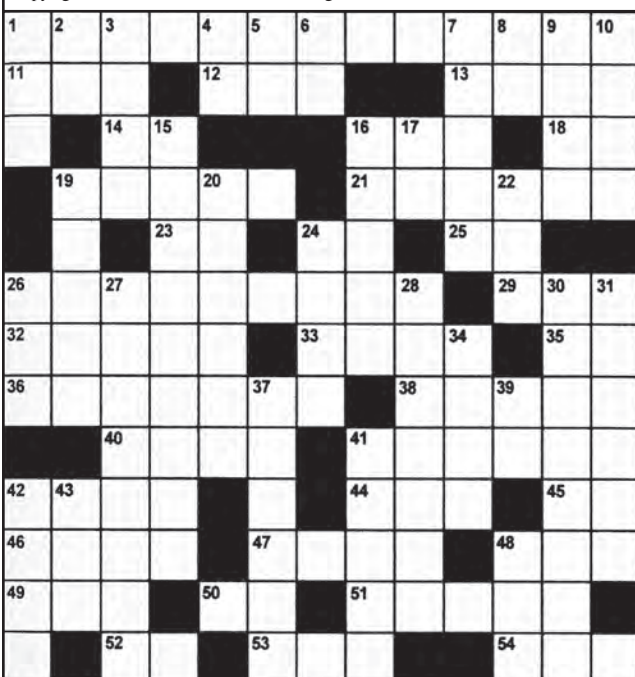
On three occasions Haggai says "take courage." Why? How? Because God says, "For I am with you. Just as I promised you when you came out of Egypt, I am with you — My Spirit abides among you. Do not fear."

Putting God at the center, making space for God in our lives and in our communities is still something we need to work on.

Craig Gay in his book "The Way of the (Modern) World" suggests the essence of worldliness is not to be found in personal morality but rather to "go about our daily business in the world without giving much thought to God." †

Christian Crossword

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Across

- They delivered him to _____ the governor. (Matt. 27:2; 2 words)
- Despise not _____ of these little ones. (Matt. 18:10)
- Standing Room Only. (abbr.)
- Unknown writer. (abbr.)
- Ye shall be _____ gods. (Gen. 3:5)
- _____ Francisco.
- Come from God, and went _____ God. (John 13:3)
- To hold onto something with your hands.
- Fathers. (Span.)
- Lower case. (abbr.)
- Missouri. (abbr.)
- Thus.
- For mine eyes have seen thy _____. (Luke 2:30)
- I will let down the _____. (Luke 5:5)
- A high standard.
- His raiment white as _____. (Matt. 28:3)
- There was _____ strength in him. (1 Sam. 28:20)

- Cleanest, best arranged.
- With many other _____ did he testify. (Acts 2:40)
- Thou didst _____ upon thine horses. (Hab. 3:8)
- A group of singers or part of a song.
- _____ Domini.
- The multitude _____ him to Pilate. (Luke 23:1)
- In regard to. (abbr.)
- He cleaveth my _____(s) asunder. (Job 16:13)
- The angel rolled the stone from the _____. (Matt. 28:2)
- In between, in the midst of.
- 2,000 pounds.
- Let there _____ light. (Gen. 1:3)
- _____ order. (2 Chron. 29:35; 2 words)
- I _____ to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
- Fish eggs.
- The asses that were lost three days _____. (1 Sam. 9:20)

Down

- Dad.

- Pilate wrote a title, and put it _____ the cross. (John 19:19)
- Ye know that summer is _____. (Mark 13:28)
- Jesus _____ the Savior.
- _____ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 15:7)
- _____ Abram departed. (Gen. 12:4)
- The fame of David went into all _____. (1 Chron. 14:17)
- Sent _____ angel. (Num. 20:16)
- To carry something.
- Seth called his son's name _____. (Gen. 4:26)
- Neither is there _____ in any other. (Acts 4:12)
- Knife, fork, _____. (John 13:26)
- Support group for alcoholics.
- A level in school.
- Climbed.
- Ronald. (nickname)
- Went up a _____ from the earth. (Gen. 2:6)
- Lay not this _____ to their charge. (Acts 7:60)
- A wise man will hear and

- increase _____. (Prov. 1:5)
- In no specific place.
- The fear of the Lord is clean, _____ for ever. (Ps. 19:19)
- The ship was now _____ with waves. (Matt. 14:24)
- Abraham took the _____, ... and laid it upon Isaac. (Gen. 22:6)
- One who sends.
- Railroad. (abbr.)
- Near.
- _____ and crafts.
- New. (abbr.)
- Missing in Action. (abbr.)



Purposeful kindness



'Putting the other person before you, not thinking worst of them'

John Fuller recently made a monthlong effort to never utter a negative word to or about his wife, a busy mom he sometimes took for granted.

For a similar period, Katie Phillips found something positive to say about her 7-year-old son, with whom she had a “prickly relationship.”

And Christine King performed acts of kindness for an irritating co-worker.

Kindness requires intentional behavior and can have beneficial results for both the giver and recipient, experts say.

30-day challenge

But don't we know that already? Aren't most of us already kind?

We'd like to think so, said Phillips, an Atlanta-area mother of five, who took a “30-Day Kindness Challenge” earlier this year.

“But when you actually stop and think, ‘OK, what am I actively doing to please my child? How can I find little ways to make them happy, make their day, let them know I'm thinking about them?’

“You're really humbled because you think, ‘Oh my gosh, I don't do this nearly as often as I thought I did,’” said the woman who leads an adoption ministry at her church.

In recent months, Christian authors — as well as *Parade* magazine — have highlighted step-by-step processes to help readers learn how to be kind.

Though organizations like the World Kindness Movement and the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation have encouraged altruism since the 1990s, more recent studies by scientists back up its benefits.

“People are longing for kindness,” said relationship researcher Shaunti Feldhahn, author of “The Kindness Challenge: Thirty Days to Improve Any Relationship.”

“Everybody likes living with a kind home, with a kind church, with a kind school and with kind neighbors.”

So she created daily goals for how to treat a friend, loved one or colleague: Say nothing negative, say something affirming and be generous to them in some small way. Feldhahn found that 89 percent of relationships improved when people took those steps for a month.

“They had trained themselves in purposeful kindness,” she said.

Convoy of Hope President

Hal Donaldson has similar goals for a “revolution of kindness” but for strangers as well as acquaintances.

“Hatred has just seized the headlines and anger is marching through the streets of our nation,” said Donaldson, author of “Your Next 24 Hours: One Day of Kindness Can Change Everything.”

“If we're going to stem the tide of hatred and conflict, it's not going to be through more hatred and conflict. It's going to be through kindness.”

Donaldson knows about the benefits of kindness firsthand. His father was killed and his mother was seriously injured when they were hit by a drunken driver when he was 12. A family of four took in his family of six, sharing a single-wide trailer while their mother recovered. He and his brothers went on to found a Christian charity that mobilizes volunteers to help the poor.

A way of life

But he also has worked on his own level of kindness — first for 24 hours and then trying to make it a way of life — from “being kind to a waiter to opening a door to jotting a note to a friend who I knew was going through a tough time.”

He made that plan after reading Proverbs 21:21: “Whoever goes hunting for what is right and kind finds life itself.”

But there also can be downsides to kindness, from being labeled a “pushover,” as Inc.com columnist Jessica Stillman wrote, to inadvertently aiding a disreputable cause.

“Don't allow your generosity to be exploited and your good intentions to be thwarted,” writes Donaldson. “There are too many people who really need your help.”

And then there's the century-old example from Jerome K. Jerome's “The Cost of Kindness,” in which

members of a fictional congregation despised their cleric, who had an “inborn instinct of antagonism to everybody and everything surrounding him,” but parishioners were so kind to him at his farewell ceremony that he canceled his plans to leave the church.

But kindness, in real life, can be thought of as a personal goal.

King, a former marketer who worked at the Hearts at Home ministry, said she learned the difference between being nice and being kind as she improved communications with her colleague by complimenting her more and complaining less.

“We all know that you should say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ and hold the door,” she said.

“Being kind is putting the other person before you and making an effort not to think the worst of them.”

Although kindness plans are often focused on individuals, group efforts have reaped rewards too.

Many Alabama Baptist churches have launched Random Acts of Kindness efforts through the years such as paying for the food order of the person behind them in the drive-through line, purchasing someone's gas or handing out \$5 bills to strangers. (RNS, TAB)

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'Our mission is making disciples'

Fellowship of Native American Christians celebrate growth at 9th annual meeting

The Fellowship of Native American Christians (FoNAC) celebrated significant growth at its ninth annual meeting, which took place June 12 at the Phoenix Convention Center. The group gathered in the city prior to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting.

The fellowship hosted its first regional training conference June 10–11 at First Indian Baptist Church, Phoenix, where Shaun Whitey is pastor and a FoNAC board member.

"There is a new day coming for our people," the fellowship's Executive Director Gary Hawkins told about 100 who had gathered at the first training session. "All glory to God the creator."

Financial support

In addition to an expansion of its outreach across the United States and internationally, the 80 people present at the fellowship's annual meeting heard reports of solid financial support — though more is needed for further expansion of FoNAC's ministry that networks Native Americans and others reaching Native Americans. They also heard reports from those wanting to align their ministries' goals with those of the Southern Baptist Native American fellowship.

Baptists from South Korea met earlier in the year with Hawkins to express their interest in reaching out to Native Americans in the United States. A missionary in Russia working with unreached and under-reached indigenous people also recently



A group sings with Native Praise during the annual meeting of the Fellowship of Native American Christians on June 12 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

Photo by Matt Miller

contacted FoNAC to discuss similarities between Native Americans and native Russians, particularly those living in remote areas. Hawkins also has been asked to preach next January in Melbourne, Australia, at a gathering of Aboriginal Christians.

Ministry network

A group of Native American men from Oklahoma led by Phil Lawrence, a member of Native Stone Mission, a church plant in Tulsa, traveled to Sisseton, South

Dakota, to develop a ministry network with Pastor Milton "Nippy" Owens. The intent is to strengthen, encourage and open a line of communication of "Native men to Native men" crossing many miles, Hawkins said.

Also during the last 12 months, Hawkins connected with Native Americans on several reservations in Washington state when he spoke at a Global Impact event in Seattle.

He presented native worldview studies in South Carolina and FoNAC leaders met with Native American leaders in San Diego and Los Angeles.

"FoNAC serves as a catalyst blending cultures; a conduit for ministry and those who want to do ministry with Native Americans; and a connector between Native Americans, denominational and tribal leaders and others ... to develop synergy for greater impact," Hawkins said.

FoNAC seeks to serve those with an interest in Native Americans because "if a person seeks to do ministry with an ethnic people group they have little working knowledge of, they risk making many mistakes because of their pre-conceived ideas and assumptions," Hawkins added.

FoNAC's 2018 bare-bones budget of \$66,460 is similar to that of 2017, but it reflects a growing support base from individuals and Southern Baptist churches that worship in Native and non-Native cultural contexts, reported FoNAC's Treasurer Tim

Chavis, pastor of Bear Swamp Baptist Church, Pembroke, North Carolina.

FoNAC Chairman Ledtkey "Lit" McIntosh, pastor of Glorieta Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, gave a plea for more financial support to enable continual expansion of the fellowship's Kingdom-growth ministries across North America's 567 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. and 634 federally-recognized First Nations groups.

'Consider how you can help'

"If 500 churches or individuals each gave \$200 a year, that would be \$100,000," McIntosh said. "Consider how you can help." He spoke of David facing down Goliath. Native Americans need that same mindset, that with God, nothing is impossible, the chairman noted.

Hawkins reiterated the "nothing is impossible with God" theme when he spoke of Billy Graham's and Henry Blackaby's reported proclamations in years past that the next Great Awakening would start with Native Americans. Hawkins noted that just 1.7 percent of the U.S. population identifies as Native American.

Native Praise, a group of Oklahoma women from 23 tribes in traditional dress associated with their culture, led worship at the annual meeting. They sang hymns in Native American languages as a way of helping preserve those languages, since "this is the last generation to speak the languages," said Native Praise Director Augusta "Gus" Smith.

The annual meeting followed two days of training in reaching Native Americans. In addition to Native Praise, a quartet from First Indian Baptist Church, Phoenix, and a duo from First Nations Baptist Church, Phoenix, all led in worship during the training conference and Sunday morning worship at First Indian Baptist.

Sessions included one on reaching Native Americans through understanding their worldview, led by Mark Custalow, a Native American who is a church planting strategist in Virginia.

'Power of God'

"Our mission is making disciples," Custalow said during the training conference. "The limitless power of God resides in us."

It is in conversation that people learn about each other, Custalow said. Knowledge gleaned from that learning, he noted, can be a bridge to sharing the gospel.

"Ask questions," Custalow said. "Take time to listen. God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason." (BP)



HAWKINS

REFLECTIONS

