



INSIDE



Celebrate 'valuable resource' with Read TAB Day on July 30

◆ Page 2



Conference to prepare participants to 'give defense' for faith

◆ Page 4



Gluten-free option for Lord's Supper wafers now available

◆ Page 9



# Pathway to Freedom

## Discipleship program helps Alabama inmates begin journey toward transformation

By Martha Simmons  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

At 8 a.m. four mornings a week, some 20 men wearing prison garb arrive at a dormitory classroom to spend the next four hours with God.

When they leave the classroom, there will be lots of homework. The 14-month Pathway to Freedom discipleship program is no crip course. That's as it should be, notes program founder Kenneth Brothers, because these inmates will face many challenges once they leave the prison bars behind and begin a lifelong journey toward transformation.

Previously serving as a volunteer in prison ministries, Brothers — a former Air Force colonel and B52 pilot — became all too aware of those challenges, seeing firsthand the revolving door of recidivism.

"When I retired from the Air Force in 1993, I began praying for God to reveal what He wanted me to do for the rest of my life," he said. "After eight years, He finally answered with one word in June 2001: 'Aftercare.' My pursuit of fulfilling that calling led to the forming of New Beginnings Foundation Inc., a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation, in June 2003.

"Negotiations with the Alabama Department of Corrections to implement Pathway to Freedom inside prison began in April 2004 and was finally approved in June 2007 from Commissioner Rich-

ard Allen," Brothers said. "The first class began at Kilby prison in September 2007."

Since then, of the 220 Pathway to Freedom graduates who have been released from prison, only seven — or about 3 percent — have been reincarcerated. That's a stunning reversal from the overall recidivism rate for Alabama ex-felons, about 35 percent of whom will commit another crime, according to the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles.

"When I meet Jesus, I'm going to give Him a photo album of all the graduates of our program," Brothers said. "It's an investment in heaven."

Over the past decade, more than 610 inmates have taken part in the in-prison discipleship program in five men's and women's prison facilities. The men's program meets four mornings a week but the women's classes are held one night per week because of more limited

access to facilities. Both programs are dependent on volunteer facilitators.

### Need for volunteers

There is a critical need for more churches and volunteers to sustain and grow the program, Brothers said, especially since some of the long-term facilitators are now facing age-related health problems. Volunteers commit to serving at least one day or night per week for three months. More

(See 'The seed's,' page 3)

For more information or to volunteer for the program, email [kenneth.brothers@nbfi.org](mailto:kenneth.brothers@nbfi.org) or call 334-220-6519.

123rf.com



**Login** and check us out

[www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org)

# COMMENT

## Don't Miss This Valuable Resource

Individual Christians and churches across Alabama are always looking for resources that will help them or their members grow as Christian disciples. Often overlooked is a resource that has proven its value through generations of use, a resource that is right at hand — *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB).

Just because this resource has been around a while does not mean it is out of touch. This tool for Christian growth seems to have the uncanny ability to reinvent itself occasionally in order to stay up-to-date. A few days ago a 30-something mother of two told about examining this resource for the first time. She had been familiar with its name but never really looked at it.

With some surprise she shared about finding interesting and helpful items for her and her family. She read things that would be helpful to others like her. This resource wasn't just for her parents as she expected it to be. It could help her grow in the Lord as well.

For generations people have turned to this resource to learn what Baptists believe. Those wanting to know how Baptists do church and how Baptists work together have found guidance from its pages. Christians wanting to know what God is doing in other churches and in other nations have turned to its pages for answers.

### Honest examination

When perplexing moral and ethical issues have arisen generations of Alabama Baptists have looked to this resource for understanding, knowing the issues will always be honestly examined through the lens of Bible teachings.

Also available to those who avail themselves of this resource are insights into real life issues from helping people with post-traumatic stress disorder to domestic abuse to sexual integrity and more.

Families find guidance on such challenges as parenting, living with teens, handling criticism constructively and grandparents relating to grandchildren.

When looking for information about better serving through the church this resource is a must. In the last two months help has been available regarding ways to grow a God-loving child, preparing ministry teams for service, handling money and financial records, using technology in church, growing in giving, supporting caregivers and more. This resource is a literal gold mine of ideas and suggestions for Christian service.

People who already use this resource anticipate it will examine the latest trends and their potential impact on the Christian faith. Readers know information will always be evaluated from a Christian worldview.

For generations Baptists have turned to this resource for information that provides understanding and perspective, inspiration for Christian discipleship and connections for missions and



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ministries. The resource has been and remains a welcomed guest in tens of thousands of homes every week across Alabama.

Originally this resource was only available in print like most resources of that day. But today you can access the resource anywhere at any time. And yes it is still available in print. In fact it is one of the largest circulated resources of its type in the state. But the digital edition makes the publication accessible anywhere, anytime.

The digital edition has extra resources that cannot be included in the print edition such as videos, audio clips, slideshows of photos and links to additional material on various topics.

Along with the consistent efforts to keep the print and digital editions of the paper relevant, the ministry also is working to reinvent itself with its latest efforts related to the website — [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org). Now the website and all its articles, essays, Bible studies, interviews, teaching material, news stories and more are available on a smart phone or iPad. The site was upgraded to be mobile-responsive in January and since that time the amount of traffic on the site has tripled.

### Online archives

Another available resource offered on the website is access to all the information published since 2000 through the archives of this important resource. Talk about a treasure for Christian growth.

Concerned about the quality of the resource? Don't be. When the Southern Baptist professional organization called Baptist Communicators Association evaluated TAB earlier this year, this Alabama product was judged best in class.

When the resource was judged against other

Christian publications in Associated Church Press' national competition it again walked away with top honors.

So did several of the writers and other staff members. This resource strives to honor the Lord with what is offered Alabama Baptists.

What about the cost? Don't worry — you can afford it. An individual subscription is less than 50 cents a week for the print edition — \$22.25 including taxes — for 50 issues. The digital edition is less than that — \$14.95. That is a meager investment for such a valuable resource to help one grow as a Christian disciple.

When a church provides the resource for its active families the cost is less than that through the group plan. Through the group plan the cost per subscription is only \$13.75 or less than 28 cents a week. The digital edition is only \$8.50.

And full access to the website is granted as a complimentary add-on for all print and/or digital subscribers.

What church can't afford to invest 28 cents a week for a valuable, proven resource to stimulate member families to grow in Christian discipleship? Perhaps one should ask what church can afford not to invest in its families by providing this valuable tool.

For almost 175 years this publication has been inspiring, informing and connecting Alabama Baptists. For almost 175 years it has been a catalyst to help Baptists grow as Christian disciples, helping equip them to live for Christ and train them for work in God's kingdom. For almost 175 years this publication has promoted all

that Baptists do together in our state, nation and around the world.

So valuable to Alabama Baptists is the state Baptist paper that Cooperative Program gifts help underwrite part of the cost of the ministry so it will always be affordable to churches and individuals.

As a reader you know the value of TAB. Share your copy with a friend. Encourage them to subscribe. And talk to your church about making sure that all the active families receive this resource for Christian discipleship.

And pray for TAB and its ministry. Pray for us on Sunday, July 30, as Baptists observe Read *The Alabama Baptist* Day on the denominational calendar. Pray this resource for Christian living will touch the lives of more and more Alabama Baptists. ☩

**TAB**  
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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# ‘The seed’s been planted’

## Program helps inmates ‘function as God’s liberating light in our dark world’

(continued from page 1)

importantly, they commit to establishing a rapport with the inmates.

“They need to know that you care,” Brothers said. “It’s basically a mentoring, coaching and discipling interaction.”

Pathway to Freedom is an important missions ministry for First Baptist Church, Montgomery, said Pastor Jay Wolf.

“First Baptist, Montgomery, has taken seriously and literally the call of Christ to minister to the incarcerated when He said, ‘I was in prison and you came to visit me,’” Wolf said, referencing Matthew 25:36. “Jesus instructed His followers to serve hurting and wounded people with the same type of compassionate care you would extend if Jesus stood before you.

“Pathway to Freedom constitutes our best efforts to help incarcerated friends come to know Christ, grow into His image and be prepared to be stable and productive Christ-followers when they leave prison,” he said. “Our volunteers act as mentors who pour a lot of God’s transforming truth into the thirsty spirits of the prisoners.

Noting the overcrowding issue in Alabama prisons — nearly 200 percent of their intended capacity — Wolf said, “We can either bemoan the problem or choose to be part of a solution. We can either curse the darkness or light a candle. When you participate in a fruitful ministry like Pathway to Freedom, you function as God’s liberating light in our dark world.”

Former inmate Larry Hutchins was living in a dark place after he returned, emotionally scarred and numb, from three tours in Vietnam.

“I look back on who I used to be and I’m not that person anymore,” he said. “I couldn’t show love. I couldn’t even cry because I had seen so much as a young man. I prayed to God to make me human again.”

### Challenging program

Hutchins became a born-again Christian in 1992 but ended up incarcerated a few years later. He enrolled in Pathway to Freedom in 2011 and found the challenge and structure prepared him for his eventual journey as a free man.

“Pathway is almost like a college course. Four days a week, each on a different subject. You gotta do homework. You gotta show some responsibility. Not all people do well because they’re not disciplined enough and they’re not ready. That’s okay. The seed’s been planted.”

When he was released from prison, Hutchins continued his discipleship and now expresses joy and gratitude in his daily life.

“I get excited about this stuff,” he said. He met his fiancée while handing out small

crosses and praying with people he encountered in his daily travels. He also serves as the chaplain for his local American Legion post.

But enjoying the rewards of faith doesn’t mean it’s been a cakewalk.

“Being a Christian is not an easy job,” Hutchins said. “I believe in a structured prison program. As long as someone is involved consistently with the Word of God, it’ll change you. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, it says, ‘Behold, all things become new.’

“This doesn’t erase the past but it will change the man because he has a new outlook as long as he has Christ in his eyes before him.”

For ex-inmate Juanida Pitts, Pathway to Freedom motivated her to find ways to help other returned citizens to build a new life in the free world through a job training program she established with another former inmate, Melinda Ricketts.

Released in 2010, Pitts and Ricketts formed the nonprofit A Cut Above the Rest Training Facility. Now located in Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery, the program offers construction and commercial lawn equipment job skills training and credentialing as well as life skills and employability training to ex-offenders upon their release back into society. Of 200 trained, only three have gone back to prison.

“I would never have thought about helping others and doing what I’m doing if not for that

program. It meant everything to me,” Pitts said of Pathway to Freedom. “When I took that class, it’s like God came to life. I knew He really does love me and He is there for me.

“And when I got out, they didn’t leave me,” Pitts added. “Whenever I called Pathway, they were there. And they’re still there.”

Pathway to Freedom wasn’t an introduction to Christian discipleship for Ray Evridge, who considered himself a Christian and already knowledgeable about the Bible, having been to a Bible college before he became incarcerated. Rather the program offered him something else he desperately needed — forgiveness.

### Importance of forgiveness

“One of the greatest things I got out of the program was that I learned how to forgive,” Evridge said. “Most guys in prison have a lot of problems with that, things in the past, maybe an abusive family situation.

“It helps you to be able to accept your responsibility for your life,” he said. “No matter what happens or how difficult it may be, you’ve got to let yourself heal. As long as you hold animosity and anger and blame others you’re never going to progress.

“You have to let God lead you. God is the only one who can instruct you,” Evridge said. “It’s all about faith. The Pathway program is really great for that. When you study the Word of God, it stays with you and helps you on your daily walk.

“Today, I’m walking with God. I’m staying out of prison. I’m thankful for what I know and what I do.”✠

## My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram  
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

We safely arrived in Oscoda, Michigan, for our missions experience. Thank you, Lord.

I survived the trip although there were struggles aplenty. God provided and we are safe and blessed. I learned some lessons about myself on the way up here but the most poignant lesson came as we were preparing to leave the hotel to travel to the church for the first night of services.

The weather was lovely. A beautiful breeze brought the cool temperature swirling around us with the scent of a cleansing rain. The pavement was wet but the sun was now shining and we had a moment

of relaxation before services. Our pastor’s youngest daughter was so eager to go that she literally ran to the bus (she is very effervescent) in flip flops — you may be able to see where this is going.

As she rounded the corner of the bus she slipped and fell face first into the bus steps, injuring her two front teeth. We got her patched up and again her bubbly personality was ready to go. Services were a blessed time of fellowship and teaching and we returned to the hotel.

As I reflected on the day, I realized her fall could epitomize many times in life. The enemy will trip us up and we may fall but Jesus is standing by with bandages, hugs and pure love to heal us.

Though these times may be painful and we may cry, it all has a purpose.

It is our job to accept Him, let Him heal us and move on with the work He has us to do.

Maybe the lesson here is just to slow down and watch for the enemy’s snares.✠

# Officers, chaplain questioned

## Freedom From Religion Foundation targets Wetumpka police

**T**he atheist group that is fighting the clergy housing allowance tax break and defending a Satanic monument's placement in a Minnesota veterans park has made its way to Alabama.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), a nonprofit that says its goal is to protect the First Amendment, recently alleged that the Wetumpka Police Department (WPD) and the City of Wetumpka have violated the constitution by promoting religious activities.

To make its claim, the FFRF pointed at several issues — a prayer program started by WPD's chaplain, a dinner hosted by churches at the police department, photos posted on Facebook of an officer leading Bible studies in uniform and a summer deputy program for kids that was advertised as including daily devotionals.

"We write to ensure that the City of Wetumpka does not let the Wetumpka Police Department proselytize, endorse specific religions or host religious events," wrote Christopher Line of the FFRF in a June 7 letter to Regina Edwards, Wetumpka's city attorney.

### Establishment Clause

The WPD's actions violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause by favoring a specific religion over others, Line wrote. "These violations must be stopped and the Facebook posts promoting them should be removed."

The FFRF contacted the City of Wetumpka more than five months after sending a letter to Police Chief Danny Billingsley asking him to write back and say that

the WPD had stopped all religious activities. Line wrote to Edwards that Billingsley never responded.

Just before the letter to Billingsley, the WPD chaplain had reportedly started a new program called the 1:1 Prayer Project, which pairs participants with a first responder so they can pray for them and send them encouraging notes.

Line called the program "problematic" and called the department's chaplain position problematic in and of itself, saying the WPD shouldn't even have one since churches abound in Alabama, unlike when military are deployed overseas.

"There is no need, and therefore no legitimate legal reason, to provide chaplains for them (the WPD)," Line wrote.

Another activity Line called a problem was the department's monthly P.E.C.K. dinners, which stands for "People Extending Christian Kindness." The event is operated largely by local churches, which volunteer to sponsor the dinners. These are promoted on the WPD's Facebook page, along with other posts the FFRF called violations of the First Amendment.

One such post mentioned in the letter was a photo that appeared on a Blue Lives

Matter Facebook page and showed an officer in full uniform leaning on the back of her squad car surrounded by children. "Officer Dailey of the Wetumpka Police Department having bible study with some

kids on her beat," the caption read. "Awesome job officer!"

Edwards told *The Wetumpka Herald* the mayor also had been contacted by the American Atheists Legal Center. In the article she said she was working with Billingsley to resolve at least one item from the list of issues submitted by the FFRF letter.

Edwards also noted that the chief had been told officers must be off work and out of uniform to engage in religious activities.

"So there's no appearance that the city is endorsing any particular type of religion," Edwards said, according to the *Herald*.

She also said the P.E.C.K. dinners were not restricted to Christian organizations but anyone who wished to be involved in providing meals for the homeless. The meals are served in an unused room at the old WPD facilities and are not sponsored by the department.

"The police department does not endorse any specific religion or host any religious events," Edwards told the *Herald*. "We do support the community and we do support the citizens in this community."

### Using social media

She added that she would need to investigate the social media posts further before responding.

The WPD has Baptist employees and Baptist churches have participated in the P.E.C.K. dinners in the past.

The full text of the letters to the WPD and City of Wetumpka can be found at [ffrf.org](http://ffrf.org). The FFRF has 26,000 members across the country, including in Alabama, according to the organization.

The *Herald* also reported that, while corresponding with the WPD, the FFRF is engaged with a school in Opp over reports of prayers at a graduation ceremony that allegedly involved both administration and students. (TAB)

**"The police department does not endorse any specific religion or host any religious events. We do support the community and ... the citizens in this community."**

**Regina Edwards  
Wetumpka's city attorney**

## Conference to prepare participants to 'give defense' for faith

**I**n 1 Peter 3:15, the disciple urges his fellow Christians to "always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you to give the reason of the hope that you have."

"Peter knew that the gospel would be most effectively shared in [his] culture through hopeful living and strategic conversations," said Kevin Blackwell, Samford University's assistant to the president for church relations and executive director of the university's Ministry Training Institute (MTI).

In the same way, Blackwell said, "we live in a time when traditional orthodox beliefs are being questioned and challenged and most believers are not properly prepared to 'give a defense' for the hope we have."

### Equipping Christians

"If we are going to reach this culture for Christ ... it is critical that we equip and train Christians in apologetics."

That's why MTI is partnering with *The Alabama Baptist*, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Tactical Faith to hold the Defending the Faith Apologetics Conference.

At the Aug. 7 event, participants will dig into the nuts and bolts of defending their faith in various sessions and will have the opportunity to ask questions during a lunchtime Q-and-A.

Session topics include "Apologetics Overview: Defending the Christian Faith," "Evidence of the Resurrection," "Christianity and Culture" and "The Atheist Challenge." Each session will be led by either Jay Watts or Gary Habermas.

Watts is a national speaker and a writer for the Life Training Institute, an organization that trains Christians and pro-life advocates to defend the humanity of the unborn. Habermas is a distinguished professor of apologetics and philosophy for Liberty University's Rawlings School of Divinity in Lynchburg, Virginia, who has dedicated the majority of his professional life to the examination and understanding of the issues surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus.

"It is my greatest hope that participants will leave the workshop with a greater grasp of their own beliefs and also a desire and confidence to share the gospel with a lost world," Blackwell said.

The conference will be held in Samford University's Regions Room, on the fourth floor of Cooney Hall. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the conference ends at 4:30 p.m. (TAB)

**For more information or to register, visit <https://www2.samford.edu/eve/index.php?formid=1638>.**

## REFLECTIONS

"HONEY, IF YOU HAD IT TO DO OVER WOULD YOU MARRY ME AGAIN?"

"WHY? IS THE LORD ALLOWING DO-OVERS?"



## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



### Missouri church wins 'playground' case

COLUMBIA, Mo. — The Supreme Court has ruled for a Missouri church that claimed religious discrimination after it was refused state funds to improve its playground.

Ruling 7-2, the court determined June 26 that the state had unfairly treated Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia under the First Amendment's free exercise clause.

The state wrongly denied the church "an otherwise available public benefit on account of its religious status," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion.

"This Court has repeatedly confirmed that denying a generally available benefit solely on account of religious identity imposes a penalty on the free exercise of religion," he continued.

The case pitted Trinity Lutheran Church against Missouri's Department of Natural Resources, which offered grants to help non-profits pay for the resurfacing of playgrounds with recycled tires.

Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg dissented in the case, considered by many court watchers to be the highest profile of the Supreme Court season.

"To hear the Court tell it, this is a simple case about recycling tires to resurface a playground. The stakes are higher. This case is about nothing less than the relationship between religious institutions and the civil government — that is, between church and state," Sotomayor wrote. "[The Court's] decision slights both our precedents and our history, and its reasoning weakens this country's longstanding commitment to a separation of church and state beneficial to both." (RNS)

### Hobby Lobby to forfeit artifacts, pay \$3M fine

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — Hobby Lobby Stores will forfeit thousands of improperly acquired ancient biblical artifacts and pay a \$3 million fine in a civil settlement the Department of Justice announced July 5.

The settlement closed a federal investigation of the store's 2010 purchase and subsequent importation of more than 5,500 artifacts from dealers who did not disclose the items' Iraqi origin. Hobby Lobby paid \$1.6 million for the artifacts, including Assyrian and Babylonian cuneiform tablets, bricks and clay bullae used in ancient writings and seals.

Hobby Lobby faces no criminal liability but in a corporate statement president Steve Green admitted to "regrettable mistakes" and "imprudently" relying on certain dealers and shippers. Hobby Lobby's inexperience in acquiring such artifacts was a contributing factor in the ordeal, he said.

Hobby Lobby has cooperated fully with the investigation and is pleased to settle the dispute, Green said in the corporate statement.

"We have accepted responsibility and learned a great deal," Green said. "Our entire (Hobby Lobby) team is committed to the highest standards for investigating and acquiring these items." (BP)

### State of Louisiana sued for its pro-life laws

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Center for Reproductive Rights filed a lawsuit in late June targeting Louisiana's abortion facility licensing law and other health and safety regulations.

The group sued on behalf of Hope Medical Group for Women in Shreveport and three anonymous abortionists who say the Louisiana laws run counter to the 2016 Supreme Court decision.

The June 2016 ruling determined a Texas law requiring abortionists to have hospital admitting privileges and mandating abortion facilities meet ambulatory surgical center standards created an unconstitutional undue burden on abortion access.

Louisiana Right to Life Federation's Executive Director Benjamin Clapper said the regulations are "common sense," and the lawsuit, if successful, would impose an "abortion-on-demand policy in our pro-life state."

The lawsuit seeks to overturn Louisiana's 2001 requirement that abortion centers obtain a state license before performing abortions. The law gives the state health department authority to revoke an abortion license if it finds health and safety violations. (BP)

# UM class research project brings joy to children with disabilities

By Rivers Brunson  
University of Mobile

An assignment in a human physiology research class earned two University of Mobile students a top grade, plus the joy of helping children with disabilities who will now be able to ride bicycles for the first time.

Makayla Scott and Jordan Grissom wrote a grant requesting funds to purchase specialized tricycles for children with disabilities in the Wiregrass area in southeast Alabama. In May 2017, Wiregrass Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up Charitable Foundation awarded \$7,800 to AMBUCS (American Business Clubs) of the Wiregrass to purchase 12 AmTrykes.

### Above and beyond

At the time of the assignment, six children were on the waiting list to receive their own toy-turned-rehabilitation device. Each device is priced at \$650, far out of the reach of many families of special needs children. Scott and Grissom's grant award was enough to buy an AmTryke for each child on the waiting list, plus six more.

An AmTryke is a tricycle built to provide mobility and independence for individuals with low muscle tone or paralysis in their lower extremities or cerebral palsy. Using a safety belt, foot straps,

a wide wheel base and rotating handlebars, the "trykes" allow riders to use their arms to assist in propelling their legs. Physical and occupational therapists use the trykes in their clinics to improve their patients' coordination, balance, muscle strength and motor skills.



SCOTT

"We feel very blessed to have had this grant awarded, not for the sake of being recognized, but because individuals with disabilities were able to benefit from the hard work we put into writing this grant," said Scott, of Chesterfield, South Carolina. Scott graduated in

December 2016 and will pursue a doctorate of physical therapy in August.

Carolyn Corliss, dean of the School of Education, assigned her Research in Human Performance, Exercise Science and Sports class to write a grant for an organization of their choice, in hopes that they would gain the experience needed to improve communities in the future. She edited and submitted the winning grant.

"I have always known how passionate our students are, however, when I told the students to research different grants and pick one they could really get behind, I was so touched these two students

selected this grant and how it could be such an impact for these children with disabilities," Corliss said.

### Unforgettable experience

Scott said she volunteered with AMBUCS before writing the grant and was able to see firsthand the benefits these trykes offer individuals with disabilities.

"I will never forget the first time I walked into an AMBUCS tryke fitting and a middle-aged woman was riding her tryke for the first time. This was the first time she had ever had the opportunity to ride a tricycle independently, and the smile on her face radiated throughout the entire room," Scott said.

Grissom also graduated in December 2016. The Navarre, Florida, graduate is pursuing a master's degree in public health administration.



GRISSOM

Since its inception in 2012, AMBUCS of the Wiregrass has purchased 165 AmTrykes for individuals in the Wiregrass region with donations from organizations, businesses, and individuals.

But they do more than providing tricycles for families in need. Charter member and Dothan Mayor Mike Schmitz hosts an annual Ride for Fitness and the community also hosts Bike Rodeos at churches, parks and the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds. (UM)

## Progress made on State Board's new building



Photo by Doug Rogers

Construction continues on the new Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office building in Prattville. Plans are for the building to be occupied and open for business in January 2018.

# Majority of Americans unaware of churches' social service efforts

At least half of Americans realize that churches feed and clothe the poor but far fewer are aware of other social services congregations provide, a new study shows.

LifeWay Research found that 60 percent of Americans know of churches that have fed the hungry in the last six months.

Half knew of instances where they provided clothing to the poor.

But scant percentages of the 1,000 Americans surveyed knew that church members teach job skills or help immigrants learn English (13 percent), volunteer to provide foster care (12 percent) or offer tax preparation assistance (8 percent).

"Unless you've received help from a church — or been involved in serving others — these kinds of programs may fly under the radar," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

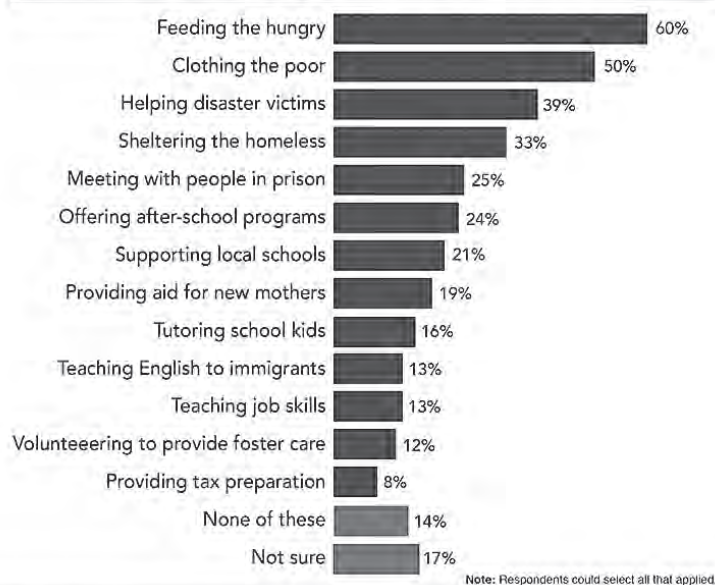
About a third of Americans knew of churches' work to help disaster victims (39 percent) and shelter the homeless (33 percent).

But only a quarter were aware of church members visiting prisoners (25 percent) or offering after-school programs (24 percent).

Though the Bible speaks of clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, a significant number

Among Americans:

**Which, if any, of the following areas of service have you heard local Christian churches or their members doing in the last 6 months?**



of Americans haven't heard of churches providing any of the 13 service programs cited in the study, according to the research. And 17 percent were not sure.

## Being more aware

Researchers were not surprised to learn that people who frequent churches were more aware of these activities.

But less than a third (30 per-

cent) of people who attend services at least once a month knew of churches that had tutored schoolchildren, compared to 8 percent of those who attend less than once a month.

The findings were based on 1,000 surveys completed Sept. 27–Oct. 1, 2016, and have an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. (RNS)

## Northeast noted as most 'post-Christian' region of US

Residents of Portland and Auburn, Maine, aren't just living in the far Northeast. They're in the most "post-Christian" part of the country.

So says Barna Group. Researchers opted for a different way of measuring the state of belief than asking people to say if they are "Christian." Those meeting nine or more of 16 criteria were labeled "post-Christian," or secular.

"These factors include whether individuals identify as 'atheist,' have never made a commitment to Jesus, have not attended church in the last year or have not read the Bible in the last week," Barna said about the study.

In all the top secular-leaning cities, half or more of the respondents met Barna's secular criteria.

After Portland-Auburn, Maine, which ranked first at 57 percent, the next six areas on Barna's list also were in the Northeast: Boston

and Manchester, New Hampshire (56 percent); Albany, Schenectady and Troy, New York (54 percent); Providence, Rhode Island and New Bedford, Massachusetts (53 percent); Burlington, Vermont, and Plattsburgh, New York (53 percent); Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut (52 percent); and New York City (51 percent).

Rounding out the top 10 were two West Coast centers — the California cities of San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose (50 percent), and the Seattle-Tacoma area of Washington state (50 percent) — and Buffalo, New York (50 percent). Shreveport, Louisiana, was the least "post-Christian" city, at 12 percent.

Chattanooga, Tennessee, was the most church-ed city, at 59 percent. The California region including San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose was the most unchurched, at 60 percent. (RNS)

## Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

### Porter named national director for SBDR

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has named Sam Porter as the new national director for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR).

Porter will replace Mickey Caison, who will officially retire Aug. 31.

NAMB noted Porter has been a proponent of SBDR for years and one of the first disaster relief leaders to respond after the 9/11 attacks in New York City.



PORTER

He made numerous trips to the area for two years and served as a chaplain in the morgue at Ground Zero.

Porter also has led more than 100 volunteer missions projects and more than 40 international relief missions. He's headed recovery efforts for a year in Haiti following 34 volunteer teams from Oklahoma in the wake of the devastating earthquake Jan. 12, 2010.

Porter currently serves as volunteer missions specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, which includes responsibilities as the director of Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief.

Porter said he is "really thrilled" about the new role, adding, "My prayer is that we can see every state convention have a strong disaster relief team to impact their part of the USA for the Lord by serving when individual's lives are torn apart by disasters of various types."

Porter plans to begin his role with NAMB in mid-September. (BP)

### Rainer, NAMB launch evangelistic website

NASHVILLE — As a way to encourage evangelistic obedience among pastors and congregations, LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer has partnered with the North American Mission Board to launch EvangelismRenewal.com.

The site will encourage churches to record how many gospel conversations they hope to have in 2018. "We know conversion is only by the Holy Spirit but we also know that God begins most of these conversions with gospel conversations."

The goal of the research and EvangelismRenewal.com is to start a conversation about difficult topics, Rainer said, but also to point struggling churches to evangelistically successful congregations and offer encouragement for those in decline to follow suit.

At the site, visitors can sign up to receive a free e-book, "Rainer on Evangelism." "We hope this will give church leaders a reason to lead their churches to be evangelistic and give those in the congregations resources and ideas on how they can be evangelistic," he said. (BP)

### Perdue commissioned as 'missionary' to D.C.

WARNER ROBINS, Ga. — U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue was commissioned July 9 as a "missionary" to Washington by Second Baptist Church, Warner Robins, Georgia.

Currently a member of Second Baptist Church where his son, Jim Perdue, is pastor, Sonny Perdue was a member of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, for eight years while he served as governor of Georgia. He has taught Sunday School at both churches.

Sonny Perdue said he and his wife, Mary, believe "God spoke" to them and called them "to serve President Trump in his cabinet."

He was sworn in as secretary of agriculture April 25. (BP)



PERDUE



According to the March 22, 1845, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

A resolution by the Virginia Board of Foreign Missions was printed calling for Baptists of the South to meet in Augusta, Georgia, to confer about the best way of promoting foreign missions causes. The resolution came after the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions of the Triennial Convention told Alabama Baptists they would not appoint a slaveholder as missionary or accept money from a church of slaveholders because to do so would imply acceptance of slavery. (TAB)

A panel discusses how to make disciples in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at the Replicate Ministries Booth at the SBC annual meeting June 13 in Phoenix. The panel included (l to r) Robby Gallaty, founder of Replicate Ministries; Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board; David Platt, president of the International Mission Board; and Eric Geiger, vice president of the Church Resources Division at LifeWay Christian Resources.

# Disciple making



Photo by Matt Jones

## Entity leaders challenge Southern Baptists to combine evangelism, discipleship

**D**isciple making in Southern Baptist churches was assessed by Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entity leaders Kevin Ezell, David Platt and Eric Geiger during a forum at the 2017 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix.

Robby Gallaty — pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, president/founder of Replicate Ministries and chairman of a task force created in 2016 to encourage disciple making by Southern Baptists — led the discussion at the Replicate Ministries booth in the SBC exhibit hall June 13.

Ezell, Platt and Geiger agreed that one problem is a lack of understanding among Southern Baptists about what disciple making truly is — that evangelism and discipleship go hand in hand.

“We have a challenge in the SBC with the terminology that we use,” said Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board.

“When we say disciple making, some people don’t understand that they need to be evangelists as well, and they don’t see reproduction when it comes to disciple making,” Ezell said. “We have a communication issue in the SBC where they don’t see it as one whole.”

Platt, president of the International Mission Board, lamented “a tendency to do evangelism that’s devoid of teaching people to obey everything that Christ has commanded and really helping them grow into the image of Christ. I definitely think we would admit that there’s a lot done in the name of disciple making that actually is devoid of evangelism.”

Geiger, LifeWay Christian Resources vice president for its resources division and a member of the discipleship task force, said disciple making must be “the totality of what we do as a people of God. That’s the mission that Christ has given us.”

“When someone says ‘discipleship’ to me,” Geiger said, “I always [ask], ‘What do you mean by ‘discipleship’ and what kind of disciple do you want to make?’”

Platt said if a Christian becomes too dependent on particular disciple making programs and gets into a context on the other side of the world where those programs don’t exist, he or she won’t know what to do.

### Personal disciple making

“We’ve got to be able to do this personally in our lives,” Platt said.

Ezell shared key SBC baptism statistics: 80 percent of churches baptized nine or

fewer people in 2016, 50 percent baptized two or fewer and 25 percent baptized no one.

“We don’t have a baptism issue as much as we have an obedience issue,” Ezell said. “We just don’t have people intentionally having gospel conversations as often as they should or intentionally discipling people as they should.”

Pastors need to lead the way for their congregation when it comes to discipleship, Ezell said.

### ‘Comes down to the pastors’

“In order to get anything done in a convention like this it comes down to the pastors,” he said. “So it’s about the pastor having a heart for discipleship and understanding what disciple making is. We’ve got to do something to stir a passion in the heart of pastors to lead their people to be disciplined.”

Geiger said the biggest predictor in any study LifeWay has done about how people grow in their faith is spending time in the Word of God. “Reading the Bible is the one spiritual discipline that impacts every other spiritual discipline,” he said.

Gallaty, in closing the session on “Making Disciples in the SBC,” asked each participant to give one piece of advice to pastors about how to be more intentional about making disciples.

Ezell encouraged pastors not to forget that discipleship starts at home. “It’s important that you disciple your family.”

Platt said he would exhort any pastor to guard intimacy with the Lord.

Geiger said that before he wants to make

disciples, he wants to enjoy being a disciple.

“I need to be a disciple continually, continue to repent and come back to Him and enjoy His grace, which fuels me to make disciples,” Geiger said. “I don’t want to get caught in the mission without the meaning of being with Him.” (BP)

**“We’ve got to do something to stir a passion in the heart of pastors to lead their people to be disciplined.”**

**Kevin Ezell  
president, NAMB**

## Discipleship boot camp to be held in Birmingham

**T**he Alabama Baptist is partnering with Samford University’s Ministry Training Institute and Life Bible Study to sponsor a statewide discipleship boot camp featuring D-Life and its author, Bill Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville.

The boot camp is a little ways off — set for Jan. 20 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

in Birmingham — but we know how quickly calendars fill up. Pencil it in now before the scheduling craze sets in.

Watch future issues of *TAB* for how to register or email news@thealabama-baptist.org.

For more information on D-Life, visit [www.livethedlife.com](http://www.livethedlife.com). (*TAB*)

**“Reading the Bible is the one spiritual discipline that impacts every other spiritual discipline.”**

**Eric Geiger, vice president of the Church Resources Division, LifeWay**

## VBS WORKERS: A quick tip

### Follow-up is needed

Vacation Bible School (VBS) pays dividends long after it concludes but good follow-up is needed for this to be true. Here are a few tips:

1. Maintain accurate and thorough registration information. There is no need to follow up with a child/family who attends another church. Focus on those who indicate they have no church affiliation.
  2. Have a follow-up plan in place before VBS.
  3. Expediency is critical.
  4. A doorstep visit is the ideal method. Your intention is not to enter the home but some may invite you in. It is recommended to go in teams of two or three.
  5. Ideal team members would be the child’s VBS teacher and age-level Sunday School teachers for the child and parents.
  6. During the visit, you can learn what other family members are in the home. Learn how to ask good questions in a low-key approach. Assign these other family members to the appropriate Sunday School class for follow-up.
  7. If doorstep visits are not possible in your area, mail or email the information.
- Chip Warren, ministry leader ✠

# Staying true to Jesus Christ

## Alexander City native reflects Christ on baseball field as Oakland A's pitcher



Photo courtesy of Kendall Graveman

Kendall Graveman, 26, is an Alexander City native who pitches for the Oakland A's. His home church is Sixth Street Baptist Church, Alexander City, where Matt Haines is pastor.

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hen the Oakland A's played their home opener April 3, all eyes were on Kendall Graveman. An Alexander City-born pitcher, he led the team to a 4-2 victory against the Angels that night.

It was a big moment, Graveman said — but even bigger is the platform he has to tell kids, youth and college students that even the job of your dreams won't fill the void that Christ is meant to fill.

If anyone looks to him, Christ is the one Graveman wants them to see, he said.

"It's great to strive for achievements — God has put in all of us a passion for some area, like baseball," Graveman said. "But when you make it to the pinnacle of what you think your dream is, it is never fulfilling in the way that God is. I want them to know that if they don't have Christ, they will never fill the void in their heart."

He spends time in the off season doing missions work and baseball camps in the Caribbean. He also spends time investing in students at Mississippi State University in Starkville, the place where his baseball career took off and where his journey in Christ grew too.

"I had a couple of guys at Mississippi State invest in my life there who were in FCA, and they took me into high schools in the morning to share with students," he said. "I grew in my faith and I also realized how I could use my platform to open greater conversations about the gospel."

He's in "high demand" for those types of conversations, according to Matt Haines, pastor of Graveman's home church, Sixth Street Baptist Church, Alexander City.

### Influential parents

"Kendall is a commendable example of a young man who has achieved much personal and professional success while at the same time staying true to his relationship with Jesus Christ," Haines said, noting that Graveman learned a lot about love of God and his church from his parents, Gary and Sharon Graveman.

Kendall Graveman said he learned a lot about baseball from his dad too.

"My dad is a baseball coach, and spending time together by playing baseball was always a thing for the two of us and my brother," he said. "He had a passion for us to spend time together as a family."

And along the way, Kendall Graveman developed a passion for the game too.

"God blessed me with the ability to be able to play and use that platform to tell others about Him," he said.

That season opener with the A's was a dream come true, he said. "It was very special. My parents were able to come out and be there for the game."

And leading the Mississippi State team to win the College World Series in 2013 also was a big moment for Kendall Graveman.

But none of that touches the satisfaction found in Christ, he said. "People have a lot of different dreams — to be a well-known artist, a successful CEO or start your own business and become wealthy. But the most important thing is that God needs to be the center of your life."

That shows in Kendall Graveman's life during the baseball season too as he tries to show Christ's love to his teammates and the coaching staff.

Haines said the pitcher understands that his professional success is a gift from God and "he does a great job stewarding that gift to the glory of God."

He's a "well-respected and honored hometown hero" in Alexander City, Haines said. "He is the real deal — extremely humble and pursuing Christ." ✝

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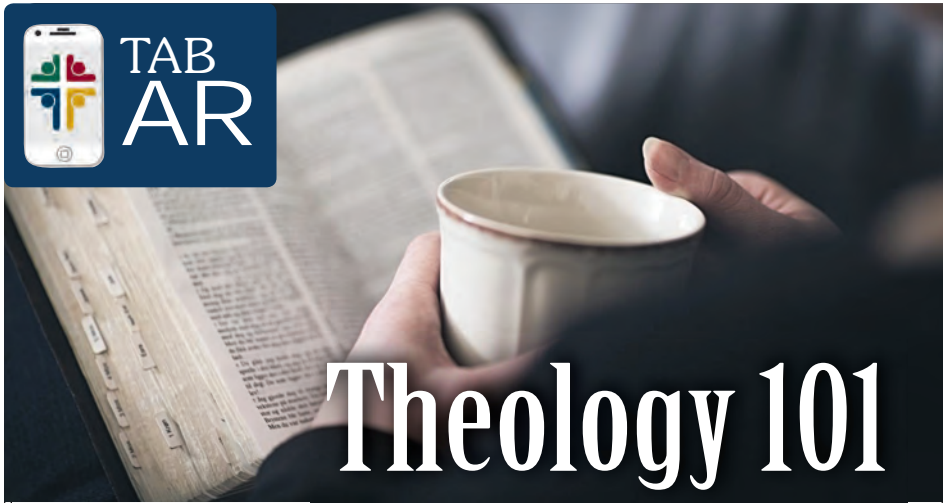
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BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Sin

# Sin as Abomination

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

None of the terms used in the Bible for sin is attractive but as noted last week some are more repulsive than others. Another of the more repulsive terms for sin is abomination. Few terms capture like this one the reprehensibility of sin. The focus of this term is on God's viewpoint or estimation of sin. Ascribe to God the highest understanding of holiness that we can, then we may begin to appreciate His abhorrence of sin. A survey of some of the sins to which the Bible attaches this label serves to capture God's heart about sin.

### Preparing the way

In giving the Law to Israel, God included animal sacrifices as a central feature. These sacrifices served not only to suggest that God counted sin to be serious but also to prepare the way for the ultimate sacrifice for sin that would once and for all be that of His Son. In His instructions about animal sacrifices, God specified that offering a blemished animal would be counted as an abomination. Deuteronomy 17:1 expresses it, saying, "You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the Lord your God." In the same vein of the seriousness with which God views sin, He warned Israel about adopting the idolatrous practices of their pagan neighbors, saying, "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God" (Deut. 7:25).

God continued to be explicit about sins that He counts an abomination. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 elaborates, "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the

dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord." Sins of child sacrifice and witchcraft are among the sins of abomination in God's estimation.

Easily overlooked or discounted are other behaviors that God deemed to be an abomination. He explicitly labeled the wearing of clothes of the opposite sex as abomination. Deuteronomy 22:5 instructs, "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God." Apparently, God early on placed high value on gender distinctiveness. The Baptist Faith and Message calls God's creation of humans as male and female "the crowning work of His creation," and then adds, "The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation." The Bible also labels homosexuality an abomination in His sight. Leviticus 20:13 puts it quite clearly, "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination."

### Revulsion in God

The Bible's use of such a term as abomination serves to indicate that sin produces revulsion in God. Sin is not merely something God is peevish or picky about. Yet, sin is not beyond the reach of divine forgiveness and cleansing. At the same time sin is not to be excused in the name of political correctness, accepted as a sign of the times or minimized by claiming everyone is doing it.

*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.*



# Gluten-free Lord's Supper wafers now available

Walk to the communion table at some Baptist churches these days will show an extra plate with a wafer that looks a little different than the tiny square crackers that have been passed around the pews for decades.

And a quick visit to the church supplies section of LifeWay Christian Resources' website will show those same gluten-free wafers available right alongside their traditional counterparts.

For many suffering from celiac disease, a gastrointestinal disease that causes stomach pain and other issues, the extra plate has been a welcomed addition. About 1 in every 100 people deal with gluten intolerance, according to the Celiac Disease Foundation.

Sales in gluten-free products have spiked in the past five years. Even Americans who can tolerate the protein, which is found in wheat, barley and rye, are sometimes opting for gluten-free diets.

### Not everyone agrees

But not everyone sees the communion bread issue as one of inclusion — in a recent letter from the Vatican, Pope Francis told Catholics that for communion to be acceptable, the bread must contain at least some trace of gluten.

Wafers made of rice, potato, tapioca or other flours in place of wheat didn't make the cut, the Pope said. The Catholic Church believes in transubstantiation, the idea that the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Christ when consumed.

Because of that, they want to stay as close as possible to the elements of the first communion — the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples — and contain at least some wheat.

But Baptists consider communion a

symbolic act and generally give themselves more leeway on the elements — such as using grape juice instead of wine.

According to Susan Blain, who serves on the faith and formation staff at the United Church of Christ's Cleveland headquarters, "it was the Protestant churches who moved the congregations for the most part from wine to grape juice and that was because of the whole temperance movement and the concern that alcohol was dangerous to the health of a lot of people."

### No singular response

As autonomous churches, Baptists have historically been left to choose for themselves where they fall on the issue.

"Baptists do not have a singular response to this issue," said Doug Wilson, dean of the office for global engagement at the University of Mobile.

"As baptized followers of Jesus covenanting together with like-minded followers of Jesus, we Baptists value the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church."

As such, Baptists don't have a prescribed perspective on the issue.

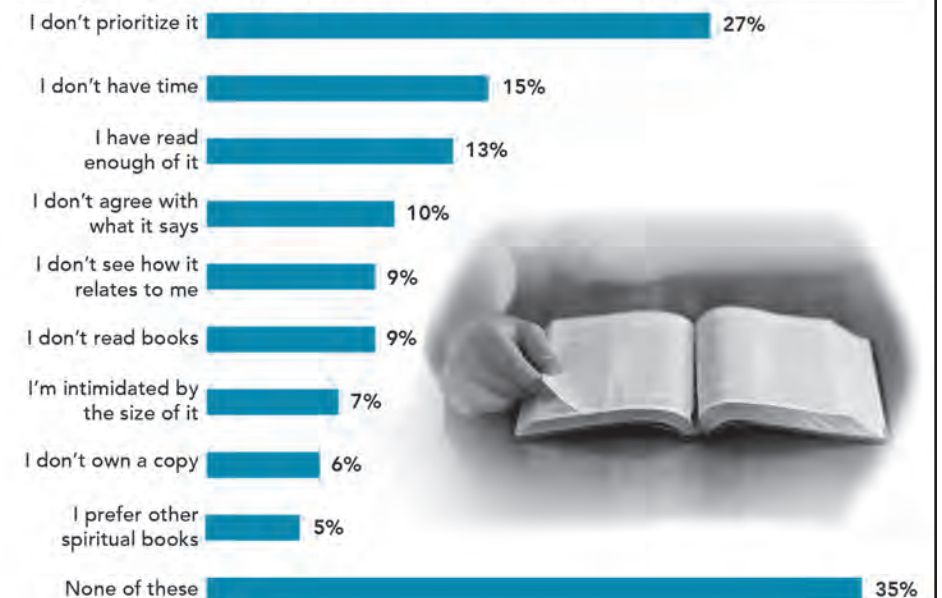
### It's about symbolism

"Such an issue as gluten free is not a matter of theological or ecclesiastical priority," he said. "Why do we use preformed cubes ... Why not oyster crackers? Why not homemade bread, right out of the oven? Why not unleavened bread, as in the Passover meal?"

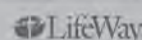
For Wilson, it's not an issue worth agonizing over — he would rather talk about the symbolism of the supper and use it as a bridge to discuss the heart of the gospel message, "namely, Jesus' death for sinners and victorious resurrection." (TAB, RNS contributed)

Among Americans:

## Why have you not read the Bible more?



Note: Respondents could select all that apply.



LifeWayResearch.com

# in Loving Memory

OF ALABAMA BAPTIST LEADERS, FRIENDS

## Dennis Edward Elliott

### Former Alabama pastor, missionary dies

Former Alabama Baptist pastor and missionary Dennis Edward Elliott died June 30. He was 83.

Elliott gave his life to the Lord at age 12 and was called to preach when he was 16. He was licensed to preach at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, (now located in Hoover) at age 20 and became the church's first youth pastor.



ELLIOTT

Elliott served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Tennessee, Florida and Kentucky. From 1963 to 1973 he served with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) as a missionary to Thailand.

After returning from the missions field, Elliott served Rocky Mount Baptist Church, Talladega, and Sylavon Baptist Church, Sylacauga. He was a member of First Baptist Church, Oak Grove, in Sylacauga, at the time of his death.

Elliott is survived by his wife of 60 years, Katherine; four children; 10 grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. (TAB)

## Michael Earl Grindle

### Presley Street BC pastor dies at 68

Michael Earl Grindle, pastor of Presley Street Baptist Church, Atmore, died June 24. He was 68.

A Selma native, Grindle was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He received his education from Mobile College (now University of Mobile) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Grindle also was on staff with Johnson Quimby Funeral Home in Atmore at the time of his death. Prior to Presley Street

Baptist, Grindle served as pastor and interim pastor of several other churches throughout the state.

He was an Eagle Scout who earned additional Palms for continued leadership and skills development and also served as a member of the Board for Boy Scouts of America.



GRINDLE

Grindle was awarded the Certificate of Appreciation by Homestead Hospice for Veterans to the U.S. Air Force, as well as many others.

He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Barbara. (TAB)

## Bob Harrington

### Alabama native, well-known evangelist dies

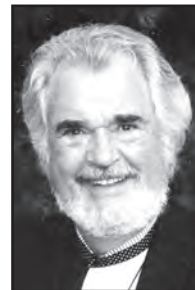
Famed New Orleans evangelist and Alabama native Bob Harrington, known by many as "the chaplain of Bourbon Street," died July 4. He was 89.

Harrington became a well-known evangelist during the 1960s and 1970s following his conversion to Christianity at age 30 in his hometown of Sweet Water. He was a popular guest on national television shows.

Harrington moved to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with his family in 1960, serving as assistant pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans. During that time he adopted Bourbon Street as his personal mission field, being declared "the chaplain of Bourbon Street" by New Orleans Mayor Victor Schiro in 1962.

Harrington spent many years out of the ministry, but eventually returned to preaching later in life.

Harrington was preceded in death by his wife, Rebecca. He is survived by two children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (BP, TAB)



HARRINGTON

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(augmented reality)

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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.
- 6 If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7 Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.



# Rashional THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

## SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

### Simple act of love or veiled criticism?

My attempt at a gentle teaching moment for a child I'm close to but who is not my actual child wasn't met with appreciation.

I certainly never intended to overstep. I care deeply about a large number of kiddos in my life, this one included, and think a lot about ways I can assist their parents in developing the good parts of their character.

But the parent took my offering as indictment rather than assistance in what I know is already being taught in the home.

Obviously I have no experience as a parent and don't claim to have any advice for raising children.

I merely recall how many times I clung to every word and piece of advice offered by extended family members, mentors, teachers, coaches, church leaders, public figures and other such heroes in my life growing up while thinking my parents didn't have a clue.

Obviously, I discovered how wrong I was about my parents' level of wisdom once I moved into adulthood myself. And the older I get the more I appreciate the advice, direction and concern my parents provided and continue to provide.

Still it is the rare child who discovers during his or her childhood the value of listening to parents who truly have their best interest in mind and are striving to follow God as they fulfill their role.

### Built-in resistance

And because of that built-in reaction to resist and stake our independence, we need a collective force to help us grow into what we hope would be considered responsible adults.

It's certainly an extra load none of us have to add to our already overpacked schedules but I've found it fulfilling to watch a young person grow and mature, sometimes knowing I had the privilege of con-

tributing to his or her development.

Of course, it can be discouraging at moments as well, like when they refuse to listen to anyone with rational intentions or when they take full credit for something that someone else actually taught them.

I'm guessing parents deal with that scenario on a daily basis.

### Trust issues

And, if I'm honest, I can see how another person attempting to share life lessons with a child could upset a parent.

As long as the advice being shared or actions being modeled are in sync with the parents' comfort level, I'm sure they would normally welcome the reinforcements.

But in a day when criticism is tossed about so freely and flippantly, it is possible the ones who take offense are often times misreading simple acts of love and kindness as veiled judgmental stabs. But then again, it really is hard to tell these days.

I've found myself in several day-to-day situations (nothing to do with children) defending a straight-up answer to a question or simple request for assistance in a certain area as being exactly what I outlined. The accusers claimed that what I was saying could not be as simple as I said, that there had to be a hidden agenda.

It hurts a bit when the person saying this to you is someone you thought knew your heart, but it has made me realize the unfortunate degree of how much we as family members, friends, co-workers and believers in general have built walls because of past hurts.

And it inspires me to keep fighting to share God's love and light, and to remember I desperately need His guidance and strength — and the support of fellow believers — to push through the darkness. †

# RASHIONAL Extras ...



## Good news for difficult times

By Pastor Scott Slayton  
Chelsea Village Baptist Church, Chelsea

When difficult times come along, is your first instinct to remember the goodness of God and rest in Him or to allow panic mode to set in?

I've experienced several difficult trials recently and have noticed I allow myself to get in the habit of thinking more about the difficulty of my trials than of the overwhelming grace of my God. I listen to my fears, my anxiety and my frustrations before I listen to the good news of the gospel.

In falling into these patterns, I have had to revisit some of the most important advice I have ever heard. In his book "Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures," Martyn Lloyd-Jones says:

"Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you

wake up in the morning. You have not originated them but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. ... Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, 'Self, listen for a moment.'"

Lloyd-Jones offers sound wisdom here. We listen to ourselves as our fears, doubts and worries shout at us. ... Our circumstances may be difficult, even insurmountable, but we have good news to preach to ourselves that will change the way we respond to difficult circumstances.

The passage I most often go to in tough times is Romans 8:28-39.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This is an excerpt from Slayton's blog One Degree to Another. To read the full post, visit scottslayton.net.*

"For those of you who have walked away and have become a prodigal, come on home. God's 'hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear' (Isa. 59:1). If you can't hope in your God, where do you think you will find hope? Come home and bring your broken heart so you can let God's healing mercy restore you.

"God is bigger than your pain, greater than your anger and His love and forgiveness are more extravagant than you can imagine. Giving back to His control what you never could have controlled yourself will give you back your peace. Come on home."

**Rita Aiken Moritz**  
Author, "So You Love a Prodigal"

"Did you know that love has a price? It's called grief. You never have to have a broken heart. How? Just don't love anything."  
From "The Sender: A story about when right words make all the difference" by Kevin Elko and Bill Beausay

Any time a family goes through a time of major transition, there is the potential for disunity, disharmony and disruption. The way a church family prevents any of that is by practicing the relational principles laid down for us in Scripture. There, in God's Word, we are called to bear with one another, to be patient with one another, to be kind and compassionate toward one another, to be gracious and merciful to one another and, above all, to love one another. We are commanded to reconcile any grievances we have with each other and to practice the art (and hard work) of forgiveness and restoration. When we do have differences that arise or when we feel that we've been wronged, we are to speak to one another honestly and lovingly, seeking not just to air our grievances — and certainly not to seek revenge — but rather to bring our relationships back into godly, righteous working order.

**Pastor Scott Guffin**  
Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills

### From LinkedIn ...

We control our time. Don't fall into the trap of blaming others for inefficiency.

**Michael Smith**  
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries

Forgiveness isn't easy. We've all been hurt by someone else. But we can't be healthy if we don't forgive.

**Joel Bruce**  
H2 Ministry

Intentional leadership is deliberate, purposeful and willful.

<http://ow.ly/yQEL30du00z>

**Ronnie Floyd**  
@ronniefloyd



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## BALDWIN

► **First Church, Bay Minette**, will hold a celebration service Aug. 6. Scott Lee and the choir of Shandon Church, Columbia, South Carolina, will perform special music. Chip Starnes is pastor.

## CAREY

► **Lineville Church** will hold a special service to honor Pastor Jerry Colquett on Aug. 1, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Colquett will celebrate 33 years of service to the church this fall.

## CLARKE

► **Ulcunush Church, Coffeeville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 6, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. The church also will hold revival services Aug. 7-9, 7 nightly. Bo Billingsley from Millry Church will speak. Jesse Griffith is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Bret Hooten** is the new

college pastor for **The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera**. He holds a bachelor's degree from South-eastern Bible College in Birmingham, a juris doctor degree from the University of Alabama School of Law and is currently enrolled at Birmingham Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Delilah, have two children. Ken Letson is pastor.



HOOTEN

## COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will have a night of worship Aug. 4, 7 p.m. featuring The Ball Brothers. Refreshments in the fellowship hall will follow. Everyone is welcome. Hosea Parker is pastor.

## ETOWAH

► **White Springs Church**,

**Rainbow City**, will hold a fall kick off service Aug. 6. Former pastor Bill King will speak at 10:30. He will perform as Billy Bob Bohannon at 6 p.m. A fellowship will be held after the evening service.

## RUSSELL

► **Pine Grove Church, Phenix City**, will celebrate homecoming and its 70th anniversary Aug. 6, 10 a.m. Monroe Bell from West Point, Georgia, will speak and The Country Gospel Band from Phenix City will perform special music. Philip Camp is pastor.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Aaron Barnes** was sent by **Forest Lake Church, Tuscaloosa**, to join the staff of Anchor Church, Tuscaloosa, effective July 2. He previously served as minister of college and discipleship for Forest Lake. He and his wife, Leesa, have one child. Donald Payne is pastor of Forest Lake.✝



## Cahaba Valley BC commemorates 200 years

Vows of rededication to the service of the Lord were taken by all in attendance for the 200th anniversary celebration of Cahaba Valley Baptist Church, Brierfield, on June 25.

Numerous soloists and ensembles sang during the celebration service and Pastor Doug Wilder spoke on Luke 15:11-31. Special guests for the service included the congregation of Enon Baptist Church, Centreville, which was a church that was planted by Cahaba Valley Baptist.



Photo by Lonette Berg

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, made a historical presentation and Bill Russell, director of missions for Bibb Baptist Association, gave the benediction.

## Ashville's McEntyre BC marks 75 years

In 1942, McEntyre Chapel began holding services despite its lack of electricity or pews and its reliance on a wood stove for heat. And the determination of the early congregation paid off, as the church celebrated 75 years this spring.

During the morning service April 30, commemorative certificates were presented to the now McEntyre Baptist Church, Ashville, by Chris Crain on behalf of St. Clair Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Crain, director of missions for St. Clair Association, also was the guest speaker.

After a fellowship lunch, former and current members gathered for an afternoon song service featuring Bobby Rupel and Redemption Trio. The McEntyre mens and womens choirs also performed.

Bobby Joe Winningham is pastor.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

## Brookwood Baptist Health system praised for care

For the third year in a row, Brookwood Baptist Health system has been recognized as an industry leader by the American Hospital Association's (AHA) Health Forum.

The health institution was named one of the nation's "Most Wired" health systems, according to the 19th annual Health Care's Most Wired survey. The survey

included nearly 700 participants representing more than 2,000 hospitals, AHA reported.

"The Most Wired hospitals are using every available technology option to create more ways to reach their patients in order to provide access to care," said AHA President and CEO Rick Pollack.

Chris Davis, Brookwood's chief information officer, said, "Technol-

ogy is progressing at a rapid pace and we are going to continue to ... adapt to the changing landscape so we can continue to improve the efficiency of care we deliver." (TAB)

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# Wellness retreat focuses on ministering to ministers

By Michael J. Brooks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ministers from several states convened at Samford University in Birmingham on July 10–14 for the eighth consecutive Ministering to Ministers (MTM) wellness retreat sponsored by the Center for Congregational Resources (CCR). Each minister there had a crisis story to share.

Joe has served as music minister in a Southern Baptist church for 13 years. His church is facing financial challenges so church

leaders have suggested he should relinquish his full-time job and serve the church part-time with no benefits. He has two teenagers at home.

## Facing turmoil

Betty is an associate pastor in a Lutheran church. Her church has faced declining membership and resources. The pastor, who has been her mentor and encourager, summoned her to his office recently and suggested she should find another position.

Sally ministered alongside her

husband in a church where she had the responsibility of supervising staff. The church board asked her to terminate an employee but refused to support her when an influential member blamed her alone for the decision. Sally decided to retire from ministry rather than face continued turmoil.

What happens to ministers when they leave their churches? Studies show it often takes six months or more to find a new ministry position, and ministers may be without income while conducting their job searches. Often terminated ministers are not at their best and don't interview well. They are despondent, having lost their jobs plus their circles of Christian friends in their churches.

The MTM Foundation was founded by Alabama-native Charles Chandler in 1994 and has

sponsored 134 wellness retreats throughout the nation to help ministers in crisis. Participants representing 40 denominations have come from 37 states, Canada and the Bahamas.

MTM also has developed a "friends for the journey" network of retreat alumni who offer to contact and encourage inquirers. Betty, who lives in the Northeast, contacted MTM for help in June. The organization asked a former retreat participant in Alabama to call, share his story and encourage her to attend the Samford retreat.

Chandler said ministers in crisis

sometimes are victimized by forces outside their control but at other times ministers make bad choices leading to hurtful results. He frequently tells retreat participants, "Don't waste your pain. Grow from it. Wounded ministers can have a new dimension of ministry since we can grow strong at the broken places."

Licensed professional counselor Cynthia Barnes, of Richmond, Virginia, served as clinician at the recent Samford retreat. She is an Episcopalian who serves her denomination as a clergy coach and as a consultant in transition and crisis. She was assisted by Michael K. Wilson, CCR program director and a member

of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church.

Barnes said she had several goals in mind for participants.

"I want(ed) participants to leave with a renewed sense of hope," she said. "I want(ed) them to have new ideas in their bag of skills as well as clarity about what the next right thing may be."

Barnes said involuntary terminations need not be the end of ministers' careers.

"Ministers have transferrable skills they can use in other vocations," she said. "But others go back into ministry with greater wisdom and abilities."

Chandler retired from MTM in 2016 and passed the executive director reins to James B. Johnson II, of Richmond. Barnes has been working with Johnson to retool the

varied activities in the retreats.

"We're putting new emphasis on family systems and genograms," Barnes said. "What we find is, if we understand our family backgrounds better, we understand

ourselves better. And sometimes we find the same kinds of family systems in the churches."

Barnes said the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality inventory will continue to be a tool she uses.

"We also have a new session on dealing with grief," she said. "Grief affects so much of our lives and ministers under stress grieve when they lose friends or positions."

## Affecting families

Ministers are not alone in their grief, Barnes said.

"Spouses and children get caught in the crossfire," she said. "They're part of the church and they can lose the support of a congregation if their parent faces involuntary termination."

One participant said his 19-year-old daughter was deeply hurt when he was fired.

"Dad, you've always told me this is the Body of Christ but I don't see that anymore," she said.

Barnes said another goal for the week is for participants to learn to forgive themselves and others.

"Out of our humanness, we hurt one another," Barnes said. "Sometimes it's well-intentioned but hurtful nonetheless. We must learn to forgive and love one another as we serve Christ and His church."✠

**For more information about MTM, visit [mtmfoundation.org](http://mtmfoundation.org) or call 804-594-2556.**

**"Wounded ministers can have a new dimension of ministry since we can grow strong at the broken places."**

**Charles Chandler  
founder, MTM**



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**WHEN: Sunday, July 30 at 7 PM**

**WHERE: CrossPointe Church  
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 30

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

**GOD'S FAITHFULNESS**  
**Psalms 146:1-10**

Our psalm this week comes from the last collection in Book Five, the final "hallelujah" psalms. They are given this designation because each of these songs begins and ends with the Hebrew words "hallelu Yah," regionally translated as "y'all (For real because it's the plural form of you.) praise Yahweh."

**The Declaration (1-2)**

Verse one includes two imperatives. First y'all praise Yah(weh). Immediately following, the psalmist exhorts his own soul to praise Yahweh. An important note here is that the original Hebrew includes the vowels and consonants that look like this: Yehovah. The problem with transliterating this name as Jehovah is that the vowels (e-o-a) indicate to the reader that the substitute name Aedonai is to be spoken. In this way, the Hebrews would never be guilty of misusing the name of Yahweh their God (the third commandment). Whenever the name Yahweh is replaced in the Hebrew reading with Aedonai (or Adonai), we read the name LORD (in all capital letters).

In verse two the psalmist declares his unceasing commitment to offer praise to Yahweh. We see parallel verbs "praise" and "sing praise" as well as parallel theological references to Yahweh and "my God." The point here is that as long as believers have life, it is right and fitting for us to lift up our hands and lift up our voices in praise to God our Creator.

**The Warning (3-4)**

He warns us in these verses not to rely on humans whose authority and abilities are limited. Verse three is reminiscent of Psalm 20:7, except this carries the weight of a prohibition: "do not trust" or even "stop putting your trust" in princes or a son of man who

cannot save. Why? Their lives and abilities are fleeting. Resting on temporal solutions and the agencies of men are feeble foundations. Where then is our hope?

**The Worthy One (5-9)**

Yahweh is the worthy one. He is the Creator. He is the faithful one. He is the just one. He sets the prisoners free. He loves the righteous. He provides for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow.

Yahweh reveals His nature through the Torah. The people of Israel failed to reflect the character of their covenant God to the nations around them. Instead they compromised themselves and reflected the ungodly nations before their holy God.

In due time God became man. Jesus, the Word, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He sets the captives free. As Chris Tomlin wrote: "My chains are gone; I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me."

**The Reality (10)**

"The Lord reigns forever ... for all generations. Hallelujah!" Y'all praise Yahweh. He is worthy of praise. He revealed His plan from the beginning that He would redeem a people to Himself from every family (Gen. 12:3) and nation (Gen. 22:18). In time the Father sent the Son to live and die and rise again to bring us good news of redemption. Shortly thereafter He sent the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples-turned-apostles to proclaim the gospel to the nations. Now He includes us in His plan. We, who were dead in trespasses and sins, are made alive in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah, brothers and sisters. Praise the Lord.

A fitting end to this lesson is to join the heavenly choir who stand and sing the Hallelujah Chorus before the throne: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). †

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

**OBJECTIONS OVERRULED**  
**Exodus 3:11-12; 4:10-17**

The book of Exodus is a story about a relationship between God and His people. In the story of Israel, we see our own story. In their pilgrimage of faith and obedience, we see our own walk with God. The story of Moses offers us a word of comfort and challenge concerning our own confidence in God's promises and our commitment to His purposes.

**God is with you. (3:11-12)**

Yet the call of God requires a response. Initially when God reveals Himself to Moses, Moses is reluctant to obey. Moses speaks about his own inadequacy to fulfill the task that God has assigned him. So the Lord assures Moses of His presence, saying, "I will be with you."

God takes the initiative in revealing Himself to Moses. In the end, He does so because He has chosen not only to use Moses, but also to need Moses to be His instrument in and through whom He will work. What is interesting here is that God chose a mountain in the wilderness named Horeb, far removed from the sights and sounds of the religious community. There is no temple nearby, no indication that this is a "holy place."

Moses is on an everyday journey with no "religious intention." I think it's wonderful the way in which the whole of life is so sacred to God that He can meet with us in the everyday occurrences of life — indeed in the mundane and ordinary places. God uses ordinary people in ordinary locations to do an extraordinary work for Him.

**God created you just as you are. (4:10-12)**

Moses argues with God. He tries to wriggle out of God's call on his life by

claiming to be unable to speak. Yet here is a man who has been raised in Egypt to be well educated, to be trained in eloquent speaking in Pharaoh's household. Therefore, his attitude is probably one of disobedience. Nonetheless, as Moses goes on and on and on about his inadequacy, God is very gracious — gentle but firm. God encourages Moses to commit himself into the purposes of God, having the confidence that God's promises will provide for all Moses' needs.

To know that — despite our sin and our lack of ability — God can use us is one of the greatest blessings as a Christian. God uses us. He knows all about us. He created us and He believes there is a "work for Jesus none but you can do."

**God equips you with all you need. (4:13-17)**

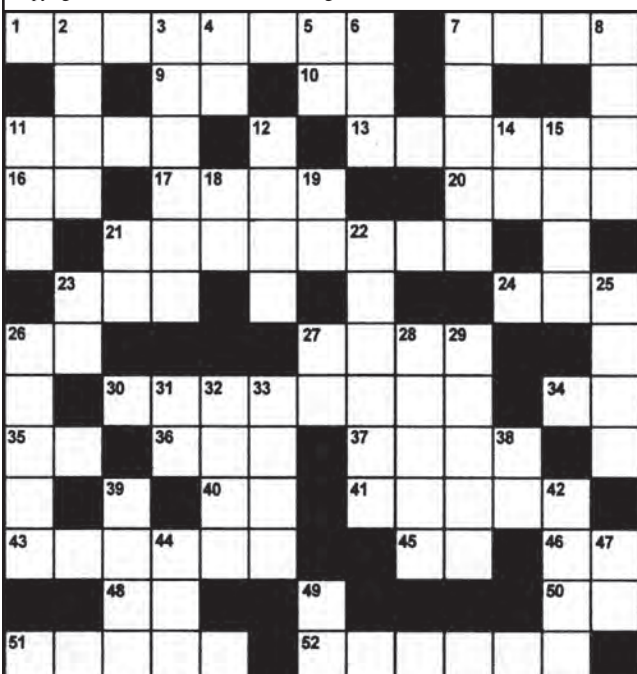
Moses takes every opportunity to dodge the call of God. Moses speaks of his own ignorance and the fact that he didn't know anything. It's almost as if the Lord says to Moses, "Well you've come to the right person. I can meet you in all of your need with all of my grace."

We need to be willing to come to the point in our lives that we will gladly, for the sake of Christ, give up anything that hinders us from following Him. It may be our possessions, pleasure, position, prestige and so on. Whatever the reason, we stop short of positively giving our time and our talents into the service of the Savior. Christian discipleship is not a negative; it is a positive attitude and action of devoting our lives to the call of God and committing all that we are and have in order to be available to Him. As the hymn says so well:

*"Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated Lord, to Thee  
Take my moments, take my days  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise." †*

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

1. Belonging to a minor prophet.
7. Belonging to the son of Issachar. (Gen. 46:13)
9. I'm \_\_\_ the end of my rope.
10. Each. (abbr.)
11. The beloved disciple.
13. Spoken of by \_\_\_ the prophet. (Matt. 24:15)
16. Abbreviation meaning "all right."
17. Though they have \_\_\_ chariots. (Josh. 17:18)
20. Woodworking tool.
21. Cupbearer to the king. (Neh. 1:1, 11)
23. Styling \_\_\_ for the hair.
24. \_\_\_ is the father of Canaan. (Gen. 9:18)
26. Negative.
27. They set the ark ... upon a new \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Sam. 6:3)
30. \_\_\_ lamented for Josiah. (2 Chron. 35:25)
34. \_\_\_ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 15:7)

35. And \_\_\_ shall rule over thee. (Gen. 3:16)
36. Type of armament.
37. "I \_\_\_ that test!"
40. \_\_\_ have and to hold.
41. 28th book of the Bible.
43. Belonging to a man of mount Ephraim. (Judg. 17:1)
45. Compass direction.
46. He dwelleth in \_\_\_\_\_. (John 6:56)
48. Tyrone. (abbr.)
50. "\_\_\_ top of old Smokey."
51. Pharaoh's daughter called his name \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 2:10)
52. Before the Israelites had kings, they had \_\_\_\_.

**Down**

2. Written in the \_\_\_ of the prophets. (Acts 7:42)
3. He had the gift of interpreting dreams.
4. A word ... in due season, how good is \_\_\_! (Prov. 15:23)

5. Where is \_\_\_ that is born King of the Jews? (Matt. 2:2)
6. Why is thy countenance \_\_\_? (Neh. 2:2)
7. Prophet to Nineveh.
8. Part of a shoe.
11. The patience of \_\_\_\_.
12. The name of Samuel's firstborn was \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Sam. 8:2)
14. \_\_\_, ego, superego.
15. Seraiah, Jeremiah, \_\_\_\_\_. (Neh. 12:1)
18. Blood factor.
19. Southwestern state. (abbr.)
21. Compass direction.
22. As my servant \_\_\_ hath walked naked. (Isa. 20:3)
23. \_\_\_ in peace. (Luke 7:50)
25. Barnabas took \_\_\_, and sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 15:39)
26. 34th book of the Bible.
27. 900 in Roman numerals.
28. Radar beacon.
29. Solomon was not

- arrayed like one of \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 6:29)
31. For example.
32. Boaz begat Obed of \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 1:5)
33. Seth called his son's name \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 4:26)
38. Defensive End. (abbr.)
39. \_\_\_ of the Apostles.
42. Prophet who was a herdsman of Tekoa.
44. Yes. (nautical)
47. Printer's measure. (abbr.)
49. Middle Atlantic state. (abbr.)





MBTS photo

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary remodeled its former chapel into the Spurgeon Library, which consolidates and showcases the collection appropriately.

## Spurgeon collection now available online

A website expected to hold the largest digitized collection on the internet of writings by famed British theologian Charles H. Spurgeon is now available.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in partnership with B&H Academic, launched the website June 21.

Also known as “The Spurgeon Archive,” Midwestern Seminary’s original Spurgeon Center website has been combined with [www.spurgeon.org](http://www.spurgeon.org), which was founded and donated by Phil Johnson, executive director of “Grace to You.” The Spurgeon site consists of accessible sermons, writings, links and a number of other Spurgeon-related documents.

“We view this website as a resource available to the local church that makes visible the life, legacy and library of Charles Spurgeon,” Midwestern President Jason Allen said. “Our ultimate goal is to make Spurgeon’s works accessible to the world in a way that has never been done before. This site does just that.”

### Blog feature

In addition to facsimiles of sermons that visitors can search through, the site will also feature a regularly scheduled blog by Spurgeon Library curator Christian George, graduate of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. There also are links

highlighting Spurgeon’s Daily Meditations, where guests can access his morning and evening readings for each day of the year, as well as Spurgeon’s commentary on Psalms, “The Treasury of David;” the *Sword and Trowel* magazine; and artifacts from the library.

“The heartbeat of this website is to make Jesus Christ shine through Spurgeon,” George said. “We are uploading a treasure chest of sermons, commentaries, Puritan writings and preaching helps designed to encourage pastors and edify the church. My prayer is that God will use the same books that shaped Spurgeon to shape new generations of Christians throughout the world.”

### Future plans

George, who is in the process of publishing the 12-volume *Lost Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon* series, noted there are plans to add a discussion/interactive element to the site, which he hopes will bring scholars together.

Midwestern Seminary purchased C.H. Spurgeon’s personal library from William Jewel College in 2006. The collection consists of more than 6,000 books and hundreds of artifacts, letters and assorted materials housed in the seminary’s Spurgeon Library in Kansas City, Missouri.

In 2014, Midwestern established the Charles Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching. (BP)



SPURGEON

# TELLING THE gospel story

## Gettys focus on intersection of worship, missions

I am thankful for song writers and musicians who are thoughtfully crafting hymns that tell the gospel story, challenge us to think theologically and press us to respond accordingly,” hymn writer Keith Getty shared with the International Mission Board’s Rodney Calfee in June.

Keith and Kristyn Getty — best known for “In Christ Alone” — have been writing hymns together for about 17 years now but there’s been a particular emphasis on the intersection of worship and missions recently.

Calfee asked Keith Getty about that shift.

“Well, obviously we’ve been trying to write songs that explain the gospel in beautiful ways,” Getty said. “And over the years, of the hymns we’ve written that were commissioned for a specific occasion, almost all were tied in with significant missional events. ... We’ve really taken a year and a half to think well about the subject and try very hard to write songs that might be good for churches to sing.”

Here’s more of Calfee’s interview with Getty:

*Q: You reference worship and music in general as a way to disciple people into a certain belief and corresponding activity. How is corporate worship through song a tool that ultimately accomplishes that goal?*

A: I think we have to remember that early in the Old Testament, Moses was commanded by God to teach the Hebrews through hymns (see Deut. 31:19): “Teach this to your children, that it will be a witness against them lest they turn away,” he said. In other words, what you sing doesn’t just affect how you think or how you feel or how you pray. It is presumed that singing will affect how you live your life. In fact, 20 percent of the Bible is songs. We learn from the Word of God that we’re created to sing.

To take that another step further, most Christians probably know more verses of Scripture through singing them than by studying them. That’s not because we’re bad and we don’t study. It’s because we’re fearfully and wonderfully made. This is how God made us.

So, for someone like me who wasn’t gifted in the same ways as my friends who are pastors, discipleship through music uses the gifts that I do have. Every so often, I write a tune that’s memorable and helps let the Word of Christ dwell richly in people as they meet together and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

*Q: You’ve just completed a new hymn project just for kids. Why was it important for you to create a hymnal, as it were, specifically for children?*

A: We’ve thought about this a lot and started recording kids’ songs a couple of years ago. I’d like to

tell you it was because my wife and I are the most spiritual parents to ever live but it really wasn’t.

Actually we were snapped into it by a really embarrassing moment.

We were in New Jersey to perform a concert and a church requested that we join them that morning to hear their school children sing our hymns because they teach the kids the Bible through teaching them one of our hymns each month. It was really fascinating and quite humbling. So we went along to see them perform the songs.

Of course, our 4-year-old daughter at the time had flaming red hair and was an extrovert and wanted to join in. She got into the middle of the group and they all started singing “In Christ Alone.” Of course, there was only one kid that didn’t know all the words — our daughter — and there was nowhere for us to hide.

The truth was, for us, the moment had come. All parents face that moment when they have to decide to start teaching their kids the hymns of our faith. New England Puritans did not allow men to take the Lord’s Supper on Sunday if they did not pray, sing and read the Bible with their children during the week because they believed those fathers to have neglected their primary duty.

Now that is probably a bit of an overreach of church authority, to be honest, but the point is well taken.

So we wanted to start teaching our children to sing. We want them to understand and share their faith, to grow up with a confidence in the gospel and an imagination that is excited by the gospel. We want it to be natural to express the gospel in the midst of a society that will tell them (a) Christianity is unbelievable, (b) it’s antisocial and (c) you must never talk about it. Worship songs teach them the opposite and can infuse them with truth that helps them counter that flow.

### 16 languages

The whole album is meant to sing to the Lord in 16 languages with kids.

We’ve always said there are three goals for the kids’ albums. The first is to teach them the Bible and help them understand the gospel. The second is to get them excited about singing. The third is to help them extend their imaginations and creativity, and think about what is happening in the arts and culture around them.

All that said, being parents, we included our own little daughters on the album in a setting of John 3:16. They read and sang the passage. Because of the content and the beauty of the song, nepotism aside (maybe), it is my favorite track on the album. (BP)



KEITH & KRISTYN GETTY



John Hawkins leads an English class at FBC Duluth, Georgia.

LifeWay photo

# Being relevant

## Georgia church embraces multicultural ministry

By Mark Hearn  
Special to Baptist Press

I grew up in a small town tucked away in the mountains of Pulaski, Virginia. This beautiful Appalachian upbringing provided great vistas and wonderful childhood memories. However, it did little to prepare me to be a ministry leader in an increasingly diverse context.

After 35 years of pastoral ministry, I wonder if anything could have prepared me for what I encounter in recent days.

In 2010, my wife and I moved from our predominantly monocultural neighborhood in the suburbs of Indianapolis to our new church, First Baptist Church, Duluth, Georgia. This quaint southern town outside Atlanta is diversifying at an astonishing rate.

Longtime residents can recall when Duluth amounted to a single road with a single stoplight. But in the late '80s and early '90s, Duluth became a residential hot spot in suburban Atlanta. Professional athletes, CEOs and wealthy entrepreneurs built massive homes, and the standard of living soared.

A colossal event in 1996 changed the trajectory of this community for the next generation: Atlanta hosted the Olympics.

The nations came to our city. International leaders had a delightful first experience in the mild climate and robust economic atmosphere of Atlanta's suburbs. As a result, people from a variety of nations began to populate Duluth in record numbers during the early 2000s.

### Startling statistic

When I arrived in 2010, Duluth was on its way to becoming one of the most diverse cities in America. In our mayor's "state of the city" address that year, I heard a statistic that has motivated me ever since.

Mayor Nancy Harris illustrated the changing nature of our community with one statement: "There are 57 languages spoken daily at Duluth High School." I wrote this down and challenged the mayor afterward. Surely she had misspoken. I didn't think

there were 57 languages in the entire world, much less at our local high school.

I left that event pondering, "If First Baptist Church is going to be relevant in this community, we have to learn to carry the life-changing truth of the gospel to 57 different language groups." I spent the next six months forming a biblical strategy that I shared with the church in a Sunday morning message.

### Assimilating vs. accommodating

Since that time, people from 41 nations have become members of our church or partners in ministry. We now offer our services with live interpretation through headsets in Spanish, Korean and Arabic (we hope to add Mandarin Chinese soon). We join with our community and celebrate international holidays, such as El Día de Los Tres Reyes Magos (Three Kings' Day), a Spanish celebration, at Christmas-time; East Asian New Year, for those who observe the lunar calendar; and India's Independence Day.

The changes at our church all began with the establishment of rich relationships that provided the impetus to show how much we care for one another. My friend and mentor, Mark DeYmaz, explains this as the difference between being "assimilating" and being "accommodating."

Most churches do a good job at assimilation. Many churches have a staff position dedicated to assimilation. Assimilating churches do their best to provide all the necessary information for you to become one of us, become like us and adopt our culture.

Accommodation, on the other hand, begins with me wanting to know about you. How can I help you to become all God intends you to be? Tell me about your cultural nuances and how to make a gospel impact in your cultural setting.

After experiencing the spiritual dynamics of a multicultural church, I do not ever desire to return to a monocultural world. The beautiful picture of heavenly worship in Revelation 7:9 might be beyond our comfort zone but it is happening every week at our church. I feel incredibly blessed. ✠

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Christians attacked, forced into 'agreement'

ABASING, India — After an attack in eastern India in which a Christian was seriously injured, police and Hindus created an "agreement" — without the participation of church members — effectively halting worship services, sources said.

Church members were bullied into signing the agreement, according to Morning Star News. As a result, in the tribal village of Abasing in Gajapati District, Odisha state, Sunday worship services have ceased following the June 18 attack on a worship service by a mob of Hindu women, a church leader said.

About 30 Hindu women entered the house where the congregation had been worshipping for six months, broke into front and back entrances and dragged the 12 Christians present out, he said.

Four Christians who were injured were temporarily detained and forced to sign the document.

Seven Hindus also signed the document, which states Christians cannot celebrate any event without prior permission from the police station, can only worship in their own homes and cannot gather for familial celebrations like birthdays without first submitting an application to the police.

The document also states that if Hindus intend to celebrate any event and are concerned for their safety, they can complain to police of "the threat from Christians." (MS)

### Chinese couple killed, accused of 'preaching'

QUETTA, Pakistan — A Chinese couple was killed in June after Pakistani officials accused them of "preaching."

Reports say Lee Zing Yang, 24, and Meng Li Si, 24, were paid about \$280 per month to teach Chinese to people in Pakistan at a language institute run by a South Korean, Juan Won Seo.

The Pakistani interior ministry released a statement asserting that security officials told Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan in a June 12 meeting that, "Instead of engaging in any business activity, they went to Quetta and under the garb of learning (the) Urdu language from a Korean national ... (but) were actually engaged in preaching."

Lee and Meng were kidnapped off the streets of Quetta on May 24. The Islamic State (IS)-affiliated news agency Amaq reported June 8 that IS fighters had killed two Chinese teachers being held in Mastung, Balochistan, and IS released a video showing what are believed to be their bodies shot and bleeding. Pakistan reportedly confirmed the Chinese teachers had been killed, though it was unclear if officials had recovered their bodies.

Pakistan also has deported Juan Won Seo, accusing him of setting up a phony business as a cover for a church and "preaching activities." (MS)

### Food aid reaches Christians in Nigeria

BORNO, Nigeria — Food aid is beginning to reach Nigerian Christians and others displaced by Boko Haram violence in the Lake Chad Basin, World Watch Monitor (WWM) reported July 10.

WWM said food was delivered to at least 75,000 people in some of the most isolated camps in early July, citing reports from humanitarian relief organization Open Doors.

Among some 5 million internally displaced persons at risk of starving to death in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, WWM said, the most vulnerable are Christians who had been discriminated against in food distributions in favor of Muslims.

One Nigerian church official told Open Doors the discrimination began when control of refugee camps was entrusted to organizations outside the government: "The governor (Kashim Shettima) did his best when the Christians had to flee their places in 2014 and 2015. But when the care of the camps was handed over to other organizations, the discrimination started."

In February, mainly as a result of Boko Haram violence, the UN estimated about 10.7 million people needed immediate humanitarian assistance in the region. (BP)