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Designs for Hope

Trussville ministry engineers wells, ways to share gospel in developing countries

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

From Chris Bond's office in Trussville, he can see exactly how much water is being pumped each day into a small village in Kenya.

It has only been a month so far, but already it has provided more than 12,000 gallons of clean drinking water for the town of about 1,000 people.

The pump is powered by a solar panel designed by Bond and installed on a recent trip. And he knows it's still working, because it sends data back to him in real time.

"We use this data as a tool to make sure the system remains fully functional," said Bond, a member of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville.

Africa has more than 50,000 wells that aren't operational anymore because of problems ranging from dirty filters to parts that have broken and not been replaced, he said.

"We see this as a problem and want to make sure that what we do has a lasting effect," Bond said.

So he's keeping an eye on it — just like he's

keeping an eye on dozens of other things he has designed as part of his ministry, Designs for Hope. Bond, an engineering teacher, started the ministry back in 2012 when he had the idea to build a kit that could charge a phone from power generated by a bicycle.

Helping pastors do ministry

He began to build more of these packs — which cost about \$100 each to build — and take them to pastors in developing countries as a way to help them with their ministry. The kits can generate enough electricity to power a water purification system, charge a phone or run lights so that pastors can study the Bible or have church at night.

"A lot of times it's really hard for them to do ministry based on the conditions in which they live," he said. "Most are farmers and work during the daylight hours. With lights, they can have Bible studies or church at night."

He's kept up with the pastors over the years, and hearing how the ministry of Designs for Hope has changed their lives "is what keeps us motivated," Bond said.

It's not just battery packs — over the years,

the nonprofit ministry has grown to encompass resources like solar panels and wells but also pastoral training and discipleship.

On their recent trip to Kenya, Designs for Hope led a three-day training for about 40 pastors.

"It's so amazing to see how they grow in their understanding of God and their role as a minister of the gospel and how they actually flesh that out in their lives and ministry," Bond said.

And the well that Bond's team installed is not only pumping out fresh water — it's making inroads for the gospel too, he said.

"They have nicknamed it Salvation Well, because there have been several salvations that have (See 'Technology,' page 8)



Chris Bond stands atop the rock formation Kit-Mikayi in Kenya near a ministry site of Designs for Hope, a Trussville-based nonprofit that seeks to provide sustainable energy and clean water in developing countries.

Photo courtesy of Chris Bond

COMMENT

Churches in the Courts

Filing a lawsuit against a church used to be the last thing someone would do. Not anymore. In today's litigious society, the church is often a target — sometimes an easy target — for lawsuits both serious and frivolous.

About 25 years ago the American Bar Association began sponsoring workshops on the best way to sue a church. Regional and national conferences discussed serious issues like holding churches accountable for sexual abuse of minors or clergy misconduct. Sometimes, according to one account, the emphasis was on how to land large settlement amounts.

Recently when a survey asked how people might become independently wealthy, the two most common answers were “win the lottery” and “win a big lawsuit.”

Whatever the reason, churches are the target of more than their fair share of the more than 100 million lawsuits filed in state courts each year. That is about one lawsuit for every two adults in the United States.

There is some good news coming from the courts. After a decade of being the number one legal matter involving American churches, sexual abuse of minors fell to number two in 2016 according to the publication Church Law and Tax. The publication's review of state appellate and federal court rulings found 8.3 percent of cases involved child sex abuse in 2016. That was down from 11.7 percent in 2015.

Protecting children

Hopefully the primary reason for the drop is that churches are doing a better job of protecting children in their care. For at least a decade churches have been urged to adopt policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse.

Some of the policies promoted by LifeWay Christian Resources include: background checks (including child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history) for all church staff positions, Sunday School teachers, ministry leaders and children and youth workers; waiting periods before new church members can work with children



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

or youth; a buddy system so workers are never alone with children or youth; prohibition of unsupervised cross-gender contact between leaders and students; adequate child-adult ratios for Sunday School and off-campus activities.

Occasionally a church has resisted adopting these or similar guidelines for fear they would offend volunteers. However, volunteers who object to such policies may not be the kind of individuals who should be working with children and youth in the first place.

In 2016 the primary legal matter involving churches was property disputes which composed 8.7 percent of cases before the courts. In 2015 that percentage was 10.2 percent.

Frequently property cases pit members against members. Often it is a group of members who contend they are the “true” church because others in the congregation have abandoned the “true faith” in some way. Sometimes the argument is about factions in the church attempting to exercise power and leadership.

On Aug. 2, 2017, the Supreme Court of South Carolina ended a long-running lawsuit over control of 29 former Episcopal churches in that state which had seceded to form an Anglican diocese. The state Supreme Court reversed a lower court ruling and awarded the property valued at more than \$500 million to the Episcopal denomination, effectively kicking out the members of the churches who had built and paid for them and who had overwhelmingly voted to leave the Episcopal Church because of what they called liberal theology.

Interestingly, the courts in Illinois reached the opposite conclusion in a case with almost the same set of facts. The Illinois decision allowed the Diocese of Quincy, which also seceded from the Episcopal Church, to keep its property because the national denomination did not have a policy that

kept dioceses from withdrawing their membership.

The lower court in South Carolina reached the same finding based on the same reason as the Illinois court in siding with the churches. That decision was reversed by the state Supreme Court. In Illinois, the state Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal by the national denomination.

These cases illustrate the complicated nature of legal actions. One court's finding is no assurance that another will reach the same decision. Going to court always involves risk.

After property disputes and sexual abuse of minor cases, cases involving personal injury, insurance coverage disputes and zoning conflicts most frequently landed churches in court.

Again, churches can mitigate their risk of lawsuits through carefully adopted policies and procedures. LifeWay offers suggestions beginning with clear position descriptions for all employees,

including the pastor, as a first step. A whole series of church safety practices are suggested as are periodic reviews of insurance coverage.


Reviewing LifeWay's suggestions is a good starting place and a prudent step for any church today.

Even when a church wins in court, victory often comes with high costs. A court case can take up an inordinate amount of time and energy and impact the morale of the church. A lawsuit can create division. It can sap a congregation's energy. It is far better to avoid litigation in the first place if possible.

Also to be remembered is what the Bible teaches about Christians suing one another. The apostle Paul cautions against the practice in 1 Corinthians 6:1–8. In verse 5 he urges those in disagreement to find a “wise” man from among them to help settle the issue. Today that could be called Christian mediation or arbitration.

Preventing pettiness

Mediation or arbitration provides an opportunity for disagreements to be settled without creating a public furor, without the combative nature of a court room. Reconciliation becomes the goal rather than winning.

This might not work if someone's motivation is to get rich quick by suing the church for emotional distress or fraud. But it might help prevent some of the pettiness that sometimes shows up in court rooms when a person becomes more interested in “my rights” than in being at peace with one another as Romans 12:18 suggests. 

“Mediation or arbitration provides an opportunity for disagreements to be settled without creating a public furor, without the combative nature of a court room. Reconciliation becomes the goal rather than winning.”

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TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Debt-free opportunity

State Board approves plan for sale of Auburn's BCM center, new facility

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

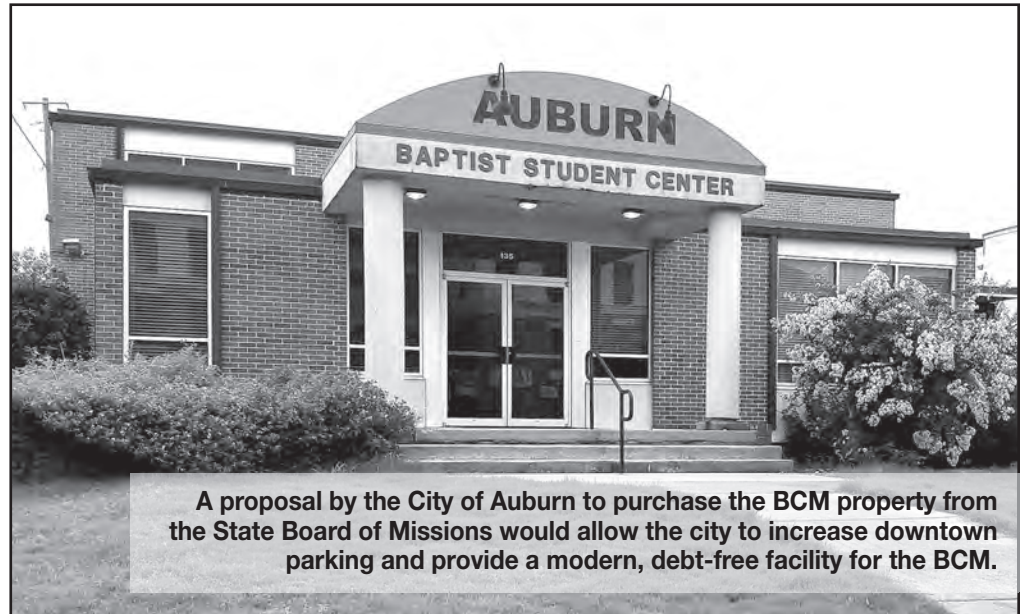
An offer by the City of Auburn to purchase the Auburn University Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) center would mean a new facility for the ministry and an influx of funds to renovate the nine other BCM centers in the state.

Trustees of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) approved the proposal to sell the property in its meeting Aug. 11 at Shocco Springs. The proposal will be brought before messengers to the state convention annual meeting in November for final approval. The Auburn city council also must approve the proposal and is expected to vote Aug. 15.

The 56-year-old Auburn University BCM, also known as the Baptist Student Center, is located on College Street, just down the street from Auburn's famed Toomer's Corner. Looking for ways to increase parking downtown, city officials approached SBOM officials more than a year ago about purchasing the land, according to Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director. Representatives from both the properties and executive committees of SBOM approved the proposal in May.

According to the agreement, SBOM will sell the property of the current BCM building to the city for \$2.33 million. The building will be demolished to make way for a new 200- to 300-space public parking deck.

A new 6,900-square-foot BCM space will be built on the first level of the parking garage, leaving the ministry's location in downtown Auburn virtually unchanged. And while the new entrance will be on the opposite side of the block off Wright Street instead of College Street, the area is still a hub of activity in the



A proposal by the City of Auburn to purchase the BCM property from the State Board of Missions would allow the city to increase downtown parking and provide a modern, debt-free facility for the BCM.

Photo by Jeremy Henderson

downtown region with more plans for retail space in the area in the future.

The new space is about 1,500 square feet less than the current building, but it will be able to seat 150 or even an overflow of 175 instead of the current building's 100.

"The new space more than adequately meets [the] ministry needs ... at Auburn right now," DuBois said.

SBOM will determine the layout of the space. Upon completion the city will deed the space to SBOM, along with 15 parking spaces, and pay SBOM the difference in the appraised value of the property and the cost of construction — an estimated \$1.23 million. That money will be combined with \$1 million from

SBOM's future construction funds to renovate the other nine facilities in the state by 2019.

If approved by messengers in November, the sale would close in late November or early December. Demolition and construction would begin soon after with plans for completion in 2019. The city of Auburn has agreed to provide temporary housing for the BCM ministry during the time of construction but the location has yet to be determined.

Mike Nuss, who directs SBOM's BCM ministry, said, "We are excited about the new facility at Auburn and how the subsequent improvements to our BCM facilities across the state will position us for strategic ministry on the college campus missions field for the future." †

Samford, state convention relationship plans outlined

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) and Samford University leaders stood together on the platform fielding questions and hearing emotional discourses borne out of broken hearts.

"All of our hearts are broken ... but we are going to have to move on," said state convention president John Thweatt.

The proposal in front of the State Board of Missions trustees was "how to have a collegial relationship with Samford going forward," he said.

Thweatt delivered a report from the Samford Relationship Study Group that was formed following a conflict that arose when a student organization focused on discussing sexuality, specifically homosexuality, issues sought official recognition on campus.

Student group not recognized

In the end the group was not granted official recognition by Samford but the executive committee of Samford's board of trustees voted in late June to withdraw from state convention funding beginning in 2018.

Samford president Andrew Westmoreland said the withdrawal was at his recommendation because "I knew that regardless of what we did at that point it was going to be a fight (and) I'm not going to do that.

"I'm going to support the work and not create disunity and division," he said, noting he realizes the timing of the funding withdrawal has created confusion. "[It] does make it appear that Samford University is about to undergo some radical change on how we approach our reliance on Scripture and many other matters," he said. "But I had to stop worrying about perception and rely on God's Word.

"What we are doing here might serve as a model for others in the years ahead. I think we can do this (remain in friendly partnership) without the money. I'm willing to give everything that I have, God willing, to make sure that this process happens."

Thweatt read through the seven-point report, which was approved with less than 10 votes in opposition.

The study group's proposal now goes to convention messengers in November.

The recommendations keep communication channels open between ABSC and Samford.

Samford also will be invited to report at convention-related meetings. The SBOM executive director and convention president will be invited to Samford board meetings as guests of the president.

Partnership opportunities

SBOM will partner with Samford's Ministry Training Institute as long as it makes sense to do so. Convention entities will continue partnering however they see fit and co-sponsored events will continue to be held on Samford's campus.

Students currently receiving the A. Earl Potts and Board of Aid scholarships will continue receiving those until they graduate but no new scholarships will be granted.

Along with approving these recommendations, the State Board approved the 2018 state convention budget of \$37 million, which reflects a \$3 million reduction from the current year coinciding with the Samford withdrawal of \$3,551,231.

A full report on the breakdown of the budget proposal and how it brings ABSC to its 50-50 parity with the SBC two years early will be in next week's issue. †

Ben Moseley (right) said that after the night he and two of friends set fire to nine Baptist churches in Alabama in 2006, he began a 'slow death' behind bars. But God redeemed him, he said, and since his release, he's been investing in his spiritual walk at Riverchase Baptist Church, led by Pastor Jeff Greer.

'On that road to redemption'

Moseley finds renewal, love, faith family after serving time for 'double dare' string of church burnings

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Ben Moseley is a little older, the creases in his face a little deeper since he and two of his buddies set fire to some Baptist churches on a night of binge drinking 11 years ago.

He watched 10 birthdays pass while he was behind bars. He woke up every morning of his 20s shaking off the emotions of dreams where everything was normal — life before the day he flicked that lighter. The things he'd done, the things he'd lost and the things he'd taken from others were always in the back of his mind.

"I was told that my life was over, that I had no hope, no dreams or ambitions," he said. "My slow death had begun."

And from the outside looking in, that might've looked pretty true.

Spinning out of control

Moseley was a freshman at Birmingham-Southern College majoring in music and theater the night that police rushed into his dorm room and ended his youth with some very adult consequences.

"Music was my dream," he said. "I loved it."

He loved it even though he was staring down the barrel of two tap classes and two ballet classes that

were future course requirements.

"My friends would've definitely given me a hard time when I took those classes," he said with a laugh. "But I never got there."

Where he got instead was a long way down a country road in Bibb County in the early morning hours of Feb. 3, 2006, drunk and spotlighting deer with two friends.

"It was at the end of our winter term at school and we had free time on our hands," Moseley said. "We were hunting, ran out of bullets and were just looking for the next thing to do."

That next thing, he said, was stupid and thoughtless and haunted him for every single day of the nine years, two months and two weeks he sat in prison. He and his



Photo by Grace Thornton

friends set fire to five churches — Rehobeth Baptist Church, Lawley; Ashby Baptist Church, Brierfield; and Pleasant Sabine Baptist Church, Centreville, which were all destroyed; and Antioch Baptist Church, Centreville, and Old Union Baptist Church, Randolph, which suffered damage.

A few days later, when the reality of what they'd done set in,

Moseley and one of his friends set fire to four more churches in west Alabama in "an exceedingly foolish double dare."

Things had spun out of control. Officials traced tire tracks at the churches back to the SUV they were driving, and the next thing Moseley knew, police officers were in his dorm room.

"What we did was horrible. It's always in the back of my mind," Moseley said. "We had no hatred at all in what we did — it was thoughtless and stupid. And I always had the questions in my mind — how many people were victimized? How would I feel if I were in their place, or if someone else had come through town and done something like that on a whim? I was in and out in a night, and I never saw the aftermath. I never saw the people I'd hurt."

But Jeff Greer — he did. He saw those people.

Greer, who was on staff at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, in 2006, reached out to First Baptist Church, Dancy, in Aliceville, one of the churches with fire damage from the second round of burnings.

"We wanted to help them, to bring a team to repaint, rebuild, do whatever we could to help," Greer said.

So Mountain Brook Baptist brought those teams. They picked up the congregation's mortgage for the rest of the year. They took a piano to the church and celebrated with them when they reopened their renovated building.

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And they watched them start to heal. “We were just like everybody else helping those churches at the time — we didn’t know who did it or the circumstances behind it,” Greer said. “We simply wanted to help out a fellow church that needed help from some folks.”

So they helped the church get back on its feet, and then they moved on.

That was where Greer’s story with Moseley started, even though neither of them knew it — it was just that the next chapter took a decade to happen.

“Several years after serving with Mountain Brook Baptist, I moved over

to become pastor of Riverchase Baptist Church,” Greer said. “And last year, when Ben got out of prison, one of his friends asked me if it would be OK if he came to our church.”

Greer said of course it would. And in his heart, he wondered what God was up to.

“I couldn’t believe it, that 10 years later I might get the opportunity to be a part of this young man’s life,” Greer said. “I knew it was something God was doing.”

So he told Moseley’s friend to tell him he’d be welcome, with open arms and with no judgment.

A second chance

“I told him I’m glad that Ben wants to continue to invest in his spiritual life and walk with the Lord,” Greer said. “He needed a second chance.”

When Moseley was sentenced in April 2007, U.S. District Judge R. David Proctor told him and his two friends that they had harmed a lot of people.

But, he said, with God’s grace, they had the “opportunity to do good still.”

Moseley took that idea to heart.

When he got to prison, “there was that anxious well of emotion that resulted from reliving the disappointment in myself, the gut-wrenching extraction

that was done from a life of seeming luxury, from college to having nothing,” he said.

But Moseley didn’t want to handle it by sinking lower in his pain.

Positive things

“I chose to spend my time doing things that would prepare me for when I got out,” he said.

He built some positive relationships. While in federal prison in California, he taught himself Spanish and practiced it with his cellmates and an older man he played Scrabble with.

But for the most part, he kept to himself.

“I was the weird guy who daydreamed about having a mortgage, who stayed in my cell and away from trouble, who wondered if I’d ever have a wife or children,” Moseley said. “I gave my energy to those positive things, to trying to learn and live God’s standard for my life, to get ready for the person I might become one day.”

With his love of music, he set out to learn what he called “The Prison 500,” a list of 500 songs he wanted to be able to play by memory on the guitar. He learned 326.

A voracious reader, he devoured books on all kinds of topics — history, linguistics and “anything biblical,” he said.

But that didn’t stop him from thinking about what he’d lost.

“For almost a decade, I sat hopelessly waiting,” Moseley said. “I watched the world rush headlong into the future without me. I cringed knowing my past had led me straight down the road to ruin, where concrete and razor wire undoubtedly haunted my dreams.”

One night in a shake down, an officer found seven books in his cell. He was only allowed to have five.

So he was scolded and punished.

And the officer labeled two of the books “contraband.”

Anything Moseley had, from his clothes to the hair on his head, was government property, he said. And anything he had without official consent, from extra books to extra toilet paper, could be labeled “contraband.”

It was “the go-to word for something I was not allowed permission to have,” he said.

But when he walked out of prison May 20, 2015, he was offered a fresh start, full of grace and contraband, he said — all the extra he didn’t deserve.

“Just to get to have another day, or to be at home for Thanksgiving or Christmas — you can imagine the emotions,” Moseley said. “There’s progress. My family is there to support me.”

He’s got a job with good benefits — he said he sees that as a gift. He started a band called Ben Moseley and the Contraband. The band is, he said, “for me, a celebration of being able to once again enjoy what I was once forbidden to have. A life. Ambition. Goals. Freedom.”

He married his childhood friend Heather and they welcomed their first child Aug. 8 — a baby boy.

Desire to grow

“This is a really cool thing that the Lord is doing bringing us together,” Greer said. “I’m just impressed with Ben’s faith and his walk and his desire to continue to grow as a Christian. We’ve been able to reach out to him and offer him a church home and offer him the pastoral care and leadership that he was kind of wondering about as he came out of prison.”

Moseley said he knows people know his backstory — he just assumes everyone does.

“But I’m here just to say you can be redeemed. I feel like I am on that road to redemption,” he said. “It happens in the trenches from the bottom up. I’m not on any kind of pedestal to go and tell people to do the right thing. But I hope that people one day can look at me and say, ‘That guy, he got it wrong, and now he’s got it right.’”

Churches say God has brought ‘great things’ in aftermath of fires

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

On Aug. 20, Galilee Baptist Church, Panola, will celebrate 10 years in the facility that was built in the aftermath of the February 2006 church fires.

But Pastor Bob Little says the building itself is just a small part of the milestone. The bigger part is everything God has done in the congregation.

“To see what God has allowed to transpire through this has been phenomenal. He has done great things,” Little said. “It catapulted us to do a lot more in ministry than we could’ve done ourselves.”

Galilee Baptist has planted six churches in the past decade — three in rural areas and three in the nearby federal prison. The church runs a six-week-long Vacation Bible School in the summer, reaching out to dozens of children from broken homes, Little said.

What other people might see as a tragedy, he sees as a testament to how God takes difficult things and turns them into good.

“We have no bitterness. I forgave way back,” he said of the three young men convicted of setting the fires, noting that the congregation would welcome them with open arms if they were to ever come for a visit. “Things are much better than they were before. Now we are able to do things we hadn’t been able to do. Only God can do that. He can take a tragedy and turn it into a triumph.”

Little is the only one left of the pastors who were serving the nine burned churches at the time of the fires. The other eight have moved on in the years since.

Seeing the fruit

But faithful members at the other congregations are still there and seeing the fruit of what God has done from the ashes — members like Edith Wilson of Rehobeth Baptist Church, Lawley.

Rehobeth — which is approaching two centuries of ministry in Bibb County — has grown stronger since the fires, said Wilson, who has been at the church for 60 years herself.

“We still have the memories of the church as it was before, but we have moved on,” she said. “As a congregation, I think we all have the same feeling — we wish the young men well. We pray for them, and we hope they get involved in church and have good lives. We forgave them a long time ago.”

The other seven churches have moved on too in the past 11 years. Three of them — Ashby Baptist Church, Brierfield; Pleasant Sabine Baptist Church, Centreville; and Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church near Boligee — all built new buildings soon after the fires with the help of volunteers.

The other four — Antioch Baptist Church, Centreville; Old Union Baptist Church, Randolph; First Baptist Church, Dancy, in Aliceville; and Spring Valley Baptist Church near Emelle — were all able to make repairs and get back in their buildings.

“God had utilized this situation,” Little said. “It has been mind boggling to see what He can do. All we can do is say wow.”

“I hope that people one day can look at me and say, ‘That guy, he got it wrong, and now he’s got it right.’”

Ben Moseley

Rehobeth Baptist Church, Lawley, was one of nine Alabama Baptist churches that Moseley and his friends set on fire in early February 2006. But member Edith Wilson says they are as strong as ever, and they pray for Moseley and the other two young men to have good lives. (See story, right.)



Photo by Lauren C. Grim



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BESSEMER

► **New Light Church, Bessemer**, continues to host evangelistic services during its Super Tuesdays in August at 6:30 nightly. Morris Johnson, pastor of Integrity Church, Hueytown, will speak Aug. 22 and Barry Cospers, director of missions for Bessemer Association, will speak Aug. 29. Previous Super Tuesdays speakers were area pastors James A. Gibson and Bill McCall. Melvin D. Bishop is pastor of New Light Church.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Hoover**, will host southern gospel group REDEEMED in concert Aug. 27, 5 p.m. A love offering will be received and a product table will be provided. For more information call 205-823-3472 or visit fbchoover.org. Randy Atkinson is pastor. ► **David Eldridge** is the new pastor



ELDRIDGE

of **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Clinton, Mississippi, as well as other Mississippi churches. He holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in Clinton, a master's degree from Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham and a doctorate from New Orleans Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Danielle, have three children. ► **East Gardendale Church, Gardendale**, will hold an "August Alive"

service Aug. 27, 6 p.m. with special guest Scott Guffin. Special music will be provided by 940 Main. For more information call 205-608-0889. Mark Barber is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a Sunday night singing Aug. 20, 6 p.m. Canaan's Crossing will be the musical guests. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

COFFEE

► The annual School Prayer Walk sponsored by **Coffee Baptist Women** will be Aug. 27, 4 p.m. at various schools in the area. For more information call 334-894-6411. Coffee Association also hosted a "thank you" supper for the volunteers at **Faith Community Church, Enterprise**. John Gunter is interim pastor. John Granger is director of missions. ► **Park Avenue Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival services Aug. 27-30. Sunday services will be at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday services will be at 7 nightly. Bill Montgomery will be the guest speaker. Mark Donaldson will lead worship. For more information call the church office at 334-347-8264. Leon Adams is pastor.

RANDOLPH

► **Trinity Church, Roanoke**, will hold a note burning service Aug. 20, 10 a.m. in the Family Life Center to celebrate paying it off. Jeff Burns is pastor. †



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Sin

Sin's Consequences — Divine Discipline

By **Jerry Batson, Th.D.**

Special to The Alabama Baptist

Previously, we have looked at sin's consequences generally; namely, that sin left to itself leads to enslavement and eventually to death. However, the presence of sin in the life of a believer has its own unique consequences. The position of a Christian in relation to God is one of security. Although we do sin, we do not cease to be children of God when we do. Our relationship with God as His forgiven and adopted children is not severed because of sin. However, aspects of our Christian lives are affected.

For one thing, our fellowship with God within that secure relationship suffers. Like Adam and Eve who sought to avoid God after their disobedience, we tend to keep our distance from Him when our lives are clogged with unconfessed sin. We do not readily come before God in prayer. We discover the truthfulness of Isaiah 59:2, that sin tends to hide God's face and separate us from enjoying times of communion with Him in prayer. Neither do we enjoy times of praise and worship when our spirits are burdened with the guilt of sins not confessed and cleansed.

Fruitfulness in ministry

In addition to its effect on our fellowship with God, sin in the lives of believers diminishes our fruitfulness in ministry. 1 Peter 2:11 uses military imagery to make the point that fleshly lusts or sinful desires wage war against our souls. To act upon sinful desires is like giving food and shelter to enemy soldiers so that they might be victorious in the warfare against our souls. The result for Christians is the loss of spiritual authority and strength and the lessening of effectiveness in service to the Lord.

Since God desires and seeks fellowship with us as His children, as well as desiring effectiveness in service for Him and richness in our prayer life, He

disciplines us when sin is allowed to intrude into our relationship with Him. So ideally when Christians sin we are prompt to recognize that fact and quick to confess our sins so fellowship with God is not disrupted or diminished. Even when fellowship is hindered, however, and God is displeased He does not stop loving us. In the absence of quick and complete confession of sin, God's love for His children prompts Him to discipline us.

'For our profit'

The Bible reminds us in Hebrews 12:6 that the Lord disciplines those whom He loves. It further assures us that God disciplines us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:10). It was in this same vein that the glorified Christ issued a reminder to the church at Laodicea, declaring, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

Whatever form divine discipline may take, it is not pleasant, as Hebrews 12:11 declares:

"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." On the positive side, divine discipline is one of the evidences of being a genuine child of God. "If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). †

Defending the Faith Apologetics Conference



Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash

Apogetics professor Gary Habermas (top photo) and national speaker and writer Jay Watts (bottom photo) share during the Aug. 7 conference in Birmingham hosted by Samford University's Ministry Training Institute in partnership with *The Alabama Baptist*, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Tactical Faith.



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.





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Designs for Hope sees physical needs, takes action in Jesus' name

Over the past few years, as Chris Bond, executive director of Designs for Hope, has gone back and forth to Africa and other developing nations, he keeps seeing more needs — the kind of needs that an engineer can see solutions for.

So he kept building things. Battery packs. Solar-powered well monitoring systems (see story, page 1). There were so many projects that could open doors for the gospel.

And as partners stepped up to fund the projects, he began to realize that his biggest problem was time.

“We had money coming in for projects and ministry, but I was teaching school at the time,” Bond said. “I also have five kids and a wife and a church I’m involved in.”

So he began to work toward raising funds so the ministry could support him in full-time work.

“We just knew that in order to do what the Lord was calling us to do we needed at least one person, hopefully more soon, to be able to spend their life serving as a missionary for Designs for Hope,” Bond said.

And since July 1 he has been doing exactly that. He said he



A church in a fishing village by Lake Victoria in Kenya welcomes the Designs for Hope team for a time of worship during a recent trip.

is excited to further develop the ministry partnerships that Designs for Hope has in Africa.

He’s also excited to come

alongside churches that are taking missions trips to Africa and other places and offer them technology and resources they can take with them.

“If your church has ministries in the developing world, we can come alongside you and help you as you support the church in those areas,” he said.

Stephen Hall, executive pastor at NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, said he appreciates Bond’s heart to give disciple makers tools for ministry.

‘Engineering solutions’

“Those tools include engineering solutions for real-life problems, such as the lack of electricity or clean water,” Hall said. “But that is not all they do. Designs for Hope also gives leaders tools for church planting and discipleship.

“They see physical needs and take action in the name of Jesus.” (Grace Thornton)

For more information, visit www.designsforhope.org.



Photo courtesy of Chris Bond

Even now, schoolchildren in the slums of Kisumu, Kenya, continue use a water filter supplied to them by Alabama-based nonprofit Designs for Hope in 2016.

Technology allows for significant changes in people’s lives

(continued from page 1) occurred while villagers are getting their water,” he said.

“It’s very motivating and rewarding to know that we are truly making a long-term impact on these partnerships.”

Stephen Hall, executive pastor at NorthPark Baptist, said that because of the ministry of Designs for Hope, people in tough areas are

able to be stable — and with stability comes opportunities

for the gospel message.

“The technology that God provides through Designs for Hope allows for significant changes in people’s lives,” he said.



BOND

“The ongoing presence of clean water and electrical power creates a continual reminder of the complete change that Christ brings into a life. Small villages in developing countries are being significantly changed.”

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Ozark's Ebenezer BC celebrates 175 years

Special guests were the hallmark of the 175th anniversary celebration for Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ozark, on July 16.

Homegrown talent returned to the Dale Baptist Association church to remember the impact the church had in their own lives and use their gifts to glorify the Lord. Steve Byrd, who grew up in Ebenezer Baptist and served as city missions minister for Texas megachurch Prestonwood Baptist for more than 30 years, was the guest speaker for the 11 a.m. service. And Jennifer Wood, a Birmingham resident who also grew up in Ebenezer Baptist, sang special music.



Photo courtesy of Ralph Foster

A framed certificate was presented to the church by Ralph Foster (left, above), Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative. Each participant left the celebration with a brief version of the church history compiled and written by Peggy Lewis. Lewis also read the history during the service.

Wendell Bener (right, above) is pastor.

Spirit of unity marks Carrolls Creek anniversary

The 175th anniversary celebration of Carrolls Creek Baptist Church, Northport, "showed the community who we are, where we are and where we want to go," according to church member June Hogue, who also served on the steering committee for the event.

And throughout the large crowd in each of three services July 9 there was a spirit of love and unity, Hogue said, even though everyone didn't know one another.

The jam-packed services featured former pastor Don Springer as guest speaker; a professional video produced by Durand Robinson; musical specials by various choirs, ensembles and soloists; and a historical presentation by Angie Cooper, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative. The church also received special recognitions from the Alabama Legislature, the City of Northport, Tuscaloosa County and Tuscaloosa Baptist Association.

During the afternoon singing, former members were the featured vocalists. In between services participants were able to view various exhibits of historical items throughout the church.

One participant, Dan Kizziah, said of the day, "The presence of the Lord was evident in everything done and said. It was a glimpse of what heaven will be like."

Alan Roggli is pastor.

Samson's New Prospect celebrates 125 years

The 125th anniversary of New Prospect Baptist Church, Marl, in Samson, was celebrated with a "near full house," said Dalton Campbell.



Photo by Dalton Campbell

Campbell, who serves as a representative for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to the church during its 10 a.m. service July 16. Guest speaker for the morning was Dicky McAllister, director of missions for Geneva Baptist Association.

Also during the morning service, Laura Messer read a history of the church and Good News Quartet, a southern gospel quartet from Andalusia, performed.

"The warm feeling of the Spirit and love of the congregation was felt throughout the celebration," Campbell said.

Elbert Smith is pastor.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

Lesbian mother in DeKalb County loses appeal; Christian judge remains on case

A lesbian mother in DeKalb County recently lost her appeal to have a Christian judge removed from her divorce case because of his beliefs, according to The Christian Post.

Tiara Lycans had filed two motions earlier this year requesting Judge Shaunathan Bell to recuse himself from the case on the grounds that his conservative Christian beliefs might color his treatment of her custody case.

According to the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, Lycans did not say that Bell was "actually biased against her because she is a lesbian," but she had expressed a concern that his pub-

lically stated beliefs might make him partial. She brought up his 15 years of service as a preacher to back her claim.

Bell refused her recusal requests both times, and the appeals court denied her appeal too, according to AL.com.

No 'reasonable basis'

Lycans and her husband, Zachary Lycans, had received joint custody of their child, something the court cited in their denial of her request. Bell had ruled the same way in two other cases involving lesbian mothers, according to the Post.

With those things in mind, "a reasonable person" would

not have a "reasonable basis for questioning Judge Bell's impartiality in the divorce action."

Tony Perkins, president of the conservative Christian group Family Research Council, said the case was part of the continued effort to "drive men and women of faith out of public life," but he praised Bell's refusal to step down from the case.

"In this age of 'diversity,' it's becoming more and more clear that the only group that it's acceptable to attack is Christians," Perkins said, according to the Post. "That must be aggressively fought — in Alabama and everywhere." (TAB)

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Samford to Launch New Christian Ministries Academic Program, Veteran Alabama Pastor Named Executive Director

A Samford University alumnus and Birmingham-area pastor has been selected to lead a new Christian ministries academic program being developed by the university. Scott Guffin, a 1988 Samford graduate, became executive director Aug. 14. He had been pastor of Liberty Park Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills since 2004.

The program, which has been in discussion and planning for several years, will be housed in the university's School of the Arts, where the worship and the arts concentration already is located, according to Samford Provost J. Michael Hardin.

The planning had reached a stage where full-time leadership was needed to move the project forward. Guffin's first year will focus on collaborating with other areas on campus to fully develop the program.

Hardin emphasized that the program will go through the university's regular review process and be presented to the board of trustees for approval.

The new program will benefit from the worship and the arts experience that Samford has had for several years and meets a growing academic need that is in high demand, Hardin noted. It will build on the collaborative and interdisciplinary models found in the School of the Arts and other areas of the campus. The religion department will provide strong academic support for the new initiative.

School of the Arts Dean Joseph Hopkins said the new degree program will prepare young adults to serve in vocational ministry, learning to use their gifts in evangelism, missions, disciple-making, outreach, worship and service. Students also will learn about applied theology and apologetics, biblical interpretation, and communication and training in ministry leadership. The program will be designed to guide students into seminary or other graduate studies.

"Scott has a unique perspective as one who has been engaged in local church ministry for three decades," Hopkins said, "but he also has the respect of the academic community through his meaningful work in scholarship. His ministry is a great model for others through his intentional work in the areas we want to emphasize."

The interdisciplinary nature of the program will involve multiple academic units on campus and drew support from Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George.

"I wholeheartedly support the development of a well-designed undergraduate Christian Ministry Program on our campus," George said. "An academically sound program, one based on the authority of Scripture and an explicit Christian worldview, will help a new generation of students to face the difficult cultural and moral challenges of our world."

In addition to his undergraduate degree from Samford, Guffin has a Doctor of Philosophy from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. His major areas were evangelism and church growth with minors in New Testament and missiology. In addition to his recent pastorate, he had served on other church staffs in Alabama, Indiana and Kentucky. He has been an instructor in Samford's Ministry Training Institute and a ministry supervisor for Samford's Beeson Divinity School. He also has served on the university's Board of Ministerial Mentors and was chair in 2015-16. He has been active in denominational service on the local,



Scott Guffin

state and national levels, and has guided multiple missions and ministry projects in the U.S. and internationally.

Guffin, who is a native of Gardendale, is part of a multigeneration family with Samford ties. His grandfather served on the university staff, and his late father, Truett, served as a Samford trustee for many years. His son is a recent Samford graduate, and his daughter is a current student.

Guffin grew up in Gardendale First Baptist Church.

"One of the overarching goals for the new Christian ministry program is to ground our students in a thoroughly biblical worldview and to equip them with an apologetic that will prepare them to carry out the mission of the church around the world," Guffin said. "In keeping with Samford's tradition of academic excellence in a Christian environment, students will be challenged academically while also being encouraged and strengthened in their Christian faith and walk."

FBC Piedmont ministers in Nicaragua



Photo courtesy of Shelia Harper

Twenty-three members from First Baptist Church, Piedmont, went to Nicaragua on a missions trip July 21–28 led by Pastor Michael Ingram. They partnered with Mount of Olives Church in Posoltega where they did door-to-door evangelism, VBS and church services. The women’s ministry reached out to the women with Bible studies and hands-on activities. Several members of the First, Piedmont, women’s ministry are pictured above with the women from Mount of Olives Church.

Fatherlessness can affect child’s DNA, view of Christ, experts say

Ask Michael Bozeman how growing up without a father can affect a child, and his list is a long one.

“Studies have shown that children who grow up without a father are more likely to be aggressive, be depressed, have low self-esteem, do poorly in school, do drugs and be incarcerated,” said Bozeman, a counselor at Pathways Professional Counseling.

But according to him and other researchers, the difference can be even bigger than those things.

View of Christ

Bozeman says children who grow up without a father may struggle to have an accurate view of Christ. And a recent medical study shows that fatherlessness even affects a child’s DNA, shortening the chromosomes that are believed to correspond to health and longevity.

The DNA effect surprised Dr. Daniel Notterman of Princeton University, who co-authored the DNA study.

“Children need fathers; they’re very important,” said Notterman, according to The Christian Post. “They play an economic role, but also provide love and attention, stability and cohesion, and they’re role models.”

Children who lack a father in the home apparently react physically to that void, much as people do to stress and diet, the study showed. Fatherless children have



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Michael Bozeman, a counselor at Pathways Professional Counseling, says children who grow up without a father may struggle to have an accurate view of Christ.

much shorter telomeres, the caps at the end of chromosomes that researchers say are indicators of a person’s length of life.

The research involved about 5,000 children who are part of the federally funded Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, according to the Post. For children who whose fathers died or were imprisoned before they turned 5, the impact on DNA was the worst.

The loss of a father impacted boys’ telomeres 40 percent more than those of girls.

But Bozeman said the effect of fatherlessness that concerns him the most is the negative way that the children would view Christ.

“A father’s role is to help their

child understand the characteristics of God through exhibiting those characteristics in their relationship with them,” he said. “The promise the writer of Hebrews shares that Christ will never leave us is easily lost on the child that grows up without a father.”

Christ-centered fathers

What they have seen contradicts everything they are told to believe about their heavenly Father, Bozeman said.

“Christ-centered fathers that raise Christ-centered children may not always be perfect or get it right, but those fathers definitely give their children a better view of Christ,” he said. (TAB)

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According to the May 31, 1845, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

A Table of Statistics at the end of 1844 was published on the front page of *The Alabama Baptist*. The table showed 653 Baptist churches in Alabama organized into 38 different associations. The number of ordained Baptist ministers was reported at 267 with 2,723 baptisms and 37,100 resident members. The compiler of the report indicated the numbers did not include information from the 20 churches that failed to report. (TAB)

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THE PROTECTOR
Psalm 141:1-10

The Plea (1-2)

The reader hears the urgency in David's words as the song begins. He longs for God to listen to him and to respond quickly. At the same time, David's desire is for his intercession to be a sweet smelling aroma to God like the altar of incense in the Holy Place or like the smell of the evening burnt offering. (If this does not sound enticing, consider the smell of your neighbor's barbecue the day after you start a new diet.)

David acknowledged that he was completely dependent upon God to hear his prayer. Further he was convinced that God would not only listen to him, but He also would answer his requests. Our Lord Jesus, the son of David, expressed His commitment to do nothing of His own initiative (John 8:28), and that the Holy Spirit would say nothing of His own (John 16:13).

In one of His last discourses, Jesus explained to the disciples that apart from Him, they could do nothing. No words, no actions of eternal significance can be accomplished apart from Christ. With such a functional dependence upon our Lord, we would do well to join David in pleading for God to hear and answer our petitions.

The Requests (3-7)

In these verses David asks three personal requests. First "shut my mouth," for lack of a better way to phrase it. The king was committed to speaking words that honored the Lord. Second he asks God to protect his heart from evil. He recognized the enticements of the world, and he did not want evildoers and their activities to capture his affections. Third he requests for the godly to discipline him. Even in

his position, he was not above receiving rebukes.

David closes this portion of the song by expressing his enmity for those who refuse to submit to God's authority. Both his prayers and his plans are for the unrighteous to be brought low, and for their rulers to experience humiliation. The idea of bones scattered at the mouth of a grave, rather than being placed within would have shown utter contempt for the dead.

While this may seem very "Old Testament" to our Marcionite readers, Jesus (Luke 14:11; 18:14) and the apostles (James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6) make clear that those who exalt themselves will be humiliated, but those who humble themselves will be exalted. We are blessed when we recognize our spiritual bankruptcy (Matt. 5:3), as well as our absolute dependence upon Christ for our justification, sanctification and glorification.

The Promise (8-10)

The author of Hebrews may have had verse 8 in mind when he wrote: "Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1b-2a). After all, Jesus is the Lord God (HCSB) or Sovereign Lord (NIV). The Greek rendering is "Lord, Lord," (kurie kurie) used of Jesus in the gospels (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46). All authority belongs to Jesus in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He is Lord, and in Him we take refuge.

If these final verses seem familiar, it may be because Solomon wrote something similar as he warned his son about the dangers of wayward men. Think of it: David sings his song and Solomon is influenced by its message (Prov. 1:10-19).

May we fix our eyes on Jesus, who is our life, with our hearts and minds set on things above (Col. 3:1-2).✠

A PASSION TO SHARE THE GOSPEL
2 Corinthians 5:11; 14-21

On May 27, 1742, John Wesley made the first of countless visits to the city of Newcastle, England. His first impression was of "much drunkenness, cursing and swearing, even (he said) from the mouths of little children ... surely this place is ripe for Him who 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

Here, as so often during his itinerant ministry, Wesley noted in his diary, "I offered them Christ."

This was at the heart of Wesley's evangelical ministry in Britain in the 18th century and it is at the heart of our ministry in the 21st century. We offer Christ as Savior and Lord to all with whom we come into contact.

The fear of the Lord motivates us to share the gospel. (11)

For Paul there were two great motivations at the heart of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first is what he calls in this verse "the fear of the Lord."

It is a phrase found very regularly in the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. It speaks of humble dependence on God, seeking to honor Him in all our attitudes and actions. It doesn't mean being frightened of God, but rather having a reverence for God.

The book of Acts tells us that the mark of a growing church is that they "lived in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31).

Those who fear God are the people who prosper spiritually and seek the companionship of fellow believers. As Malachi says, those who fear the Lord "talk with each other."

People who seek to revere God will seek to live their lives according to His commandments. As Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

To Paul, one of the ways in which we honor God is by being faithful to the commandment of Jesus to "go into all the world and preach the gospel."

If we love Jesus, if we honor Him, if we revere Him, then we will seek to follow Him in mission. As Jesus was obedient to the Father, so we are obedient to Him.

The love of Christ compels us to share the gospel. (14-17)

The second — and related — motivation for evangelism is love for Jesus. Paul indicates that the "love of Christ constrains us." The word could be translated "compels" or "leaves us no option."

We cannot take or leave evangelism according to the whim of the moment and whether we feel like it or not. As William Temple used to say, "The church is the only human organization which exists for the sake of those who are not yet its members."

God's grace is generous. His love has no limits as to the way in which He has expressed His desire that men and women come to know Him and experience His forgiveness, His mercy, the gift of eternal life. This ought to encourage within our lives a similar generosity of desire that family members, friends and colleagues discover the Christian message for themselves.

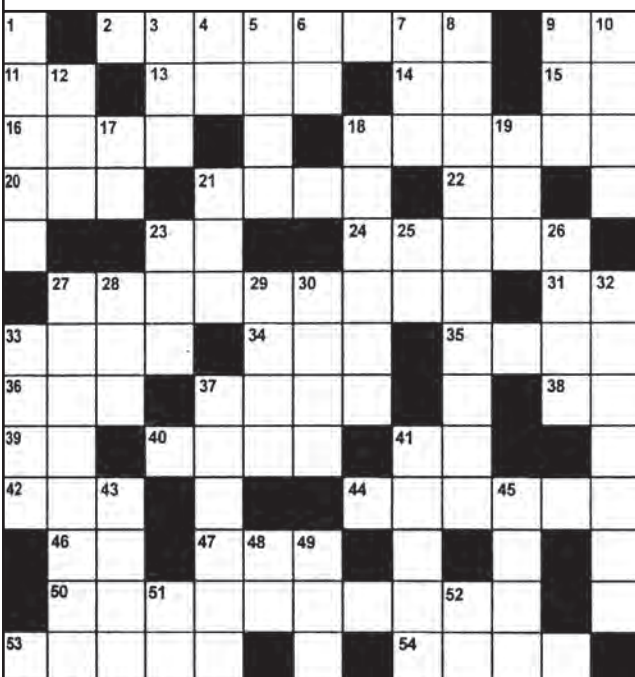
God's grace compels us to take this message of His love for the whole world to as many people as we can reach.

The commission of God charges us to share the gospel. (18-21)

Finally we are under orders. God charges us and will hold us accountable to share the good news of His love with a lost world.

The ultimate reason for evangelism is the life and death of Jesus Christ for us and for all humankind.✠

Christian Crossword



Across

2. Are not two ____ sold for a farthing? (Matt. 10:29)
9. Thou couldst have no power ____ all. (John 19:11)
11. New Testament. (abbr.)
13. To give off.
14. God ____ loved the world. (John 3:16)
15. They have ____ rest day nor night. (Rev. 14:11)
16. Sun, ____ or stars. (Eccles. 12:2)
18. They shall beat their ____ into plowshares. (Isa. 2:4)
20. A long period of time.
21. Fellow. (British)
22. The centurion's servant was ready ____ die. (Luke 7:2)
23. Mother.
24. "When I go to the mall, ____." (2 words)
27. ____ in the field. (Luke 2:8)
31. It ____ not for you to know the times. (Acts 1:7)
33. ____ the furnace. (Dan. 3:19)
34. Samuel ran to _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
35. Isn't. (ungrammatical but popular)

36. God said to Adam, Where ____ thou? (Gen. 3:9)
37. A person from the British Isles is sometimes called this.
38. Took counsel ____ slay the apostles. (Acts 5:33)
39. Recreational Vehicle. (abbr.)
40. Render therefore to all their ____ tribute. (Rom. 13:7)
41. Electrical Engineer. (abbr.)
42. Take thou unto thee an iron _____. (Ezek. 4:3)
44. As the morning ____ upon the mountains. (Joel 2:2)
46. Compass direction.
47. I make thy ____ thy footstool. (Acts 2:35)
50. I will ... build again the ____ of David. (Acts 15:16)
53. A fall-blooming flower.
54. As my beloved ____ I warn you. (1 Cor. 4:14)

Down

1. Needs that are unsatisfied are ____.
3. I will not with ink and ____ write to thee. (3 John 13)

4. When I am weak, then ____ I strong. (2 Cor. 12:10)
5. He was very sorrowful: for he was very _____. (Luke 18:23)
6. Right. (abbr.)
7. Compass direction.
8. Thou shalt have no more ____s. (Mic. 5:12)
9. Surely goodness ____ mercy shall follow me. (Ps. 23:6)
10. He will ... turn and ____ thee like a ball. (Isa. 22:18)
12. Also.
17. I meditate ____ all thy works. (Ps. 143:5)
18. Jesus was led up of the _____. (Matt. 4:1)
19. Shortened form of the word kangaroo.
21. A small hat.
23. Abigail ____ David and his men. (1 Sam. 25:20)
25. South Dakota. (abbr.)
26. A liquid measure.
27. On my ____ I will pour out of my Spirit. (Acts 2:18)
28. Fedora, Stetson, or derby.
29. It is good for us to be _____. (Matt. 17:4)
30. Belonging to Samuel's teacher.

32. Jesus ____ to read in the synagogue. (Luke 4:16; 2 words)
33. Praise the Lord with _____. (Ps. 33:2)
37. An item placed between other items to keep them apart.
41. Several film ____ have been made from the Bible.
43. ____ and clean.
45. Doth not ____ nature itself teach you? (1 Cor. 11:14)
48. Either/_____.
49. Prefix meaning "inner."
51. To ____ or not to be.
52. And _____, the heavens were opened. (Matt. 3:16)





(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)
- 3** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.



Media reviews

Dunkirk (PG-13)

Warner Bros. Pictures

I've seen my share of war movies. They often go something like this:

Opening credits. Battle scene. Blood and guts. Blood and guts. Gory scene you wish you could forget. Conclusion. Closing credits.

Even if the movie had a positive message, it likely was lost in a mass of violence.

But there are exceptions, and one of them is the new movie "Dunkirk."

Based on a true story, it spotlights a pivotal moment from World War II in which some 330,000 Allied troops were evacuated off the beaches of Dunkirk, France, after being surrounded by German forces. Facing a devastat-

ing loss to the Nazis and needing a miracle, the troops — comprised of British, German and Belgian forces — survived when hundreds of private boats from Great Britain crossed the English Channel and ferried the men to larger ships.

Without that daring and risky mission in May and June of 1940, Hitler may have conquered all of Europe long before the United States even got involved.

"Dunkirk" is directed by Christopher Nolan, the same moviemaker who brought us the mind-bending films "Interstellar" (2014) and "Inception" (2010). But while those former films were sometimes hard to follow, Nolan opted for simplicity in "Dunkirk." It includes little dialogue, a modest musical score and a straightforward plot as it alternates between scenes on the land, at sea and in the air. All total, there are only about eight major characters.

This minimalistic approach may seem gimmicky but it works. It's easy to forget you're watching a movie. This is one of the reasons "Dunkirk" may be my new all-time favorite war film. Here's another reason: The violence is minimal — at least for a war movie. Yes soldiers are killed and bodies do fly through the air and ships do explode but it is largely bloodless. To me, the most disturbing parts of the

Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a writer and podcast host for Heirloom Audio. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four small children.

film involve soldiers caught in a capsized ship, trying to escape before drowning.

"Dunkirk" includes about eight coarse words; although, honestly, the thick British accents can make it tough to know what is said.

The film contains no sexuality or nudity.

With countless examples of sacrifice and courage and a good-versus-evil worldview, "Dunkirk" is an inspirational war movie you want to watch again and again. And even though God is mentioned only once (that is, in a positive light), it's impossible not to see His hand at work in the Allies' survival.

Jesus once told His followers, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). That happens a

lot in "Dunkirk."

Entertainment rating: 4 out of 5 stars

Family-friendly rating: 3 out of 5 stars †



Still in theaters

War for the Planet of the Apes (PG-13)

Chernin Entertainment

In this third installment of the "Planet of the Apes" reboot, the incredible talking primates are fleeing through the forests of California, trying to escape a rogue army of men led by a madman known as "The Colonel" (Woody Harrelson). His goal: Kill the apes before they take over the world. And that's possible, as a pandemic has shrunk the human population. The film has its entertaining moments, but the theme is troubling: Apes are good, humans are bad. Still, it can be a decent tale about man's depravity.

Violence: extreme

Sexuality: none

Language: minimal

Spider-Man: Homecoming (PG-13)

Marvel Studios, Columbia Pictures, Pascal Pictures

Peter Parker is like a lot of 15-year-olds you've met: insecure and a bit awkward. Yet he's got this side gig that's quite cool: He dons a red costume, swings from skyscrapers and stops crime. That's not enough for him, though. He wants a slot on the Avengers. But Tony Stark/Iron Man keeps rejecting him. "Homecoming" features a solid lesson on contentment and gives us a very creative plot that is spoiled somewhat by sexual humor and language.

Violence: moderate

Sexuality: moderate

Language: moderate †

Streaming this month

Amazon Prime

▶ "New in Town" (PG, 2009) — A businesswoman (Renée Zellweger) from Miami is sent to frigid-cold Minnesota to oversee a blue-collar manufacturing plant. It's hilarious. It's also one of the cleaner Hollywood romances out there. Rated PG for language and some suggestive material.

▶ "Valkyrie" (PG-13, 2008) — Based on a true World War II story, German Col. Claus von Stauffenberg (Tom Cruise) leads a failed plot to assassinate Hitler. Rated PG-13 for violence and brief strong language.

Netflix

▶ "Sing" (PG, 2016) — A theater owner attempts to save his business by holding a singing competition. It's a funny animated film, although some parents may find the music and dance choices problematic. Rated PG for some rude humor and mild peril.

▶ "I Am Sam" (PG-13, 2002) — A men-

tally challenged father (Sean Penn) fights to keep custody of his 7-year-old daughter.

A Hollywood film with a life-affirming message. Rated PG-13 for language. It will be available Aug. 18.

Hulu

▶ "Charlotte's Web" (G, 2006) — Based on the classic novel by E.B. White, this live-action version tells the story of a pig from the dinner table. A delightful children's film with lots of life lessons. Rated G.

▶ "Spider-Man," "Spider-Man 2" (PG-13, 2002 and 2004) — There have been three versions of Spider-Man in the past 15 years; this was the first one and starred Tobey Maguire.

Both are rated PG-13 for violence and action. They also contain some sensuality and language.

▶ "New in Town" (PG, 2009) — See above.

▶ "Valkyrie" (PG-13, 2008) — See above. †

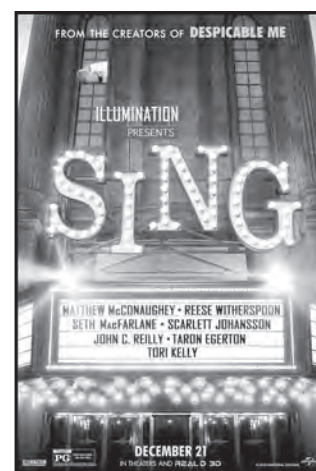




Photo courtesy of Montgomery Biscuits

Kyle Winkler

'Higher purpose'

Biscuits pitcher shares Christ by living out loud

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Kyle Winkler's nickname might dramatize his age just a little. "We call him Grandpa Kyle," said third baseman Grant Kay, who played with Winkler before being placed with the Durham Bulls. "He is one of the older guys. He is really mature. He has a lot of responsibilities."

But "Grandpa Kyle," a right-handed Biscuits pitcher, is only 27. He became a first-time father May 22 when his wife, Stephanie, gave birth to their daughter, Kole.

"Having to be responsible for another life has been pretty life-changing," Kyle Winkler said. "I am trying to juggle everything. Jesus has given me my wife, my daughter and the opportunity to play baseball here and live out loud for anybody who wants to hear about Him."

In 2015, Kyle Winkler was the Biscuits' best closer, pitching nine innings of relief. His ERA was 0.96 and his 13 strikeouts were the most among Biscuits closers. In 2016 he was 0-2 with a 2.53 ERA in 29 appearances with 36 strikeouts. He had eight saves for the Biscuits.

Gets the job done

While the slider is his favorite pitch, his fastball is clocked between 94 and 96 mph.

Biscuits catcher Nick Ciuffo said when Kyle Winkler goes to the mound in the ninth inning, the other team might as well pack it up and go home.

"You know what you are going to get," Ciuffo said. "He always likes to make it interesting in the ninth inning. You can have the bases loaded with a one-run lead and no outs in the bottom of the ninth and he is always going to get the job done. He comes in and closes and the door."

There have been times when Kyle Winkler thought his baseball career may be finished. He was released twice, once from the Arizona Diamondbacks and once from the Los Angeles Angels.

But God used those moments to grow Kyle Winkler, he said. The pitcher did a lot of soul searching and searching for his purpose.

'Send me'

"Honestly I put it on God and told Him, 'Wherever you want to send me, send me.' Ever since then, life has been pretty good. It's pretty simple. I have not had to worry about much," Kyle Winkler said. "He has always taken care of me. There is a separate plan that is not mine, and that is OK."

Kyle Winkler first learned about faith from his parents, Mike and Suzanne Winkler, and while in the youth group at First United Methodist Church, Sugar Land, Texas.

"I went to church as a kid with my parents," he said. "I accepted Christ when I was 13 or 14 on a church retreat. I found my way through the youth group to Christ. At even 13 something was missing in my life, and I knew that I had a higher purpose. I have been trying to practice my faith ever since then."

Kyle Winkler reads his Bible before going to bed, participates in team Bible studies and prays after warming up for each inning. Other players look to him as a spiritual example.

"If you want to grow, you have to dive deep into the Word," he said. "Faith makes life so much easier to deal with and to handle. There are plenty of things that life throws at you every day that you have to be able to figure out."

Don't worry, he said — just give those things to God. That's what he does, he said.

"I pick myself up off the mat and keep going," Kyle Winkler said. 🙏

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Court rules in favor of Christian photographer

MADISON, Wis. — Christian photographers in Wisconsin can't be legally forced to photograph weddings of same-sex couples, according to an Aug. 1 court ruling.

The Dane County Circuit Court stated that Christian photographer Amy Lawson is exempt from city and state laws that threatened to fine her heavily if she didn't take pictures of a same-sex wedding, according to The Christian Post. Lawson's troubles began in 2016 when she posted a statement on her blog saying she would not photograph same-sex weddings because of her Christian beliefs. After getting backlash over the statement, she realized that lawsuits were a possibility and decided to be proactive in filing a challenge to the laws.

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), the Christian legal group that represented Lawson, said the court has not officially issued a preliminary injunction but is expected to do so soon. The court's reasoning for the decision was that Lawson didn't have a physical storefront and that the laws in question would impact her "artistic freedom," according to the Post.

"The court's announcement has important implications for everyone in Wisconsin who values artistic freedom," ADF senior counsel Jonathan Scruggs said in a statement. "It means that government officials must allow creative professionals without storefronts ... the freedom to make their own decisions about which ideas they will use their artistic expression to promote." (TAB)

First meal eaten on moon was communion

HOUSTON, Texas — Communion was the first meal ever taken on the moon, thanks to astronaut Buzz Aldrin taking them with him on the Apollo 11 voyage, which marked its 48th anniversary in July.

Aldrin, who stepped out of the spacecraft just after Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969, asked the public watching from back home to "give thanks in his or her own way." Then he turned off the broadcast and read John 15:5 — "I am the vine and you are the branches" — over the surface of the moon.

He had intended to read his communion passage to the audience back home, but at the last minute, he was asked not to, he said. NASA was already embroiled in a legal battle over the Apollo 8 crew reading from Genesis while they orbited the moon.

"I poured the wine into the chalice our church had given me," Aldrin said, according to The Christian Post. "In the one-sixth gravity of the moon, the wine slowly curled and gracefully came up the side of the cup."

As Aldrin thanked God, he said it was meaningful for him that "the very first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the very first food eaten there, were the communion elements." (TAB)

Twitter removes ad about traditional marriage

CUSTER, Wash. — The social media platform Twitter has refused to allow a former pastor to run a paid ad on its site promoting his new book, which supports a traditional Christian view of marriage.

Craig Stellpflug, a former pastor and retired cancer nutritionist, paid July 2 to promote a tweet and received an email reply the following day that said the tweet violated Twitter's ad policy about "hate" ads. The tweet promoted his book "One Man One Woman: God's Original Design for Marriage" and stated that the book was about "God's original design for marriage carried from Adam and Eve in the garden through today."

Twitter initially accepted Stellpflug's payment and began the promotion, then took it down, he told The Christian Post. The book is "definitely not an anti-gay book" and that it is "not about (the) lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual movement," he said.

Stellpflug, who teaches Bible study and Sunday School at Sunrise Baptist Church, Custer, Washington, noted that he didn't give any "special weight" to homosexuality but addressed other issues too, such as adultery, divorce and pornography. (TAB)