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# 'God moment'

## How God showed up in one Alabama church the day after Charlottesville

It came as an unannounced and unexpected blessing in Marion — in the sanctuary of Siloam Baptist Church to be exact — the day after the deadly protest rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, Aug. 12.

"No living man, woman or child has ever seen the incarnate Christ; we don't know what He looks like," John Nicholson, pastor of the predominantly white Siloam Baptist, posted on his blog [thyrodandstaff.wordpress.com](http://thyrodandstaff.wordpress.com) on Aug. 13.

"However, I know for a fact, on this Lord's day at Siloam Baptist Church in Marion, Alabama, He looked like a black woman and a young black girl handing out roses."

That morning Nicholson began the service with a call to unity and addressed the "unsettling and heart-

breaking events which unfolded ... over the weekend."

"Even as I began to speak of the inherent evil which presents itself in every form of racism, quoting 1 John 4:19-21 ... the back door

slowly opened, revealing a young African-American girl and an African-American woman carrying a large, white plastic bag filled with something red."

The bag was filled with roses and "these two beautiful saints began handing each person in our sanctuary a gorgeous rose," Nicholson said. "I continued to speak while they completed their joyful task and as they finished I invited those gathered to stand and

greet one another, acknowledging the presence of Christ among us."

Siloam associate pastor Josh Watford said neither the visit by the guests handing out roses nor the tim-



Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, members experienced a 'God moment' the day after the deadly protest rally in Virginia.



Photo by John Nicholson

Two surprise guests, who happened to be African-American, walked in the sanctuary of Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, right as Pastor John Nicholson began the Aug. 13 service with a call to unity. The guests brought red roses and gave one to everyone in attendance.

ing of their entrance was planned.

"These ladies came as part of St. James Baptist (also in Marion)," he said. "They went to many other churches to show their love and promote unity. No one knew they were coming beforehand and John didn't know they would be there during his call for unity and reconciliation."


Nicholson added that the power of the moment was intensified for him when he discovered the women had not yet heard of the events in Charlottesville. They were merely impressed to do this act on that particular Sunday. (TAB)

### 1 John 4:19-21

"We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, whoever loves God must also love his brother."

### John 15:12

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."



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# COMMENT

## Racism Is Wrong

The events in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Aug. 12 shocked most Americans as the despicable evil of racism burst back into the headlines of America's news outlets. A demonstration ostensibly called to protest the removal of Confederate monuments in Charlottesville's Emancipation Park turned into a rally for white racism.

Before the day ended one was dead, 19 critically hurt and scores injured.

Racism is not a new plague. Fifty years ago the struggle to overcome this sin engulfed much of the nation including Alabama. More recently racism has been witnessed in places like Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland. It has been seen in Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit. The evil seems to live in many of society's structures as well as in the minds and hearts of individuals.

Southern Baptists added another dimension. In 2016 Southern Baptists publicly acknowledged that racism also exists in "our churches."

Racism is not a uniquely American problem. It is a worldwide dilemma. Humans everywhere seem intent on defining themselves by race, ethnicity, country of origin, tribe, religion and more. The human race seems uniquely gifted at building walls to separate and particularly clumsy at tearing down walls of division.

But pointing to problems in other places does not diminish the predicament faced in this nation. Nor does it lessen the problem of racism in the South and in Alabama.

### Race relations in the South

According to the 2010 national census, 55 percent of African-Americans live in the South. A total of 105 southern counties have black populations of 50 percent or more and 300 southern counties have black populations ranging between 25 and 49.9 percent. In terms of numbers alone, race relations is an issue which those of us in the South must face.

The 2016–2017 demographics show African-Americans make up about 26 percent of Alabama's population. According to a June 2015 article in al.com, the state is also home to at least 18 separate white supremacy groups. Those two facts alone indicate racism is something Alabama must face no matter what happens in the rest of the nation.

Thankfully, Southern Baptists are on the right side of history and, more importantly, on the right side of scriptural teaching as Baptist Christians and others work through this Gordian knot



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

of race relations. That has not always been the case as admitted in a 1995 Southern Baptist Convention resolution in which Southern Baptists apologized to African-Americans "for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism."

Messengers that year denounced racism, in all its forms, as "deplorable sin."

That point cannot be over emphasized. Genesis 1:27, 3:20 and Acts 17:26 make it clear that God created all people in His image from the first couple. All bear the image of God and deserve respect. 1 John 2:2 teaches that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Revelation 5:9 says God is reconciling to Himself people from every tribe, tongue and nation.

The apostle John wrote, "For God so loved the world ... ." The apostle Peter said, "God doesn't show favoritism but in every nation the person who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him" (Acts 10:34–35).

In Galatians 3:27–28, the apostle Paul reminded that justification before God is based on faith in Christ alone, not in ethnicity. In Ephesians 2:15–16, he wrote God has made believers one in Christ and that believers stand together in faith.

### 'Of every nation'

According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' final words on this earth charged His followers to make disciples "of every nation."

Southern Baptists said in 2015 that "racism is sin because it disregards the image of God in all people and denies the truth of the gospel that believers are all one in Him." It is idolatry because racism elevates part of creation (pigmentation of skin) to a place belonging only to God.

Our world has witnessed the horrors of racism.

In World War II the Japanese called themselves a "divine race" free to abuse and enslave all they could conquer.

Germany called itself the "master race." It wasn't white supremacy. It was Teutonic supremacy. Other whites — Sloves, Anglo-Saxons, etc. — were inferior and deserving of rule by their "masters." It would be interesting to see how many of today's Neo-Nazi Hitler would have carted off to concentration camps.

History is filled with examples that ideologies based on racial superiority lead only to wreck and ruin.

Racism and white supremacy are wrong. They are wrong theologically. They are wrong morally. They are wrong socially.

### SBC resolution

That is why Southern Baptists earlier this year condemned "every form of racism, including altright white supremacy, as antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ." The resolution went further. It called racism and ethnic hatred "a scheme of the devil intended to bring suffering and division to our society."

Alabama Baptists have not been silent on this subject. Through resolutions messengers have called "racism in all its forms contrary to the gospel" and condemned racism as sin.

Condemning racism is not enough. Alabama Baptists urged fellow believers to "work for reconciliation and healing."

Another resolution urged Alabama Baptists to "intentionally seek to destroy barriers of racism and build bridges of racial reconciliation to unify the Body of Christ."

Southern Baptist resolutions urged members to

overcome intimidation and be "ambassadors of reconciliation in their personal relationships and local communities." Southern Baptists should be committed to "eradicate racism in all its forms," the resolution said.

Southern Baptists, Alabama Baptists, all Christian believers are called to be "doers of the Word" (James 1:22). We are to pursue racial reconciliation because it is the teaching of Scripture and the will of God.

Racism is wrong and it must be resisted. Reconciliation is possible through the grace of God and the love of the Savior. That is the position of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, and it should be the position of every follower of Christ.✠

Follow Bob Terry  
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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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# Responses to Sin

## Most Americans think they are a sinner, according to recent study

By Bob Smietana  
Lifeway Christian Resources

America is full of sinners — and most of them want to mend their ways.

Two-thirds of Americans (67 percent) say they are sinners, according to a new study from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. Most people aren't too happy about it — only 5 percent say they're fine with being sinners.

As America becomes more secular, the idea of sin still rings true, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"Almost nobody wants to be a sinner," he said.

The survey question about sin was inspired in part by an exchange McConnell witnessed on his way to a Nashville Predators hockey game.

A religious group of protesters began preaching at people on the street outside the hockey arena, calling them sinners, said McConnell. That led a few people in the crowd to embrace the title with enthusiasm.

"I wondered how many people really think of themselves as sinners," he said.

Americans tend to fall into three categories when it comes to sin, according to LifeWay Research's representative survey of 1,000 Americans.

A third (34 percent) of Americans say they are sinners and are working on being less sinful, while a quarter (28 percent) say they are sinners and rely on Jesus to overcome their sin. One in 10 say sin doesn't exist (10 percent) and 1 in 12 say they are not sinners (8 percent), while a larger 15 percent prefer not to say if they are sinners at all.

Only 1 in 20 are fine with being sinners (5 percent).

### Among the other findings

Folks in the Northeast (9 percent) are more likely to be fine with being sinners than those in the South (5 percent) and West (4 percent). They're also more likely to say sin does not exist (14 percent).

Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to say they rely on Jesus to overcome their sin (72 percent) than those without evangelical beliefs (19 percent).

Nones — those with no religious preference — are more likely to say sin does not exist (32 percent). Ten percent of nones say they are fine with being sinners, while 27 percent say they work on overcoming their sin. Six percent say they depend on Jesus to overcome sin.

Members of non-Christian faiths (27 percent) are more likely to say they are not sinners than Christians (7 percent) and nones (6 percent).

Catholics are more likely than Protestants to work to be less of a sinner (48 vs. 31 percent) and to say they are not a sinner (11 vs.

Americans' views on sin:

### Which of the following best describes you?

I am a sinner, and I work on being less of one.

34%

I am a sinner, and I depend on Jesus Christ to overcome sin.

28%

Sin does not exist.

10%

I am not a sinner.

8%

I am a sinner, and I am fine with that.

5%

I prefer not to say.

15%

LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com

5 percent), but less likely to say they depend on Jesus Christ to overcome sin (19 vs. 49 percent).

Americans 18–44 are twice as likely (14 percent) as those 45 and older (7 percent) to say sin doesn't exist.

A 2016 LifeWay study about theology also found many Americans think sin is commonplace.

In that study, two-thirds (65 percent) agreed everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. More than half (57 percent) said it would be fair for God to show His wrath against sin.

However, few Americans seemed to think most sins put them in spiritual danger. Three-quarters (74 percent) of Americans disagreed with the idea that even the smallest sin

deserves eternal damnation. That includes almost two-thirds (62 percent) who strongly disagreed.

### Sin and salvation

In the current survey, McConnell said he was struck by how few Americans — outside of those with evangelical beliefs — say they rely on Jesus to overcome sin, a core Christian belief.

"To some Americans, saying you're a sinner is a way of admitting you are not perfect," he said.

"To those folks, it doesn't necessarily mean you're evil or should be punished for your sin. That's something the church should pay attention to."

For more information on this study, visit LifeWayResearch.com.✠

**"To some Americans, saying you're a sinner is a way of admitting you are not perfect. To those folks, it doesn't necessarily mean you're evil or should be punished for your sin. That's something the church should pay attention to."**

Scott McConnell  
executive director, LifeWay Research



# TAB and war

## TAB editors kept readers informed about military conflicts through the years

By Elizabeth Wells  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

For almost 175 years, *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) has reported not only denominational news but also state, national and international information. Through the decades the paper became a mirror and a voice of life at that time, even covering aspects of multiple wars involving the U.S.

Many readers of TAB, when it was launched in 1843, were acquainted with war. A few Revolutionary patriots still lived; more were survivors of the War of 1812 and the Indian Wars of 1836–1837.

### Mexican-American War

In 1846, three years after the paper began, the nation became involved in the Mexican-American War. TAB printed a call for troops. Twenty-three Alabama units prepared for the war. Many enlistees never engaged in a skirmish, but this war prepared military leaders for the larger conflict to come. The paper explained effects of the conflict on missions, ministers and people in the areas. Readers were taken to the conflict or battlefield through the pages of TAB.

### Civil War

Following the Civil War, the nation struggled with many divisive issues and when the conflict entered the denomination, forming the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845, the newspaper kept readers informed. While readers heard a Southern voice, the editors reported all phases of the war, victory and defeat. The paper also continued sharing the gospel and reporting news about churches, associations and the denomination.

The Confederate surrender was reported with heartfelt sorrow and bitterness and federal troops closed the paper because of its vehement pro-Southern stance. But TAB persevered, partnering with Georgia's *Christian Index* for a while.

TAB reported on Southern Reconstruction efforts affecting individual churches and the denomination. But with time, good news gradually replaced war recollections, with a New South look and feel. From rural Marion and Tuskegee to Montgomery and then Birmingham, TAB, which grew from four pages to eight, championed the new opportunities and challenges for economic progress and denominational ministry in the New South.

### Spanish-American War

Reporting world news in 1897, TAB printed reports from missionaries in Cuba, detailing the plight and starvation of the Cuban people. The talk of possible war affected the

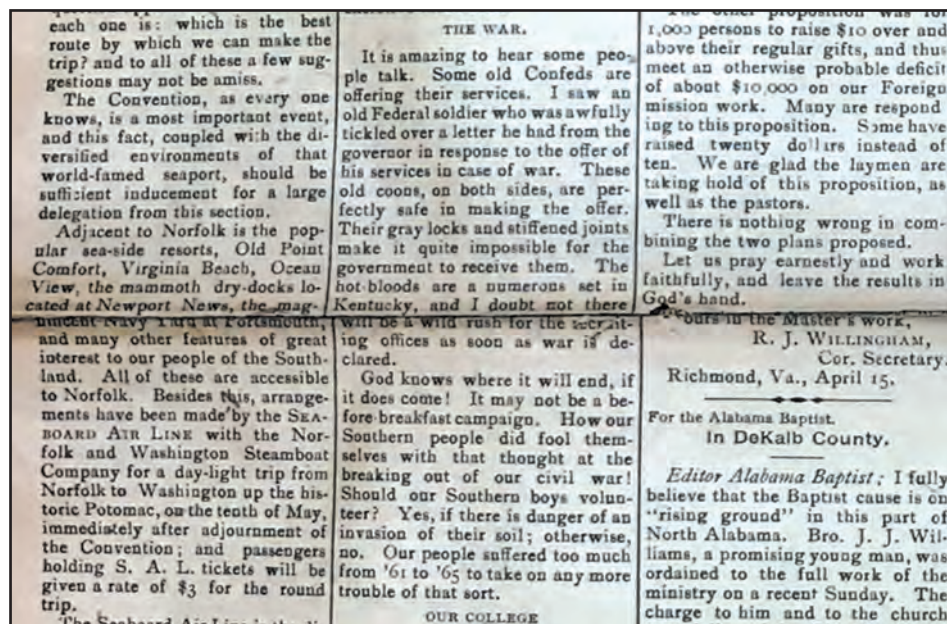


Photo courtesy of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
An article about the Spanish-American War is printed in the April 21, 1898, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Church; those who at one time gave generously were withholding funds fearing a "disaster might befall our country."

By 1898, TAB Editor John Harris wrote, "We hear the Cuban people's cry for freedom but the United States must be careful. We deprecate war. We are for peace as long as it can be honestly maintained." He believed that diplomacy should take care of the situation. However, with the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine and the R.M.S. Lusitania, the editor declared his support for the war. Coming over the newswire of April 21, 1898: "War with Spain: The South will furnish the invading army to Cuba. The regular army will be reinforced by the National Guard from the Gulf and South Atlantic states. [Southern men] are better able to withstand the climate of Cuba."

The war officially ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1899, printed in TAB.

### Europe, Asia and Russia

TAB next reported disturbances in Europe and Asia. In 1903, TAB Editor Frank Willis Barnett reported and led meetings in Birmingham protesting the massacre of 1,000 Jews in Kishineff, Russia, and "against persecution in every form and especially where innocent blood is shed," particularly relating to the safety of missionaries. He brought readers through the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05). He expressed concern for missionaries Drucilla and John McCollum as they came home on furlough, "The man is

tired and his other and dearer self [Drucilla] is also worn out with work. Let them rest. For a while let them forget, if possible, that there is such a thing as sin in the world."

### World War I and World War II

But war continued. Barnett lamented, "1914 is passed. It will long be remembered in history as the year in which the war began when news reached the United States about the great war in Europe." On April 6, 1917, the U.S. officially entered World War I. The editor wrote, "Your country is calling you. Do not let it call in vain. If you are not compelled to go to the front, it's your duty to serve at home."

The newspaper carried war information, impacting all Alabamians as well as reports of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. At the end of the war, the paper reported, "And now that the glorious peace has come, we ought to catch the spirit of our boys who gave their lives for freedom and 'carry on' with our great idea of soul liberty."

By 1939, war news in Europe and possible U.S. involvement permeated the paper's columns. When the U.S. declared war in 1941, Editor L.L. Gwaltney wrote, "We believe that force may be legitimately used ... in self-defense when force in the hands of wicked men would take away human liberties and all else that makes life tolerable."

Gwaltney continually reminded readers to support the church, remember the troops and prepare for their homecoming. While World War II ended in 1945, he warned readers

of the potential for future struggles. In his 1950 column as editor emeritus, he wrote, "Following World War II, Russia instituted a new kind of warfare ... 'Cold War.'"

### Korean War and Vietnam War

Then two more conflicts arose: one in Korea and the other in Vietnam. Editor Leon Macon commented, that although the armistice was signed in Geneva on July 27, 1954, ending the Korean War, "We anticipate continued ... propaganda campaigns, espionage, secret moves and communist missionary work."

In the summer of 1966, TAB Editor Hudson Baggett wrote, "Thank God for those who have paid and are paying the price [in Vietnam] that we may remain free." When peace was declared, the editor reminded readers of the great cost: 45,000 Americans dead and missing. He expressed thankfulness for the release of prisoners of war and asked all to pray scars facing soldiers, physically and emotionally, would be healed.

### Peace in Middle East

A peace treaty ending 30 years of hostilities between Egypt and Israel was signed on March 26, 1979, by Anwar Sadat, then-president of Egypt; Menachem Begin, then-prime minister of Israel; and Jimmy Carter, then-U.S. president. It read: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn of war anymore."

### Operation Desert Storm

On Jan. 16, 1991, during Wednesday night prayer meetings, many witnessed the onset of Operation Desert Storm, a military operation to expel occupying Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The paper featured soldiers in the Middle East and also focused on missionaries serving there. TAB managing editor Mark Baggett, in his war reports, wrote, "Conflict is a moral issue because it has to do with God-given resources — oil, money, property and management."

### Beginning the 21st century

With the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, TAB Editor Bob Terry struggled "to find adequate words."

He reminded readers, as had other editors in response to other tragedies, not to be goaded by internal rage. "Where is Jesus when tragedy strikes? He stands beside us. He won't leave or forsake us. God is present and He cares for you."✠

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION

# 2018 Proposed Cooperative Program Budget

(To be considered by convention messengers in November)

	2017 BUDGET	PROPOSED 2018 BUDGET
<b>SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES</b>		
SBC Executive Committee	18,392,424	18,500,000
SBC GuideStone (Church Retirement Plan and Mission Dignity)	799,338	*See below
<b>Total for Southern Baptist Convention Ministries</b>	<b>19,191,762</b>	<b>18,500,000</b>
<b>STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES</b>		
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP (27 full-time employees)</i>		
Evangelism	106,938	106,938
Sunday School and Discipleship	307,862	307,862
Collegiate and Student Ministries	96,427	96,427
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	1,640,839	1,640,839
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	164,345	164,345
<i>LEADERSHIP RESOURCE (7 full-time employees)</i>		
LeaderCare/Church Health	315,866	371,866
Worship Leadership/Church Music	86,140	86,940
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	523,462	523,462
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	51,867	51,867
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (10 full-time employees)</i>		
Associational Missions & Church Planting	756,652	756,652
Global Missions	211,869	209,353
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	679,485	679,485
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	67,325	67,325
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (16 full-time employees)</i>		
Executive Director		
A. Director's Office	48,427	22,734
B. Disaster Relief	1,000	1,000
C. Supplemental Aid	1,000	1,000
D. Strategic Initiatives		
D. Partnerships	1,000	1,000
Financial/Facility Services		
Director's Office	424,752	352,000
Accounting & Human Resources	2,135,383	2,285,000
Church Compensation Services	14,561	0
Facility Services	1,418,914	1,328,018
Cooperative Program & Stewardship Development	32,390	32,390
Communications & Technology Services	323,090	323,090
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	1,604,124	1,604,124
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	158,943	158,943
<b>Subtotal for State Board of Missions Ministries</b>	<b>11,172,660</b>	<b>11,172,660</b>
*GuideStone (moved from Southern Baptist Convention Ministries — see above)		799,338
<b>Total for State Board of Missions Ministries</b>		<b>11,971,998</b>
<b>STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES</b>		
Christian Higher Education Ministries		
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	111,761	111,761
B. Board of Aid to Students	254,110	354,110
C. Judson College	936,870	1,038,163
D. Samford University	3,551,231	0
E. University of Mobile	2,385,366	2,627,728
Other Entities and Commissions Ministries		
A. Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	253,625	253,625
B. Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center	544,943	544,943
C. <i>The Alabama Baptist</i>	552,673	552,673
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	186,125	186,125
E. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama	132,251	132,251
F. The Christian Life Commission	24,475	24,475
G. The Education Commission	3,230	3,230
H. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission	127,775	127,775
Auxiliaries and Other Ministries		
A. ALCAP	65,354	65,354
B. Alabama Woman's Missionary Union	505,790	505,790
<b>Total for Convention Entity Ministries</b>	<b>9,635,578</b>	<b>6,528,002</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET</b>	<b>40,000,000</b>	<b>37,000,000</b>
<b>SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS</b>		
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	11,600,000	12,000,000
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering	6,100,000	6,100,000
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	2,700,000	3,000,000
Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering	1,000,000	1,000,000
Alabama Baptist World Hunger Offering	800,000	800,000
<b>Total for Special Offering Goals</b>	<b>22,200,000</b>	<b>22,900,000</b>

## A look at the proposed 2018 state convention CP budget

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

Samford University's unexpected decision to withdraw from state convention funding beginning in 2018 changed the landscape a bit for Alabama Baptists — assuming convention messengers approve the plan in November at the annual meeting.

First, the \$3.5 million windfall coming out of a June decision by Samford officials allows Alabama Baptists to reach their goal of 50-50 parity with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) two years ahead of schedule.

Second, it pumps up the budgets for University of Mobile, Judson College in Marion and the Board of Aid.

And, third, the reduction provides for a more realistic budget plan — \$37 million rather than the current year's \$40 million. The overall decrease in the budget comes from \$3 million of what would have been in the Samford line item.

None of the other entities are losing any funds from the current year's budget, but they aren't gaining any either, except for the three mentioned above. Those increases were given from the remaining \$551,231 left over from the Samford funding.

Numbers provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) indicate the state convention is on track to receive roughly \$38 million in Cooperative Program (CP) receipts in 2017. This is \$2 million shy of the approved numbers but in line with what was received in 2015 and 2016.

Alabama Baptist budget numbers have been trending downward since the Great Recession in 2008.

Record budgets of \$46 million were approved in 2009 and 2010 but receipts came in drastically under budget — about \$2.5 million shy in 2009 and more than \$4.2 million below in 2010. Since then the annual budget proposals as well as the receipts coming in have decreased.

### More 'realistic' budget

The current proposal to reduce the 2018 budget to \$37 million will bring planning more in line with actual receipts, SBOM officials noted.

Any money coming in over the 2018 budget amount will be distributed to the various missions and ministries areas according to the existing allocation formula.

One adjustment made to the proposed budget is not an amount but where the amount is positioned, said SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance.

The allocation for GuideStone Financial Resources for the Church Retirement Plan and Mission Dignity was moved from the SBC Ministries section of the budget to the SBOM Ministries section.

### Funding adjustments

Other adjustments are proposed in the SBOM Ministries section. The total remains the same but some reallocating of existing amounts provides an increase in the accounting and human resources line item of nearly \$150,000.

Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of SBOM, said the reallocation is in anticipation of a 3 percent salary increase for SBOM full-time employees and an anticipated increase in medical insurance premiums.

"Part of the movement of resources (nearly \$100,000) is due to an anticipated reduction in building operating costs associated with the new building," he said.

Other reallocations are related to internal ministry and staffing adjustments between offices and to cover the loss of what GuideStone used to offer states in the form of financial offsets.

Of the five special offering goals, two received increases. The goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions was increased by \$400,000 to \$12 million. The goal for the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries was increased by \$300,000 to \$3 million.

### CP divided 50-50

And as far as the 50-50 parity with SBC goes, "we didn't think we would get there this soon," Lance said. "We were looking at 2020 but we have arrived at this point."

Alabama Baptists' effort to make this move started in 2010 following the Great Commission Resurgence effort by top SBC leaders. State conventions were pressured to move toward what many termed a 50-50 split of CP dollars.

Some state conventions answered quickly, slicing and dicing many traditional state convention-funded ministries, programs and staff.

Others took a more methodical approach, such as how Lance led Alabama's effort, moving more slowly toward parity.

The SBC allocation has been increasing annually since 2012 when it was 43 percent for SBC causes and 57 percent for Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) causes.

A reduction of funds from the allocations for Samford, SBOM and The Baptist Foundation of Alabama in the 2015 budget helped launch the official move toward parity. ✪

# Sufficiency of Christ

## Ministering to single adults requires 'high view' of both marriage and singleness

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**P**J. Dunn says he has heard many a church say they want to reach more young adults.

"But what many of them think of is young families," he said. "And while that's great, the world today is radically different than the world our church leaders grew up in."

The population of "young adults" is statistically single today, said Dunn, president and founder of Table for One Ministries. The average marrying ages these days are 29 for men and 27 for women, he said, so most young adults are single.

### 'Lack of vision'

According to Barna Research, that reality spans even older — more than half of adults ages 18–49 are single too. But even so, single adults only make up 23 percent of active churchgoers.

Keenan Braden, minister of singles/pastoral care at Gardendale First Baptist Church, said those numbers tell him that the church is missing something.

He said the struggles churches face in reaching single adults often stem from leadership not recognizing how many singles are in their communities.

"This lack of vision has led some single adults to share with me that they have felt like the church, as a whole, does not have anything to offer them," Braden said. "This may be because the church does not have specific events or ministries for single adults or the church has a limited understanding of the needs and different types of single adults."

But perception is reality, he said. "If single adults have perceived that the church does not care about their unique needs, then they will not get involved."

What are some of those unique needs?

### 1. They often come to church alone.

This seems obvious, said Kathy Cooper, minister to single adults at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, but attending a new church or small group for the first time is much more intimidating when you have to go alone than it is when you can go with your spouse.

"We try to be very, very aware of that, especially with the young adults who are just moving here to start their careers," Cooper said. "We have a church that is trained to be ready to look for visitors in the congregation and welcome them in. And when they visit, we get their email addresses, follow up, invite them to dinner and make them feel that they are valued by the church."

Ashley Chesnut, associate singles 20s/30s minister at The Church at Brook

Hills, Birmingham, said another way to bridge that gap is to provide singles with opportunities to be with other singles their age — but also to be in interactive, multi-generational settings with families.

### Body of Christ

"Having a singles ministry is great because it provides a place to find friends who can grab coffee or hang out on the weekends but at the same time, we also want and need to be around the rest of the body of Christ," she said. "There is much we can all learn from each other."

### 2. They struggle to find a place to serve and have community.

Cooper said one of the biggest struggles singles face in church attendance is feeling like there is a place for them.

"Oftentimes a 23 year old will end up in the same class with a 50 year old, and they have nothing in common, life-stage wise," she said.

**Single Adult  
Sunday is  
Sept. 3.**



**“[A singles ministry] doesn’t have to be huge — it will grow. Just having a commitment to putting value on singles and showing them that you want to include them goes a long way.”**

**Kathy Cooper**  
minister to single adults, FBC Montgomery

So at First, Montgomery, they make it a goal to have a class for each age group.

Braden said Gardendale First Baptist does the same thing. “We have four classes broken down by decade — 20s, 30s, 40 and up, 50 and up — specifically for single adults,” he said.

And Cooper said they make it a goal for their classes to have a strong focus on studying the Bible.

“We have a wide variety of people in our singles ministry — professionals, lawyers, military personnel, doctors, you name it — and it is a significant population, not a damaged population,” she said. “It is not a meat market; we’re there to study God’s Word. If you meet someone that’s good, but we are about following Jesus.”

**3. They often hear empty encouragement rather than biblical truth.**

Chesnut said a friend mentioned to her recently how he thought singleness would get easier as he got older but it hasn’t. “There’s grief that comes at various points — like when you realize that you’re not going to have children or provide your parents with grandchildren,” Chesnut said. “A Christian can still love and pursue Christ while mourning unfulfilled desires.”

But it’s important to submit those desires to the lordship of Christ, she said —

and it’s important for people to encourage singles who are mourning the loss of life dreams in an appropriate and biblical way.

People often say unhelpful things, Chesnut said.

### Empty encouragement

“Marriage is not a promise,” she said. “God’s Plan A for you may not be marriage and it is unhelpful — and even erroneous theology — for folks to make comments like ‘God has a wonderful husband planned for you’ or ‘If you become content in your singleness, God will bring you a spouse.’”

The church needs to have a high view

of both marriage and singleness, which involves being careful not to treat singles in such a way that implies they are inferior or unfulfilled because they are not married,” Chesnut said. “At the end of the day both singleness and marriages reflect the gospel, just in different ways. In my singleness I can show the sufficiency of Christ — how He truly can satisfy — while a marriage depicts the relationship between Christ and the Church.”

**4. They have different — but still demanding — schedules.**

Chesnut said there is sometimes a false assumption that singles have more time than those who are married.

“While on one hand we might have more flexibility, on the other hand we have to do everything ourselves whereas our married friends have a partner to share tasks and responsibilities with,” she said.

That includes practical needs — especially for single women — like car and house repairs, yard work and tax or mortgage questions.

“We are often capable of doing these things ourselves but we would greatly appreciate help or advice or just knowing that people are available and willing to help,” she said.

But most of all remember that single adults have demands on their time too, Chesnut said. “Be considerate in what

you ask singles to do.”

And don’t forget the added burden that single parents or single foster parents have, Braden said. Consider some ways to offer practical help to single moms.

If you see that your church isn’t doing an effective job of reaching the single population of your community, just start something, Cooper said.

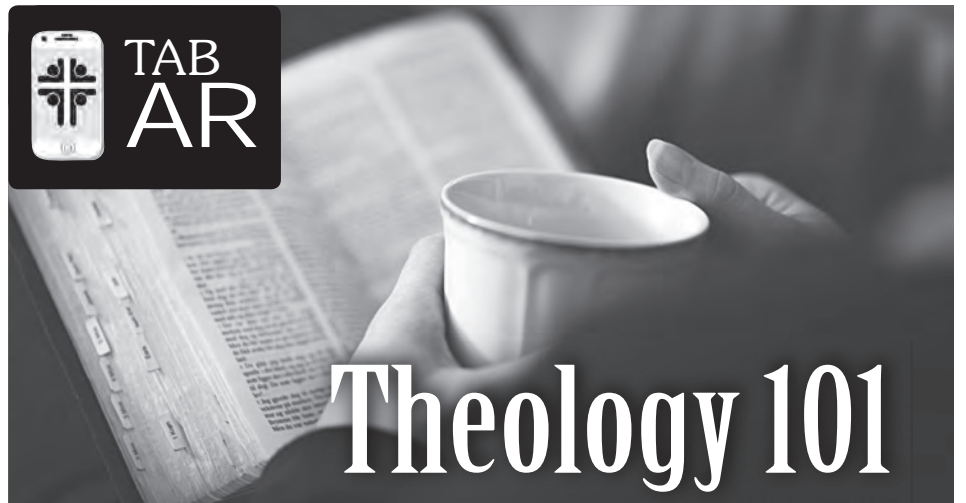
“It doesn’t have to be huge — it will grow,” she said. “Just having a commitment to putting value on singles and showing them that you want to include them goes a long way.”

Braden agreed. “Perception is reality,” he said. “Just do something.”

## RESOURCES

**Keenan Braden, minister of singles/pastoral care at Gardendale First Baptist Church, recommends reading “Baker Handbook of Single Adult Ministry” edited by Douglas Fagerstrom or “Reaching Single Adults” by Dennis Franck.**

**Ashley Chesnut, associate singles 20s/30s minister at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, recommends watching the video “5 Misconceptions About Singleness” by Sam Allberry at The Gospel Coalition, available here: [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-misconceptions-about-singleness](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-misconceptions-about-singleness).**



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Doctrine of Sin

# Sin’s Consequences — Disquiet

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

**T**he result of sin for a Christian often stops short of becoming entrenched or habitual. While not being entrenched as a stronghold, sin can produce milder consequences. For example, sin not confessed and cleansed may produce a feeling of disquiet.

We think of disquiet as a sense that something is wrong, producing worry or anxiety. This feeling that something is not right results in inner restlessness or agitation. Such feelings of disquiet can be indicated by comments such as, “Something is wrong but I can’t quite put my finger on it.”

Isaiah 57:20 captures these feelings by an analogy with the sea, saying, “The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.” The next verse gives us God’s point of view, “There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.”

Unconfessed sin can be the cause of a general feeling of disquietude.

Sometimes we experience this kind of result brought on by sin as a somewhat vague sense of troubling within our spirits.

Proverbs 22:8 long ago made the observation, “He who sows wickedness reaps trouble.”

In Hosea’s time, Bethel (“House of God”) had become a center for idolatry. The prophet then referred to it by another name, admonishing the people not to go up to Beth Aven (“House of trouble”). For that ancient generation of the people of God, sin had taken the form of pagan worship.

Whatever the nature of sin in the lives of God’s people, the results can show up as a general troubling of heart. Over time a troubled heart becomes a source of spiritual misery and sorrow.

After his infamous sins David experienced such inner turmoil during the time he did not make confession of his sins before the Lord. He described it in these words: “When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand

was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (Ps. 32:3–4). His subsequent prayer of repentance contained the plea, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Ps. 51:12).

In our day the common label for the disquiet that results from sin is guilt. Guilt for believers can show up as a sense of being liable to punishment for something done that should not have been. It is the feeling that one has been bad or done wrong.

Guilt may well describe the source of feelings of having disappointed God, who loves us supremely, and fallen short of His expectations. The tendency can be to multiply guilt by seeking to avoid God.

### Sense of guilt

When one feels guilty before Him the tendency is to keep one’s distance. Why do some people quit going to church or neglect Bible reading and prayer? It may well be that sin has wrought in them a deserved sense of guilt.

So rather than confessing it and receiving God’s offer of cleansing they seek to lessen the guilt feelings by avoiding the very One who can relieve guilt feelings.

Such was the experience of Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God. When God sought to join them in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid from Him (Gen. 3:8). Unrelieved guilt can compound itself by causing a person to attempt to avoid God.

Sincere confession of sin sets things right with God. Forgiveness and cleansing is the way out of disquietude and guilt. ✠

*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.*



The children of Stansel Baptist Church, Reform, in Pickens Association, raise \$12,500 to buy a lift so wheelchair-bound Sophie Claire Rector can go upstairs with the rest of the children for Sunday and Wednesday classes.

# Lifting up Sophie



Photo courtesy of Stansel Baptist Church

## Stansel Baptist children raise funds for wheelchair-bound peer

By Anna Keller  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Nine-year-old Sophie Claire Rector can't communicate verbally but her facial expressions and contagious laughter make her emotions clear to those around her. Sophie has a rare condition called Rett Syndrome which has left her wheelchair-bound and requires she be nourished with a feeding tube. To the other children at Stansel Baptist Church, Reform, however, Sophie is just another kid.

### 'They want to help'

"These children do not just see a girl in a wheelchair; they see their best friend and the marvelous works and miracles that God is doing through Sophie," said Joey Lucas, pastor of Stansel Baptist. "They want to help push her chair, comfort her and make sure she is okay at all times."

Her peers at church love to include her in as many things as possible and Sophie thrives in this inclusive environment.

"Sophie loves her little army and lights up when they involve her in games, activities and discussions," Lucas said.

However, as Sophie grew bigger and heavier, it became more and more difficult to carry Sophie

upstairs for class on Sunday and Wednesday nights. Because the other children didn't want Sophie to have to miss out on any of the learning and fun happening at church, they decided to raise money for a lift to help transport her upstairs.

The idea for this type of fundraiser began during Vacation Bible School (VBS) in 2016. During VBS each year the kids typically raise money for a missions project. So Sophie's lift became their missions project for the next year.

"They had their own car washes, set up lemonade stands, sold bracelets, collected VBS



Photo courtesy of Stansel Church

Nine-year-old Sophie Claire Rector has a rare condition called Rett Syndrome which has left her wheelchair-bound.

attendance sponsorships, emptied piggy banks, asked for donations and many other various entrepreneurial opportunities," Lucas said. "One of the children even came up with the slogan 'Help Us Lift Sophie.'"

Jan Bailey, VBS director, was impressed at the children's commitment to raising money to help Sophie participate in their activities.

"The more money raised, the harder they worked," she said. "They asked for donations and any change they could find was collected. Each child was challenged to attend VBS every night and each night they attended they

got family and friends to sponsor them, which meant more money for Sophie's lift."

### 'Hands and feet of Jesus'

In total, the kids raised \$12,500 for the lift. The church then partnered with Central Alabama Christian Builders — a company Lucas had worked with before at a previous church — for the lift's installation in June.

"The children ... were learning at a young age to be the hands and feet of Jesus," Bailey said. "Their eagerness and excitement ... carried over to the entire church. Our church has come together to work and help any way they can to lift Sophie up. How amazing to see God work and provide in all things, great and small, for this project to be complete." ✝



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## North central Ala. is nation's 5th most 'churched' area

Stretching across north central Alabama is the nation's fifth most "churched" area, according to a recent Barna poll.

The region that spreads from Tuscaloosa through Birmingham to Anniston is 56 percent churched, just a few percentage points behind the two cities that tied for No. 1 — Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Salt Lake City, Utah.

For the purpose of the study "churched" was defined as those who have attended a church service other than a wedding or a funeral in the past week.

Those who said they have not attended a regular church service in the past six months were described as "unchurched."

A third group — the "dechurched" — were those who had not attended a service in six months but also used to be somewhat or very involved.

The study showed the last two groups to have similarities.

### 'Unchurched' areas

At the top of the list of "unchurched" cities was California's San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose area. It also topped the list of "dechurched" — 47 percent of people surveyed there fell into that category.

Trends show church attendance in the U.S. is on the decline, according to The Christian Post.

Using data from the study, Barna created a list of the most "post-Christian" cities.

To qualify as "post-Christian," people must "meet nine or more of our 16 criteria, which identify a lack of Christian identity, belief and practice."

The criteria 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."

### Post-Christian

The top post-Christian city in America? The Portland-Auburn, Maine, area, which ranked at 57 percent post-Christian — the same percentage as the "churched" in the belt across Birmingham-Tuscaloosa-Anniston.

Following at No. 2 was the Boston-Manchester area at 56 percent post-Christian, trailed by several other cities in Rhode Island, Vermont, Massachusetts and New York.

The north central Alabama region only had 19 percent who qualified as post-Christian. (TAB)

# Faithful service

## Scottsboro nonagenarian honored for 74 years of teaching Sunday School

By Margaret Colson  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

She has been recognized on the U.S. Congressional Record of the 115th Congress. She has received a commendation from the governor of Alabama. She unofficially has surpassed a known Guinness World Record.

Yet for Velma Lee Sebring, who will celebrate her 97th birthday on Aug. 27, all of those honors pale in comparison to the countless lives she has touched during the past 74 years of teaching Sunday School at Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

She has taught children and women through the years, influencing many to make salvation decisions for Christ.

When Sebring considers those who have made professions of faith, "I just say, 'Lord, thank you.' And then all you can do is cry, just cry. I've enjoyed every minute of it."

On Aug. 6, in a surprise service at her home church, Sebring was honored for her record-setting tenure as a Sunday School teacher.

In addition to the Congressional Record recognition and the governor's commendation, Sebring was presented with a letter from U.S. Senator Richard Shelby, a certificate of recognition from her home church, a plaque from the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), a letter from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and a bouquet of flowers.

### Investing in lives

"Thank you so very much for all your faithful years of service and we look forward to many more. God bless you for your investment in countless lives over the years," said Jamie Baldwin, an associate in the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship.

Kirk Griggs, Sunday School director for Center Point Baptist, added, "Ms. Velma's faithfulness has been an inspiration to generations at Center Point. Teaching Sunday School for 74 years means 74 years of faithfulness. She is an example to me and to all of our wonderful Sunday School teachers.

Perhaps most of all, she still teaches with a smile on her face and joy in her heart. She is a true jewel."

Immediately following the recognition, Sebring said, "I've never been so speechless in my life."



Photo by Margaret Colson

With Velma Sebring's (center) family surrounding her, Jamie Baldwin, who serves in the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the State Board of Missions, thanks God for Sebring's faithfulness in teaching Sunday School for 74 years at Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

Then, reflecting on the morning's accolades, she said, "This is not right. This (serving God) is what you're supposed to do."

Sebring, Center Point's oldest member, began teaching at Randall's Chapel United Methodist Church, Scottsboro, in 1938. When she joined Center Point in 1942, she immediately began teaching Sunday School there.

When first asked to teach, Sebring said, "I was terrified. I said, 'I can't do this; I don't know anything about teaching a class.'"

Her only "experience" was "pretend teaching" her six younger siblings as they squirmed under her tutelage sitting on a wagon in the family barn.

Still, the thought of teaching intrigued her. "I used to think, 'Well, maybe I will be a missionary.' Really and truly we are all missionaries," she said.

She accepted the invitation to teach a children's class and she hasn't looked back since.

Today she teaches a senior adult class of women known as the "Last Stop" class. Virginia Bradford, a Center Point lifetime member, was led to make her profession of faith by Sebring in 1951 and today she is an active member of the Last Stop class.

Through the years, Sebring has regularly

participated in training opportunities to hone her teaching skills, including classes offered through then-Howard College (now Samford University) as well as the state convention and association.

After 74 consecutive years of teaching Sunday School some people may want a break. Not Sebring. "I've never had a thought of quitting," she said. "If the Lord gives it to you, be willing to share it."

Even on the day of her recognition, Sebring spotted a senior-adult woman visitor making her way into Center Point's sanctuary for worship. Sebring eased her walker into the church aisle to meet the woman, also using a walker, and invited her to the Last Stop Sunday School class.

### A blessing

Teaching, she said, is a blessing. "Why would I want to give this blessing to someone else when I can keep it myself?"

As Sebring is still going strong as a Sunday School teacher, her legacy is already evident in great-granddaughter Reagan Wallace's life. Wallace, who will graduate with a bachelor's degree in education in December, has been teaching Sunday School since she was only 13 years old. She turns to her "precious" great-grandmother for advice.

"Just keep on keeping on," Sebring said.

Sebring was married to the late Bill Sebring of Scottsboro and she has three children, four grandsons and five great-grandchildren. They all were present at Sebring's recognition service. †



SEBRING



# 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.

## AUTAUGA

▶ **Tom Jordan** is the new pastor of **First Church, Posey Cross Roads in Prattville.**



JORDAN

He previously served as pastor of Thomas Mill Church, Brierfield. He holds a bachelor's degree from Ambassador College, Lattimore, North Carolina, and a master's degree from Andersonville Seminary, Camilla, Georgia. He and his wife, Dawn, have five children.

## BIBB

▶ **Mount Carmel Church, West Blocton,** will hold its annual women's retreat Sept. 9, 8 a.m. through lunch. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Peggy McKay, Wendi Hall and Patti Smith will speak. Peggy McKay, Ginger Pope, Tammy Prather and Sheree Linch

will provide special music. There will be door prizes. Nursery will be available through 4 years old. Tim Jennings is pastor.

## CHILTON

▶ **Concord Church, Clanton,** will celebrate homecoming and its 118th anniversary Sept. 17. Spoken For will provide special music at 10 a.m. and former pastor Doug Powell will speak at 11 a.m. There will be no afternoon or evening services. Lunch will be at noon. For more information call Pastor Randal Mims at 334-341-0190.

## COFFEE

▶ **Coffee Association's Coffee Baptist Women on Mission** will hold its annual school prayer walk Aug. 27, 4 p.m. Prayer walking will be at all Coffee County Schools, Elba City Schools, Enterprise City Schools and Enterprise State Junior College. For more information call 334-894-6411. John Granger is director of missions.

## CONECUH

▶ **Long Branch Church, Andalusia,** will celebrate homecoming Sept. 17, 10 a.m. The New Vision will provide special music. Brent Cook will speak. Lunch will follow. Winston Foshee is pastor.

## GENEVA

▶ **New Hinson Church, Slocomb,** will hold revival Sept. 17-20. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday at 7 p.m. Ray Jones of Ridgecrest Church, Dothan, will be the guest speaker. Bryan Klobe is pastor.

## MADISON

▶ **Murphy Hill Church, Toney,** will hold an annual fall gospel singing Sept. 10, 6 p.m. The Kellys Quartet and New Ground will provide special music. A love offering will be received. For more information call 256-693-7381 or 256-828-3171. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

## SHELBY

▶ **Macedonia North Church,**

**Vincent,** will hold revival services Sept. 17-20. Sunday services will be at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday-Wednesday services will be at 7 nightly. Bo Shedd will speak and Price Harris will lead the music. For more information call 205-672-8846 or email [macedonianorthbc@yahoo.com](mailto:macedonianorthbc@yahoo.com). Adam Armstrong is pastor.

## TALLAPOOSA

▶ **Wayside Church, Alexander City,** will celebrate 70 years of ministry with a special service Sept. 24, 10:30 a.m. Eric and Whitney Miller and the gospel trio Justified will provide special music. Gerry Tapley will speak. Lunch will follow.

## TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Rosedale Church, Tuscaloosa,** will host Dania Yadago in a special service "Telling My Story" on Aug. 25, 6-7 p.m. Yadago will share her testimony as a shoe box recipient through the Operation Christmas Child ministry. Kenny Overstreet is pastor.✠

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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Western Heights Baptist Church is located in LaGrange, Georgia, east of the Alabama border. An affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention, WHBC seeks a candidate to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, provide administrative leadership, engage in pastoral care ministries and meet the needs of the church and community. The senior pastor serves under the supervision of the elder board. Preferred requirements: master of divinity, a minimum of 8 years' pastoral experience as a senior pastor or associate pastor. Submit resumé and statement of interest to: [whbcresume@gmail.com](mailto:whbcresume@gmail.com).

#### WORSHIP LEADER

Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time worship leader. The primary responsibility is, as a Christ-follower, to lead and grow a "blended" worship ministry. Resumés may be submitted by email to: [\[deerfootbaptist.org\]\(http://deerfootbaptist.org\), or mailed to: Deerfoot Baptist Church, 5450 Mount Olive Church Rd., Trussville, AL 35173.](mailto:churchoffice@</a></p>
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#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

Calvary Heights Baptist Church, Alexander City, Alabama, is receiving applicants for a part-time, bivocational music director. Deadline for resumés is Sept. 30. Resumés and inquiries may be sent to: [CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com](mailto:CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com).

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(augmented reality)

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## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## Finney's revivals saw thousands come to Christ, paved way for 20th Century evangelists

**C**harles Grandison Finney (1792–1875), a Presbyterian minister, was a leader in the Second Great Awakening in America. He has been called the “Father of Modern Revivalism.”

This year is the 225th anniversary of his birth.

He was born Aug. 29, 1792, in Warren, Connecticut, to Sylvester and Rebecca Finney. The family moved to the upstate frontier of New York after the American Revolution where they attended the Henderson Baptist Church.

He became a lawyer after studying as an apprentice to one.

### ‘Waves of liquid love’

At age 29 Finney had to settle the question of his salvation. On Oct. 10, 1821, he went out in the woods near his Adams, New York, home. After several hours he returned to his office a changed man. He later wrote of the experience,

“The Holy Spirit ... seemed to go through me, body and soul ... like a wave of electricity. ... Indeed it seemed to come in waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way.”

The next morning he told a client whose case he was to argue: “I have a retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause and cannot plead yours.”

After studying under two Presbyterian preachers, he received a license to preach in 1823 and was ordained the next year.

The Female Missionary Society of the Western District hired him in 1824 as a missionary to the frontier communities of upper New York. He preached there for two years. Crowds came to hear him.

His preaching became more controversial when he modified Calvinist teachings regarding God’s election of people to be saved. He thought unbelief was a “will not”

and if people willed to become a Christian they could do so.

Finney’s New Measures also were targets for the Presbyterian leadership. He allowed women to pray in public meetings and had an “anxious bench” where people who felt a need for salvation could sit. He held protracted meetings lasting as long as four hours. Speaking in the common language of the audience he preached extemporaneously.

In 1827 clergy met in New Lebanon, New York, to censure him. They reached a stalemate which made him even more popular.

The high point of his revivals came in Rochester, New York, between Sept. 10, 1830, and March 6, 1831. He preached almost 100 sermons. Shopkeepers closed their doors and asked people to attend Finney’s revivals. Many thousands were converted. The Rochester revival inspired other revivals in the Second Great

Awakening.

In 1832 he moved to New York City. A leader in the Free Church movement, he rejected pew rent in favor of free seating for everyone. Finney’s friends built the Broadway Tabernacle for him but he preached there only a year.

### Areas of ministry

In 1835 he went to Ohio to pastor the Oberlin Congregation Church and teach theology at Oberlin College. He served as president of Oberlin College from 1851 until 1866. After leaving the Presbyterian Church, he held revivals in America and Great Britain. He was a leader of social reforms, particularly temperance and abolition. Oberlin was a station on the Underground Railroad.

Finney died at Oberlin on Aug. 16, 1875, of natural causes and is buried there. His great revivals paved the way for later evangelists such as Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Billy Graham. †

By Joanne Sloan

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



FINNEY

# ALABAMA

## UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

### Harrison celebrates 50 years of faithful service to gospel ministry

Even though he was saved in Chicago in 1961, James “Jimmy” Harrison said he understood the gospel message for the first time in Alabama on April 4 of that same year.

“From that time that I was saved (at age 25) I just had a real desire to go to church and read the Bible and to share my faith in Christ. And God just dealt with me. ... I knew He was calling me to something.”

That something was a life in ministry. On April 23, 1967, Harrison accepted God’s call on his life and hasn’t wavered from it for the past 50 years.

From that moment when he gave God the reigns, Harrison got his degree from the Baptist Bible Institute (now the Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville and started serving as a pastor. In addition to serving churches in Florida, Tennessee and Louisiana, Harrison has served as pastor of Hodgesville Baptist Church, Dothan; Oakley Baptist Church, New Market; Steele Baptist Church; Second Baptist Church, Boaz; and Bethany Baptist Church, Attalla, where he continues to preach despite retiring in 2012.



HARRISON

“I just love preaching to people and being around God’s people,” said the 81-year-old.

“I would encourage younger pastors to just really give their life and live close to the Lord and just preach the Bible in the church, verse by verse,” he said. “That’ll get the job done when nothing else will.”

He and his wife, Faye, have two children and three grandchildren. (TAB)

### Locust Fork Church pastor Harris retires after nearly 40 years in ministry

As of July 31, Rufus Harris closed the book on what he calls “one of the greatest blessings of his life.”

For nearly 19 of his nearly 40 years in ministry, Harris served as pastor of Locust Fork Baptist Church. The church held a retirement reception for him and his wife, Emily, on July 30.

“I hope that my legacy is that the church is healthy, harmonious and has a great future ahead,” he said.

Harris preached his first sermon at Locust Fork Baptist on Oct. 5, 1998, and has seen “great unity and harmony through the years.” He is proud of how missions-minded the congregation is and prays their passion only grows as time goes on.

And through the years the church has grown in membership and giving. These are good things but Harris

wants to be remembered for his faith.

“I also want my legacy to be that I conducted myself with honesty and integrity and that my goal was to glorify my Father in heaven,” he said.



HARRIS

Harris holds a bachelor’s degree from Murray State University in Kentucky and a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Harrises plan to remain in Locust Fork and look forward to traveling out of state often to see their two daughters and three grandchildren.

“We have been so blessed to serve the Lord in full-time ministry since 1980,” Rufus Harris said. “Our hearts are so full of gratitude to the Lord for this opportunity. We are looking forward to what He has for us in the future.” (TAB)

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### Child sex slave rescue group ordered to close

ROSEVILLE, California — An American Christian group that rescues child sex slaves has been ordered to close after Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen found a recent CNN report on the ministry “insulting,” according to The Christian Post.

CNN interviewed three girls who had been rescued by Agape International Missions (AIM) after their impoverished mothers sold them into slavery.

AIM is based out of California and has been working in Cambodia since 1988 as a humanitarian aid and church planting organization. Its focus shifted in 2005 to ending child sexual slavery.

The CNN report, “Life after trafficking: The Cambodian girls sold for sex by their mothers,” was broadcast July 25, the Post reported.

Sen was quoted by various news sources as saying, “This is a serious insult. ... We cannot accept this big insult and we are going to close the NGO (nongovernmental organization) involved.” (TAB)

# Opelika evangelist walks across one state every year, prays for divine appointments

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**R**ick Hagans has walked across 37 states. He has stories from all of them.

The family in Louisiana who fed him a hamburger while they shot roaches off the wall with a BB gun. The drunk man he found on the side of the road in Alaska and brought back to Alabama with him to help him start a new life.

And the countless other people he’s shared the hope of Christ with — like the pastor in New Hampshire who was on his way to commit suicide.

“My son was with me on that trip and we had finished our walk for the day and were trying to hitchhike back to our vehicle,” he said. “A man came by and asked if we were OK and we told him where we were trying to go.”

The man said it was out of his way but he would take them. Hagan and his son got in the truck and the man gave them a basket of blueberries he had picked that day.

“I told him I didn’t have anything to offer him in return but that I was a preacher and I asked him if I could pray for him,” Hagans said. “He started sobbing and said he was a preacher too but that everything had been going really badly at his church and he was on his way to kill himself when he saw us.”

Both men knew it was a divine appointment, Hagans said.

“God goes to great lengths to reach people in their moment of need,” he said.

That’s why he doesn’t mind the weeks he spends walking the roads of each state asking God if He’s got anyone for him to talk to that day.

“People often ask me why I do it,” he said, “and I always ask them, ‘How far would you go to reach one person?’”

In his mind the answer is as many miles as it takes.

Hagans, founder of Harvest Evangelism in Opelika, started his treks more than two decades ago when he decided to walk west to east across Alabama. His goal



Rick Hagans

Photo courtesy of Rick Hagans

was to collect 10 pairs of shoes for each mile he walked and give them to those in need. The next year he walked the state north to south.

He’s been walking every year since. On Labor Day he will begin walking his 38th state — California — from north to south down the coastal highway. It will be a journey of about 1,000 miles — his longest walk to date.

“In the past, I’ve walked 20 to 30 miles a day but the older I get the more of a ‘labor’ it is,” Hagans joked. “I’ve got pains in my knees these days so I will probably do more like 15 to 20 miles a day this time.”

If he can finish what he started he may be the first man to ever walk across each of the 50 states, he said.

“A book publisher told me they had researched it and can’t find anyone else who’s done it.”

### Talking to God

What does he do during those long days of walking? Hagans said he prays for friends and family, communes with God and asks Him to give Him divine appointments along the way. Sometimes people start walking with him. Other times

when he hitchhikes back to his van at the end of the day he gets to share the gospel with the driver.

Friends and family sometimes join him too — his wife, Kim, will be walking California with him this year. And sometimes churches invite him in to speak and some of

the members will come out and walk with him the next day. Occasionally they will invite him to stay the night.

Most nights he puts poster board up in the windows of his van and sleeps in the back. But just in case he can’t get

back there at the end of the day he carries a tarp for a tent in his backpack.

What else does he carry? Band-Aids, potted meat, a Bible, a journal and a bottle of Yoo-hoo — “all the necessities of life,” Hagans said.

Over the 10,000 miles he’s walked, he’s figured out what works for him and he’s never once been nervous about being harmed along the way.

That even includes the night he accepted a ride from two witches who offered him a room at their coven for the night.

“There were 15 to 20 self-professed witches there. The next morning was Sunday and I asked them if I could hold a church service,” Hagans said.

Surprisingly they said yes, he said — and three of them accepted Christ and left the coven that day.

“Jesus said, ‘Go into all the world,’ and that means everybody,” Hagans said. “Through these walks I like to challenge people to step out for Christ. It’s amazing what can happen when you do. We can’t do everything, but we can all do something.”

**For more information about Hagans and Harvest Evangelism, visit [www.harvestevangelism.org](http://www.harvestevangelism.org). To follow his walk on Facebook, visit [www.facebook.com/pastor.rick.hagans](http://www.facebook.com/pastor.rick.hagans).**

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 27

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

**THE LONGING**  
**Psalms 42:1-11**

We have previously discussed the royal commission of the sons of Korah as gatekeepers for the Tabernacle, and later the Temple of Solomon (1 Chron. 9:19; 26:1). Based on the number of psalms attributed to them, one may conclude that some of the Korahites also were worship leaders in Israel (see also 2 Chron. 20:19).

This first psalm of Book Two is directed to the choir master as a "maskil," a Hebrew word used multiple times in superscriptions of the psalms. Peter Craigie in *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 19* explains this term likely means "a meditation ... a psalm of understanding ... or a skillful psalm."

Craigie and others see Psalm 42 and 43 as one psalm, largely because the repeated refrain in 42:5, 11 and 43:5. Early Jewish and Christian translations identified them as separate psalms. Alexandrian Jews attributed Psalm 43 (LXX Psalm 42) to David. Jerome translated both the Hebrew and Greek psalms without providing his own perspective regarding authorship of Psalm 43.

**Thirsty (1-4)**

Imagine this: For as long as you can remember your father has been telling you that one day your time will come. One day, your division's lot will be chosen. One day, you will be able to serve in the role for which you were born. You'll finally be able to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord. Can you imagine the anticipation, the longing, the anxiety of taking on such a weighty task? If Psalm 84:10 is the celebration of that day, then Psalm 42:2 is its anticipation: "When can I come and appear before God?"

Verse three indicates that opposition to faith in Yahweh arose, either by means of individual or corporate scoffers. Canaanites utilized idols to represent their deities,

figures clearly forbidden in the Torah. The psalmist indicated he had previously participated in a worship procession in Jerusalem, and that he wept when others mocked him, asking, "Where is your God?" His thirst for that experience of God's presence in the midst of His worshippers would be the writer's consolation if only he could return. In the *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Vol. 14*, Derek Kidner suggests this may have been written by a temple musician who has been exiled to the north without further access to Jerusalem.

**Drowning (5-8)**

The repeated refrain in verses 5 and 11 may first come across as hopelessness but we must read on. Unlike Psalm 88 we see immediate light at the end of this tunnel: "Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God." The psalmist felt overwhelmed by waterfalls and crashing waves of depression as he thought of Zion from beyond the Jordan River, but hope arose. Mornings brought the reminder of God's faithful love ("chesed;" see Lam. 3:23). Nights brought songs of praise and prayer. Paul and Silas' imprisonment in Philippi comes to mind here, praying and singing praise to God for His glorious gospel (Acts 16:25). What better way to heal a broken spirit than by investing time in the presence of God?

**Crushed (9-11)**

Believers crushed by persecution wrestle with bouts of hopelessness. Their oppressors seem to have the upper hand, and they see little visible help from God or other believers. This affects them physically and emotionally. What are they to do when the enemy surrounds them and taunts them?

God is their Savior and Deliverer. Their hope (and ours) is in Yahweh, the one true God who will never leave or forsake those who trust in Him. †

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

**RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW**  
**Mark 5:1-2; 8-15; 18-20**

Emil Brunner once said the "church exists by mission, as a fire exists by burning." The church has often forgotten that truth. It was embedded in the earliest promise of God to Abraham: "I will make of you a great nation and through you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Israel often forgot that promise and became insular and only concerned for the welfare of the people of Israel. So Jesus said to His disciples, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth."

**We are broken people living in a broken world. (1-2)**

In Mark 5, we have an early example of Jesus encouraging those who had been touched by His grace to tell others and share their experience with those in similar need of grace and love. The context is the story of a man who was possessed by evil spirits. The impact of this tragedy was that he had been excluded from human community; among the tombs, he lived, bound with chains and naked. He lived in darkness, both physically and spiritually, and the presence of Christ appeared to torment him.

Despite the many advances in science, technology and education, we have not seen any change for the better in our world. Destructive wars, acts of genocide and the grim possibility of a nuclear holocaust make easy faith in human potential for good very difficult indeed. In a series of letters on the subject of the "problem of the world," the shortest and most potent stated very simply states, "Dear Sir, I am, yours sincerely." The problem of humanity is the problem of the human heart. Into this broken world, Jesus came to bring hope and healing.

**Jesus replaces our brokenness with a restored life in Him. (8-15)**

In a very dramatic confrontation with the reality of sin and evil, Jesus took control of the situation and brought a message of reconciliation into this man's experience.

He was reconciled to God as Jesus healed him and delivered him from the power of sin and Satan. Jesus also brought him back into a reconciled relationship with the community of Capernaum. The story comes to a climax when others come to see Jesus and found the man "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind." Have you ever wondered from where the clothes came? The man was naked but he needed to be clothed. Salvation from sin and evil forces brings people into a life of hope and healing where every aspect of their life is changed — physically, emotionally and spiritually.

**Our response to Christ should be to participate in His mission. (18-20)**

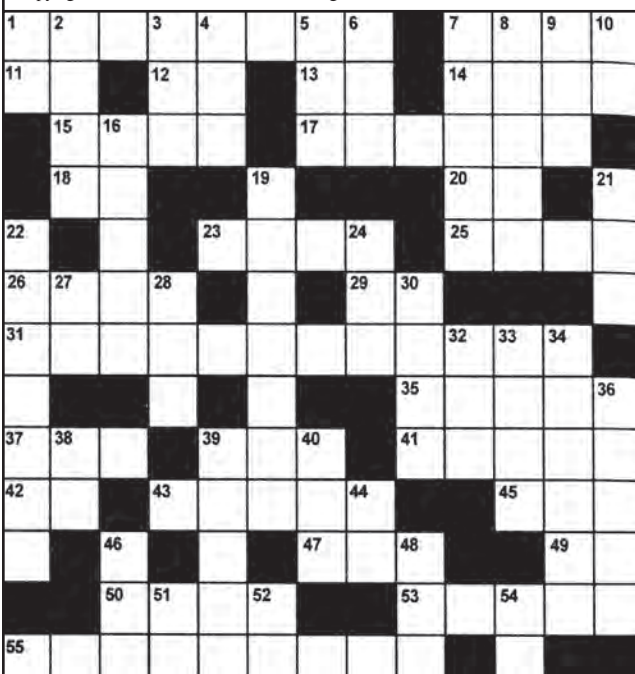
The conclusion of this story tells us the man who had been healed, whose life has been so dramatically transformed, wants to stay with Jesus. But Jesus tells him to "go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and what mercy He has shown you." The man went first to his friends, to those who knew him, who had seen him in his wretched state and would recognize just how much Jesus had accomplished. Likewise, we are called first to go to our families, our friends, to those who know us and can see the change which Jesus has made in our lives and tell them of the good things which He has done.

*"Go forth and tell, O church of God awake  
God's saving news to all the nations take."*

— James Seddon †

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

- God be \_\_\_ to me a sinner. (Luke 18:13)
- A female horse of breeding age.
- For example.
- Alternating Current. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_ be ye holy. (1 Pet. 1:15)
- According to my \_\_\_est expectation and hope. (Phil. 1:20)
- Wide is the \_\_\_. (Matt. 7:13)
- Belonging to the son of Ner. (2 Sam. 3:25)
- Social Security. (abbr.)
- We desire \_\_\_ hear ... what thou thinkest. (Acts 28:22)
- The month of \_\_\_. (Ex. 13:4)
- \_\_\_ with hr suburbs. (1 Chron. 6:70)
- A red root vegetable.
- For we have heard ... what ye did unto ... \_\_\_. (Josh. 2:10)
- The Lord \_\_\_ Eglon ... against Israel. (Judg. 3:12)

**Down**

- He dwelleth in \_\_\_. (John 6:56)
- As the partridge sitteth on \_\_\_. (Jer. 17:11)
- A feline.
- Blackish by reason of the \_\_\_.
- Tell me, art thou a \_\_\_? (Acts 22:27)
- Haran begat \_\_\_. (Gen. 11:27)
- I will take away all thy \_\_\_. (Isa. 1:25)
- Type of acid.
- \_\_\_ King of Bashan. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Joshua ... gave \_\_\_ ... Hebron. (Josh. 14:13)
- \_\_\_ the kine to the cart. (1 Sam. 6:7)
- Another word for *bill*.
- A train that runs above street level.
- Volumes. (abbr.)
- Many \_\_\_ and troubles shall befall them. (Deut. 31:17)
- \_\_\_ shall a man leave his father and mother. (Gen. 2:24)

- United States of America. (abbr.)
- A high return in tennis.
- There shall \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ man. (Mark 14:13; 2 words)
- Moses' brother. (Ex. 4:14)
- Railroads. (abbr.)
- Printer's measure.
- Leah ... called his name \_\_\_. (Gen 30:13)
- Nabal's wife was \_\_\_. (1 Sam. 15:3)
- Tempted like as we \_\_\_, yet without sin. (Heb. 4:15)
- I saw \_\_\_ hanged in an oak. (2 Sam. 18:10)
- Bohemia. (abbr.)
- Hero of a popular child's science-fiction movie.
- One of the Kennedy family sons.
- Ehud's father. (Judg. 3:15)
- Nominative. (abbr.)
- To give off.
- Spoken of by \_\_\_ the prophet. (Matt. 24:15)
- Christmases.

- \_\_\_ King of Bashan. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Crumbs which fell from the rich man's \_\_\_. (Luke 16:21)
- When he draweth him into his \_\_\_. (Ps. 10:9)
- Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
- Adam and \_\_\_.
- A swarm of \_\_\_s in the carcass of the lion. (Judg. 14:8)
- Either/\_\_\_.
- San Francisco. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_ is finished. (John 19:30)



TV



Photo courtesy of Michael Foust

PBS' 'Victoria' tops August streaming entries. The series follows the life of Queen Victoria, who was 18 years old and woefully unprepared when she took the throne in 1837.

## 'Victoria' might fill your 'Downton Abbey' void

By Michael Foust  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

I didn't cry when PBS' "Downton Abbey" went off the air but I thought about it. After all, what would replace my infatuation with yesteryear British aristocracy?

Then Netflix launched "The Crown," which gave us a story not just about aristocracy but a royal family: that of Queen Elizabeth II. I was hooked.

### British TV series

And now I have discovered a third binge-worthy British series, and it may be as good as the first two. It is PBS' "Victoria," which follows the life of Queen Victoria, who was 18 years old and woefully unprepared when she took the throne in 1837 but reigned over the United Kingdom for 63 years.

Like "Downton Abbey," "Victoria" first aired on ITV in the UK before becoming a part of PBS' Masterpiece series.

Season 1 begins streaming on Amazon Prime Aug. 29. Here's ever better news: It's mostly family-friendly.

Victoria was fifth in the line of succession at birth but became queen through a series of unexpected family events during her teenage years. (Her grandfather was the Revolutionary War's King George III.) With a sheltered upbringing and standing at only five-feet tall, she had plenty of doubters who wanted to see her replaced. In the PBS series, many question her intelligence and temperament.

"Her wits are too fragile," one person says.

"She's too impulsive to be queen," says another.

Season 1 succeeds because it gives us a Queen Victo-

ria worth rooting for. She's flawed, yes, but also humble. She shows graces to others. She learns. We want her to prove her detractors wrong.

The series has elements we enjoyed in "Downton Abbey" and "The Crown." Like "Downton Abbey," PBS' "Victoria" spotlights the lives of the servants. And like "The Crown," it shows us a queen who wasn't prepared to lead. The sets in Victoria are not as extravagant as those in "Downton Abbey," but the theme song is just as addictive.

Jenna Coleman, previously known for her role in "Doctor Who," does a magnificent role in the lead role.

Of course, "Downton Abbey" (Amazon Prime) and "The Crown" (Netflix) are on streaming platforms, as well. (Both come with caveats for families: "Downton Abbey" includes a same-sex angle with a problematic scene in the first episode, and "The Crown" contains a flash of African native nudity in the second episode. "The Crown" also includes a gory surgery scene.)

### The ultimate King

Meanwhile, have you ever wondered why Americans are so enamored with shows about British royalty — besides our attraction to the accents? My guess is that it's a combination of things: First we long for simpler times. Second we're spellbound by the mysterious and secret lives of royal families. And third we have a natural desire for kings and queens — which in the best circumstances are an earthly picture of the ultimate King. In PBS' "Victoria," the queen even is called "the Lord's anointed." †



# Media reviews

MOVIE

## IS GENESIS HISTORY?

Thomas Purifoy

Del Tackett knows he can't convince everyone that the events described in Genesis are literally true.

But he does hope that naysayers who watch his new documentary — "Is Genesis History?" — will at least acknowledge there is contrary evidence to the mainstream, pro-evolution scientific model.

Tackett serves as host of the roughly 90-minute documentary, which features a dozen scientists discussing the scientific evidence for a young Earth, a literal Adam and Eve and a worldwide flood. Along the way, Tackett visits such sites as Grand Canyon National Park, Coral World Ocean Park in the Virgin Islands and Washington state's Mount Baker.

The documentary — now on Netflix streaming, DVD, Blu-ray and video on demand — was a surprise hit in February when it debuted in theaters, finishing No. 1 on opening night and topping mainstream releases like "The Lego Batman Movie" and "Fifty Shades Darker."

Tackett says one of the biggest problems with the pro-evolution, pro-Big Bang scientific model is that no one is allowed to question it.

"Academia has bought into the paradigm. The media has bought into it," he said. "If we look at the history of science, every scientific paradigm that has arisen has captured those areas of power before they collapsed and the next paradigm arose. We're in the midst of one of those, as well. You're not allowed to speak against it. When a scientific paradigm captures a culture, it's the only way you think, and anyone who thinks differently is viewed as weird, stupid, idiotic and unscientific — all those terms that are tossed around."

Although the documentary's primary audience is Christians, Tackett wants supporters of the mainstream scientific model to watch it too.

"And hopefully they'll recognize that the old accusations — that people who affirm the Genesis para-

## 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.

digm are weak-minded or whatever — are not true," he said. "We would hope that they would then say, 'You know, there's something wrong with shutting out evidence and not having a clear, open discussion.' That's what I would love to see. Let's just have an open discussion of this without the name-calling."

Tackett got involved in the project because of a concern that the mainstream scientific model is gaining in popularity among Christians, especially within seminaries and "among some of our more prominent pastors," he said. He wants the documentary to encourage Christians who are having doubts about their faith.

"We hope they're reassured in their belief of Scripture," he said.

"Is Genesis History?" features such scientists as Douglas Petrovich, an archaeologist at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada, and Marcus Ross, a paleontologist at Liberty University

in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Tackett said he learned a lot while filming the documentary but also had fun.

"Having the opportunity to rub shoulders with these scientists and learn from them, it was a thrill. But it was — I'll be honest — at lot," he said of the physical challenges. "We had some back-to-back trips and we did some serious hiking on occasions. But I thoroughly enjoyed it. And the scientists, the crew, everybody — it was just a wonderful experience." †

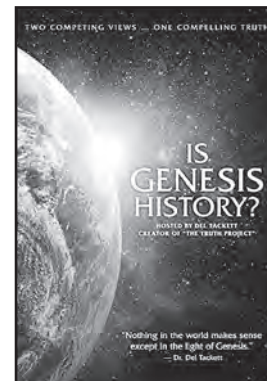


Photo courtesy of Compass Cinema

Del Tackett serves as host of the roughly 90-minute documentary, which features a dozen scientists discussing the scientific evidence for a young Earth, a literal Adam and Eve and a worldwide flood. Along the way, Tackett visits such sites as Grand Canyon National Park pictured here.



RNS photo by Zachary Wong

The archaeological team at the excavation site in northern Israel believe they may have discovered the biblical city of Bethsaida, the hometown of three of Jesus' apostles on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

# 'More evidence'

## Archaeologists believe they have discovered the city of Bethsaida

**A**rchaeologists excavating in northern Israel believe they may have discovered the biblical city of Bethsaida, the hometown of three of Jesus' apostles on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

For decades archaeologists have searched for the fishing village where apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip lived, according to the New Testament (John 1:44; 12:21). Three possible sites in the area had been identified but all were inconclusive.

This summer, however, during the second year of excavating, a team from Israel's Kinneret College and Nyack College in New York discovered remnants of a Roman-era bathhouse, potsherds and coins from the first to third centuries.

### Historian's chronicles

These findings are consistent with the chronicles of the first-century historian Josephus Flavius, who wrote that the Roman King Philip Herod transformed the small village of Bethsaida into a polis, or city state, called Julias.

"He didn't specify whether he built it directly on top of the village or nearby, but the presence of

a Roman bathhouse says this was once an urban area," said Mordechai Aviam, head of the Institute of Galilean Archaeology at Kinneret College and lead archaeologist for the excavation.

Aviam noted that the layer from the Roman period was found roughly 6 feet below a layer from the Byzantine period.

### Roman bathhouse

"We discovered a mosaic floor and other items that made it clear this was a Roman bathhouse," he said.

During 2016 and 2017 the team also discovered dozens of golden glass mosaics, evidence of an "important" and "magnificent" church, according to a statement from the college.

Aviam said this finding supports the testimony of an eighth-century Christian pilgrim who said he had "the house of Tsaida," a church built "in honor of Peter and Andreas, two of Jesus' apostles."

The Hebrew word for "house" is "beth" or "beit," so the word Bethsaida means the "house of Tsaida."

Aviam said he is confident his team's next excavation will yield "more evidence" that this is the site of Bethsaida and Julias. (RNS)

**"We discovered a mosaic floor and other items that made it clear this was a Roman bathhouse."**

**Mordechai Aviam**  
lead archaeologist

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Father-son pastor duo attacked in India

HYDERABAD, India — A father and son, both pastors, were attacked by hard-line Hindus in India, and one of the victims is defending a Muslim man arrested in the case.

The attack on 28-year-old Daniel Jebraj and his father, 61-year-old Muniyandi Elangoan Jebraj, occurred on July 19 in Tamil Nadu state, India. Five attackers beat the younger man with steel rods, wooden sticks and knives. When his father came to his aid, the attackers beat him too, resulting in injury to his brain.

Christians identified the assailants as members of the Hindu Makkal Katchi, a wing of the Hindu extremists Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the state. An official denied a religious motive for the attack, calling it an "independent incident."

Police arrested two people in the beating, one Hindu and an 18-year-old Muslim man, Abdullah Barish. However, Daniel Jebraj is defending Barish claiming police officials are framing him to prevent exposing the case as Hindu extremist violence on Christians.

"Abdullah has no relation to this case. He heard our screams and came and tried to take us to the hospital. He did not beat us," Daniel Jebraj said.

The attack follows an incident three months ago when area Christians were surrounded by about 150 Hindu extremists after distributing 50,000 gospel tracts. That situation was calmed by police, Daniel Jebraj said. He called the recent attack a "setback for the community," which has seen Christians growing in numbers and breaking down caste-based barriers.

India ranked 15th on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the most persecution. (MS)

### Group attacks newly converted Christians

THI TAW, Myanmar — About 150 angry Buddhists and monks recently attacked a group of newly converted Christians in Myanmar (Burma), destroying their homes and property and injuring seven people.

In Thi Taw village in northwest Myanmar's Sagaing Region, the mob threw stones and broke into houses July 6, two days after two families put their trust in Christ and left Buddhism, a local official said. Four women and three men were hit with stones and sticks and suffered injuries on their heads, faces and backs. Three motorbikes were destroyed.

The Buddhists told local media the Christian villagers held services for three days, singing and preaching late into the night to celebrate and welcome the new Christians. Prior to the attack, a monk in Thi Taw told the worshipping Christians to be quiet and stop making noise late at night.

When they didn't stop, the Buddhists attacked. (MS)

### Order rejected for schools to open on Sundays

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Members of the Khartoum, Sudan, state parliament have rejected an order by the minister of education requiring all Christian schools in the capital to open on Sunday, reported World Watch Monitor.

Minister of Education Farah Mustafa issued a statement in late July requesting Christian-run schools treat Sundays as a work day, as the rest of the country does. Churches stood against the order, saying the decision was a form of discrimination against Christians.

Mohammed Hashim, deputy speaker of the Khartoum state assembly, asked Mustafa to revoke the order in early August for the sake of "peaceful coexistence," adding the Christian schools' schedule of taking the Sabbath for rest didn't seem to hinder academic performance, according to World Watch Monitor.

The day after parliament sided with Hashim and rejected Mustafa's order, the Sudanese government demolished The Baptist Church in Omdurman. The church was 1 of 27 designated for destruction in 2016 on claims it was in violation of the designated purposes of the land it was built on, sources reported. (TAB)