

INSIDE



Despite harsh pushback, Luther launched theological revolution

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J.D. Greear to headline this year's Pastors Conference in Huntsville

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Faith & Family: Dealing with Disappointment — Working to avoid disappointment in relationships

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Passing down faith

Young Bible readers more likely to be faithful adults, LifeWay study shows

Most churchgoing Protestant parents of young adults say their kids grew up to be Christians.

But half of them don't actually practice the Christian faith, their parents say, according to a LifeWay Research survey released Oct. 17. And the biggest factor predicting their spiritual health as young adults is whether they read the Bible regularly as kids.

Those are among the findings of the study, which was conducted Sept. 22–Oct. 5, 2016, among Protestant churchgoers about parenting and spirituality. The survey was sponsored by LifeWay Kids for use in the book “Nothing Less: Engaging Kids in a Lifetime of Faith,” which was released Oct. 2.

The long haul

For the study, researchers surveyed 2,000 Protestant and nondenominational churchgoers. All attend services at least once a month and have adult children ages 18–30.

Researchers wanted to know what parenting practices pay off over the long haul when it comes to spiritual health, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

“Churchgoing parents want to pass

on their faith to their kids — and to see their children make that faith their own,” McConnell said. “But they don't always know how best to make that happen.”

LifeWay Research took a twofold approach to the study.

First researchers asked parents about 40 factors that could affect a child's moral and spiritual development. Among them: whether the child's parents had been divorced, whether the family prayed or ate meals together, what kind of school the child attended, how often the child went to church or youth group and even what kind of music the child listened to growing up.

LifeWay Research then asked parents to describe their adult children's spiritual health, using eight observable factors. Each child received one point if he or she:

- ▶ Identifies as a Christian.
- ▶ Shares his or her faith with unbelievers.
- ▶ Is involved in church.



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- ▶ Reads the Bible regularly.
- ▶ Serves in a church.
- ▶ Teaches others at church.
- ▶ Serves in the community.
- ▶ Supports local or international missions.

Spiritual health scale

Parents gave observations for a total of 3,472 adult children. Eighty-five percent identify as Christians, according to their parents, giving them at least 1 point on the 8-point spiritual health scale. But only 3 percent had a score of 8, the highest possible. Two-thirds had a score of 2 or less. Half had a score of 0 or 1, meaning they either don't identify as Christians (11 percent) or they identify as Christians but have none

of the other spiritual practices (39 percent).

LifeWay Research then compared the results of all these young adults to find out which factors predict the highest spiritual condition.

The top factor: Bible reading. Twenty-nine percent of the young adults regularly read the Bible while growing up, according to their parents. On average, that group has 12.5 percent higher spiritual health than otherwise comparable individuals who didn't, LifeWay Research found.

In addition, spiritual health levels are 7.5 percent higher on average for young adults who regularly spent time praying while growing up (28

(See ‘Key,’ page 13)

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BY THE NUMBERS
{Hurricane Irma response} at press time



COMMENT

The Protestant Reformation's Surprising Gift of Unity

On Sept. 12, 2017, a remarkable thing happened. An astonishingly diverse group of Protestant Christian leaders released a Confession of Faith designed to demonstrate the unity among Christian believers who trace their heritage to the Protestant Reformation.

The confession is called “A Reforming Catholic Confession” and was signed by leaders ranging from Anglican to Pentecostal and from Armenian to Calvinists. (See story in Sept. 21 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* or online at www.thealabamabaptist.org.) The idea for the confession was birthed in the mind of Jerry Walls, a professor of philosophy at Houston Baptist University in Texas. Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, was co-chairman of the group’s executive committee.

The new confession comes as evangelical Christians and others prepare to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation which is dated from Martin Luther nailing his famous 95 Theses to the Wittenberg Castle Church door on Oct. 31, 1517.

Core elements of Christianity

Some point to today’s large number of Protestant denominations as a failure of the Reformation. Walls counters saying the new confession demonstrates the remarkable togetherness that exists throughout the world among Protestants on the core elements of Christianity.

One leader of the new confession movement explained disagreements among Protestants look bigger than they really are because the many groups share so much in common.

Drafters acknowledge the confession does not say everything every group would like but it does express what all the groups agree on. Considering signatories come from Anglican, Anabaptist, Baptist, Free Church, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Pentecostal, Presbyterian and more, agreement on core elements will surprise many.

Like me, most who read the confession will find it an excellent statement, and, I believe, would willingly add their own names to it if asked.

What “A Reforming Catholic Confession” puts in formal terms for all to see may be what has been happening in local churches for years. Protestant Christians (including Baptists) have



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

been acting as if they have more in common when it comes to what they believe about God, salvation, the Bible and the Christian life than they have differences.

In 1980, Southern Baptist life was astir with the news that Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Adrian Rogers was to be the featured speaker at a “Washington for Jesus Rally” sponsored by Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker and other nationally known religious personalities from the evangelical world. Up to that time Southern Baptists had shied away from participation in such events and many urged Rogers to cancel.

After the event Rogers met with state paper editors and was asked about his participation. He responded that he would fellowship with any Christian or group of Christians who acknowledged the one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all as stated in Ephesians 4:4–6.

Rogers held to that position and so did most of the SBC presidents who followed him. Today Southern Baptists are leaders in much of the evangelical world.

Members of Baptist churches also followed that example. Today it is not uncommon to hear someone joke that Baptist is the largest religious background of members of this Methodist church or that Presbyterian congregation or some other community church fellowship.

At the same time Baptists have received members from many evangelical backgrounds. When such people present themselves the usual concern is about their salvation experience and whether they received New Testament baptism, meaning did their baptism follow their salvation experience. Coming from another church “of like faith and order” is not as important as it used to be.

Denominational identity also may be wan-

ing, at least among Baptists. More and more churches omit Baptist from their name, some because they believe the identity hinders people from coming. Use of denominational literature continues to trend downward as churches write their own material or turn to Christian publishing houses rather than denominational specific outlets.

Speakers and conference leaders seem to transcend denominational lines. This is true for churches as well as denominationally sponsored events. The ministry of the speaker or conference leader is the greatest value. As a result the same speaker may be at a Baptist church this month, a Methodist church in a neighboring city next month and a nearby Presbyterian church the following month.

It is as if we are all fishing out of the same pond. Despite different denominational identities we study the same material, read the same books and hear the same speakers.

Generally speaking, more and more magnifies what evangelical Christians hold in common. Less and less emphasizes individual denominational distinctives. Even pastors move from denomination to denomination.

One result of all of this is more nondenominational or community churches and fewer denominationally identified churches. Another result is closer cooperation among churches of a community in sharing Christ through joint missions and ministries.

A few years ago a keen observer of Baptist life commented that he was confident Baptist beliefs

(our theology) would continue until the Lord’s return. He was not so sure the Baptist denomination would last that long. He may be right.

The new Reforming Catholic Confession is a wonderful reminder that no denomination is alone in the work of our Lord. All have many ministry partners and God is at work in them. After all, God’s call was to build up His Kingdom. None was called to build up a denominational kingdom.

Body of Christ

Locally and nationally, a growing appreciation for one another and closer cooperation with one another in Christian service can only be positive, for Jesus prayed that His church “might be one” (John 17).

At the same time, Baptists have understandings and perspectives to offer the entire body of Christ. Hopefully these distinctives will not be lost as the body of Christ goes forward. ✝



**500th
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
REFORMATION**

**For more stories about the
500th anniversary of the
Reformation, see pages 4–5.**

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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Makeup of evangelicals

Influence of white Protestants decreasing in US, report shows

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Is "white Christian America" dead?
And who is the man sounding its death
knell?

In a recently released report, "America's Changing Religious Identity," the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) reported that 43 percent of all adult Americans identify as both white and Christian and only 30 percent identify as white and Protestant. This is a dramatic decline from four decades ago, PRRI noted, when white Christians accounted for 81 percent of Americans, and 55 percent were white Protestant.

Mississippi native Robert P. Jones is the founding CEO of PRRI, whose recent statistics echo the theme of his 2016 book, "The End of White Christian America." In the book Jones ties the dramatic demographic shift to current political, social and racial divisions in the U.S.

Jones is no stranger to the topic. He holds a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University in Atlanta and a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. A leading voice on religion, values and public life, Jones co-chairs the national steering committee for the Religion and Politics Section at the American Academy of Religion.

Religious affiliation statistics reflected in the September 2017 PRRI report, co-authored by Jones and PRRI research director Daniel Cox, were drawn from 2016 surveys of 101,000 Americans in all 50 states. While ethnic diversity because of such factors as immigration contributes to a small portion of the decline in white Christian church membership, most of the decline hails from rising numbers of people claiming no religious affiliation, especially young adults.

Baptists remain largest group

While some U.S. regions are growing more religiously diverse, the Deep South remains solidly in the "white Christian" camp. Mississippi is the least religiously diverse state, followed closely by Alabama. Though posting declines along with other Protestant denominations, Baptists continue to dominate the American religious scene.

"Among Protestants in the U.S., Baptists are the largest denominational family. Roughly one-third (32 percent) of all Protestants identify with some Baptist denomination, at least three times the number who identify with the next largest denominational families — Methodist (10 percent), Pentecostal (10 percent) and Lutheran (8 percent)," the PRRI report noted.

Beyond issues of salvation and empty pews, what do all these numbers mean?

The erosion of the white Christian majority represents nothing less than a seismic shift in American politics and policy, Jones contends.

"Falling numbers and the marginalization of a once dominant racial and religious identity — one that has been central not just to

white Christians themselves but to the national mythos — threatens white Christians' understanding of America itself," Jones wrote.

Church services still segregated

Church services, as Martin Luther King once observed, continue to occupy the most segregated time of the week.

That segregation, along with previous majority status, has insulated white Christians from the issues of an increasingly diverse population, Jones suggests.

"America's still-segregated modern life is marked by three realities," according to Jones.

"First geographic segregation has meant that ... most white Americans continue to live in locales that insulate them from the obstacles facing many majority-black communities. Second ... the overwhelming majority of white Americans don't have a single close relationship with a person who isn't white. Third there are virtually no American institutions positioned to resolve these persistent problems of systemic and social segregation," he writes.

"It's no longer possible to believe that White Christian America sets the tone for the country's culture as a whole." ❖

Could highly publicized study be inaccurate?

A recent study by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) shows evangelicals as losing members at a rapid rate — from 23 percent in 2006 to 17 percent of Americans in 2016.

And for those who are staying, the crowd is more diverse than it used to be, the study shows. One in three American evangelicals is a person of color, and white Christians, who made up 81 percent of Americans in 1976, now account for less than half of the population, according to PRRI.

The study, "America's Changing Religious Identity," gleaned data from more than 101,000 Americans across every state and has an overall margin of error of plus or minus 0.4 percentage points.

But not everyone agrees that the survey is an accurate representation of the state of evangelicals. Several scholars, including Tobin Grant, department chair of political science at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, have challenged the data.

"The decline that they (PRRI) show in their survey doesn't match what we see in other surveys that are of higher quality and are seen as more accurate," Grant said, according to The Christian Post. He cited a General Social Survey (GSS) graph of "white (not latino) 'Born Again'" Christians, which shows a mostly flat line from 2004 to 2016 at around 20 percent.

Andrew R. Lewis, assistant professor at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio, and Ryan P. Burge, who teaches at Eastern Il-

linois University in Charleston, also took issue with PRRI's report, according to the Post. They backed up their dissenting position with findings from both the GSS and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

Both of those studies, they noted, also used large, national samples and included two approaches to measuring evangelicals — affiliation with specific denominations and self-identification with evangelicalism.

GSS showed "evangelicals by affiliation" declining by 2-3 percent and "evangelicals by self-identification" — the category the PRRI used — remaining constant.

"In the CCES evangelicals by self-identification actually increase from the 2008 baseline, while evangelicals by affiliation remain relatively constant. In fact the only statistically significant change in all the data is an increase in self-identified evangelicals

in the CCES from 2008 to 2012 (and nearly 2016)," Lewis and Burge wrote.

'Solid evidence'

Grant said "no survey is perfect," but he noted that the GSS is "considered the gold standard on how to do a survey on these types of questions," according to the Post.

But Robert P. Jones, PRRI's CEO and author of "The End of White Christian America," said the study is "solid evidence of a new, second wave of white Christian decline that is occurring among white evangelical Protestants just over the last decade." (TAB)

**Evangelicals are
losing members at
a rapid rate — from
23 percent in 2006
to 17 percent of
Americans in 2016.**

**Public Religion Research
Institute**

Greater unity

Protestants, Catholics have more in common now, some say

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Timothy George says he isn't surprised to see studies that show Catholics and Protestants get along better than they did 500 years ago when the Reformation happened.

From his perspective, a lot has changed in the past 50 years alone. "The hostility level has gone down, even from when I was a little boy," said George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

He remembers when John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960 — the first Catholic to ever be elected to the position.

"There was significant prejudice on both sides at that time, and that's a lot less now than it was," George said.

The Reformation is not over. Some significant issues still divide Catholics and Protestants, and the message of the Reformation still needs to be heard, he said. But even still, there's greater unity than there used to be.

Why the split happened

In 1517, Catholics and Protestants were pretty different — different enough for Martin Luther to effectively break up with the Catholic Church by nailing his 95 Theses to its door.

His beef with them? First he didn't agree with the fact that, at the time, the Catholic Church sold indulgences, a type of "credit" church leaders said could reduce the penalty for sin in the afterlife. Church members could earn these through good works.

Luther's stance was that sin was covered by grace alone.

He had other grievances too. The Bible, not the Pope or the Church, was the only source of religious authority, he said.

It was a divide that sent Protestants in a different direction for the next five centuries.

"The two main parts of the Reformation — the normative authority of the Bible and justification by faith alone — are views that Protestants continue to affirm," George said. "Without them, the Reformation message is completely lost."

Protestants and Catholics have made progress toward agreeing on the grace of God as the agent of salvation, but they've made very

little progress on the question of authority, George said. "There we are pretty deeply divided."

But even so, according to recent studies by Pew Research, across Europe and the U.S., "the prevailing view is that Protestants and Catholics today are more similar religiously than they are different."

Though reformers believed that salvation came through faith alone — a view known as "sola fide" in Latin — many Protestants today believe that a combination of faith and works are necessary to reach heaven, according to Pew. That's traditionally the Catholic-held viewpoint.

Whether or not Protestants indicate they believe in "faith alone" is directly tied to whether or not they were taught that sola fide is a Protestant tradition, the studies show.

Of those who were taught that, such as Southern Baptists, 77 percent agree with it. Of the more mainline Protestants who weren't taught that, only 35 percent agree.

But theological similarities and differences aside, other things have fostered neighborly sentiments between Protestants and Catholics in recent decades, George said — things like the sanctity of human life and other social issues.

"One of the things that's drawn evangelicals and Catholics together is the way the world has become increasingly secularized. The world has become anti-religious and hostile to people of faith to a

great extent," he said. "It's been a more difficult environment for faith groups, so we've found ourselves joining together more. We (Protestants and Catholics) don't agree on everything, but if you're comparing the way it was 100

years ago to today, it's a big difference."

George himself has been contributing to this neighborly sentiment through his work with Thomas Guarino as co-editor of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together at Twenty: Vital

Statements on Contested Topics." Guarino, who teaches theology at Seton Hall University, a Catholic institution in South Orange, New Jersey, says there is "no question" that Protestants and Catholics are "much less divided today than five centuries ago."

From the Catholic perspective, he attributes much of this to the Second Vatican Council, a meeting of the worldwide Catholic bishops and theologians held in the 1960s.

"The Council, coming as it did not long after WWII, the Holocaust and the use of nuclear weapons — and with the world in the midst of the Cold War — saw as one of its main goals the need to forge strong ties among all men and women," Guarino said.

They wanted to focus on the things that unite those of faith, not divide them, he said. "While certainly not ignoring differences between Catholicism and Protestantism, the Council emphasized

"It's been a more difficult environment for faith groups, so we've found ourselves joining together more."

Timothy George, founding dean, Beeson Divinity School



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those foundational beliefs that unite all Christians, such as faith in the One God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — and faith in Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer of the world."

That council strived for unity and always referred to Protestants as "separated brethren," Guarino said, "indicating that Catholics and Protestants are part of the same family despite the differences that exist between them."

Those differences, other than the ones already mentioned, include the nature and number of the sacraments and the structure of the church and its ministries, he said.

"In ecumenical dialogue, we probe these issues in great depth to determine the extent of our agreement and disagreement," Guarino said.

But, he added, "Even in areas where there is legitimate disagreement, we have found points of unity and common faith."

In the U.S., George finds that Catholics and Protestants are more willing than ever to sit down and study the Bible together, despite their differences.

'A wonderful thing'

"I think that's a wonderful thing, a unifying thing," he said.

And Pew reports similar sentiments in Europe, even though the Reformation led to more than a century of wars and persecution there.

In every European country surveyed, roughly 90 percent or more Protestants and Catholics say they are willing to accept members of the other tradition as neighbors. And large majorities of both say they would be willing to accept members of the other group into their families.

"I think there is greater unity today between Catholics and Protestants than at any time since the Reformation," Guarino said.✚

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A report from the Joint Center for Housing Studies found that boomers are one of the most significant drivers of the record spending on home improvement last year, and their influence on this market likely will continue to grow. The report predicts that homeowners 65 and older will make up one-third of all improvement expenditures by 2025, doubling their share from 1995-2005.

Source: Ana Veciana-Suarez (aveciana-suarez@miamiherald.com) March 2017

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Sola gratia *{grace alone}*

Despite harsh pushback, Luther launched theological revolution

By Scott Guffin
Special to The Alabama Baptist

If you were to ask the average Southern Baptist pastor what it takes to have eternal life, you would likely receive an answer highlighting the truth that forgiveness of our sins and the promise of a home in heaven can only come to us by God's grace alone (sola gratia) through faith alone (sola fide), as Paul noted in Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

That pastor might go on to stress — for the purpose of being ultra-clear — that there is nothing at all that we can do to bring about our own salvation; it is entirely the work and gift of God, and we can only receive it through faith in Christ. All of the good deeds that we could amass in a long and productive lifetime of hard work and self-sacrifice would never even come close to earning that which only God can give. It is through His grace alone that we are saved.

Securing salvation

While a statement like the one above might be the "amen"-garnering norm for the average Southern Baptist and most other Protestants as well, such was not the case 500 years ago when western Christianity was almost entirely dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, whose theology, tradition and practice at that time promoted something vastly different than a Protestant understanding of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. On the contrary, the "salvation" offered by the Catholic Church of the 1500s was one that stressed the necessity of works and even went so far as to endorse a variety of monetary transactions

that would — so they taught — help a person to gain the favor of God for the purpose of securing their own salvation, and, in some instances, even the salvation of their dead loved ones as well.

Practices to 'win' God's favor

Among these practices was the purchasing of relics, items that were purported to have been connected with Jesus or one of the apostles in some way. Catholic parishioners were urged to buy relics as a way of displaying to God their desire to be close to His Son, therefore honoring Him while also currying favor with Him.

People were likewise encouraged to go on pilgrimages to destinations connected with the faith, which served both as a source of revenue for the Church — as people bought souvenirs and supplies from Church-owned vendors — and as a means of presumably pleasing God.

A third major practice in this regard was the selling by the Church of indulgences, certificates signed by the Pope that supposedly granted to the purchaser (or his dead loved ones) the forgiveness of sins and subsequent release from purgatory or even from hell itself.

It was in this time of such superstitious beliefs and practices that voices within the Catholic Church began to cry out for reform, hoping to return the Church to its biblical grounding. Beginning in the 12th and 13th centuries, proto-reformers like

Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe and Jon Hus pressed for the Church to reject corruption, to address immorality within the ranks of its clergy, and to return to biblical theology and practices. The Church's response was to condemn such dissenters as heretics, and some, like Hus, were put to death as a result. As the centuries rolled on, the Church sought to silence these voices calling for

reformation, but it could not. In due time their teachings would begin to gain more and more traction, as their boldness was combined with a wave of cultural and political movements that set the stage for a theological showdown in the early 16th century that would forever change the face of Western Christianity.

The defining moment that set the wheels of revolution in motion occurred Oct. 31, 1517, when a young Augustinian monk named Martin Luther nailed his now-famous 95 Theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg Castle.

Although his initial intention was merely to create an academic theological debate on the matter of indulgences, Luther would step into the shoes and raise the banner of the reformers who had gone before him, igniting a firestorm that resulted in what is commonly recognized as the birth of the Protestant Reformation.

Religious authority

Central to Luther's arguments in opposition to indulgences was a call for the

Church to return to an understanding of Christianity that had been put forward in the 4th and 5th centuries by Augustine — namely, that the Bible should serve as our ultimate religious authority and that salvation cannot be obtained through human works but is rather bestowed only by God through His divine grace. In this regard, Luther was not plowing new ground but rather was seeking to call the Church back to its earlier roots in a deeply biblical understanding of the Christian life.

Negative response

The response of Church officials to Luther was not positive, to say the least. Over the next three years, he was subjected to a variety of papal tribunals where Church representatives argued against his teachings and called on him to recant. Refusing to do so, he was excommunicated from the Catholic Church in January 1521. Unfettered by the threats of Church authorities, Luther continued to stand for and to teach the doctrine of the good news of God's free grace as set forth in Scripture.

As the newly hatched Protestant Reformation began to take shape and to grow, Luther's central doctrines of Scripture alone (sola scriptura), grace alone (sola gratia) and faith alone (sola fide) would form the core of the theological revolution that would propel Protestantism on to be a transformational force in Western Christianity and in the world.

Today we as Southern Baptists believe and live in the doctrines passed down to us by those who took principled stands a half a millennium ago, individuals who considered scriptural truth to be of greater importance than their own lives and reputations. Their emphasis on Scripture as the ultimate source of truth led them to discern that salvation is the gracious work of God alone, and it is this understanding that we trust in and in which we find eternal assurance. We know that a salvation that is in any way one of our own making is a salvation that will forever be in doubt. A salvation, however, that is entirely a work of God's grace stands forever.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Scott Guffin is executive director of Christian ministry for Samford University in Birmingham. He holds a bachelor of science degree in religion and philosophy from Samford and a master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.



"Today we as Southern Baptists believe and live in the doctrines passed down to us by those who took principled stands a half a millennium ago, individuals who considered scriptural truth to be of greater importance than their own lives and reputations. Their emphasis on Scripture as the ultimate source of truth led them to discern that salvation is the gracious work of God alone, and it is this understanding that we trust in and in which we find eternal assurance."



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

ALABAMA CRENSHAW

► **Jack Anderson** is the new director of missions for **Alabama Crenshaw Association**. Anderson will retire as pastor of Bradleyton Church, Highland Home, and from his position with LifeWay Christian Store in Montgomery on Oct. 31. He will begin his new role Nov. 1. He holds degrees from Mobile College (now University of Mobile) and New Orleans Seminary.



ANDERSON

BALDWIN

► **Southside Church, Bay Minette**, will hold a retirement reception for Pastor Larry Patterson on Nov. 5, 2 p.m. Patterson served as pastor of Southside for nine years. During his 44 years of ministry he also served as director of missions for Baldwin Association.

BETHEL

► **Thomaston Church** will celebrate its homecoming and 77th anniversary Oct. 29, 10:30 a.m. Jerry Henry will speak and Mitzi Gates will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. David Traywick is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Old Salem Church, Frisco City**, will celebrate its homecoming and 200th anniversary Nov. 18–19. Memories Day will be Saturday at 2 p.m. with a fish supper at 5 p.m. and special music by The Dixie Echoes at 6 p.m. Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, will speak in the 10 a.m. Sunday service with special acknowledgements. Lunch will be at noon. Thomas Lindsey is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Huffman Church, Birmingham**, will host KingdomFest, a community fall festival, with Eastside Church, Birmingham, and Kingdom Family Christian Fellowship, Center Point, on Oct. 29, 3–6 p.m. There will be food, games, inflatables, entertainment, prizes and candy. Wear your favorite royal costume and receive a special treat. For more information call Carrie Smith at 205-836-0168 or Audrey Krier at 205-833-3463. Derrell Crimm is interim pastor of Huffman Church and Bill Morrison is pastor of Eastside Church.

COFFEE

► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will hold its third annual community country fest Oct. 28, 4–6 p.m. The Jerry Gay Family will perform special music. There will be antique tractors, cars and farming implements, old time demonstrations, carriage and hay rides, a petting zoo, games,

crafts, a peanut boil, popcorn and cotton candy and door prizes. For more information call the church office at 334-347-6082. Danny Wiggins is pastor. ► **New Ebenezer Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming Nov. 5, 11 a.m. Larry Doster will speak. There will not be Sunday School. Lunch will follow the service. Randall Pearson is interim pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Pleasant Valley No. 2 Church, Collinsville**, will host the annual Lookout Mountain Children's Home Benefit Concert on Nov. 4, 6 p.m. The Redemption Trio will be the guest singers. Association-al music director DeWitt Cox is the coordinator of this event. Kelly Clontz is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Snowtown Church, Dora**, will hold a Fifth Sunday Night Singing on Oct. 29, 5 p.m. EverPraySing from Jasper will perform special music. Bob Thomason is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Craig Carlisle** is the new director of missions for **Etowah Association**. He previously served as pastor of Twelfth Street Church, Rainbow City, since 2007. He holds degrees from Samford University in Birmingham; Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Tammy, have one child.



CARLISLE

PICKENS

► **Lyle Dease** is the new director of missions for **Pickens Association**. He was installed during the evening session of the annual meeting Oct. 17. Dease and his wife, Claren, are former International Mission Board missionaries.

ST. CLAIR

► **Evening Star Church, Vincent**, will hold an evangelist conference Nov. 5–8, 7 nightly. Guest evangelists will include Shad Smith, Dale Butler and Frank Parrish. Shon Phillips is pastor.

WINSTON

► **First Church, Addison**, will host the associational evangelism conference Nov. 5, 5 p.m. Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Seminary, will speak and The Cleghorns will perform special music. First, Addison, also will hold revival services Nov. 6–8, 6:30 nightly. Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Church, will speak Monday; Sammy Gilbreath of the State Board of Missions, will speak Tuesday; and Eric Hixon, pastor of New Covenant Church, Oneonta, will speak Wednesday. Mark Kimbrell is pastor. ☛

TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Demonology

Encountering the Demonic — Then and Now

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

After the rather frequent mention of demonic activity during Jesus' earthly ministry, it is noteworthy that less than a half dozen of direct encounters with demons are recorded in Acts. Some who were tormented by unclean spirits were brought to the apostles in Jerusalem and were all healed (Acts 5:12–16). Philip, who was not one of the Twelve, exercised authority over unclean spirits in Samaria (Acts 8:5–7). In Philippi, Paul was the instrument of releasing a slave girl from a spirit of divination that was manifested in fortune telling (Acts 16:16–18). Later God worked unusual miracles through Paul in Ephesus, one of which was the expulsion of evil spirits (Acts 19:11–12). What are we to make of the diminished number of recorded encounters with demons after the ascension of Christ? Furthermore, what should be the attitude and actions of believers today in relation to evil spirits?

Of foremost observations is that Jesus did not leave His followers with a ritual or procedure for combating demons. He simply exercised His authority as the divine Son of God in combating demons and on occasion bestowed such authority on some of His followers, such as the Twelve, as well as Paul and Philip. Many of us have heard about direct encounters between missionaries and evil spirits on missions fields, but we hear little about such encounters in our own church ministries.

Are enemy spirits less active or has the strategy changed? Is demonic activity in our times simply focused in settings that are given to superstitions and biblical illiteracy? With the fact that the New Testament contains frequent warnings about false teachers and false doctrines, could it be that satanic strategy has shifted from physical manifestations to theological ones? Hebrews 13:9 warns, "Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines." Does Satan seek to incapacitate believers for fruitful living and service by promoting false teaching rather than inflicting physical maladies? The prophetic words in 1 Timothy 4:1

is that "the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons." Might this warning refer to doctrines suggested or promoted by deceiving spirits as opposed to doctrines about demons? Is the current manifestation of demonic activity focused on capturing people's minds more than attacking their bodies? Such would account for the prevalence of admonitions about false teaching and false teachers found throughout the New Testament. We remember that Satan is subtle in the pursuit of his goal of opposing God and God's people. The capture of the mind can have disastrous effects that may well be more serious than causing physical pain or disabilities. Having rebelled against God, these spiritual beings seek to extend rebellion by influencing people to live in ways that are contrary to God. As Christians we are called on to resist Satan while submitting ourselves wholly to God.

Be cautious

Two cautions are in order in thinking about the doctrine of demons. The first is that we not dismiss the role of demons or take lightly what the Bible says about them. Denial of the existence of a real enemy makes the enemy all the more dangerous. The second is not to overplay demonic activity by finding demons behind every negative event, sickness, disappointment or failure, as if an exorcism is called for in every situation. In the meantime we can rejoice over the eventual outcome when the devil and his angels are finally and eternally vanquished. ☛

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.



Biblical justice

Pastor Lance Cunningham of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Cincinnati, presents the report during the annual meeting of the Cincinnati Area Baptist Association.



Photo by Mark Snowden

Cincinnati Baptist pastors look at social justice from biblical standpoint

Civil unrest sparked by the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, opened Mark Snowden's eyes to a dilemma. What is the responsibility of Southern Baptist pastors in seeking the social justice that Jesus would demand?

Snowden, now director of missional leadership for the Cincinnati Area Baptist Association (CABA) in Ohio, assembled a diverse team of four Cincinnati pastors to study the question of justice from a biblical standpoint. The result is a new report focused on societal and biblical truths from the study group and a list of seven recommendations from Snowden available to pastors within the association and online.

The paper, presented during the CABA annual meeting Oct. 9 at Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Cincinnati, is a call for Southern Baptist pastors to study practical ways to respond to such societal ills as poverty, hunger, geographically based unemployment, racism, criminal injustice, opioid addiction and other problems, Snowden said.

'Standing on the sidelines'

"If you say the name 'Ferguson, Missouri,' people are very aware of the racial tension and the rioting," said Snowden, who serves as Missouri Baptist Convention's evangelism and discipleship strategist. "And I saw a lot of our churches standing on the sidelines."

The need for a biblically framed model of social justice continued to haunt

Snowden when he moved to Cincinnati in 2016. There, public unrest erupted when murder charges were dismissed against a white university police officer when an unarmed black man was shot and killed.

Law enforcement officials decided not to retry the case after two juries were unable to reach a verdict.

"What does it take for us to be able to engage properly as we should, as followers of Jesus?" Snowden asks. "This study is at least trying to help us say, 'What does the Bible say to address that?'"

Study group member Jerome Byrd, an African-American and founding pastor of the 30-year-old Good News Baptist Church, Cincinnati, said America is in great need of social justice.

"Our society is in deep trouble, deep trouble, and all we have to do is look at the news, look at the internet and we can easily see that we are so far away from the standards of God," Byrd said. "The only way we can come back to those standards is for godly men to stand up in their pulpits in their churches

and proclaim what thus sayeth the Lord, and to do it boldly, to do it strongly and then encourage their people to embrace the Scriptures and to live out the examples that Jesus showed us when it comes to social justice."

"We have to have compassion on everybody involved. That's what Jesus does."

**Pastor Lance Cunningham
Mount Carmel Baptist Church,
Cincinnati**

Study group chairman Lance Cunningham, Mount Carmel Baptist pastor and annual meeting host, described the goal of conducting the study as "a wrestling with your own soul."

In compiling the Bible-based study, which Cunningham calls a theologically based pastoral call, the study group had to consider whether they themselves were righteous and not self-righteous, whether they had a right relationship not just with God but with others and whether they viewed others with mercy and humility.

Christians are separated today by age, generational differences, nationality, socioeconomic differences and other characteristics that make it difficult to effectively discuss societal ills and consider solutions, Cunningham said.

"I want people to approach one another in grace," Cunningham said.

"there's a huge divide" among Christians regarding the application of grace. "Grace to some people means you're going to approve of me and applaud me no matter what I say, what I do and you're going to condone it. ... It's not within our authority to condone that which is evil, nor to condemn that which is approved."

Be proactive

The study group landed on biblical justice as the answer to social justice, said Cunningham, who would like pastors to consider the findings and be proactive in going forward.

"We have to have compassion on everybody involved. That's what Jesus does," Cunningham said. "He's compassionate ... even when He stands firmly against Pharisees and Sadducees, He's doing it out of compassion, hoping they'll see the error of their ways."

The association took no formal action on the study and does not expect to adopt any official statement or recommendations, Snowden said.

"We consider it in the churches' hands and raised it as a tool," he said.

The report and recommendations on how to engage the issue are available on the front page of CABA's website, CincinnatiBaptist.com. (BP)



Various annual meetings set for November in Huntsville

Each year prior to and during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, various groups across Alabama Baptist life meet to connect and conduct business. Meeting alongside this year's annual meeting, which will be held at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, on Nov. 14–15, are:

► **Alabama Church Planter Network** — The Alabama Church Planter Network will have a dinner Nov. 12 at Essential Church, Huntsville, 4:30–8:30 p.m. The guest speaker will be Tommy Duke, connection pastor for Calvary Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, and a planter of churches in Pennsylvania and Florida. Since 2014, Duke has trained more than 175 men in coaching networks across Alabama. Child care will be provided. For more information or to register, visit plantalabama.org.

► **Volunteers in Missions** — The Volunteers in Missions will host a light “pick-up lunch” at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, on Nov. 14 in Room 160 at noon. The Volunteer of the Year will be announced during the state convention annual meeting. For more information, contact the State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238.

► **Alabama Network of Christian Community Ministers (ANCCM)** — ANCCM will meet Nov. 13 at Inside-Out Ministries at 103 Gin Oaks Court in Madison, 8:30 a.m.–1 p.m. The leaders of the ministry will speak and lead a tour of the facility. Lunch will follow the tour. For more information, contact Kristy Kennedy at kkennedy@alsbom.org or

1-800-264-1225, ext. 311. Kennedy requests that those attending would RSVP by Nov. 6.

► **Directors of Missions and Mission Belles** — The Alabama Conference of Directors of Missions (DOM) and Mission Belles will hold its annual meeting Nov. 13 at Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville, 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Directors of missions Kevin Ward and John Granger will share their stories prior to the 11:45 a.m. lunch and Todd Unzicker, associate pastor for The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, and former DOM, will speak after lunch. The Mission Belles will hold separate meetings prior to and following lunch. Deadline to register is Nov. 7. For more information or to register, contact Eddy Garner at eddy.garner@gmail.com or 256-335-0691. Send payment for the meeting to Barry Cosper, c/o Bessemer Baptist Association, 1630 Powder Plant Road SW, Bessemer, AL 35022.

► **Pastors Conference** (see story, this page).

Messenger cards: To request messenger cards for the state convention annual meeting, go to cards.alsbom.org. For more information, contact Sandy Harmann at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 266, or sharmann@alsbom.org. (TAB)

Finish!

November conference urges pastors on in their race

When Richard L. Richie was in seminary, one of his professors told the classroom full of students that only two or so of them would stick with ministry full-time.

“I think back on that and he was truly correct,” Richie said. He’s been in ministry 24 years and is currently treasurer of the 2017 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference, but the ministry tenure for many seminary grads is just a handful of years.

That’s why he and the other conference officers are looking forward to what God is going to do through the Nov. 13 event at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Rob Jackson, president of the conference, said of the theme, “Finish!”: “It’s a call for all ministers, whether young or old, to finish the race Christ has set before us and finish it well.”

It’s not an easy call, Richie acknowledged, but it’s a call worth all the effort.

“How powerful that is to hear a calling from the Lord but then to embrace that fully and try to stay in our lane and keep our eyes on the Author and Perfec-

tor of our faith,” Richie said.

Part of fighting the good fight, as 2 Timothy 4:7–8 references, is reaching the lost for Christ and making disciples. That’s why two breakout sessions have been added to the normal conference format:

► “Becoming a Disciple-Maker Workshop,” with Billie

Hanks Jr. and Robert Coleman, Nov. 12, 4–8:30 p.m. To sign up, call 256-353-5912.

► D-Life (disciple-making) Demo, Nov. 13, 8 a.m.

Refreshments will be provided at both breakouts, and both will be held in Room 221 at Whitesburg Baptist. (TAB)

Pastors Conference schedule

Morning Session — 9 a.m. to noon

9:30 a.m. Message: Teman Knight
10:25 a.m. Message: Scott Guffin
11:20 a.m. Message: Jimmy Jackson

Afternoon Session — 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1:35 p.m. Election of Officers
1:55 p.m. Message: Robert Coleman
2:50 p.m. Message: Billie Hanks Jr.
3:50 p.m. Message: David Uth

Evening Session — 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

6:50 p.m. Message: Phil Waldrep
7:40 p.m. Prayer Emphasis: Compassion International Inc.
8:05 p.m. Message: J.D. Greear

The Alabama Baptist is co-sponsoring a D-Life disciple making demonstration at 8 a.m. prior to the morning session.

Speakers



TEMAN KNIGHT
Pastor
Heritage Baptist Church
Montgomery, AL



SCOTT GUFFIN
Executive Director
Christian Ministries
Degree Program
Samford University
Birmingham, AL



JIMMY JACKSON
Pastor
Whitesburg Baptist
Church
Huntsville, AL



ROBERT COLEMAN
Distinguished Senior
Professor of
Discipleship & Evangelism
Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary
South-Hampton, MA



BILLY HANKS, JR.
Founder
Becoming a
Disciple-Maker/
International Evangelism
Association
Salado, TX



DAVID UTH
Pastor
First Baptist Church
Orlando, FL



PHIL WALDREP
Founder & President
Phil Waldrep
Ministries
Decatur, AL



J.D. GREEAR
Pastor, Author,
Theologian
The Summit Church
Raleigh-Durham, NC

ALABAMA BAPTIST PASTOR'S CONFERENCE

FINISH!
2 Timothy 4:7-8
Monday, November 13, 2017
Whitesburg Baptist Church

www.ALBaptistPC.com



According to the Feb. 11, 1851, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, the executive board of the Yallobusha Baptist Association strongly defended Rev. H.B. Hayward who was charged by the *Attalla Democrat* with promoting a slave rebellion. Hayward's fellow ministers called the charges “false and malicious” and said Hayward was “worthy of the confidence of the community.”

Dealing with disappointment

Working to avoid disappointment in relationships

Disappointed, again

As Kristi sits down to dinner with her children, she avoids looking at the empty chair at the table where her husband, Mike, usually sits. Mike should have been home an hour ago but he is late — again.

It's not uncommon for a last-minute emergency to arise at Mike's workplace but Mike also has been known to grab a bite after work with co-workers. When either happens, he rarely calls to let his wife know he will be late.

Kristi understands that emergencies happen. She doesn't even mind that he wants to spend time with friends from work. But Kristi is tired of eating cold meals with cranky kids.

How can she let Mike know how disappointed she is without starting another argument?

Say what's on your mind: communicating well with your spouse

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Though the ability to communicate is a gift from God, positive communication, especially between spouses, takes work, in large part because men and women typically communicate in very different ways.

"Some of the most striking differences between the sexes are the unique ways that men and women interact verbally," write Rhonda

H. Kelley and Monica Rose Brennan, co-authors of "Talking Is a Gift: Communication Skills for Women."

Kelley and Brennan describe several important distinctions between the ways men and women tend to use language.

For example, men tend to

talk more about sports, work activities and accomplishments. In contrast, women are reluctant to boast but are eager to talk about family, friends and feelings.

Differences in language

Women tend to share more about their problems and concerns in order to receive empathy and understanding. They find relief in just "letting it all out." But when a man hears "problem," he tends to think "solution," which his wife might perceive as critical of her own efforts in the situation.

Research also shows that while men and women speak approximately the same number of words per day, where they speak those words varies. Men use most of their words at work. Women tend to talk more at home. And when men speak, they tend to focus on information, speaking only when they have something to say, whereas women use language to affirm and connect with others.

H. Norman Wright, author of "Finding the Right One for You:

Secrets to Recognizing Your Perfect Mate," divides communicators into two groups: amplifiers, or those who give a number of descriptive sentences as they talk, and condensers, those who give only one or two sentences.

"In approximately 70 percent of marriages, the man is the condenser and the woman is the amplifier," according to Wright. "Neither is a negative trait but the amplifier wishes his or her partner would share more while the condenser wishes his or her partner would share less."

Wright suggests that adapting to the style of your spouse will aid in conversational compatibility.

"Try to speak in your partner's style," he advises. "If each would adapt (See 'Practice,' page 12)



Listen and share

Practical tips for making peace, avoiding disappointment in marriage relationships

By Rod Marshall and Lisa Keane
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Perhaps no relationship holds greater potential for disappointment than the most emotionally intimate relationship — marriage. A person may be kind to co-workers, courteous to neighbors and compassionate with fellow church members yet neglect to give the same amount of attention to his or her spouse.

As therapists, we are often tasked with helping our clients see another perspective. In relationships, that means developing understanding and insight about your relational partner. In other words, it is being able to see where someone else is coming from and why that person is behaving in a certain way. Fostering understanding and insight in a relationship does not necessarily mean that both individuals agree, but it does mean both of you are willing to listen and share your own point of view.

To avoid disappointment in relationships, you also must be willing to talk about your expectations. Unmet expecta-

tions can be a relationship destroyer. Frequently unmet expectations exist because they were never spoken in the first place. Even if an expectation is expressed, it may not be met. However, once an expectation is communicated there is more potential to work toward it. Marriages work best when the couple is working together toward common goals.

Identity in Christ

Ultimately your fulfillment and your identity must come from Christ. Our ultimate hope and joy come from the Lord and who He says we are in Christ. If two people in relationship are both growing closer to God, they also will be growing closer to one another. However, being in relationship with another means being in relationship with a fellow sinner. At times, we will all let one another down. We will all fail at being understanding. We will all see only one side of the conflict.

It is a good and holy labor to work toward stronger relationships. Here are some practical tips from the male and female perspective to help you reduce the risk of

disappointment in your most significant relationships.

He says:

Learn my communication style. I may be someone who warms up slowly or is more introverted. I may think of communication simply as a way to gather data in order to solve a problem. Don't assume I am trying to avoid you or hide anything from you. If it seems like I am "running away" from you, I may be asking for some space to think and process what is going on. Please do not pursue me. That will only motivate me to run away farther or faster.

Give me the benefit of the doubt (unless you are faced with overwhelming evidence that I no longer deserve the benefit of the doubt). Assume the best about me and my motives.

Do not be too surprised if you find out that I am not very good at managing conflict. Sometimes conflict can be scary for me. I very much like to win but I do not want to hurt you. Sometimes these conflicting motives leave me unsure of what to do next. Though I dislike conflict, I love solving problems. If we can work together as a team to solve the problems that are creating conflict, you might find me to be very willing to work toward resolution. It may be hard for me to accept responsibility for the contributions I have made to our conflict.

It is incredibly important to me to believe that you honestly respect me. I do not want to disappoint you. But sometimes it feels like many areas of my life are being judged and critiqued.

Let our relationship be someplace where I can feel respect and acceptance, and I will be more motivated to give you what you need from our relationship.

EDITOR'S NOTE — By Rod Marshall, president/CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. He is

a licensed professional counselor who has been married for nearly 30 years and is the father of two adult children.

She says:

I want to be treasured and know that you value me. I don't need to be treated as a delicate flower but as a precious jewel, something that you prize over all things except the Lord. I want to know that no matter how long we have been in relationship with each other, you are still interested in me. Show me your interest by being intentional in our time and conversations. Make time for me.

Know that I might want to outwardly process what is going on with our relationship.

Just because I need to talk about something does not mean there is an issue to fix. I value being heard. Often, that alone is what I need. Please listen to me and be willing to give me your attention, make eye contact and reflect back what I am saying.

I need to know that you think I am doing a good job. Whether it be with our family, in our marriage or my job, I need to hear affirming words from you on my efforts not just my outcomes. I need to hear that you see how hard I work and the sacrifices I am making for those around me. Give me specific examples of what you see and tell me how you are thankful for those things.

It is important for me to know that we are on the same team. Sometimes in the midst of our busy lives, I may feel that we are no longer working toward the same goals. Include me in planning for our family and our future. Celebrate with me as we accomplish our goals.

EDITOR'S NOTE — By Lisa Keane, clinical director of Pathways Professional Counseling. She is a licensed professional counselor who has been married for eight years and is the mother of two young children.✝





Forgive each other

Ephesians 4:32

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Biblical principles provide guidance, insight to resolving marital conflicts

By Kline W. Johnson, Ed.D.
Director, Baptist Family Resource and Counseling Ministry
Montgomery Baptist Association

Conflicts in marriage relationships, even Christian marriages, are unavoidable and inevitably lead to a feeling of disappointment in one's spouse and in oneself. However, conflict should be a temporary issue that a couple resolves intentionally and with love.

Both the Old and New Testament speak to the issue of conflict resolution. Many of the biblical teachings are focused on the relationship of Christians with one another. Because God's Word gives us directions for functioning in harmony, it is even more important in our marriage relationship.

The marriage commitment is the primary relationship in our human experience of sharing in God's love and acting in a way that honors God. This relationship also should show respect for your helpmate. In marriage, as in other relationships, the overall goal in successfully resolving conflicts and differences of opinions is unity.

'A gentle answer'

The writer of Proverbs tells us in 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Anger, psychologically speaking, is a response to a perceived threat. Therefore, it is our responsibility not to provoke a person to anger.

Two other Proverbs give instructions in responding to one another: "He who answers before listening — that is his folly and his shame" (Prov. 18:13); "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Prov. 12:18).

There should be no confusion regarding how we are to follow God's guidance in our Christian response to other people. A good summary for us is Proverbs 25:11: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." The adage "think before you speak" applies to all our interactions with people, but especially with our spouse.

In the New Testament, we find parallel and similar instructions including the admonition in James 1:19-20: "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

One aspect of conflict resolution in marriage is forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32 states:

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." When we seek God's forgiveness, He grants it instantaneously.

For most of us, forgiveness is a process.

Paul's letter to the church at Colossae applies to us as individuals affirming our need to forgive one another. Yes, this teaching includes your spouse and other people. In Colossians 3:13, Paul writes, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

With the biblical principles guiding us, let us review three practical applications of these principles in

daily living in the marriage relationship.

► **Deal with conflict immediately.** As soon as one or both partners become aware of a conflict, arrange an uninterrupted time to deal with the conflict. Delay in approaching an issue often intensifies the conflict.

► **Talk things out productively.** Conversations should center on the conflict and

seek a plan of action that each can accept as being beneficial to the relationship. Attack issues, problems or questions — not your spouse — and deal with only one issue at a time. Listen and ensure understanding of your mate's view before responding to specific statements. If additional support is needed resolving an issue, a trusted pastor or counselor can offer assistance.

► Handle the outcome respectfully.

Recognize that you don't have to be right or prove that your spouse was wrong. The Bible tells us to keep no record of wrongs. Do not revisit past disagreements or bring others into the discussion. It is imperative to deal with the issue before sharing the conflict with another person.

Christ and the Church

The Bible has much to say about living at peace with others. Because marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the Church, peace in the marriage relationship is of utmost importance. Resolving conflict is never easy but the result is harmony in the home.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Kline Johnson is a licensed professional counselor who has specialized in marriage and family counseling for 48 years. In addition to serving with the Montgomery Baptist Association, he teaches a couples Sunday School class at Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery.✉

"The Bible has much to say about living at peace with others. Because marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the Church, peace in the marriage relationship is of utmost importance. Resolving conflict is never easy, but the result is harmony in the home."



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Practice **healthy** communication

Children mimic parents' communication behavior, research shows

(continued from page 9)

their natural style to their spouse's style when they talk, each would respond better."

This is especially important for parents.

Research has shown that children mimic their parents' communication behaviors, with girls often following in their mother's style and sons often following in their father's.

"Poor communication can lead to growing apart as a couple. It also impacts your kids because they learn from watching you. So teach them how to do it in a healthy way by communicating well with your spouse. This may seem like a simple thing to do, but it requires action, intentional effort, desire and the willingness of you and your spouse to make it

happen," writes Marcus Kusi, co-author of "Communication in Marriage: How to Communicate with Your Spouse Without Fighting."

One of the easiest ways to start communicating well is to use only words that build up, according to Gary Chapman, author of "The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts."

'Love is kind'

"Many couples have never learned the tremendous power of verbally affirming each other. Verbal compliments, or words of appreciation, are powerful communicators of love," Chapman writes. "Love is kind. If then we are to communicate love verbally, we must use kind words."

Tone of voice is as important as word choice, according to Chapman.

"Sometimes our words say one thing, but our tone of voice says another. We are sending double messages. Our spouse will usually interpret our message based on our tone of voice, not the words we use," he writes.

In marriage, as well as in other relationships, the benefit of positive communication is a deeper emotional connection, Kusi writes.

"When you start communicating effectively with your spouse, you will feel heard and respected, become more present and listen empathetically. You will become a better spouse for yourself and your marriage. Furthermore, you will start looking forward to talking with your spouse, spending time together and being able to have those difficult conversations." 🌟

"When you start communicating effectively with your spouse, you will feel heard and respected, become more present and listen empathetically. You will become a better spouse for yourself and your marriage."

Marcus Kusi, co-author of "Communication in Marriage: How to Communicate with Your Spouse Without Fighting"

Helpful resources

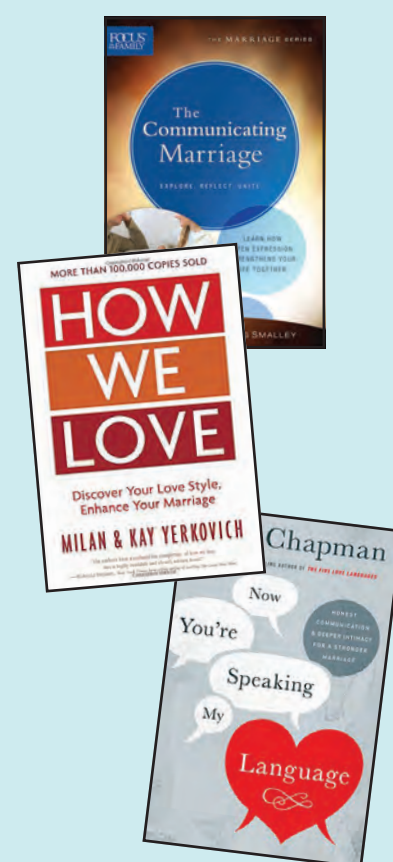
► "Now You're Speaking My Language: Honest Communication and Deeper Intimacy for a Stronger Marriage" by Gary Chapman

► "The Communicating Marriage (Focus on the Family Marriage Series)" by Barbara and Dennis Rainey

► "How We Love: Discover Your Love Style, Enhance Your Marriage" by Milan and Kay Yerkovich

► "52 Uncommon Dates: A Couple's Adventure Guide for Praying, Playing and Staying Together" by Randy Southern

► "131 Creative Conversations For Couples: Christ-honoring questions to deepen your relationship, grow your friendship and ignite romance" by Jed Jurchenko



Compiled by Carrie Brown McWhorter

Church ANNIVERSARIES

Sylacauga's Mount Vernon marks 75 years

Because of a joint service that commemorated its 75th anniversary and celebrated its annual homecoming, members and visitors of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Sylacauga, will remember Sept. 10 as a "wonderful day with beautiful music," according to Mary Staggs.

The "beautiful music" was supplied by the male chorus of Hopewell Baptist Church, Wellington. Edward Pickett, pastor of Hopewell Baptist, and Randy Roberson, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist, each shared a few words during the 11 a.m. service. A presentation also was made by Staggs, who serves as a representative for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.



Photo by Mary Staggs

Special displays were set up for participants to view and included old photos of former pastors and church activities, as well as old Sunday School and Training Union attendance books from years past. Mount Vernon is in Coosa River Baptist Association.

Center Point Baptist celebrates 175th anniversary

Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro, is a body of people who is "geared up and excited about the future," said Wendell Dutton (right) following a visit to its Sept. 10 service. Dutton was there as a representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission to commemorate the church's 175th anniversary.



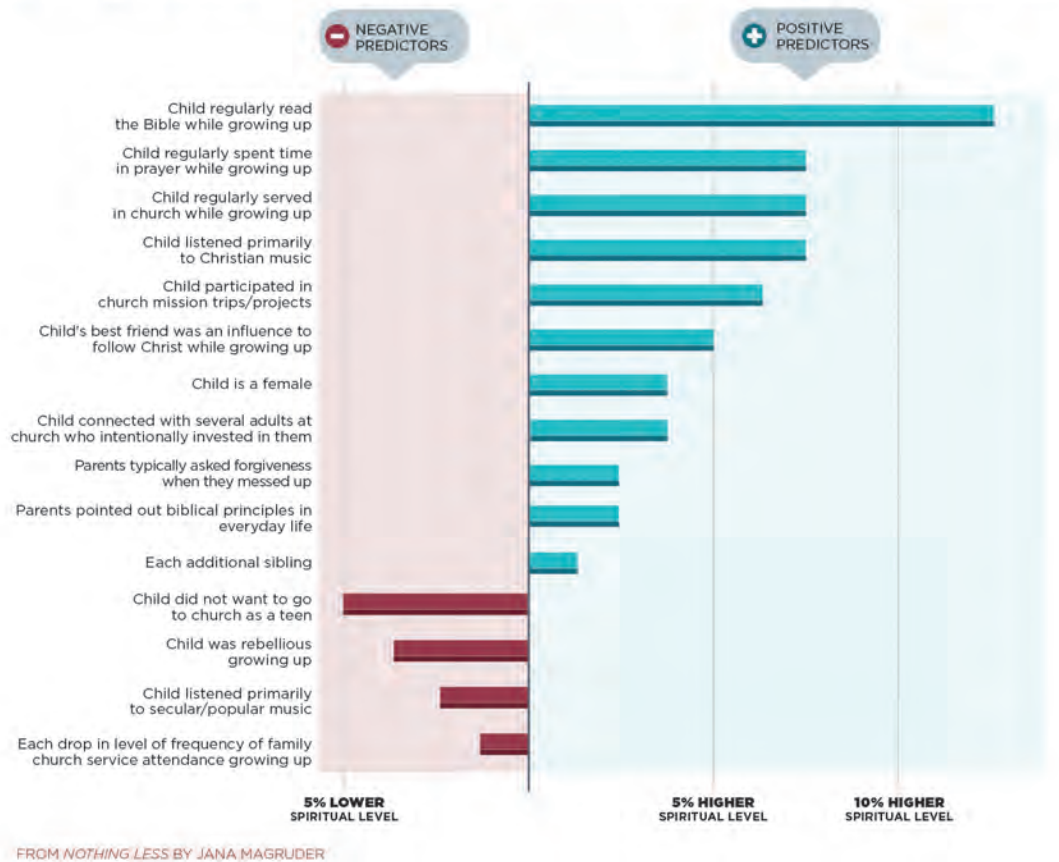
Photo courtesy of Wendell Dutton

A special guest of the 10:30 a.m. service was Dan Garland, director of pastoral ministries and church consulting for LifeWay Christian Resources, who brought the morning message. Garland also presented a certificate to the church on behalf of LifeWay, and a second commemorative certificate was presented by Dutton. Pastor David Moorman (left) accepted both certificates on behalf of the church.

Garland preached to a congregation of 600-700 at the Tennessee River Baptist Association church.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

Best predictors of spiritual health among young adults



lifewayresearch.com

Key takeaway from study: 'God's Word truly is what changes lives,' Magruder says

(continued from page 1)
percent), regularly served in church (33 percent) or listened to primarily Christian music (22 percent) than for comparable individuals who didn't.

And scores average 6.25 percent higher for young adults who participated in a church mission trip while growing up (27 percent) than for comparable individuals who didn't.

Doing all five of these practices in childhood could boost a young adult's spiritual health score 41 percent, putting the young adult above the 90th percentile, McConnell said.

"Practicing your faith — in specific ways — really pays off later in life," he said.

Jana Magruder, director of LifeWay Kids and author of "Nothing Less," said it's easy for parents to be caught up in the busyness of life — and not to ground their kids in the practice of reading the Bible.

"The key takeaway from the study is a simple yet profound finding that God's Word truly is what changes lives," she said.

Parents' behavior also is related to their adult children's spiritual health, LifeWay Research found. Young adults had higher spiritual health scores if they grew up with

parents who spent time reading the Bible, taking part in a service project or church missions trip as a family, sharing their faith, encouraging teenagers to serve in church, asking forgiveness when they messed up as parents, encouraging their children's unique talents and interests, taking annual family vacations, attending churches with teaching that emphasized what the Bible says and teaching their children to tithe.

All these little things can pay off, McConnell said, by showing kids what practicing your faith looks like.

"In the end, parents hope the light will go on and their children will want to follow God on their own," he said. "At any age the Holy Spirit can flip the light switch, and these habits can help kids grow in their faith." (LifeWay)



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Divorce more likely after pornography use begins

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Pornography use has many negative effects on relationships, including an increased likelihood of divorce when married individuals begin a pornography habit, according to an analysis of years of social science research.

The study “Till Porn Do Us Part? A Longitudinal Examination of Pornography Use and Divorce” was conducted by researchers at the University of Oklahoma in Norman who analyzed data collected for the General Social Survey (GSS), a project of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.

Respondents were interviewed three times about their pornography use and marital status between 2006 and 2014. Researchers focused on initially married respondents who reported no pornography use during their first interview and then measured the change in their pornography use and marital status during the period of study. Their responses were compared to those of married respondents who did not report pornography viewing during any of the three interviews.

Lead researcher Samuel Perry, assistant professor of sociology at the University of Oklahoma, said beginning pornography use be-



123rf.com

tween interviews nearly doubled the likelihood of a man being divorced by the next interview, from 6 percent to 11 percent. For women, the likelihood nearly tripled, from 6 percent to 16 percent. For both husbands and wives, the results suggest that viewing pornography may have negative effects on marital stability, Perry said.

‘Can’t compete’

The results don’t surprise Traylor Lovvorn, co-founder of Undone Redone, a Birmingham-based recovery ministry and ministry partner of *The Alabama Baptist*.

“Pornography, by its very nature and design, leads the user to become discontent and to long for more,” Lovvorn said. “Real-world issues like paying bills, raising children and doing the laundry can’t compete with the fantasy world offered so readily by pornography.”

Pornography use in marriage also undermines and destroys intimacy, Lovvorn said.

“Hiding and secrecy are almost always associated with the use of pornography and the distorted view of sex presented through pornography is impossible for any spouse to compete against,” he said.

Young adults are especially vulnerable to the effects of pornography, according to the study. Perry and his co-author, Cyrus Schleifer, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Oklahoma, found that the younger an adult was when he or she began viewing pornography, the higher his or her probability of getting divorced by the next survey interview.

Perhaps one surprising result of the study was that among respondents who attend a religious service weekly, the probability of divorce was virtually unchanged as a result of beginning pornography use.

According to Perry, previous research has reported a stronger negative impact on the marriages of frequent churchgoers when pornography use was an issue.

‘Protective effect’

“But our findings suggest that religion has a protective effect on marriage, even in the face of pornography use. Because religious groups stigmatize divorce and prioritize marital stability, it is likely that married Americans who are more religious will experience a greater combination of community pressure and internalized moral pressure to stay married, regardless of pornography’s effect on their marital quality.”



(augmented reality)

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Rashional THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

You get what you pay for

Justification is an interesting action. Have you ever noticed how much you justify to yourself or others why you did or didn't do something?

My moments of justification tend to focus on why I failed to follow through with a commitment I made. It might be a commitment to myself to exercise routinely or get more rest. It might be a commitment to someone else that I would take care of a project or task by a certain time frame.

Because I'm extremely skilled at justifying my own actions, I always notice when others are justifying their actions as well.

Recently I heard a friend note that he knew he wasn't giving a client his best work but because he had agreed to do the work at a reduced price he felt justified in delivering less than his best.

The more I thought about his reasoning, the more it bothered me.

The saying "you get what you pay for" is true in many cases, but I would hope that we as believers would always give our absolute best in all that we do, even when we aren't getting paid what we think we might be worth.

'With all your heart'

Scripture is clear about doing our best in all that we do.

Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do work at it with all your heart. ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

First Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Romans 12:11 says, "Never be lazy in your work but serve the Lord enthusiastically."

Galatians 6:9 says to never tire of doing good.

Second Timothy 2:15 reminds us to present ourselves to God "as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly

handles the word of truth."

And Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

Keeping our focus on Christ and seeking to be more like Him would demand a pursuit of excellence on our part, especially excellence of character and how we behave.

Soul searching

Representing Christ as a believer should mean we are aware if our lives are truly mirroring Him or not. We should always work to show grace and love while standing on truth.

If we are not able to give our best to all that we do as we journey through this life representing our Lord and Savior, then we really should do some soul searching and self-evaluation — eh hem, talking to myself here.

Certainly there are seasons and times when we have no choice but to give second best — and even to fail — but those moments should be because of situations out of our control not because we don't care. And they shouldn't happen because we are selfishly leaving the work for someone else to do.

We must find ways to reduce the demands on our lives so we can be in top form for those depending on us, and we must help each other in the process.

What does it say about our relationship with Christ and the condition of our heart if we purposefully agree to a job or task knowing we never intend to provide quality results or service? How do we justify such actions?

And how easy will it be to make a similar choice next time once we lower our standards and expectations of ourselves?

How far could we go down this path before we don't even remember what our best looks like? #

RASHIONAL Extras ...

Nothing Loved Is Ever Lost

By Faye Harris
Hamilton, Ala.

No one lives in what is left of the once proud house that sits in ruin down the old country road.

The wild vines are threatening to take it over completely and one is left to wonder about the people who had spent their lives within its walls — when it was new and alive.

The same spring still bubbles nearby where it came forth a hundred years ago when children played in the yard of the house then grew to move on to another home and have children of their own.

Even though there were still visitors to what was by now considered to be the old homestead, as the house's aging inhabitants grew more frail, the visitors came less and less often.

Weeds now fill the banks on one side of the stream. One is left to only imagine little boys standing nearby watching the minnows play in the water, waiting for them

to grow into large fish where, just like daddy, they will catch them, put them into their rusty pail and take them home for supper.

Through what is left of the windows creep wildflowers that in their day had been planted and contained by the young woman for whom the house was built.

As we stand by the side of the road observing this sentinel of another time, we note it is still trying its best to stand guard over the dreams of its original owners.

There's a sadness we feel as our hearts connect with those so long ago because we

understand a bit how these gallant soldiers of yesterday worked as we do today to provide for their families.

It's as if nature itself is telling us there will always be memories left even after we too travel the road to immortality.

Our value will be firmly in the minds and hearts of those we leave behind because nothing loved is ever lost — it's just passed on in beloved memory. #



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"If you want to get better at discerning God's voice, you must orient your thinking toward His perspective. As Romans 12:2 says, 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.'"

"The transformations of our minds includes the willingness to sacrifice our limited ideas about the way we think things should be done, to give up our pride and to let go of our money and time. If you have offered yourself and anything you cling to as a sacrifice to God and have refused to be swayed by what the world tells you is the norm, then you are in a position to truly discover God's will in a given situation."

Joe Greene

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Every Christian can help someone: Either to find Christ or to not slip away from Him.

Bravely ask, "Are you saved?"

Start the conversation.

R.A. Matthews

Author of "Reaching to God"

"Resentment is taking poison and expecting someone else to get sick. Forgive."

From "The Sender: A story about when right words make all the difference" by Kevin Elko and Bill Beausay

"Blessing comes when our hearts are tuned to God's will and our hands are placed to God's work."

Kyle Beshears

University of Mobile

Excerpt from "Explore the Bible" Sunday School Lesson in the Oct. 26 issue of The Alabama Baptist

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ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

East Gadsden recognizes Clower for 45 years

Shirley Clower was recognized for 45 years of service at East Gadsden Baptist Church in Etowah Baptist Association at a reception Sept. 17.

Clower was hired as the pastor's secretary Sept. 19, 1972. She retired Sept. 19, 2017, as church office manager.

The church honored Clower with a meal following the worship service. A table displayed mementos from her years of service to the church, including photos, church directories from years past and a rotary phone like the one in the church office when Clower was hired. Clower said working at the church was something she enjoyed doing. "It's been a joy," Clower said. "I knew the Lord had put me there for a reason." (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Susie Collins
Shirley Clower (left) and former pastor Chad Chandler

Boaz's Kyuka Baptist honors pianist McMurtrey for 50 years of faithful service

The choir director at Kyuka Baptist Church, Boaz, has often told Charlotte McMurtrey that her piano playing makes him want to sing.

"But it's not about me — it's just where the Lord has placed me," McMurtrey said. "It's about the singer and the one we're singing about."

The Kyuka congregation honored McMurtrey on Sept. 24 for 50 years as the church's pianist.

"Charlotte has readily shared her artistic talents and selflessly ministered to others when needed," the church bulletin read that day. "Kyuka Church has been blessed by Charlotte McMurtrey, not only by her God-given talent of piano playing but also by her faithfulness to the church, the delicious meals she freely shares, the time she spends ministering to others and her willingness to help in any way needed. She is always there for us, counting it a joy to serve the Lord."

McMurtrey began playing in church at age 14 at Carnes Chapel, Gadsden, then moved over to Kyuka after meeting her husband, Herman, at a fourth Sunday night



Photo courtesy of Zachary Burns

Kyuka Baptist Church, Boaz, honors pianist Charlotte McMurtrey for 50 years of service. Pictured are (l to r) Herman McMurtrey, Charlotte's husband; Charlotte McMurtrey; Cathy Burns, ladies ministry chairperson; and Pastor Jeremy Burns.

singing at a church in the Duck Springs community.

Serving at Kyuka has "been a great blessing," said McMurtrey, who also has taught Sunday School. "It's been an honor and a pleasure to play for them all these years."

The celebration was a "total surprise," she said. When she

walked into church that morning, the youth group had left a rose on the piano bench with a note expressing their appreciation. Then she noticed some family members and friends who don't go to Kyuka beginning to slip into the congregation. "I knew something was up then," she said with a laugh. (Grace Thornton)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 29

Explore the Bible

By Kyle Beshears

Instructor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

HIS PRESENCE

Exodus 39:42–43; 40:1–4, 34–38

Finished (39:42–43)

With the golden calf incident in their rearview mirror, Israel turns to a precious act of obedience to God. The Lord is not an ill-natured despot. No, He is “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin” (Ex. 34:6–7).

He cannot tolerate sin but He also offers us the chance of repentance. By God’s grace, Israel got this one right — they worked diligently to obey the Lord’s command. They did everything it took to build the tabernacle.

It is important to note that Moses “inspected all that Israel had accomplished” and not just what they made. Moses took notice not only of Israel’s excellent craftsmanship but also the heart behind their work. Earlier their hearts were bent toward gods and their work resulted in a golden calf. Now, however, their hearts are bent toward God and their work results in a place of worship. Blessing comes when our hearts are tuned to God’s will and our hands are placed to God’s work.

Assembly Required (40:1–4)

Israel is commanded to set up the tabernacle — the portable location where people could worship God in His presence — near the anniversary of their redemption from Egypt. That the tabernacle could be set up in just one day demonstrates God’s priority for worship, which is the most important feature of Israel’s life.

His directions for setting up the tabernacle are specific. God does not merely demand worship without offering guidance on how. He wants His people to succeed so He gives them clear instructions. Yet again

we see God’s compassionate concern for His people.

Glory Shown (40:34–35)

At last, God’s presence dwells with His people. Earlier in God’s story of Israel we saw His presence in the cloud — in the exodus, the wilderness and on Mount Sinai. In those episodes, the presence of God was always before, behind and above the people.

Now the presence of God is among the people. Indeed the same cloud that led Israel out of slavery is now dwelling with them in freedom (Ex. 13:21–22). God is present with them. But this moment, as precious as it was, did not satisfy God’s desire to dwell among His people. No, that desire would take another step in the sending of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is no surprise that John should open his Gospel by declaring that the eternal Word, the one who is God and with God, dwelt among the people (John 1:1, 14). Just as God dwelt among Israel, so Christ came to dwell in the world. While Israel enjoyed God’s presence in the tabernacle, we enjoy God’s presence in us by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Don’t you yourselves know that you are God’s temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?”

God Led (40:36–38)

Why would God desire to dwell among His people? We are told that one reason is guidance and we can still experience the confident assurance of God’s present guidance today. The Holy Spirit guides us (John 16:13) and His Word shields, protects and sanctifies us (Prov. 30:5; Heb. 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:5). These two sources of guidance, the Spirit and the Word, will never disagree because they have the same goal. The Spirit and the Word bring glory to God by making His words, works and promises known to all. Will you be led by them? ‡

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

RUTH: ALL-IN COMMITMENT

Ruth 1:8–17

Scattered across the pages of the Bible are a striking number of places where non-Israelites — foreigners — are held up by the biblical authors as keen examples of character, dignity and fidelity. Jethro, Rahab, Job, the Magi, the Good Samaritan, Cornelius — all of these are treated as exemplary characters, figures who are often more worthy of praise than the Israelites themselves.

One on this list of “Righteous among the Gentiles” is the Moabite woman, Ruth. Her story is one whose tragic dimensions we often miss, especially how terribly she is treated by her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Understanding commitment (8–10)

Early in the Book of Ruth we find that tragedy has struck. Elimelech and his two sons have died, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to fend for themselves. Naomi’s initial treatment of Ruth and Orpah seems kind enough as she blesses them, kisses them and attempts to send them back to their own people. When the daughters attempt to stay with Naomi, however, their mother-in-law’s demeanor begins to change.

Endures hard times (11–15)

Naomi tells Ruth and Orpah she is too old to bear more sons who could be their husbands, a point which seems obvious enough but which also seems to imply that new husbands is the only reason the daughters are wanting to stay with her. Worse, Naomi then appears to downplay the sorrow the daughters have experienced themselves when she insists, “It has been far more bitter for me than for you.”

Demonstrated by our actions (16–17)

Naomi’s words were enough to convince Orpah to return to her people in Moab. Ruth

would not be dissuaded so easily though. The text tells us Ruth clung to her mother-in-law and protested her loyalty to her in some of the most memorable words in Scripture: “Your people shall be my people and your God my God.” Unfortunately Naomi did not return Ruth’s words of devotion. The text tells us only Naomi stopped speaking and turned for home. And with each passing chapter of the book, we find Naomi’s mistreatment of Ruth grows worse.

In Chapter 2, Naomi lets Ruth go out to the fields to try to glean scraps of barley left behind in the harvest, a dangerous task for a beautiful woman all alone among the harvesters. But Ruth would face even greater danger in Chapter 3.

When Naomi learns Ruth has caught the eye of the landowner, Boaz, she instructs Ruth to bathe and perfume herself, put on her best dress and go lie next to Boaz as he sleeps on the threshing floor. He would take care of the rest.

There Boaz could have done anything he wanted to Ruth. Thankfully he did not take advantage of her as he might have but instead took the steps necessary to make her his wife. Then we find Naomi’s last unkindness to Ruth in Chapter 4.

When Ruth bore a son to Boaz, the text tells us Naomi took the child from Ruth. She became his nurse and the women of the town proclaimed, “A son has been born to Naomi.”

All of Ruth’s loyalty would seem to have been for nothing. But, of course, it only seemed that way. Though Naomi may have taken advantage of Ruth and may even have taken her son, Ruth is the woman who would ultimately be honored in Scripture.

As we turn over to the pages of the New Testament, we find Ruth’s name once more. When Matthew records the genealogy of Jesus, it is faithful Ruth he mentions and not Naomi. ‡

Christian Crossword

By Mary Ann Freeman

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Across

1. Primate.
4. Every perfect gift is from _____. (James 1:17)
9. Fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
12. Another fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
15. _____ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 15:7)
16. South American mountains.
17. What a pregnant woman does.
19. Sacred image.
20. Poem.
21. Wesley. (nickname)
22. Behold, I will do a _____ thing. (Isa. 43:19)
23. As a _____ adorneth herself with jewels. (Isa. 61:10)
25. The priest shall _____ his finger in the blood. (Lev. 4:6)
27. The _____ of knowledge. (Gen. 2:17)
28. Digging tool.
30. _____ of God. (1 John 4:7; 2 words)
33. Sarai was _____; she had no child. (Gen. 11:30)
34. Son of Shemidah.

Down

- (1 Chron. 7:19)
35. In royal apparel of _____. (Esther 8:15)
36. Missing in Action. (abbr.)
37. The elder unto the wellbeloved _____. (3 John 1)
39. Chlorine, caron. (symbol)
42. Put off ... the _____ man. (Eph. 4:22)
44. Soviet Socialist Republic. (abbr.)
45. Fire causeth the waters to _____. (Isa. 64:2)
46. The daughter of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:15)
48. Major artery.
49. Not. (prefix)
50. Study of places.
52. Compass direction.
53. Ruth’s sister-in-law. (Ruth 1:4)
54. Socioeconomic status. (abbr.)
- (Rom. 12:2)
6. For a righteous man will _____.
- (Rom. 5:7; 2 words)
7. Heal me; for my bones are _____. (Ps. 6:2)
8. Extrasensory perception. (abbr.)
10. Ye make clean the _____ of the cup. (Matt. 23:25)
11. Years. (abbr.)
13. Red dragon, having seven heads and _____ horns. (Rev. 12:3)
14. A time to rend, and a time to _____. (Eccles. 3:7)
18. So Hiram gave Solomon _____ trees. (1 Kings 5:10)
20. Minerals.
23. _____ ye all the tithes. (Mal. 3:10)
24. His hands were hairy, as ... _____ hands. (Gen. 27:23)
26. My tongue is the _____ of a ready writer. (Ps. 45:1)
27. Late-afternoon meal.
29. Before. (prefix)
30. Book written by Jeremiah. (abbr.)
31. Buckeyes.
32. Seven _____ full of the seven last plagues.
- (Rev. 21:9)
33. Cloud or confuse.
35. A _____ must be blameless. (1 Tim. 3:2)
38. Fall flower.
39. Military subdivisions.
40. Flexible.
41. Loams.
43. Decimeter. (abbr.)
45. Feather scarf.
46. Ride a yellow one to school.
47. Cornelius said, Four days _____. (Acts 10:30)
48. Argon, hydrogen. (symbol)
51. Peach tree state. (abbr.)





Media reviews

MOVIE

'I'll Push You' documentary spotlighting humility, sacrifice, friendship to play Nov. 2

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In a world filled with dis-sension, death and downright depressing news, a feel-good movie full of selfless acts stands out. "I'll Push You" is one such film.

Playing for only one night, Nov. 2, the documentary recounts the incredible story of two life-long friends who embarked on a 500-mile journey in 2014 to trek the Camino de Santiago — a scenic hiking route that stretches from the mountains of France through the valleys of Spain and ends at the Cathedral in Santiago. Tradition says the Cathedral in

Santiago was the burial site of the apostle James.

The catch? One of the men suffers from a progressive neuromuscular disease that prevents him from moving his arms or legs. This means he's in a wheelchair — and that his friend will have to push him the entire way.

"I haven't seen a friendship like that before," says one woman who meets them on the journey.

Most of us have not either.

Patrick Gray and Justin Skeesuck were born barely 24 hours

suck were born barely 24 hours apart and have been friends since childhood. When Skeesuck was

diagnosed with Multifocal Acquired Motor Axonopathy as an adult, Gray moved closer to Skeesuck so he could help take care of his friend and help with family life. (Both men are married and have children.)

"I love him like a brother," Gray says. "He's my closest friend."

The idea for the trek began innocently enough, when Skeesuck was watching the TV show "Rick Steves' Europe" and thought the Camino route looked fun. He and Gray decided to give it a shot — even though most people thought they were nuts. With rocky paths, steep hills and a treacherous desert, Camino de Santiago is challenging enough for an able-bodied person, much less a person pushing someone else in a wheelchair. In some locations, Skeesuck and the wheelchair had to be carried.

But Gray persevered on the 35-day journey with determination and love for his friend. He also had some help as fellow hikers pitched in when he was tired.

For show locations and times, visit www.fathomevents.com and search 'I'll Push You.'



Photo courtesy of Fathom/'I'll Push You'

TAB AR

"I'll Push You" is a pro-life, inspirational film that just might make you a better person. It teaches humility and self-sacrifice unlike any documentary I've watched. It also encourages us to live life with gratitude, wanting to make every day count.

Would I do that?

I walked away asking: Would I do that for someone? And would I allow someone to do that for me?

The movie is being released in tandem with a book, "I'll Push You," published by Tyndale Momentum. For show locations and times, visit www.fathomevents.com and search "I'll Push You."

"I'll Push You" is not rated.

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.

Cautions: It includes about four coarse words (s—t, 2; d—n, 1; h—ll, 1), one joke about monks not having sex and a handful of scenes of Gray in stages of undress, although never nude.†

"'I'll Push You' is a pro-life, inspirational film that just might make you a better person. It teaches humility and self-sacrifice."

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Photo courtesy of Wycliffe Associates

Wycliffe Associates' Lyle team works during a Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation project in Burkina Faso. They completed eight New Testament books in 10 days.

Bible translation

Wycliffe Associates takes Bible to isolated language groups

Wycliffe Associates, an international organization involving people in the advancement of Bible translation, plans to begin 20 MAST (Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation) workshops in the next 90 days to meet a growing demand from language groups historically overlooked for Bible translation project starts.

"For decades [or longer] Bible translation in these remote areas could only happen if foreigners were willing to live there, learn the language and painstakingly translate the Bible line upon line," said Bruce Smith, president and CEO of Wycliffe Associates, in an Oct. 9 news release.

A MAST training workshop is the first step in a process that enables a church community to obtain the Scriptures for their language group. MAST is a collaborative translation method that was first piloted by Wycliffe Associates in 2014.

Working over a two-week period, a group of mother-tongue translators in Burkina Faso completed the drafting and accuracy-checking process for approximately half of the New Testament in their language.

New method for translating

There was no decrease in the quality of the translation compared to traditional translation methods. During a MAST training workshop, leaders can

assess the pace at which mother-tongue translators are able to draft and check Scripture. The pace of translation depends on a variety of factors, including a translator's education, biblical knowledge and language skill. Near the end of the workshop, leaders are asked to develop a plan for the completion of the translation project.

Tools and training

Church leaders from numerous isolated language groups are reaching out to Wycliffe Associates to ask for MAST tools and training.

As part of a MAST training workshop, Wycliffe Associates provides mother-tongue translators with computer tablets loaded with software, training, technical connectivity and safe shelter where the translators can work collaboratively and discreetly.

"Many of these folks live in regions of persecution," Smith said. "They've been pushed aside by those in political power. And

sadly, they've been unreachable by Bible translation. There are so many language groups crying for help. I often have to admit to them that we simply don't have the resources at this time."

Since 2014 more than 1,000 translation projects have been started using MAST.

"I have visited a remote area of Indonesia where a church was planted 182 years ago, but they now have the Scriptures in their own language for the first time ever," Smith said. "Thank God, MAST makes the difference." (TAB)

For more information about Wycliffe Associates and the MAST program, visit <https://www.wycliffeassociates.org>.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Coptic bishop killed, priest injured in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt — A Coptic Orthodox bishop from Upper Egypt was slain outside Cairo, Egypt, on Oct. 12, the same day a priest also was attacked.

Bishop Samaan Shehata was killed after an assailant stabbed him in the head, neck and torso with a machete in the El Salam area near El Marg District on the outskirts of Cairo, according to local reports.

A security spokesman said the suspect, Ahmed Saeed Ibrahim, was mentally ill, but neighbors reportedly denied this, saying he was a Muslim who had been "radicalized" a year ago. Since then, they said, Ibrahim had begun praying in the street, shouting loudly and calling Christians infidels.

Another priest, whom local press identified as the Rev. Mikhail Melad Tawadrous, 67, of the Arch Angel Michael in Qoft, Qena Governorate, was seriously injured on the same day.

A Muslim vegetable vendor reportedly attacked Tawadrous with heavy objects, leaving him with cuts on his hand, bruises on his chest and blood in his lungs. When the priest called out for help, bystanders reportedly encouraged the suspect, Saad Mohamed Mahmoud Hassan, to kill him.

Hassan had been jailed before, and a few days before the attack, he had insulted another priest. Authorities reportedly tried to persuade Tawadrous to drop the charges, claiming that the attacker is mentally ill, and the priest refused. Hassan was held for questioning and released. (MS)

Christian teen arrested for online comments

HYDERABAD, India — A Christian teenager in northern India was jailed for 12 days after anti-Hindu comments appeared on a fake Facebook account in his name, sources said.

First-year university student Sandeep Kumar, 18, whose christened name is Karan Anthony, was arrested when members of the Hindu extremist Rudra Sena in his home area of Kasganj District filed a complaint with police. Kumar was charged with posting anti-Hindu comments on Facebook, a charge he denies.

"I did not make any posts on Facebook," Anthony said. Anthony said he has long been a target of his Hindu friends because they know his father is a pastor.

In the past, he had received abusive comments in response to posts about Jesus, which led him to deactivate his Facebook account, he said.

Anthony's father, Pastor Shrinivas Gautam, said former classmates who filed the complaints against Anthony were not happy that a Christian boy from a lower caste had "secured admission in an esteemed university."

Anthony said he prayed daily while in jail and shared the gospel with other prisoners, who he described as happy to hear about Christ.

"It was an opportunity the Lord had given me to share the gospel with them," Anthony said. (MS)

Pastors arrested after house church ban

BAHAWALPUR, Pakistan — Church leaders in Bahawalpur, Pakistan, are urging Pakistan's prime minister and other officials to uphold the country's constitution after city officials imposed restrictions on Christian worship in their city.

According to the British Pakistani Christian Association, authorities ordered the closure of house churches in Bahawalpur after Muslims complained they were disturbed by Christian prayers.

Eight pastors, including one affiliated with United Presbyterian Church Pakistan and two Pentecostal pastors, have been arrested since the order was issued. The pastors were released on bail pending a later court date, sources said.

Pakistan ranks as the fourth worst nation in the world when it comes to the persecution of Christians, according to Open Doors USA's 2017 World Watch List. (TAB)