



INSIDE



Consider how experiential gifts compare to material gifts when shopping for others

◆ Page 4



Theology 101 — Revealed in Creation

◆ Page 6



Faith & Family — Dealing with self-image issues

◆ Pages 7-10

# Awareness training

## Spiritual leaders hear sobering word about child sexual abuse within church

By Michael J. Brooks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Research suggests at least 60 million Americans are survivors of sexual abuse. Concerned churches must be proactive in protecting children in their care from predators.

That was the message of the MinistrySafe Conference held at Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, on Sept. 19. The event was jointly sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) and GuideStone Financial Resources.

Greg Love, an attorney and a minister, served as presenter at the conference. Love and his wife, Kimberlee Norris, are co-founders of MinistrySafe and Abuse Prevention Systems of Fort Worth, Texas.

An estimated 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys under age 18 will be sexually abused, Love said. As a place where children are invited and welcomed, churches often attract predators.

Abusers most often go where the barriers are the lowest, Love explained.

“The Church is welcoming and affirming,” he said, “and we’re overjoyed when new people come and volunteer to work with children and youth. The abuser tries to gain the trust of leaders or what I call the ‘gatekeepers.’ They convince us they’re helpful, trustworthy and kind. Then they proceed to gain the trust of our children. This is called ‘grooming,’ and it’s a significant mark of the abuser.”

Love added that 50 percent of abuse in churches is perpetrated by volunteers, 30 percent by church



Photo by Doug Rogers

Greg Love, an attorney and a minister, serves as presenter at the MinistrySafe Conference held at Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, on Sept. 19. Love is co-founder with his wife, Kimberlee Norris, of MinistrySafe and Abuse Prevention Systems of Fort Worth, Texas.

staff and 20 percent by “aggressive children” or peer-on-peer abuse.

Once thought of by many as a Catholic problem, child sexual abuse crosses denominational lines now, Love said.

The problem is widespread in Baptist life, said John Murphy, development manager for GuideStone property and casualty, noting that the No. 1 claim GuideStone has handled for the past seven years has been the sexual abuse of children.

It’s what Love calls the “Baptist

quandary” since other denominations have ecclesiastical systems, many of which have mandatory precautions against sexual predators.

### Must identify the problem

“Baptists are congregational without a controlling authority but must do a better job identifying the problem (sexual predators in the Church) and implementing safeguards,” Love said.

The number of children harmed by each abuser is staggering. Ninety

percent of abusers are males who began abusing their victims when they themselves were children — age 13 or 14, according to Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for SBOM who helped organize the conference. Many abusers are never caught. The average age of arrest for a male perpetrator of sexual abuse is 35, meaning that the person might have been abusing boys 20 years or more. The typical female abuser has harmed 52 children (See ‘Churches,’ page 5)

## Week of Prayer

for International Missions  
and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is Dec. 3-10.

National goal: \$160 million / Alabama goal: \$11.6 million



# COMMENT

## Why Do We Give?

Perhaps you have been part of discussions about whether or not a Christian is required to tithe? Perhaps you have even discussed whether tithing should be based on one's gross earnings (before taxes and deductions) or on one's net earnings (the take home amount of one's check).

Such discussions demonstrate that Baptists sometimes can act like Pharisees and turn God's good gifts into a type of bondage. That includes the good gift of giving. Sometimes it seems we are more interested in what the law requires than in the benefits that giving our money can bring to us and others.

In many Baptist churches giving is encouraged for a lot of wrong reasons. Passing the offering plates is not supposed to be a fundraising ritual. After all, the Psalmist declares our God owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10). God is the Creator of all. He has no need of our money.

Why then do churches continue to promote giving out of obligation, need and guilt rather than help Christians realize that giving can be one of the highest points of true worship?

### Motivation for giving

Frequently giving to God through the church is treated more like organizational dues than worship. If one belongs to a service club or most any kind of organization, annual dues are part of that membership. Churches often emphasize all the benefits one receives from the church. The logical conclusion is that because one benefits from the programs of the church one should help finance the church's activities through regular financial contributions.

Sometimes need is the motivator used to promote giving. The need might be an ongoing need such as paying the bills for utilities, literature, personnel and more. The need might arise from special circumstances such as a leaky roof or a worn out air conditioner. The church's message in both instances is similar — "help us meet this need."



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

That approach has a lot in common with raising money for new high school band uniforms — only a different organization.

Increasingly passion is becoming a motivator for giving. Someone wants the church to be attractive so they give for landscaping, furnishings, etc. Another loves the music program so that person's giving is channeled toward music. Still another is invested in missions and directs giving toward the church's missions outreach.

People like to see the results of their giving, we are told, so giving is linked to one's passion so the giver can see the difference made by the contribution.

None of these is bad. Indeed, the Bible says in James 4:17, "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." Obligation, need and passion all help one know what is "good" and provide opportunities to do something about them.

Churches do need to pay bills and churches do a lot of good things with the money they raise. But how are these motivations different from any charitable fundraising program and what do they have to do with worship?

One theologian expressed it this way: "The offering is an act of worship, an instance in which we are invited to give up something that we

value — our money — as a sacrifice to God."

That insight is consistent with the teaching of Leviticus where the principle of tithing was incorporated into Jewish law. But even in the Old Testament we are told God is not as concerned about rules and rituals as He is with one's motivation. In 1 Samuel 16:7 the Bible says, "People look at outward appearances but the Lord looks at the heart."

Jesus expanded that principle in the Sermon on the Mount, saying, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Since God examines our hearts and how we use our treasure reveals the nature of our hearts, then why we give is important. When we are able to give our money instead of keeping it for ourselves, we demonstrate that our hearts are not tied to our money. We validate that our love for God is more important to us than our love of money.

God controls our hearts more than money controls us. In fact, God is in control of both our hearts and our money. When that is true, rules and regulations fall away.

Giving expresses our heartfelt devotion to God who has saved us through faith in Jesus Christ and who lives in our hearts through the presence of His Holy Spirit. The offering time then becomes the highest expression of true worship for no other point in the service provides so pure an opportunity to worship God as the sacrifice of giving our money to God.

### Giving cheerfully

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:7 urged that giving to God not be done reluctantly or under compulsion, "for God loves a cheerful giver." When the Christian is able to give cheerfully, the act itself affirms the sacrifice of praise offered with the lips during other parts of the service. If one chooses not to worship through giving or gives reluctantly then the truthfulness of the sacrifice of praise comes into question.

It is not the size of the gift that counts. The story of the widow's mite in Mark 12:42-44 clearly teaches that. It is the motivation of the giver. When the offering plate is passed each Sunday morning it is not because the church needs the money. It is because we need the opportunity of worshipping through giving.

In God's great economy, He takes the heartfelt sacrifices of our money, combines them with the sacrifices offered by others in the community of saints and produces extravagant results that bless us, bless others and reflect His glory into the world.

Why do we give? We give because we need to worship God and giving is a pure act of true worship. ✠

**"God controls our hearts more than money controls us."**

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

#### LEWIS DRUMMOND

Lewis Drummond was one of Alabama's notable Baptists of recent memory. He was ordained to the ministry and served two Alabama churches as pastor along with being the Billy Graham Professor of Missions and Evangelism at Beeson Divinity School (1994-2003) in Birmingham.

Dr. Drummond's life and ministry have deeply enriched Southern Baptist life, and I am asking for those of

you whose life intersected with Dr. Drummond to call upon your memory of him. His is a story worth sharing because it was a model of Christ-likeness and evangelistic fervor. I am a Southern Seminary student writing a dissertation where Dr. Drummond is the principal topic.

If you knew him, sat under his preaching/teaching, were mentored by him or were a colleague of Dr. Drummond, then I would like to

know more of how he impacted your life. If you are interested in participating through an online survey please find me on Twitter @DrLewisDrummond, email nclark173@students.sbts.edu or call 812-489-3628.

Nicholas R. Clark  
Louisville, Ky. ✠





"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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# Tension & violence

## Hundreds killed as houses of worship are targeted in Egypt

**T**ensions surrounding houses of worship in Egypt have escalated to mass bloodshed in recent days.

On Nov. 25 militants waving the flag of the Islamic State (IS) group killed 305 people at a northern Sinai mosque frequented by Sufi Muslims, worshippers who follow a mystical branch of Islam. IS has not yet claimed responsibility for the attack, but Egyptian forces are battling a stubborn remnant of the group in the area.

The attack, which left 27 children dead, is the bloodiest attack in Egypt's modern history, according to *The Christian Post*.

Gunmen arrived at the mosque in jeeps, set off a bomb then opened fire on worshippers as they tried to escape.

In addition to those killed, more than 120 were wounded.

In the wake of the bloody attack, Coptic Christians in Egypt have been holding public prayer services for the victims, but they too have been dealing with tension and violence from outsiders.

In October four Coptic churches in Mina were closed after locals launched a brutal attack on Christians there. Others were reportedly closed in the weeks that followed.

"We stayed silent for two weeks after the closure of a church hoping that the officials would do the job they were assigned to do by the state," Bishop Macarius said in a statement.

"However, this silence has led to something worse, as if prayer is a crime the Copts should be punished for. The Coptic Christians go to the neighboring villages to perform their prayers."



CBS News screen capture

Militants waving the Islamic State group flag killed 305 people Nov. 25 at a northern Sinai mosque frequented by Sufi Muslims, worshippers who follow a mystical branch of Islam.

In one incident, an aggressive mob of more than 1,000 gathered outside a Coptic church.

Within a two-week period, churches were closed, Copts were attacked and their property was destroyed with "no deterrent," Macarius said.

### Official warning

A top lawyer with the United Nations (U.N.) gave the Egyptian government a week to stop closing churches and reopen the ones

that had been closed, the *Post* reported.

In mid-November, Joseph Malak, fellow of U.N. high commissioner for Minority Affairs, sent an official warning to Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, as well as the ministries of interior, local development, parliamentary affairs and the governor of Alexandria calling for an end to the crackdown on churches.

Egypt has been named one of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians, especially since the spread of IS in 2014. (*TAB*)

## Judges differ on buffer zones at abortion clinics

**T**wo district court judges have taken different stances on whether or not abortion clinics should have a buffer zone keeping pro-life activists away from their doors.

In mid-November, District Court Judge Susan D. Wigenton struck down a city ordinance in Englewood, New Jersey, that kept pro-life advocates from being closer than eight feet from the entrance of abortion clinics, according to *The Christian Post*.

### 'Burdens free speech'

She ruled that the ordinance "violated the First Amendment" and "burdens the free speech of individuals, not just in front of the clinic, but at health care and transitional facilities citywide."

The buffer zone affected all health care facilities in Englewood, though "evidence shows that the ordinance was adopted in response to protestors outside of one specific health care facility — the [abortion] clinic," Wigenton wrote.

The ordinance was adopted in 2014 in response to reported tension at a local medical clinic called Metropolitan Medical Associates, the *Post* reported. Protesters who violated the ordi-

nance could receive citations or sentenced to 90 days in jail.

The American Center for Law and Justice said the ruling was a

"big pro-life free speech victory" and gave "breathing space for pro-life free speech."

But in Pittsburgh, where an ordinance creates a 15-foot buffer, pro-life advocates weren't granted the

same breathing space.

District Court Judge Cathy Bissom upheld the ordinance in

mid-November, saying that it "imposes only a minimal burden on Plaintiffs' speech."

### 'Sidewalk counseling'

"[T]here is undisputed evidence in this case that Plaintiffs are able to communicate their anti-abortion message using their preferred form of expression — i.e., sidewalk counseling," Bissom wrote in her decision for *Bruni v. City of Pittsburgh*.

She also wrote that "Plaintiffs' own records reflect not only that they are able to communicate with patients, but, in some instances, have accomplished their intended goal of persuading women not to have abortions."

Pro-life activists expect to appeal the ruling. (*TAB*)



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# Gift ideas

## Consider how experiential gifts compare to material gifts when shopping for others

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

Last year for Christmas, Chris and LeeAnn Duke gave their kids a ski trip instead of gifts. The kids, both middle schoolers, got to plan parts of the schedule for the trip and each were given cash to spend on whatever they wanted.

The trip simplified Christmas in a big way and was “amazing,” LeeAnn said.

The gift of an experience is trendy today and for good reason, says Cassie Mogilner, marketing professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia. Mogilner has researched the connection between happiness and gifting, and what she’s found can help parents, grandparents and others struggling to find just the right gift in a technology-obsessed world.

“There’s been a growing body of work that suggests that from a happiness perspective, a good way to spend your money is buying experiences rather than material goods,” Mogilner said in an episode of the Knowledge@Wharton radio show.

Research suggests people are much happier when they treat themselves to a nice dinner or a vacation rather than buying the latest gadget or a piece of jewelry. So Mogilner and her colleagues wanted to see if there were any happiness benefits when an experience was given as a gift. The results were interesting.

### Emotional connection

Researchers found that there was no difference in how much the recipient liked an experiential gift versus a material gift, and recipients didn’t see either gift as more thoughtful. The difference was in the emotional connection the recipient felt to the gift giver while consuming the experience.

“It’s really the emotion that gets evoked when you’re attending the concert, when you’re eating the dinner, versus when you’re wearing the sweater or the Apple

Watch,” Mogilner said. “You don’t necessarily need to be sharing in the experience with the gift giver to have this connecting effect. ... Because someone had given you this gift, you’re thinking of them as you’re consuming it. Those emotions lead to greater feelings of connection.”

Mogilner said people adapt to “things” really quickly — “it sort of sits on your shelf and you engage with it every day, and so it loses its shiny, bright newness.”

A memory, on the other hand, stays fresh,

which is why people adapt less quickly to experiences than to material goods, Mogilner said. There may be some generational influence going on as well, she said.

“There’s a lot of talk right now about how (millennials) share these life narratives that they’re telling through their experiences, and they’re posting these really cool experiences on Facebook,” she said. “So there’s more awareness of the value of experiences.”

For those who like to give a physical gift, Mogilner suggests emphasizing the experiential aspects of the gift in some way — perhaps through a card

or letter to the recipient that explains why the gift was chosen.

“So if you’re set on giving a sweater, you can highlight, ‘I’m giving this to you because it will make you feel cozy and warm when you’re walking in the winter days.’ It’s highlighting the experience of consuming it, as opposed to the fact that it’s a sweater that you have and are putting on your shelf.”

And don’t discount gifts that are useful, including books, bath and body products, hobby or athletic supplies, and even gift cards.

“In all of the hustle and bustle of the season, it’s easy to lose sight of the fact that some of the best gifts you can give a loved one aren’t necessarily the most exciting or most expensive,” says Jill Nystul, editor at the lifestyle website One Good Thing. “Often the best gift you can give someone is a useful gift — one that will make their lives easier or fulfill a legitimate need.”



Unsplash.com

Research suggests people are much happier when they treat themselves to a nice dinner or a vacation rather than buying the latest gadget or a piece of jewelry.

## Gift-giving guide

And for our first TAB gift-giving guide, we’ve collected a few suggestions. Enjoy!

### For the athlete

Flipbelt (a secure way to keep keys, money and identification close at hand); SOI Sensor Bag Light (hand-activated light for athletic bags or purses); private lessons to work on their skills

### For the traveler

Tickets to a museum or a trip to a national park; U.S. National Parks Passport (great to give as a baby shower gift, too)

### For the creative

Art kits, canvases, paints and brushes; lessons for pottery, sewing, cooking or painting; a room makeover (where you help paint); personalized jewelry, with names, favorite sayings, birth month flowers or birthstones



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### For the social butterfly

Large format prints or collages of favorite photos; photo books of special events or activities

### For the adventurer

Pay for summer camp fees; give a special day and let them plan what you will do (such as a spa day, concert, play or sporting event); give tickets to an escape room experience

### For the retro

Record players (they’re cool again) and vinyl records



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### For all ages to keep the fun going all year long

Subscribe to one of many available boxes that send out a new box each month. Ideas include Universal Yums! (candy), Loot Crate (for gaming), Tinker Crate (science), Little Passports (geography), GiftLit (books), Pley (toys)

For more ideas, check out [uncommongoods.com](http://uncommongoods.com) for unique gift ideas for all ages and interests, including jewelry, arts and games.

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### US abortion rates at historic low, according to CDC

ATLANTA — The CDC reports that the number of abortions performed in the U.S. remains at historic lows. An analysis of data reported by 49 reporting agencies in 47 states, New York City and Washington D.C. but excluding California, Maryland and New Hampshire reported a total of 652,639 abortions in 2014. That number represents a decrease of 21 percent in the number of abortions from 2005 to 2014. The CDC suggests education and increased access to contraceptives have reduced the number of unintended pregnancies, a primary reason cited by those seeking an abortion.

Women in their 20s account for the majority of abortions, though the rate among women in this age group dropped between 2005 and 2014. The only age group where abortion rates increased was among women older than 40 (a 4 percent increase). Only 14.5 percent of all women who obtained an abortion were married. Non-Hispanic white women and non-Hispanic black women accounted for the largest percentages of all abortions (38 percent and 36 percent, respectively). (TAB)

### UMC brings 'True Meaning of Christmas Tour' to 21 cities

HUNTSVILLE — The United Methodist Church (UMC) hopes to promote the spiritual side of Christmas with "The True Meaning of Christmas Tour," an outreach effort scheduled to visit 21 U.S. cities Dec. 2 through 24, including Huntsville on Dec. 23.

Diane Degnan, UMC director of public relations, told The Christian Post that the tour centers on the birth of Christ and will bring the gospel message of "hope, joy and faith to encourage people to seek deeper meaning in their lives, which many people are seeking during the Christmas season."

The tour also includes an emphasis on hospitality and holiday cheer. Volunteers will hand out hot cocoa, a video running will tell the nativity story and there will be opportunities provided to take part in local service projects, according to a UMC press release.

Cities on the tour's agenda include Dallas, Texas; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Jackson, Mississippi; Little Rock, Arkansas; Memphis, Tennessee; and Columbia, South Carolina, among others.

Videos and more information are available at [unwrapchristmas.org](http://unwrapchristmas.org). (TAB)

# Churches should try to prevent incidents before they occur

(continued from page 1)

before she's stopped. Love defined sexual abuse as "any tricked, forced, manipulated or coerced sexual activity for the pleasure of the abuser."

"The key is that the abused is not receiving pleasure, but most often guilt and repressed feelings," he said. "The abuser has unequal power since he or she is an authority figure. And abuse need not be touching. Abusers can use social media to prey on children."

Predators often introduce drugs, alcohol and pornography to young boys, and this adds to their guilt, which predators use to their advantage, Love said.

"With the girls, it's more often social media, including Facebook, Snapchat and texting," he said. "This is how young girls communicate today, and the predator is an expert on building trust and trying to form unhealthy relationships, including the sharing of pictures."

Abusers look for children "on the fringe," Love said, such as children in single-parent homes, children with meager possessions because of socioeconomic status or even children with physical impairments. Then they experiment with touching or closeness to see which children warm up to such attention.

Love highlighted three key failures in churches: the failure of staff to recognize risky behavior, the failure of staff to communicate to lay leadership and the failure of leadership to receive the information.

"The five words of regret I normally hear when we go into a church to do forensics are, 'Now that you mention it ...,'" he said. "Often church members notice abhorrent behavior and fail to report it until the abuse is complete."

Love likened churches dealing with the fallout of abuse to the 9/11 Commission.

"The commission investigated why 9/11 happened," he said. "This was after the fact. What churches need to be is more like Homeland Security — trying to prevent incidents before they occur."

### Safety system

An effective safety system involves at least five elements, beginning with awareness training, Love said. His organization and others offer training films that explain the dangers of exploitation.

"Skillful screening is also important," he said. "This includes application forms that highlight high-risk responses and checking references."

Background checks are the third element, Love said.

"Background checks aren't a 'silver bullet' since sometimes predators are able to stay 'under the radar' of the legal system. But we must continue to require this of our workers," he said.

The fourth element is appropriate policies.

"I've often heard church leaders talk of zero tolerance for sexual impropriety, but this can be meaningless unless the church has specific policies that are updated,

## Reporting law includes clergy

Mandatory reporting is a term teachers and medical professionals know well. Pastors and church leaders may be less aware of their legal requirements when it comes to reporting child abuse or neglect.

According to Alabama law, any person who is asked to provide "aid or medical assistance" to a child "known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect" is required to report their concerns to the local Department of Human Resources (DHR). The DHR office is then responsible to investigate and provide necessary protective services.

The list of professionals named in the law is extensive and includes physicians, dentists, nurses, school teachers and officials, law enforcement officials, day care workers and members of the clergy.

The mandatory reporting law for clergy has been in place since 2003 in Alabama but has had little enforcement, said Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. That appears to be changing in part because child sexual abuse has become one of the top reasons that a church is taken to court, Wright said.

"There is more attention. The reporting law is beginning to be enforced in Alabama and many other states," he said.

Most professionals who are mandatory reporters regularly undergo training in reporting procedures, but there is no such requirement for training in Alabama Baptist life.

And while some information shared with clergy by a church member seeking spiritual advice is considered confidential under Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, that law has "no impact" on child abuse reporting, according to state missionary Jim Swedenburg.

Failing to report suspected child abuse is a misdemeanor under Alabama law, punishable by a sentence of not more than six months' imprisonment or a fine of not more than \$500. (TAB)

## Calhoun Association marks 125 years



Photo courtesy of Calhoun Baptist Association

Calhoun Baptist Association celebrates 125 years of Kingdom ministry during the association's annual meeting at Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Anniston, on Oct. 8. The event included a missions fair highlighting many of the association's missions and ministries. Lonette Berg (center), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the association a plaque commemorating the 125th anniversary. The plaque was received by Sid Nichols (right), former director of missions (DOM), and Roger Willmore, current DOM. Special music was provided by a community choir. Willmore delivered the celebration sermon addressing the costs of discipleship.

shared and enforced," Love emphasized.

The fifth element is monitoring.

"I can't explain the psychology of an abuser," he said, "nor is there a visual profile. What we look for is a behavioral profile. God has called church leaders to be shepherds and we mustn't allow those with wolf-like qualities into the sheepfold. But even then we must continue to be observant." ✠



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Ron Geiger** is the new bivocational pastor of **Robinwood Church, Tarrant**. He has served as pastor of churches in Beatrice, Flomaton and Selma and also has served as associational missionary in Florida and Arizona. He holds degrees from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Auburn University at Montgomery and New Orleans Seminary. Geiger and his wife, Louise, have two children, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. ► **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, will hold its annual Christmas event, "Candlelight at Dawson" on Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m. and Dec. 16-17, 5 p.m. Doors will open 45 minutes prior to the start of each program. For more information visit [www.dawsonchurch.org/candlelight](http://www.dawsonchurch.org/candlelight). David Eldridge is pastor.



GEIGER

## BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a watch night service New Year's Eve at 8 p.m. This will be a time to pray the old year out and the new one in. The Singing Commodores Quartet will perform special music. A break for refreshments will be at 10 p.m. Everyone is invited. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will hold "A Night in Bethlehem" on Dec. 9, 5 p.m. Participants will be able to tour

the shops, hear the news and discuss what it means while avoiding a Roman soldier on horseback. The night will end at the live nativity and then a time of fellowship and caroling. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

## GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold its monthly 39er's CLUB meeting Dec. 12, 11 a.m. Ryan Gant, minister of music and family outreach, will present a program of Christmas music. If you are a regular attendee, please contact your table hostess to make or cancel your reservation by Dec. 5. If you would like to attend but never have before call the church office at 334-684-9617 by Dec. 5. Steve Wegmann is pastor.

## MOBILE

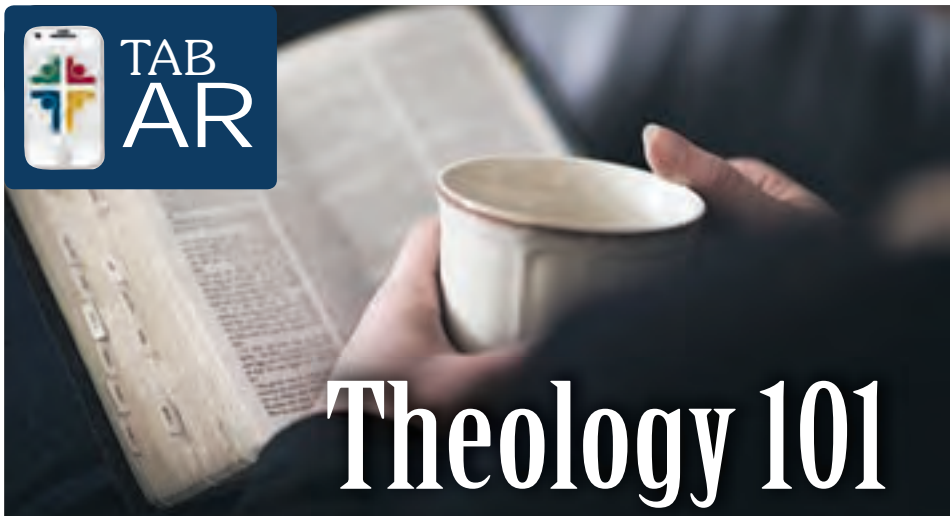
► **West Mobile Church, Mobile**, will host Dennis Swanberg in the 11 a.m. worship service Dec. 31. Charles Gibbs is pastor.

## RANDOLPH

► **David Daniel** is the new bivocational pastor of **Shiloh Church, Graham**. He previously served as pastor of Zion Church, Woodland. He also served at Mellow Valley Church, Cragford, and Providence Church, Woodland. He holds degrees from Criswell College in Dallas, Texas, and Auburn University and has done additional studies at New Orleans Seminary. Daniel and his wife, Sandra, have two children and five grandchildren.✝



DANIEL



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## God's Self-Revelation

# Revealed in Creation

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

Humans know God only where God has chosen to make Himself known. Thus, from this fact, we must think in terms of God's self-disclosure, if we mortals are to know anything about God. We might begin with the assertion that God has revealed Himself in His handiwork of creation. The starting point of the Bible identifies the earliest fingerprint of God in its opening sentence: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

The famous declaration of Romans 1:20 points to God's creation as a means of His self-revelation, "For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." The phrase "things that have been made" tells us that in some way every created thing bears witness to God's divine nature and power. Our Creator God is self-revealed in His work. This truth about God's self-revelation through His creation lies behind the statement of Acts 14:17: "He did not leave Himself without witness, for He did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

The Old Testament also attests to the created order as a channel through which God has given revelation about Himself. Psalm 19:1-3 contains this poetic testimony: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

The sky in the light of day or in the majesty of a clear night is declaring without the use of human language God's self-display in the beauty, orderliness and sheer greatness that speaks universally of a God who has revealed Himself as a powerful and careful Creator. One does not have to just look up, but also to look around at plants and animals, at rivers and lakes, at oceans and islands,

at mountain grandeur to get God's message that He possesses "eternal power," and seeks to communicate to all people in all places without the use of words. We also can look within at the intricacies and marvels of a human body to perceive divine wisdom in what God has made. Whatever the human language or dialect, the created order speaks of God's existence and creative power.

The tragedy is that sin blinds and deafens people to God's self-disclosure in His creation. God's self-revelation itself remains in what He has made but fallen human nature and sin act like blinders over human hearts, preventing seeing God through His handiwork. Only God's later work of saving grace can enable one to receive what God discloses about Himself through creation. As a result, while God's self-revelation in nature remains, in human experience it cannot save but serves only to bring condemnation.

## Exchanging glory for a lie

The Bible explains the condemnation that follows the human response to what God discloses in creation as exchanging "the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." To reinforce the seriousness of the human response to natural revelation, two verses later, the Bible concludes, "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:23-25).✝

*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.*



## REFLECTIONS



# Dealing with self-image issues

## Wanting to fit in

It's Friday night and 16-year-old Jada has just arrived at the mall with her friend, Alyssa. Their first stop is the bathroom where Jada changes into a short skirt and tank top she brought from home. She applies more blush and lipstick and tousles her hair a bit.

The girl in the mirror looks different than the girl who left her house a few minutes ago, but Jada breathes a sigh of relief. Now she won't stand out if they run into other girls from school at the mall.

She thinks about her mom, who is totally out of touch when it comes to fashion. Jada's mom just doesn't understand how important clothes are to people like Alyssa and her friends, who follow all the latest trendsetters on Instagram. Their clothes always fit perfectly — and they don't wear baggy shirts or long skirts. All Jada wants is to fit in with her friends. As she exits the bathroom, Alyssa gives her a smile and a nod. "Savage! Let's go!"

## How can parents instill 'Christ-esteem' in children in today's culture?

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

**N**o one can deny the influence media has on teenagers.

The Representation Project reports that 50 percent of American teens spend nearly 50 percent of their day consuming media, and study after study by organizations ranging from the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders to the Girl Scout Research Institute reports that media images, including photos on social media and in advertisements, as well as video images on television and in movies, make girls feel bad about their bodies.

As parents, we want our children to be strong and

confident, humble and kind. We want them to be liked by their peers but also to stay true to our family values. In a world that emphasizes self-esteem, we want our children to have "Christ-esteem." How is it possible for parents to get that message across?

### Identity in Christ

Wynter Pitts, founder of For Girls Like You, a ministry for girls, says girls especially need to be reminded of their identity in Christ.

"Her value has nothing to do with where she is, what she can do, how she looks, how she dresses or how popular she is. Her value comes from who her heavenly Father is. She needs to be reminded every day that if she is in Jesus Christ, then she is royalty," Pitts writes in her book "She is Yours: Trusting God as You Raise the Girl He Gave You."

Pitts calls on parents to affirm the truth of their daughter's status in Christ. "Say it until she believes it. Teach it until she learns it. Impress it until she owns it! God is asking you and equipping you to be the primary voice that affirms her identity. If you don't, other voices will — but with a different message," Pitts writes.

Rondie Wilks calls this the "princess principle." Wilks teaches girls of all ages at NorthPark Baptist Church,

Trussville, and she encourages them to "remember who you belong to."

"Little girls love to watch movies about princesses and dress up," Wilks said. "In every girl's heart, there is a desire to be a princess but the real deal is we truly are princesses — daughters of the most high God. When we look at ourselves in the light of how He loves us, then we begin to have a God-confidence and not a self-confidence."

As a mother of three now-grown sons, Wilks taught a similar lesson to her boys.

"Every day as my sons walked out the door, I reminded them to remember who you are and whose you are," she said. "When you are focused on loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, it changes everything."

When it comes to self-image and identity, boys are often considered to be immune from the pressures. But boys feel the pressure to measure up too. Heisman Trophy winner and sports analyst Tim Tebow writes about that in his book "Shaken: Discovering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life's Storms."

### Belonging to God

"There have been times when I was playing football that my identity was muddled," he writes. "But who I am is not based on others, on fitting in, on belonging to a certain crowd or on living a certain lifestyle. My identity is based on belonging to God. No one can take this foundation away from me. I know this to be true, and while I often need to be reminded, I aim to live by these truths every day."

Fitting in can be especially hard when it comes to trends that seem to celebrate the values of the world over biblical values. Clothing trends are a good example. Many Christian camps and programs try to keep clothing in check by requiring one-piece swimsuits for girls, T-shirts for boys and

(See 'Life,' page 10)

**50 percent of American teens spend nearly 50 percent of their day consuming media.**

**The Representation Project**



# Deeper heart issues

## Greatest sin of immodesty is that we're saying 'look at me' instead of 'look at God'

By Jennings Napper, MAMFC, ALC  
Pathways Professional Counseling

**M**any people in our society consider the idea of modesty a thing of the past, like when ladies wore skirts down to their ankles and high-necked long-sleeve blouses to cover their entire bodies. Sadly modesty often falls in the “old school” category and today many women and men in the media are celebrated for being anything but modest.

We now live in a culture that praises sexuality and sexual self-expression. Living in a sexualized society, many women feel the pressure to wear trendy clothes and styles that may be tighter, shorter or lower-cut to show more skin. This can make shopping for modest stylish clothes difficult. Others may have a difficult time choosing modesty because of the attention or approval that can come from wearing fashionable yet racy outfits.

Some may wonder, “Why does it matter if I dress modestly? Why would I choose

to dress modestly knowing I will not get as much attention as the next girl? What's wrong with getting a little attention?” The deeper question is, “Why do we desperately seek this kind of attention?”

Most people want to feel attractive, liked and approved of by others. Clothing is often a temporary outlet used to achieve the inherent need we all have to be accepted, cherished and loved. Behind the attention and the pressure there is a deeper underlying issue that needs to be addressed.

### Unconditional love

We desperately need a Savior who sees us for who we are and unconditionally loves and accepts us. Having a relationship with Jesus Christ satisfies the deepest needs of our hearts. The longing to be accepted by others is a distortion of the desire God has placed in each of our hearts to be accepted and affirmed by Him.

When we have a relationship with our heavenly Father, everything changes. Not only are we forgiven and loved, but we are made new and given a new identity in Christ that can never be taken away from

us. In Christ we are fully validated, valued and loved beyond measure. Our worth and value does not come from people, our bodies, our looks, our talents or our accomplishments. Being fully accepted by Christ, we no longer work to earn His approval and love — we already have it. When we know this truth, we start to see ourselves as children of God with a transformed heart along with different desires and an eternal outlook on life.

Dannah Gresh, a Christian author who writes about abstinence and modesty, discusses four myths of modesty on her website at pure-freedom.org. In her discussion, Gresh tackles the myth that modesty is just about clothes. Gresh uses 1 Timothy 2:9–10,

to explain that women should be more concerned with godliness and good deeds instead of being wrapped up in their outward appearance. Christians should make themselves attractive by the good deeds they do, which overflow from their transformed hearts. She states, “The greatest sin of immodesty is that we're saying 'look at me' instead of 'look at God.'”

As Christians, it's our job to set a Christ-like example to those who are lost around us, and this includes how we dress and present ourselves. One way we can do this is by choosing flattering, fashionable clothing styles that are not revealing. Yes, it is still possible for women to celebrate their beauty while being modest at the same time.

But modesty is so much more than the clothes we wear. How we present ourselves should reflect what's in our heart. God commands that we live a lifestyle of purity

— in our speech, actions and thoughts.

Purity starts in our hearts and in our thought life. God tells us to guard our hearts (Prov. 4:23) because this is where sin takes root. Hiding God's truth in our hearts is vital to helping us combat the lies of self-doubt and inadequacies.

When it comes to setting a Christ-like example by relating to others in love, remember it is not our place to judge others by outward appearance. Judging or staring at someone will not win them to Christ. We are called to embrace lost people, point them to Christ and show them His love. Our prayer for the lost should be Romans 12:2, that they would no longer be conformed to this world

but would be transformed with Christ's truth and love. When people's hearts are inwardly changed by Christ, the inner change also will work to transform their outward attitude and appearance.

### Christ lives in us

Without knowing Christ as Savior, people will always have feelings of inadequacy and will continue to try to fill their emptiness with worldly pleasures, accomplishments and man's approval. As Christians, we have the full deity of Christ living inside of us, so we lack nothing. This is because we know the truth of who we are in Christ and know our identity is found in Him alone.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Jennings Napper is an Associate Licensed Counselor for Pathways Professional Counseling in the Dothan area. ✝*



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*The longing to be accepted by others is a distortion of the desire God has placed in each of our hearts to be accepted and affirmed by Him.*



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# True confidence

## Christians must saturate hearts, minds with God's Word so worldly lies can't sink in

By **Rondie Wilks and Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**M**ore than 100 passages in the Bible address the issue of “self” in relation to Creator God.

God's Word is clear that we are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). From before our birth, God knows us (Ps. 139:13–14) and during our life he knows our every thought and action (Ps. 139:1–4). We are His workmanship, Paul writes, “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

God who knows us so intimately should be the source of our approval — our “Christ-esteem,” if you will.

### The Bible is our standard

But how do we know how to walk in the good works God has prepared for us? The answer is to look to His Word. From an early age, we need to teach our children to seek their instructions on how to look, live, walk and talk in Scripture. The Bible is our

standard for living, full of all the wisdom we need.

Unfortunately, the world sets a different standard than the Bible does. Movies, television and social media are filled with deceitful voices telling our children who they should be. We must continually point our children to the Word of Truth that tells us who we are to be. We must saturate our hearts and minds with God's Word so the lies and counterfeit message of the world can't sink in.

In truth, we are all imitators of something. Boys often imitate their fathers, sometimes by walking around in their shoes or maybe by cheering for their dad's favorite sports team. Girls often imitate their mothers by caring for their dolls or pushing a stroller during a walk. Child psychologists tell us that imitation is an important part of human development because it is how young children learn new words and skills.

As believers we are to imitate Christ. He is the only One worthy of imitating.

The Bible also addresses the temptation to seek attention for ourselves, which often happens by the way we dress.

Is there anything wrong with wanting to look our best? Not at all. But vanity and a desire for attention can lead us to prioritize physical appearance over character. More important than physical beauty is the “imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious” (1 Pet. 3:4). Jeremiah 9:23 warns us not to boast in our wisdom, our might or our riches but instead to boast

only in that we know the Lord.

The Bible also cautions us against judging others by appearance. When God sent Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the future king of Israel, Samuel was impressed by Eliab. Perhaps it was because he was the oldest. Perhaps it was because of his looks

or his demeanor. Whatever the case, the Lord tells Samuel not to judge based on physical attributes. While our human tendency is to look “on the outward appearance” the Lord “looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

Finally Paul urges us as “God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,” to put on “compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience” (Col. 3:12) and to set our minds on “things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2).

### Children of the King

When we point our children to the Bible, God's truth will come out in their lives because they will realize who they are and whose they are — children of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The only true source of confidence is Jesus. When we truly realize who we are in Him, that we are chosen and loved, how confident we can be in Him and Him alone.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Rondie Wilks is a popular Bible teacher who has led numerous women's retreats and conferences. Rondie works with her husband, Bill, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, to equip others for a lifestyle of discipleship. ✝*

*“For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.”*

Psalm 139:13–14

# 11 facts

## about teens and self-esteem

**1** Low self-esteem is a thinking disorder in which an individual views him/herself as inadequate, unlovable and/or incompetent. Once formed, this negative view permeates every thought, producing faulty assumptions and ongoing self-defeating behavior.

**2** Among high school students, 44 percent of girls and 15 percent of guys are attempting to lose weight.

**3** More than 70 percent of girls age 15 to 17 avoid normal daily activities, such as attending school, when they feel bad about their looks. Brighten someone's day by posting encouraging messages on your school's bathroom mirrors.

**4** More than 40 percent of boys in middle school and high school regularly exercise with the goal of increasing muscle mass.

**5** Seventy-five percent of girls with low self-esteem reported engaging in negative activities like cutting, bullying, smoking,



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drinking or disordered eating. This compares to 25 percent of girls with high self-esteem.

**6** About 20 percent of teens will experience depression before they reach adulthood.

**7** Teen girls who have a negative view of themselves are 4 times more likely to take part in activities with boys that they've ended up regretting later.

**8** The top wish among all teen girls is for their parents to communicate better with them. This includes frequent and more open conversations.

**9** Thirty-eight percent of boys in middle and high school reported using protein supplements and nearly 6 percent admitted to experimenting with steroids.

**10** Seven in 10 girls believe that they are not good enough or don't measure up in some way, including their looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family members.

**11** A girl's self-esteem is more strongly related to how she views her own body shape and body weight than how much she actually weighs.

Source: www.dosomething.org

## Life is about seeking glory for God not self, Wilks says

(continued from page 7)

modest clothing styles for nonwater activities. But not only can creative individuals push the limits of these rules, one rule cannot cover literally or figuratively all body shapes and sizes.

Wilks said her family has hosted many pool parties over the years and has moved to asking teens to wear "appropriate" swimwear. In bathing suits and in clothes, the answer to what is appropriate can be a hard line to find, she said.

Modesty doesn't just apply to clothing either, which is why modesty is not solely a female issue. Advertisements use the male body almost as often as the female body in suggestive and

sexual ways. Speech and behavior can be immodest as well.

Respect for one's self is the key, which directly relates to God's command to love your neighbor as yourself, Wilks said.

### Honoring God

"Loving yourself is not a bad thing if you are loving the person God made you to be," Wilks said.

And the person God made all of us to be is one who knows that each of us is here to bring honor to God and to make disciples, Wilks said.

"If children are taught that, they will be more aware that life is not about seeking glory for them but for God." ✠

## Helpful resources

▶ "More Beautiful Than You Know: Celebrating the Young Woman God Created You to Be" by Jennifer Strickland

▶ "So Long, Insecurity: Teen Edition" by Beth Moore and Susan Weibel

▶ "Lies Young Women Believe: And the Truth That Sets Them Free" by Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh

▶ "Shaken: Young Reader's Edition: Fighting to Stand Strong No Matter What Comes Your Way" by Tim Tebow

▶ "Adored: 365 Devotions for Young Women"



Compiled by Carrie Brown McWhorter

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Immanuel Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. The candidate selected will have 5 years senior pastor experience, seminary training, expository preaching style and be able to attract and appeal to all age groups. We currently have an elderly congregation and no other ministerial staff. We have underused, debt-free, excellent facilities and a good location. Candidates with the above qualifications can email resumés to: [immanuel38464@bellsouth.net](mailto:immanuel38464@bellsouth.net). Our website is [myimmanuel.net](http://myimmanuel.net). Please include current sermons on websites.

### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Bethel Baptist Church, Highway 5, Brent, Alabama, is searching for a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Bethel Baptist Church, c/o John D. Russell, 298 Tabernacle Rd., Brent, AL 35034, or email to: [russellcatering@bellsouth.net](mailto:russellcatering@bellsouth.net).

### STUDENT MINISTER

Bethel Baptist Church is seeking a student minister to lead, coordinate, plan and promote its student ministry with an emphasis on reaching students with the gospel of Jesus Christ and training them to serve Him. Resumés should be mailed to: Julie Bullington, 495 Britt Rd., Sycamore, GA 31790, ATTN: Student Minister. To learn more about Bethel Baptist Church, please visit [www.bbsycamore.com](http://www.bbsycamore.com).

### MINISTER TO STUDENTS

First Baptist Church of Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to students. Our student ministry is a thriving ministry focused on reaching, equipping and sending students for the glory of Christ. This ministry position covers grades 7 through college. Please send resumés to: the Personnel Committee at: 95 E. Oak St., Oxford, AL 36203, or you may email resumés to: [stan@firstbaptistoxford.org](mailto:stan@firstbaptistoxford.org).

### MINISTER TO CHILDREN

First Baptist Church of Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to children. Our children's ministry is a vibrant ministry with incredible potential. This ministry position covers birth through 6th grade. Please send resumés to the Personnel Committee at: 95 E. Oak St., Oxford, AL 36203,

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## Number of uninsured adults up but still under 2013 rate

The percentage of U.S. adults without health insurance is the highest it's been since 2014, according to research done by Gallup and Sharecare.

In the third quarter of 2017 that figure rose to 12.3 percent, up 1.4 points since the end of 2016. That represents almost 3.5 million Americans who have fallen from the ranks of the insured since the end of 2016. Even so, that number is still well below the peak uninsured rate of 18 percent reached in the third quarter of 2013, before the Affordable Care Act (ACA) required health care coverage and implemented a fine for any uninsured American.

Research indicates that several factors could be contributing to the rise in the uninsured rate. One might be that some insurance companies have stopped offering insurance through the exchanges and that lack of competition could be driving up the costs for consumers, Gallup reported. Another might be that, as politicians attempt to replace the health care law, Americans might question if the fine will be enforced for the uninsured.

The rate of adults lacking insurance has risen at least a point among all demographic groups except for senior adults 65 and over. (TAB)



## Douglas Tate

### Longtime pastor, church planter dies

Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor and church planter Douglas Tate died Nov. 19. He was 84.

Tate, a lifelong resident of Bagley, committed his life to Christ in 1965 and was later called to preach. He studied at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, then began his ministry

as pastor of Wyatt Station Baptist Church, Burnwell. He founded Burnwell Baptist Church, Dora, which is now Greater Vision Baptist Church, then began a tent revival ministry that sent him traveling around to preach God's Word.

In 1974, Tate felt God was calling him to plant a new church, so he started Grace Baptist Church, Sumiton.

In addition to his work as pastor, he also had long-running radio and television ministries and founded Tate Contracting Company.

Tate was preceded in death by his wife of 44 years, Peggie Ruth; his son, Douglas Driver Tate Jr.; and his grandson, Jason Linn Huguley. He is survived by one daughter, three granddaughters and six great-grandchildren. (TAB)

## Leonard Roten

### Former Jacksonville State BSU director dies

Leonard Roten, a former Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at Jacksonville State University (JSU), died Nov. 18. He was 88.

Roten, a native of Joplin, Missouri, served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He earned his master's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth Texas, in 1957, then moved to Alabama to become JSU's BSU director. He served there until 1967, when he moved back to Joplin to serve as director of the BSU at Missouri Southern State University until 1982.

Many students at both universities answered the call to missions and church ministry during Roten's time as BSU director. (TAB)

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# ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

## Longtime pastor, former DOM Larry Patterson retires after 44 years

When Larry Patterson accepted Christ as his Savior in January 1973, it only took him seven months to realize two things — everyone needed to know the Lord and God was calling him to tell them.

So that August, Patterson was licensed to preach and has been preaching ever since. He recently retired after 44 years of ministry.

Patterson most recently served as pastor of Southside Baptist Church, Bay Minette, for nine years. Prior to that he served as director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association.

Through the years, Patterson said he hopes he's "shown others the importance of seeking and doing the will of our Lord God."

Other churches Patterson served as pastor include Little Escambia Baptist Church, Flomaton; Gallion Baptist Church; Bethel Baptist Church, Citronelle; Shady Grove Baptist Church, Bessemer; and Lomax Baptist Church, Clanton.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from Louisiana Baptist University in Shreveport.

Patterson has served on the board of trustees for New Orleans Seminary, the board of regents for University of Mobile and the Board of Aid for Students in Church-Related Vocations.

He and his wife, Wanda, have three children and five grandchildren. The couple resides in Flomaton. (Maggie Walsh)



PATTERSON

## Central Park Pastor Jackie Kay retires from full-time ministry after 45 years

Since 1972, Jackie Kay has been evangelizing to lost souls, exhorting them to accept Christ and encouraging others deeper in their faith. And his upcoming retirement April 1, 2018, won't change that.

"My passion is (still) to serve our Lord, faithfully preach the Word, reach precious souls and encourage and bless churches, pastors and church staff and leadership," said Kay, who has served as pastor of Central Park Baptist Church, Decatur, since 2009.

Prior to Central Park Baptist, Kay was a full-time evangelist for 14 years. During that time he preached approximately 500 revivals.

Kay has served churches in Alabama, Texas, Mississippi and Tennessee during his 45-year ministry. In Alabama, he has served at Bethany Baptist Church, Town Creek, and Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Lexington.

Kay has served as president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Pastors Conference and has served on the board of trustees for the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, twice as chairman.

He holds degrees from the University of North Alabama in Florence; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife, Libby, plan to remain in the Decatur area and as members of Central Park. The couple has three children and nine grandchildren. To contact Kay for revivals, pulpit supply, conferences and/or interim pastorates, email jkay1986@aol.com. (Maggie Walsh)



KAY

**175 YEARS**  
1843 2018  
**TAB**  
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

According to the March 24, 1874, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, a reader wrote, "I love to see the name *The Alabama Baptist* and read it. I want it to remain as long as the rivers run to the ocean. ... I want it to unite Northern Alabama with Central and Southern Alabama. Let it tell us of love and mercy. Let it tell us and our children of Jesus and the cross."

The letter was published shortly after *The Alabama Baptist* ended its partnership with the Georgia-based *Christian Index*. Another reader added, "Alabama must feel their interest slighted and blighted until they have a paper to build up, unite and hold us together."



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 10

## Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

### MISGUIDED WORSHIP Acts 14:8-20

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, engaging in the mission of God. God has saved us to glorify Him by making disciples through the gospel, in community, on mission. Jesus wants us to be a part of this unfolding story.

#### Healing (8-13)

The apostle Paul was proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in Lystra. A man who had been lame from birth was listening to Paul's words. The threefold description of the man in verse 8 emphasized the hopelessness of the man's condition. He was congenitally crippled and everyone in town knew it. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to see what was happening in the spiritual realm, allowing him to see this man's faith. Paul saw an opportunity to confirm his message with a miraculous sign. The apostle commanded the lame man to stand up, and this man who had never taken a step in his life promptly sprang up and began walking. This miracle got everyone's attention.

#### Reaction (11-13)

The people of Lystra mistook Paul and Barnabas for gods. Paul and Barnabas did not realize what was happening at first because the people were speaking another language. They called Paul "Hermes," the Greek god of oratory and inventor of speech. They called Barnabas "Zeus," the chief god.

It is possible this false declaration came from a local legend. The Latin poet Ovid described how the gods descended to this region, seeking hospitality, but everyone rejected the gods except for one poor couple, Philemon and Baucis, who took them in. The gods rewarded them by transforming their cottage into a magnificent temple and making them guardians of it. The gods pun-

ished the unwelcoming residents with a severe flood. The people saw the miracle and assumed the gods had returned, and they did not want to mess up this time. Paul and Barnabas knew something unusual was happening when the priest of Zeus arrived with oxen and garlands for a sacrifice.

We are commanded to remember our leaders, and to obey and submit to them (Heb. 13:7, 17). We are told to honor them as they work hard in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). But we must never worship our leaders. Only God is worthy of our worship.

#### Redirected (14-18)

When Paul and Barnabas realized what was taking place, they urged the people to stop their sacrifice, redirecting them to the one true God. Paul's main theme was the nature and work of the living God. The Lystrans believed in many gods and had no knowledge of the only true God. If Paul had started his message with Jesus, many may have accepted Jesus as one god among the many other gods in their polytheistic worldview. Paul wanted to make clear that there is only one true God over all things.

Paul wants to share the "good news" with them. He never got to the resurrection of Jesus, however. Probably because of the mob his sermon was cut short. He did not have a chance to finish the story.

Our goal, like Paul's, ought to be to present the good news of Jesus and call people to repent of their sin against the living God. We may not have a chance to finish the story at that time but we ought to tell as much of it as we can.

#### Rejected (19-20)

Angry Jews came from Antioch and Iconium to persecute Paul and stop him from proclaiming the truth. If we are going to follow Christ faithfully, we too must be prepared for persecution. ✠

## Bible Studies for Life By Jim Barnette, Ph.D. Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

### JESUS TEACHES Mark 4:1-9

At my ministerial ordination service, Toby Nutt, friend and son of the beloved humorist Grady Nutt, stepped forward and laid his hands on me. Grady had died in a tragic plane crash some seven years earlier. "Jim," Toby said as he pressed his hands atop my head, "if Dad were here, he would say something about the Parable of the Sower, then he would tell you to go out there and be good dirt." I will never forget that simple but beautiful word of commission based on this simple and beautiful parable of Jesus. By equipping ourselves for His service, we become rich soil by which the Holy Spirit bears the fruit of salvation for those with ears to hear.

#### All people have access to the truth. (1-2a)

In Chapters 1-3, Mark has depicted Jesus challenging three groups to join in His kingdom work: the disciples who have committed to Him (see 1:16-20; 3:13-19), the crowds who admired Him but were not committed (1:21-45; 3:7-12), and the authorities who have rejected Him and plotted His death (2:1-3:6; 3:22-30). The four soils in this parable correspond to these groups: the authorities (first soil), the crowds (second and third soils) and the disciples (fourth soil).

"Parable" comes from the Greek "parabolos," which literally means "to throw beside." Instead of simply offering a maxim like "love one another," Jesus would "throw" a story beside that maxim which would bring it to life and provoke a choice on the part of the hearer. Like other types of story, parables have a participatory power that draws in listeners (or readers) to the point that they recognize something about themselves. Hence, John Claypool's description of parables as "windows that

become mirrors." In presenting this particular parable, Jesus sits in a boat because of the large crowd on the shore. He sat in the boat, taking the position that rabbis used when teaching (they stood when preaching).

#### Not all people obey the truth. (2b-7)

Some seeds "fell along the path." Roads and walking paths in the ancient world did not skirt around property but passed right through fields. No farmer would throw seeds on the hard-packed road deliberately but the wind could carry the seeds onto the road. Some seed fell "on rocky places." In areas of Galilee there was a layer of limestone a few inches beneath the surface that produced a shallow soil that trapped rain and kept it from penetrating deeply. Plants would burst forth out of the soil because of the trapped water. But the limestone kept the roots from growing deep into the soil. The hot sun in between rains would deplete the moisture from the shallow soil so that the plant withered quickly and then died. The "thorns" was likely a type of weed with large roots that would steal moisture from the soil and "choke" the good plant.

#### Obedying the truth will produce fruit. (8-9)

With hard work and favorable weather, a farmer could expect a crop of 10 to 12 times what he had sown; that was considered a normal yield. What is not expected is a yield from the good soil of "thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." At this surprising turn in Jesus' story, a wise hearer might walk away shaking his or her head, convinced that Jesus knows nothing about farming. But Jesus' provocative twist is asking us a vital question about the kingdom of God: Is the everyday world the real world, or is the real world one in which God provides an extravagant life that begins now and lasts eternally? ✠

## Christian Crossword

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### Across

- \_\_\_ and honor are her clothing. (Prov. 31:25)
- And \_\_\_ gave names to all. (Gen. 2:20)
- United States of America. (abbr.)
- Save the beast that \_\_\_ upon. (Neh. 2:12; 2 words)
- Casteth forth his \_\_\_ like morsels. (Ps. 147:17)
- He must \_\_\_ his own family well. (1 Tim. 3:4 NIV)
- I will \_\_\_ in the house of the Lord. (Ps. 23:6)
- Mister. (abbr.)
- Blessed be the Lord God of \_\_\_. (Gen. 9:26)
- Id est. (abbr.)
- Each. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_ shall be \_\_\_ for the congregation. (Num. 19:9; 2 words)
- Greater love hath no \_\_\_ . (John 15:13)
- I will give you \_\_\_ in due season. (Lev. 26:4)
- Mom.
- There should be time \_\_\_ longer. (Rev. 10:6)
- \_\_\_ forth.

- He shall eat at my \_\_\_. (2 Sam. 9:11)
- Second letter in the Greek alphabet.
- Roebuck, and the fallow. (Deut. 14:5)
- And \_\_\_ did that which was right. (1 Kings 15:11)
- \_\_\_ and his wife hid themselves. (Gen. 3:8)
- Internal Revenue Service. (abbr.)
- Passed through the \_\_\_ Sea. (Heb. 11:29)
- Id, \_\_\_ superego.
- Bass horn.
- Is the seed yet in the \_\_\_? (Hag. 2:19)
- They lightened the \_\_\_. (Acts 27:38)
- \_\_\_ apple.
- The \_\_\_ of violence is in their hands. (Isa. 59:6)
- To \_\_\_ with oil.
- To \_\_\_.
- \_\_\_ are created equal. (2 words)
- Atomic Energy Commission. (abbr.)
- Former emperor of Russia.
- He \_\_\_ to meet them. (Gen. 18:2)
- In my prayers \_\_\_ and day. (2 Tim. 1:3)
- Canst thou speak \_\_\_? (Acts 21:37)
- Ye shall observe \_\_\_ do. (Deut. 12:1)
- Hand, head. (abbr.)
- Thou shalt surely \_\_\_. (Gen. 2:17)
- He wrapped it in \_\_\_ linen cloth. (Matt. 27:59; 2 words)
- A dark pigmented cancer.
- To delete.
- There is \_\_\_ not unto death. (1 John 5:17; 2 words)
- \_\_\_ will shew the interpretation. (Dan. 2:4)
- For the body is not one \_\_\_. (1 Cor. 12:14)
- All the coasts of \_\_\_? (Joel 3:4)
- And the \_\_\_ arose. (Job 29:8)
- Ninth letter in the Greek alphabet.
- Good-bye in Spanish.
- Emergency Room. (abbr.)

- International Atomic Energy Agency. (abbr.)
- A tree of tropical Africa.
- People shall answer and say \_\_\_. (Deut. 27:15)
- South Dakota. (abbr.)
- Symbol for rubidium.
- I set my king \_\_\_ my holy hill. (Ps. 2:6)
- \_\_\_ the seventh day. (Gen. 2:2)
- An expert.
- Route. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_ is the father of Canaan. (Gen. 9:18)
- I \_\_\_ no pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3)
- Symbol for aluminum.
- Symbol for sodium.



# Wide open door

All work is ministry no matter its label, successful businesswoman says

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Ana Mims thought for a long time that God wanted her to serve in ministry.

But the doors just kept shutting. “I was involved in church ministries and went on missions trips, and I always felt a call to serve the Lord,” she said.

“But God made it clear to me one day that that wasn’t what He had for me — at least not for right then.”

So she kept working at the jobs

God had given her — jobs that eventually became top positions in Fortune 500 companies around the world.

## Freedom Flight

It was a far cry from where she started.

Mims, who was born in Havana, Cuba, came to the U.S. with her parents, sister and grandmother on what turned out to be one of the last Freedom Flights.

“We started our lives here living in a two-bedroom apartment with one of my mother’s brothers and

his family,” she said. “Once my parents were able to make enough money, we eventually rented a place.”

And once Mims eventually stood on her own two feet, found her faith and found that she was good at her job, she discovered it still wasn’t success she was interested in — at least not in the traditional sense of the word.

She wanted her job to be her ministry.

“Just because God didn’t put me in full-time ministry, that didn’t mean I wasn’t still in full-time ministry,” she said.

“When you come before the Lord and say, ‘You have my whole life,’ that’s 24/7, 365. You work excellently because you represent God and you know there’s a greater purpose in your job.”

God has you working in the midst of darkness for a reason, she said.

That’s why Mims wrote her book, “Keeping the Faith” — to help others bridge the gap between their faith and their work.

“The decisions we make, the way we behave, asking for forgiveness from co-workers — those are the things that speak to other people about who we are and what we believe when we aren’t able to share our faith,” she said.

They also help to build strong



Photo courtesy of Pinkston Group

Ana Mims worked successfully for years in corporate America before leaving her job to serve with Wycliffe Bible Translators. But Mims, shown here in Bangladesh during a short-term missions trip, says no matter where she is, her environment is her missions field.

relationships so that when people go through tough times, they can approach you and ask you questions, Mims said.

“God intends to use us in those environments,” she said.

Sometimes that’s for life and other times that’s for a season — and for Mims, it was a season.

In a move that totally surprised her, Mims recently felt God leading her to

leave the corporate world behind and work for Wycliffe Bible Translators in global communica-

tions and international relations.

“It came right on the heels of a really difficult season,” Mims said, noting that she had gone through a divorce and was living as a single mom to her daughter, Sydney. “I thought it was the absolute wrong time.”

## ‘He has provided’

But God shut door after door and kept throwing this one wide open, she said.

“God was calling me through it and He has provided,” Mims said. “It’s been an amazing journey. I’ve learned that He is faithful, that He is who He says He is.”

**For more information about Ana Mims’ work, visit [wycliffe.org/partner/anamims](http://wycliffe.org/partner/anamims).**

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# 'The sun stood still'

## Hebrew text could be referring to solar eclipse

**R**emember reading in Joshua about the day the sun stood still? Researchers from the University of Cambridge in England say they have pinpointed the oldest recorded solar eclipse — and they say it correlates with the astronomical happening mentioned in the Old Testament.

As the story goes in Joshua 10, the Israelites were battling the Amorites, and Joshua spoke to the Lord and said, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

And according to Joshua 10:13, "the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day."

Professor Sir Colin Humphreys from Cambridge's Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy said the King James Bible translation of 1611 interprets the text to mean that the sun and moon stopped moving.

### Hebrew wording

"But going back to the original Hebrew text, we determined that an alternative meaning could be that the sun and moon just stopped doing what they normally do: they stopped shining," he explained, according to The Christian Post.

The original Hebrew wording could be referring to a solar eclipse, a situation where the moon passed between the earth and sun and made the sun appear to stop shining, he said.

"This interpretation is supported by the fact that

the Hebrew word translated 'stand still' has the same root as a Babylonian word used in ancient astronomical texts to describe eclipses," Humphreys said.

With that in mind, the University of Cambridge announced in late October that researchers were able to refine the dates of the biblical text and an ancient Egyptian text to pinpoint the Israelites' presence in Canaan between 1500 and 1050 B.C.

### Annular eclipse

Historians had been unsuccessful at finding a total eclipse in that window, but that didn't mean the information didn't jive.

"What the earlier historians failed to consider was that it was instead an annular eclipse, in which the moon passes directly in front of the sun, but is too far away to cover the disc completely, leading to the characteristic 'ring of fire' appearance. In the ancient world, the same word was used for both total and annular eclipses," the Cambridge article explains.

The annular eclipse in question — the only one visible from Canaan in that time frame — happened Oct. 30, 1207, B.C. in the afternoon, according to their calculations.

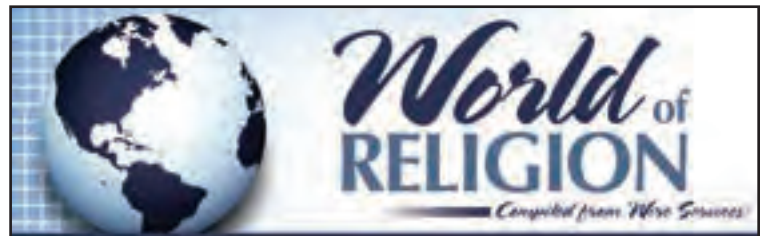
An Israeli research team also offered information in January that backed up this claim.

They turned to Hebrew etymology to help explain the potential contradiction if the passage was understood to mean the sun lingered in the sky.

The word "dom," translated "stand still" in Joshua 10, actually means to "become dark," which would fit well with the characteristics of an eclipse, the Post reported. (TAB)

*"And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies."*

Joshua 10:13



## At least 25 Christians killed in Philippines

MARAWI, Philippines — Muslim militants reportedly targeted Christians during a six-month-long conflict on the Philippine island of Mindanao, killing dozens.

About 200 people, many of them Christian, were taken hostage in the city of Marawi after militants with ties to the Islamic State seized the predominantly Muslim city of about 200,000, The Christian Post reported.

The militants, who clashed with the Philippine military until October, "regularly targeted civilians and carried out numerous extrajudicial executions," according to a report by Amnesty International. "The civilian victims were nearly all Christians, and most — if not all — were targeted because they were not Muslim."

Some were killed as they tried to leave the city but once the militants' strategy became known many Muslim residents helped Christians escape by dressing them as Muslims and driving them out in their vehicles.

"In total, witnesses provided Amnesty International with accounts of 25 civilian deaths. Unlawful killings by militants have also been reported in the media," the report said. Others were kept for sex slaves or human shields.

The Philippine government, which had the support of the U.S., put the island under military rule after the conflict, the Post reported. (TAB)

## Australia votes to legalize same-sex 'marriage'

CANBERRA, Australia — More than 60 percent of Australians voted in favor of legalizing same-sex "marriage," according to results from a national postal survey.

And as politicians are expected to follow through with the people's wishes, churches are voicing concerns for the preservation of free speech and parents' right to choose how their children are educated on the matter.

"Parliamentarians must recognize and respect the concerns of the more than 4.8 million Australians who opposed a change to the definition of marriage by putting in place strong conscience and religious freedom protections," said Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President Archbishop Denis Hart, referring to the 38.4 percent of respondents who voted against the proposed change.

Lyle Shelton, a spokesman for the Coalition for Marriage, said the organization, which led the campaign to keep marriage as strictly one man and one woman, is "naturally disappointed" with the outcome of the vote.

"We will now do what we can to guard against restrictions on freedom of speech and freedom of religion, to defend parents' rights and to protect Australian kids from being exposed to radical LGBTIQ sex and gender education in the classrooms," said Shelton, according to The Christian Post. (TAB)

## Officials replace religious images in China

HUANGJINBU, China — In China's Jiangxi province, officials are removing religious images and replacing them with portraits of Xi Jinping, the nation's leader.

Officials said the Christians there had "recognized their mistakes and decided not to entrust to Jesus but to the (Communist) Party," according to UCA News, a Catholic news source in Asia.

The officials claimed Christians voluntarily removed 624 religious images and put up 453 portraits of the Communist Party leader. One Christian in the area told UCA News that officials had paid poor households in return for hanging Xi's pictures.

Officials said they were "converting" Christians to Communist Party loyalty by alleviating poverty.

With the party's new revised "Regulations on Religious Affairs" to be implemented Feb. 1, Chinese Christians and observers believe religious policy will closely follow Xi's "Sinicization" model, UCA News reported. (TAB)