



INSIDE



Shelby County church plant sees massive need around it as 'exciting'

◆ Page 3



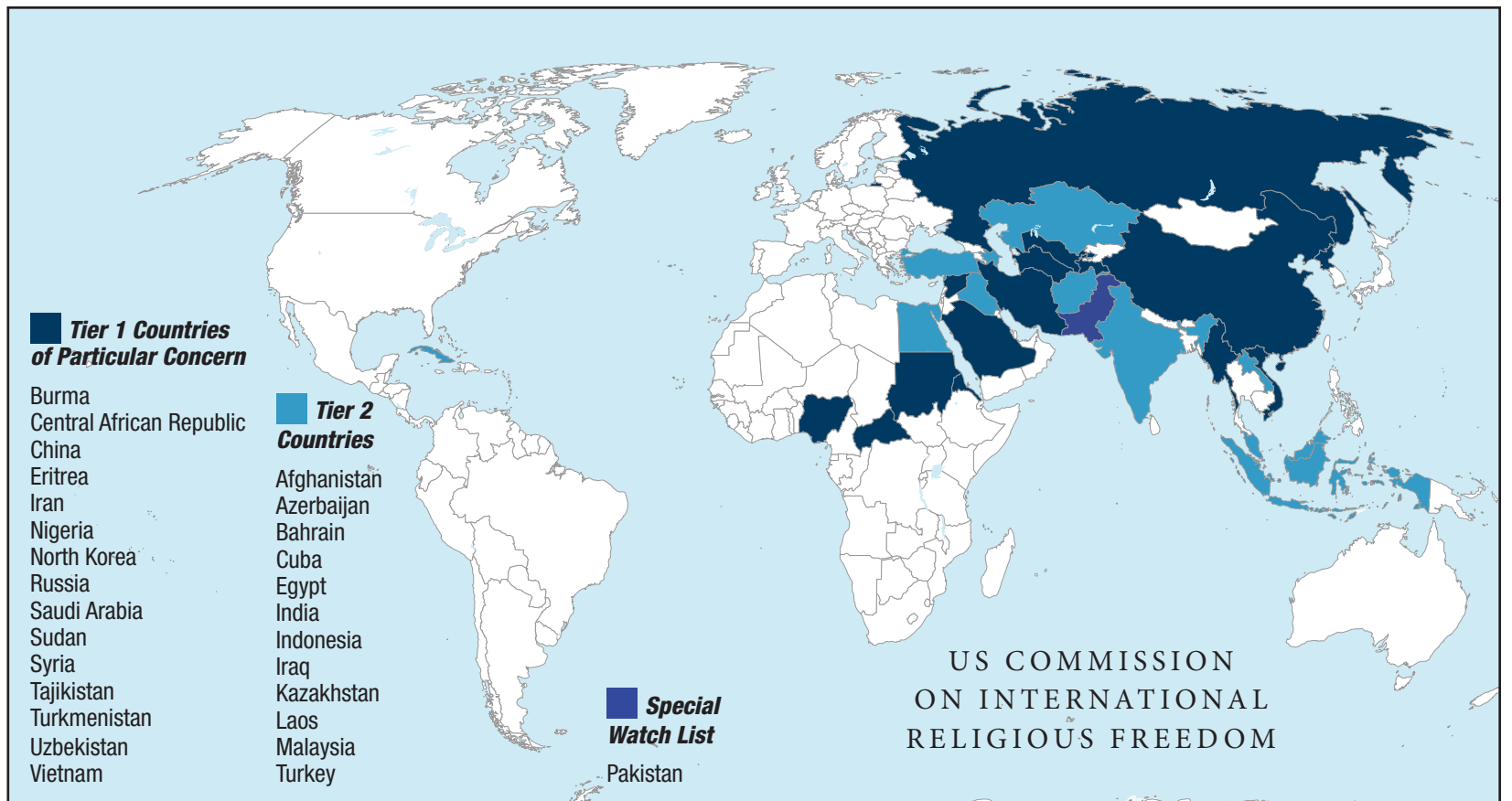
Understanding, practicing forgiveness as Jesus would have us do

◆ Pages 4-5



Auburn BCM relocated; sale of building, property 'on track'

◆ Page 11



freevectormaps.com; graphic by Lauren C. Grim

'Countries of Particular Concern'

State Department acknowledges Pakistan's severe violations of religious freedom

Along with the Jan. 4 release of the annual list of "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPCs), the U.S. Department of State also announced the first "Special Watch List" (SWL). And Pakistan is the lone country on the new list.

The CPCs list is required by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and designates governments that have engaged in or tolerated

systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom. Ten countries were re-designated as CPCs — Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

However, it was the addition of Pakistan on the SWL that gained the most attention.

SWL is a new category created by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016.

It is for countries that engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom but may not rise to the level of CPC, according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

Former Congressman Frank Wolf, for whom the new SWL designation is named, said the designation for Pakistan is "an important step."

"Pakistan is a signatory of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, but

they have treated the responsibilities associated with it casually and with no consequences," he said.

"It is my hope that this will spur Pakistan to initiate long needed reforms."

For the past 15 years, USCIRF has recommended that the U.S. government add Pakistan to the CPCs list for its egregious human rights and religious freedom violations against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Shi'a Muslims. (RNS, TAB)

Coming next week ...

Faith matters: Spiritual commitment at the heart of a strong marriage



COMMENT

Priority: People or Task?

Every football fan has seen it. The starting quarterback is unable to move the ball or score points in several games. The coach faces a dilemma. Does he stick with “his guy” no matter what happens or does he put in a new quarterback in hopes of winning?

The coach may be known for developing character in his players, teaching them to overcome adversity and learning how to win through hard work and perseverance. He may have even recruited the starting quarterback and can call every member of the young man’s family by their first names. Believing in the young man is important to the coach. He doesn’t want to convey any negative feelings. After all, people matter.

At the same time the coach has promised to do what is best for the team. He has promised to win for the school. The coach faces pressure because some argue the whole is more important than the individual parts. The ultimate goal is winning for the school and all the people who invest in the team. Obviously, the task matters too.

What should the coach do? Should he prioritize the person or the task?

The dilemma between prioritizing a person or a task is not unique to football. It is a question faced in many places including the church.

Selfless service

Consider the saint who has cared for three generations of babies in the church nursery. She is a fixture there. More than that, she epitomizes selfless service to others through her years in the church nursery. Grandparents tell their grandchildren about how Miss Smith cared for them.

But now Miss Smith doesn’t move as fast as she once did. Her hearing and sight are not quite as sharp. Her step is not as sure; her hands not as steady. No one in the church wants to do anything that would hurt Miss Smith. At the same time, members fear a child being hurt or parents choosing another church because of concerns about nursery care.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Does the church prioritize Miss Smith (the person) or the quality of nursery care (the task)? Illustrations of this dilemma from church life can go on and on.

There may not be a single right answer to such problems. Like some football coaches, we often pray things will work out for the best and do nothing. The coach may keep working with the quarterback hoping the next series of downs will be the one that produces the miracle victory. Churches keep hoping the person in question will make the “right” decision but no one says what the “right” decision is, and certainly no one says a thing to the legendary nursery worker.

A coach may act like the task does not matter. The relationship with the quarterback is the priority. They win together. They lose together. The team, the institution, everything else take a back seat to the relationship between the coach and the quarterback. For this coach, “his guy” — people — is the priority over task every time.

Churches reflect this priority when people continue in functions which for whatever reason they can no longer do satisfactorily. Technology may have changed. Methods may have changed. Resources and capabilities may have changed. Even needs may have changed. But because the church prioritizes people, the church opts to do

nothing, fearing that to make a change would hurt someone’s feelings.

The message is clear. People matter.

Other churches are like the coach who pulls the quarterback the first time the player fails to live up to the coach’s expectations. In some churches every teacher must first complete a series of training programs before ever entering a Bible class. Explicit job descriptions exist for every volunteer position and every greeter, usher or committee member must participate in a training session before being placed in service.

“If God’s work is worth doing, it is worth doing well,” one hears in these churches. The task is the first priority and the emphasis is on effective and efficient service.

Dependent on volunteers

Churches, however, are not football teams. They are not even businesses. Churches depend on volunteers, not paid employees, to do the

work of the church. That makes the dynamics of a church far different from other organizations.

And, too, the gospel of Jesus Christ begins with a person-centered relationship. The initial call of the gospel is to a personal relationship with God and to grow individually in God’s grace. Obviously, the church is person-centered.

The gospel also is task-oriented. Christians are instructed to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. We are encouraged to learn God’s Word, to reflect His glory into all the world as instruments of His peace. Those are tasks and they are important.

Ultimately, the choice between “person or task” is a false dilemma which the church has too often embraced. The priority for the church is “person and task.” The church should neither allow problems to fester nor carelessly push faithful servants aside. The church must always care for the individual, and the church must be equally diligent in carrying out its God-given tasks. The church must be faithful to fellow believers and faithful to God who commissioned both the church and believers for service.

When problems arise, and they arise in every church, the goal should be what is best for the people involved and what is best for the ministry of the church. Certainly it is a resolution that is consistent with the gospel emphasis of “person and task.”

“When problems arise, and they arise in every church, the goal should be what is best for the people involved and what is best for the ministry of the church. Certainly it is a resolution that is consistent with the gospel emphasis of ‘person and task.’”

Connect with us
 >>>> **ONLINE** <<<<

 thealabamabaptist.org

 facebook.com/thealabamabaptist

 twitter.com/alabamabaptist

Follow Bob Terry
 Twitter
 @drbobterry





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-879-6026. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash
Editor-elect

Maggie Walsh
Assistant Editor

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions Coordinator

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation and Public Relations

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News Global (BNG), Religion News Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18), Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Circulation Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Full member of
Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of
Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

'Big field'

Shelby County church plant sees massive need around it as 'exciting'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Danny Lovett says his church is surrounded by a big, big field. Even though the Church at Chelsea Westover is "way out here in Shelby County," from where it sits at the intersection of Highway 55 and Highway 280, there are 82,000 people within a 10-mile radius.

"And 82 percent of our county doesn't go to church," Lovett said. "It's a big field. There's a lot to be done here."

Because of that, the congregation has got a second field on its mind — a 90-acre plot of land behind the ServPro headquarters where the Church at Chelsea Westover meets.

They recently built a big pavilion to hold children's activities and have drawn up plans for a multipurpose building, walking trail and fields for soccer and softball.

"About 3,000 kids in the area drive to other parts of the county to play sports because there's nothing offered in the area," Lovett said. "So we're going to start our own leagues."

He's hoping that when the sod goes down, there will be hundreds of people on the church's property.

"It's exciting," he said.

"Exciting" isn't a new word for the Church at Chelsea Westover. Ever since 2012, when David Wilson first felt led to get a church started in his Servpro training building, the church has been growing and adding.

"The training center was about 2,000 square feet, and we started running 130 or 140 and would pack that thing out," Lovett said.

So Wilson, owner of central Alabama's six Servpro franchises, doubled the footage and added a stage and electronic equipment.



Photo courtesy of Rick Wright

The youth program at the Church at Chelsea Westover is bursting at the seams. More than a hundred students are currently in the youth ministry.

Now the church is running between 250 and 300 and is "way over 80 percent full again," Lovett said.

That's when they started drawing up plans for a multipurpose building, and they took in the building behind them.

"David moved all his sales team down so we could have that space for a children's area and five Bible study rooms," Lovett said.

The church is running 100 in Bible study every week right now, he said.

And the youth program is bursting at the seams too, according to Rick Wright, who serves as student/outreach pastor.

"God has really just done a work," he said. Two years ago, on his first night at the church,

he expected a dozen youth to show up and then he could build from there.

"I don't know what got them there, but 40 showed up, and seven came to know Christ," he said. "The second week, 55 showed up and 12 were saved. And the momentum just kept rolling."

More than a hundred students are in the youth ministry there now. It's because of God moving and because the students are catching a vision to reach their county, he said.

'We've got a big job'

We want to be a church that reaches our 15-mile radius," Wright said. "We've got a big job, and there's a lot of students involved in that. We just want to be vessels He can use."

That's the philosophy of the Church at Chelsea Westover — reaching the unreached, Lovett said. From the very beginning, many of the church's new members were unchurched or had been away from church for a very long time.

"We have someone saved almost every week," Lovett said.

They've also reached out to the community through a weekly meal called the Love Feast and have installed a walk-in freezer so they can become a food distribution site for Shelby Baptist Association.

God planted the seed in Wilson's heart five years ago, and it's amazing how much it's grown through his obedience, Lovett said. "It's unreal what God's allowing the church to do out there for the community."

Wilson died in June 2017 from cancer, and Lovett said that's been tough to walk through. "I saw him every day — we would walk and pray together," he said.

"But I know David's last statement to me before he died was that the greatest thing God allowed him to do was start that church. And what God has done there is exciting." ✠

For more information about the Church at Chelsea Westover, visit thechurchatcw.com.

PASTORS AND STAFF:

A quick tip

Being content

Many times ministers find themselves in a place they really don't want to be. It may be a geographical location or it may be a place in life or ministry. Whether the Lord directly engineered the circumstances or not, He can use our current situation to do a work in our life and ministry.

I found myself in that place in seminary occasionally. I wanted to graduate, move back east and get started in ministry. Somehow God gave me the grace to settle in and finish my degree. The patience and endurance

required to finish have proven invaluable in ministry.

There are numerous biblical examples of those who found themselves in places they didn't want to be. The Israelites grumbled en route to the promised land. Joseph also found himself in places no fault or choice of his own, yet later he was able to say, "You meant it for evil but the Lord meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). The places Joseph found himself were on God's path to get him to where he needed to be.

Consider "blooming where you are planted." It's possible if you will accept the place where you are, God may move you to another place in His time. Remember, no place in life is permanent.

Chip Warren, ministry leader

Forgiveness

— Understanding the concept —

In forgiveness you voluntarily embrace pain of your own anger instead of retaliating

By Arthur Freeman
and Fisher Humphreys
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Forgiveness is a response you can make when someone wrongs and hurts you. You may have been hurt by an individual. Sometimes it is a group who hurts you; sadly, some people have been hurt by a church or a group within a church.

How do you respond to being hurt deeply and unfairly? We know the Lord calls us to forgive those who hurt us (see the sidebar “Jesus and Forgiveness,” next page). But what does that mean?

Forgiveness means suffering in a special sense. In order to forgive, you have to accept two kinds of pain. First comes the pain of being hurt by someone. That is a kind of pain that all of us experience, and there is no way to avoid it completely.

Our natural response

There also is another kind of pain. When you’re treated unfairly, you become angry. No one has to teach you to do this. It is a natural response.

And when you are angry because you have been hurt, you want to retaliate. This also is a natural response, and many things in our world reinforce it.

In a sense, you are entitled to retaliate. After all, it’s only fair — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. That balances the scales. That’s justice.

But it’s not forgiveness. In forgiveness you do something that is even better than justice. You voluntarily embrace the pain of your own anger instead of retaliating.

By doing this, you neutralize your anger. You do not repress or deny your anger; you live into it and you live through it in such a way as to drain the violence from it.

Here then is our definition: Forgiveness



123rf.com

is accepting the pain caused by people who hurt you — and also accepting the anger you naturally feel because you have been hurt — in such a way as to end their destructive power in your life and in the lives of others.

“I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it away from me.”

John 10:17-18

Of course, this is not fair. You didn’t hurt the other person. The other person hurt you. You shouldn’t have to suffer. The person who hurt you should have to suffer.

But in the real world of interpersonal relationships, it is the injured party alone who can forgive, and that means that it is the injured person who must suffer if forgiveness is to occur.

Forgiveness doesn’t come naturally to us. It is not easy and it may take time.

But it is worth doing. Why? Because if you don’t forgive, you will continue to carry around anger about the hurts others

have caused you. That will make you bitter and unhappy.

It may even make you sick. Bottling up your anger and resentment can lead to hypertension, ulcers, headaches, skin lesions and insomnia. In fact, according to one scientist engaged in cancer research at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Medical School, failure to deal with anger can contribute to cancer. Forgiveness is something you need to do for yourself.

It also is something you need to do for others. If you don’t forgive, you will hurt those around you because they will be affected by your anger and resentment. They will be made unhappy by your unhappiness.

Reconciliation

And there is something else too. Sometimes those who hurt you may realize what they have done and repent of it and ask for your forgiveness. When that happens, the fact that you have not forgiven them means you have no forgiveness to offer them. Then the two of you can’t be reconciled, not be-

cause of the wrong they did to you but because of your failure to forgive that wrong. So we need to forgive, just as Jesus taught us to do.

There is one other important factor in understanding forgiveness. We need to distinguish forgiving those who hurt us from allowing them to continue to hurt us. There is a word for being hurt repeatedly by the same person — it is abuse.

Turn the other cheek

Jesus calls us to forgive those who hurt us, but He does not call us to continue to accept abuse. Of course, sometimes we can’t escape abuse. In Jesus’ lifetime, it was impossible for Jews to escape abuse at the hands of the Roman soldiers who occupied Israel. Under those circumstances, Jesus told His followers to shame the abusers by turning the other cheek and going the second mile (see Matt. 5:38-42). And that is still the best counsel under those circumstances.

But in many cases we are able to get out of harm’s way, and with rare exceptions that is what we should do. Certainly that is what Jesus did. He did not allow people to abuse Him whenever they pleased. He said, “I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it away from me” (John 10:17-18).

Following Jesus does not mean accepting abuse but it does mean forgiving those who abused us.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Arthur Freeman is clinical professor of psychiatry at Tulane University in New Orleans. Before he retired from psychiatric practice, he was recognized by the International Association of HealthCare Professionals as a Leading Physician of the World and also as Top Adult Psychiatrist in Birmingham. He is a member of Canterbury United Methodist Church in Mountain Brook. Fisher Humphreys is a Christian theologian and taught at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University before retiring. Both men live in Birmingham.✠

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Matt. 5:38-39

Jesus and forgiveness

By Arthur Freeman
and Fisher Humphreys
Special to The Alabama Baptist

When the subject is Jesus and forgiveness, we are likely to think first of the fact that Jesus died to forgive our sins — that is the Christian gospel (see 1 Cor. 15:1–3). In unforgettable parables such as the prodigal son, Jesus emphasized that God forgives our sins (Luke 15:11–32).

But we also should remember that Jesus talked often about how important it is for His followers to forgive others.

For example, in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His followers to say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). To make sure they didn't miss the point, He added: "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14–15).

How often?

On one occasion Peter asked Jesus how often we ought to forgive our enemies — seven times? Jesus said, "I tell you, 77 times" (Matt. 18:21–22).

Jesus then told a parable about a king who forgave one of His slaves an enormous debt. That slave then turned around and refused to forgive one of his fellow slaves a small debt. The king told the wicked slave, "You should have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you," and he punished him severely. Jesus added, "So will my heavenly Father also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brothers (or sisters) from your heart" (Matt. 18:23–35).

In the Beatitudes, Jesus summarized His teaching with these words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt. 5:7). He intended for His followers to do a very daring thing — to imitate God by treating others the way God was treating them. He said, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

Of course, Jesus did not mean that His followers would earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others. It was the other way around. It is because your Father has forgiven you that you must forgive those who hurt you. Years later Paul expressed it this way to the Church at Ephesus: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

If we take seriously what Jesus took seriously, we will forgive those who hurt us. ✠



123rf.com

— Practically applying it —

Ways you can open yourself up to extend grace to those who need it

By Arthur Freeman
and Fisher Humphreys
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Wondering how to practice forgiveness? Here are some ways you can open yourself up to extending grace to those who need it.

▶ Participate in a community that supports you in forgiveness. We can choose inner circles within our communities. These smaller communities should hold values and Christian principles that are similar to ours. There are many Christians who do not practice forgiveness, so the division cannot be purely Christians versus secular communities. We must pray to God that we can choose those communities in which He wishes us to be.

Forgiving all

▶ Identify the persons or group you need to forgive. Certainly it is more difficult to forgive one person rather than several persons. Our forgiveness work will be incomplete if we do not forgive all. Archbishop Desmond Tutu believes that specificity in who the offenders are and what they have done is central to forgiveness and restoration of previous relationships. It may take gentle, persuasive discussions with the offenders to get this right.

▶ Try to see the humanity of those you need to forgive. All of us are mixtures of goodness and sin and in those who have offended us we must look deeper than the evil they have done. The offenders are children of God just as we are. Some of them may have supported their churches or given to charities. Nonetheless they have hurt us in some way and both of us have reparative work to do.

The French have a saying, "To understand is to forgive." Understanding is very complex. We will have to empathize with someone. If we do, we may feel compas-

sion for him. Empathy is imaginative reconstruction of the offender's mental state at the time of his or her wrongdoing. This will not be a pleasant part of our forgiveness work, but it can be done, with rewards.

▶ Live in such a way as to do them no harm. Our first intention may be retribution. We want offenders to suffer as we have. We should slow down mounting rage and pray that we can address their offense with forgiveness. We must be sure that our anger and desire for revenge must give way to forgiveness. We can thus experience a powerful sense of our mission for God in this world.

▶ Do not stoke the fires of your anger. We can make a bad situation worse with vengeance. It is important to put mental brakes on our mounting sense of hurt and wish for retribution. Meeting with trusted friends who are objective enough to help us may be a step to forgiving. Meditation and mindfulness of our own anger process may stem the rage we feel. Love, not an eye for an eye, is Jesus' way.

Ask God to help

▶ Pray and ask God to help you forgive. Prayer is of foundational importance. As John Wesley said, "Pray ceaselessly." Your work with God will take patience. Now is the time for humility. Being offended and sinned against should not be the time for righteous (egotistical) indignation. Pray for God's help in this dilemma. You may have to see the offender in the light of his or her own distress. Forgiveness may occur earlier when we see the offender's suffering.

▶ Pray for those whom you need to forgive. The likelihood is that prayer for those who have hurt you may bring you closer to understanding their misery. Pity for them

may make you aware of their pain. Pity leads to empathy and even compassion for them. Praying for someone can help dissolve our hatred. Prayer can bring talks that lead to a deep awareness of the needs of those we have despised.

Perseverance

▶ Persevere until you are sure that you no longer want to hurt them. Images of wounding or even killing those who have wronged us are common. We must remember that forgiveness is an arduous process and we need all the help we can get. We may think we have forgiven someone, and then the next day the same aggressive thoughts and images return. This is why perseverance is much more important than we thought it would be.

▶ Allow yourself time to forgive. Forgiveness comes in stages and there is some backsliding. This

is not an occasion for frustration but for increased effort with the help of God. Our prayers to Him must be sincere and frequent. When we are successful we will be rewarded many times over. We must be respectful also for how much time will be needed by the offender to accept our forgiveness.

In your forgiveness process, try to re-establish the relationship you had with the person who hurt you. This will be difficult on many occasions. You can help the offender accept the shame he or she may have experienced during the forgiveness. He or she may resent the attitude you are using in reminding him or her of the offense. Coach him or her through this with even more forgiveness. This part of the process may help re-establish the relationship and allow you both to know you are doing God's will. ✠

"Pray and ask God to help you forgive. Prayer is of foundational importance."



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

AUTAUGA

▶ **Chris Britton** is the new pastor of **County Line Church, Deatsville**. He previously served as youth pastor for Center-Point Fellowship Church, Prattville. He also served at East Memorial Church, Prattville. Britton and his wife, Kim, have four children.

BIGBEE

▶ **Wayne Smith** is the new pastor of **Christian Valley Church, Livingston**. He is married to Hope.

BETHEL

▶ **Linden Church** will host the Bon-trager Family Singers from Kalona, Iowa, in concert Jan. 28, 11 a.m. A love offering will be received. Billy Harris is pastor.

BLOUNT

▶ **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold the regular third Sunday night singing Jan. 21, 6 p.m. One Accord will provide special music. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

SHELBY

▶ **Siluria Church, Alabaster**, will hold a community Life Line Screening on Jan. 11, 9 a.m. Five screenings will be offered that scan for potential health problems related to blocked arteries, abdominal aortic aneurysms, atrial fibrillation or irregular heartbeat and a bone density screening. All five screenings will take 60–90 minutes to

complete. For more information and to register call 1-888-653-6441, text "circle" to 797979 or visit lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle. Michael Brooks is pastor.

MORGAN

▶ **Greg Lee** is the new pastor of **West Hartselle Church, Hartselle**. Lee is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He previously served as pastor of Wall Highway Church, Madison. He also served First Church, Alabaster. He and his wife, Debbie, have two sons.



LEE

TUSCALOOSA

▶ **First Church, Tuscaloosa**, will begin celebrating its 200th anniversary Jan. 21. Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions and former pastor of First, Tuscaloosa, will speak during the expanded service times at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. There will be no Sunday School. The yearlong celebration officially begins Jan. 24 with a missions celebration featuring Rosalie Hall Hunt as guest speaker. There also will be expanded service times at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 28. There will be no Sunday School. Pastor Gil McKee will speak. For more information about additional events call 205-345-7554 or visit fb.me/first-tuscaloosa200.



TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What's New?

A New Covenant

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

The Preacher" in Ecclesiastes, commonly taken to be Solomon, concluded that it is utter folly or emptiness for a person to attempt to find fulfillment and happiness apart from God. After exploring such avenues as power, popularity, prestige and pleasure, all with God left out, he came to the conclusion, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. 1:9). From such a dismal conviction, the Bible takes us to the opposite conclusion, voiced from heaven in a loud shout: "Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (Rev. 21:5). Without God there is no real or lasting newness, but with Him there is hope for all things being made new.

The beginning of a New Year puts into focus the idea of newness — new resolves, new expectations, new pathways, new achievements. In the beginning weeks of this New Year, Theology 101 will be dealing with several wonderful things that God has, or will have, made new. So what's new with God? For one thing there is a New Covenant.

Anyone who picks up a Bible can notice immediately that it contains two major sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. If we know that the term "testament" is another way of translating into English the original term for "covenant," we might say that the Bible ends with setting forth a New Covenant. Of course, something declared to be new implies something that was old. Hence, the Bible begins with the Old Covenant but ends with the new.

The Old Testament presents God as a covenant-making God. In each instance God took the initiative and set the terms. He made covenants with selected individuals such as Noah (Gen. 9:8–13) and Abraham (Gen. 15:18–21; 17:1–13). Preeminently, through Moses, God made a covenant with the nation of Israel (Ex. 24:3–8). God pledged in that covenant that He would be Israel's God and that Israel would be His people.

We often think of the Old Covenant as a covenant of law, the terms of which were spelled out in commandments, ritual ceremonies, animal sacrifices and specifications for periodic renewal of that covenant. In the Old Testament not only is God presented as a covenant-making God but also as a covenant-promising God. Speaking through Jeremiah, God declared, "Behold, the days are coming ... when I will make a new covenant ... this is the covenant that I will make: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:31–33).

Covenant of grace

The short way of describing the New Covenant is to speak of a covenant of grace in contrast to the Old Covenant of law. Hebrews 7–10 speaks to us at some length about this New Covenant. Whereas Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant that God gave at Sinai, Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant.

Thus, the New Covenant has a better mediator. It also was based on better promises. It has a better Priest (Christ) ministering at a better altar (a heavenly one), having offered a better sacrifice (Himself) that has achieved better results (once-for-all remission of sins for individuals and formation of a new community — the Church).

In summary, we might say the terms of the Old Covenant were etched in stone (the Ten Commandments), while the core of the New Covenant is etched in the hearts of believers by the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 3:3).✠

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.



Taylorville Baptist holds note burning



Photo courtesy of Taylorville Baptist Church

Rick Besant, chairman of the sites and facilities committee at Taylorville Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, in Tuscaloosa Association, burns the note for the church's mortgage Nov. 26, 2017. The mortgage note was originally signed in 2003, the same year Curtis Kelley (left) was called as pastor of Taylorville Baptist.

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Former Midwestern President Ferguson dies

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Milton Ferguson, 89, the second president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, died Dec. 21 after a brief battle with cancer.

Ferguson's tenure as president at Midwestern Seminary began in February 1973, and he served the seminary community in this role before retiring in 1995 at the age of 67.



FERGUSON

"Serving as Midwestern Seminary's president for 23 years, Dr. Ferguson led the institution through a season of great denominational and institutional transition," said Jason K. Allen, who is Midwestern Seminary's fifth president. "He did so faithfully and graciously, seeking to honor the Lord in both word and deed."

Under Ferguson's leadership, Allen said the seminary crossed many milestones including a growing enrollment, expansions in campus housing and leading the seminary to greater financial health.

In addition to his service as a professor and seminary president, Ferguson served many roles in Southern Baptist life as a writer, pastor, preacher and teacher. He also was a renowned youth evangelist early in his ministry.

A native of Harrah, Oklahoma, Ferguson was a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He also served in the U.S. Army.

Ferguson is survived by two daughters. He was preceded in death by his wife, Bettie, and his daughter, Jo Catherine. (BP)

CP giving slightly above last year's 1st quarter

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) portion of the Cooperative Program (CP) are 0.98 percent ahead of the same time frame at the end of 2016 and 3.69 percent under the SBC CP Allocation Budget projection for the year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Frank S. Page.

The \$46,229,225.46 received by the Executive Committee from Oct. 1, 2017, through Dec. 31, 2017, for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget represents 96.31

percent of the \$48,000,000.00 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$447,033.04, or 0.98 percent, above last year's first quarter total of \$45,782,192.42.

Designated giving of \$11,620,360.88 for the same year-to-date period is 6.75 percent, or \$734,568.32, above gifts of \$10,885,792.56 received at this point last year. This amount includes only those designated gifts received by the Executive Committee.

Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, Southern Baptist Global Hunger Relief and other special gifts.

December's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$16,043,689.81. Designated gifts received in December amounted to \$4,462,282.71. (BP)



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

'Highest integrity'

2017 SBC Pastors Conf. issues financial report

In what may be the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors Conference's first public financial report, 2017 conference president Dave Miller noted expenditures of a little more than \$400,000 for the Phoenix gathering plus an additional \$100,000 provided by the Cooperative Program (CP) to help pay for meeting space.

"As pastors of average and smaller churches, the costs of the conference boggled our minds," Miller, pastor of Southern Hills Baptist Church, Sioux City, Iowa, wrote in a Jan. 2 report. "But we found that with the support of the entities of the SBC and the help of the (SBC) Executive Committee, a group of average church pastors can do this."

The 2017 Pastors Conference — held June 11–12 at the Phoenix Convention Center — focused on leaders of small and medium-sized churches, with all conference preachers leading congregations of approximately 500 or fewer worship attendees. The conference leadership team also comprised pastors of average-sized churches.

Since 2014 the Pastors Conference has issued annual financial reports to the Executive Committee (EC), but those reports have not been made public. The EC utilizes the reports in its meetings each February to help set the level of CP funding for future Pastors Conferences.

Miller wrote in his 2,100-word report, published on the SBC Voices blog, that previous Pastors Conference leaders operated with the "highest integrity." He added, however, "We do believe that since it is the SBC Pastors Conference ... accountability should be made to the pastors of the SBC." Miller expressed hope future conference leaders also will publish financial reports.

Total income

The 2017 Pastors Conference total income of \$410,582 — which does not include the \$100,000 in CP funds allocated from the SBC Operating Budget to help offset Pastors Conference meeting space costs — comprised gifts from SBC entities, state Baptist conventions, churches and other organizations; some \$52,000 forwarded by the 2016 Pastors Conference leadership team; revenue from booth and ad sales; and interest on a Pastors Conference account with the Southern Baptist Foundation, according to the report.

The conference's "chief ministry partner" and largest financial contributor was New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Caskey Center for Church Excellence, Miller wrote. Three "session sponsors"

— the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, LifeWay Christian Resources and the North American Mission Board — also made "substantial" financial contributions.

Several SBC entities assisted in ways other than financial donations, according to the report. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary of Fort Worth, Texas, hosted an initial colloquium for conference speakers. New Orleans Seminary hosted a post-conference wrap-up session for the 2017 and 2018 conference leadership teams. Gateway Seminary of Mill Valley, California, produced and printed the conference program, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary of Kansas City, Missouri, supplied a pulpit for the conference.

Conference expenses, according to the report, included:

- ▶ \$162,585 for meeting logistics such as facility rental, lights and sound;

- ▶ \$88,855 for conference expenses like honoraria as well as travel, hotel rooms and meals for the speakers and leadership team;

- ▶ \$61,000 for \$1,000 scholarships to help pastors of smaller churches attend the conference;

- ▶ \$19,960 for pre-conference expenses; and

- ▶ \$4,378 in post-conference expenses.

After all bills were paid, the 2017 Pastors Conference gave nearly \$24,000 to the Caskey Center to fund scholarships for the 2018 Pastors Conference and SBC

annual meeting in Dallas. Approximately \$30,000 was forwarded to the 2018 Pastors Conference leadership team, headed by president H.B. Charles Jr., pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida.

The 2017 Pastors Conference forwarded \$20,000 to GuideStone Financial Resources' Mission:Dignity initiative, which assists retired pastors and their widows who have financial needs. Participants at the Phoenix gathering gave an additional \$15,138 to Mission:Dignity through the conference offering, GuideStone reported in a comment to Miller's SBC Voices post.

Miller's report did not specify the exact amounts donors gave and kept some specific expenses confidential.

"We loved serving at the 2017 Pastors Conference and are eternally grateful for the support of the Executive Committee, the Caskey Center and the entities of the SBC," Miller wrote. "I can never express my gratitude fully for that group of men who worked with me to make this conference a success." (BP)

"We found that with the support of the entities of the SBC and the help of the (SBC) Executive Committee, a group of average church pastors can [plan the Pastors Conference]."

Dave Miller
president, 2017 SBC Pastors Conference

"We do believe that since it is the SBC Pastors Conference ... accountability should be made to the pastors of the SBC."

Dave Miller, president, 2017 SBC Pastors Conference

Advertise in *The Alabama Baptist*

Contact Bill Gilmore
at 1-800-803-5201, ext. 107 or bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

Things to consider when choosing hospice care for loved ones

A quick search on Medicare's Hospice Compare website shows more than 250 hospice agencies that serve Alabama.

It can be daunting to choose the people who will help your family with end-of-life care. The nation's 4,000-plus hospice agencies served about 1.4 million

Medicare patients in the U.S. in 2015, according to *Time* magazine. It's a huge business.

But, according to an investigation that Kaiser Health News published in cooperation with *Time* magazine, the care that most people expect from a hospice agency sometimes disappears right when they need it most.

The investigation, which looked at 20,000 government inspection records, found that "missed visits and neglect are common for patients dying at home," *Time* reported. They found more than 3,200 complaints filed with state officials in the past five years, complaints that led to inspectors finding problems in 759 hospices. One of those complaints from a woman in Alaska told a gripping story about her husband's final hours without pain medication.

Officials with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), an industry trade group, said stories like hers are inexcusable — but they aren't common.

"I would venture to say whatever measure you want to use, there are an exponential number of positive stories about hospice that would overwhelm the negative," said Jonathan Keyserling, NHPCO's senior vice president of health policy, according to *Time*. "When you serve 1.6 million people and families a year, you're going to have instances where care could be improved."

Aim: 'humane care'

But Amy Tucci, president and CEO of the Hospice Foundation of America, said even one story like that is too many. "It's like medical malpractice. It's relatively rare, but when it happens, it tarnishes the entire field," she said.

Hospice care began in the U.S. in the 1970s, "driven by religious and nonprofit groups aimed at providing humane care at the end of life," *Time* reported. It's available through Medicare to critically ill patients who are expected to die

within six months and agree to forego treatment for a cure. Care is focused on comfort instead of aggressive medical interventions that can end up in drawn-out hospital deaths. The purpose of hospice care is to offer peaceful, holistic care at the end of life.

Most families are happy with their hospice experience, according to a recent survey by the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) designed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Many even give it glowing reviews, according to *Time* magazine.

But 1 in 5 respondents felt their hospice agency did not always come when they needed assistance. According to Dr. Joan Teno, a researcher at University of Washington in Seattle who has studied hospice quality for 20 years, that's not good enough.

If you are choosing hospice care for yourself or a loved one, NHPCO suggests asking these questions when looking for an agency.

► Is the hospice Medicare certified?

Most hospices are certified by Medicare and are therefore required to follow Medicare rules

and regulations. This is important if you wish to receive hospice care as part of your Medicare/Medicaid coverage.

► Has the hospice been surveyed by a state or federal oversight agency in the last five years? Ask when the last survey was and if any deficiencies were noted and if so, have they been resolved.

► Is the organization a NHPCO member and does it comply with all aspects of NHPCO's Standards for Hospice Programs? If the hospice is a current NHPCO member, ask if it complies with NHPCO's standards and has completed the Self Assessment and if so, how recently they completed it.

Accreditation

► Is the hospice accredited by a national organization?

Several organizations accredit hospices, surveying them to ensure they meet quality standards. Hospices are not required to be accredited but accreditation can be a reflection of its commitment to quality.

► Does the hospice conduct a family evaluation survey?

Many hospices ask family members to complete a brief evaluation of their services after the death of a loved one. Ask for their most recent scores so you can see how previous patients and family members have rated their services. (TAB)

There are more than 250 hospice agencies that serve Alabama.

Medicare's Hospice Compare

JUNGLE RIVER ADVENTURE
 "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go."
 Psalm 128:1
bogard press
 Always, True, and Christ-Centered
TRUST OBEY SERVE SHARE FOLLOW
www.vbs.bogardpress.org

The Alabama Baptist to celebrate 175 years

You and your church are invited to be a part of the birthday party celebrating the 175th anniversary of *The Alabama Baptist*. The celebration will be Tues., Feb. 6 on the campus of Judson College in Marion where the state Baptist paper began in 1843.

The day includes historic tours in the community; presentations by the authors of the new book "*The Alabama Baptist: Celebrating 175 Years*;" a worship time with Judson students featuring editor-elect Jennifer Rash as chapel speaker; a thanksgiving prayer;

a birthday party with cake and punch; and a sit-down lunch.

The day will begin at 9 a.m. with historic tours scheduled. Other activities will begin at 10:45 a.m.

Ideal outing

The celebration would make an ideal outing for senior adult groups, WMU groups, Sunday School classes or anyone interested in Baptist history.

The cost for the day is \$15 in advance and includes tours, the program, lunch and a \$5 discount coupon on the new book. Registration on the day of the event will be \$20. (TAB)

YOU'RE INVITED TO CELEBRATE

175 years of The Alabama Baptist

February 6, 2018

Judson College / Marion, AL

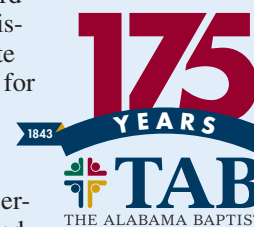
A day of historic tours, prayer, lunch, worship and more for \$15 per person in advance or \$20 per person at the door

— For more information or to register —

Call 1-800-803-5201, ext. 100 or email lharrison@thealabamabaptist.org.

On April 25, 1878, the Alabama Baptist State Mission Board reported statistics from state missionaries for the first quarter of the year. They were: sermons preached — 410; ad-dresses delivered — 111; churches visited — 299;

Sunday Schools organized — 28; prayer meetings organized — 1; baptisms — 5; received by experienced — 2; received by letter — 1; deacons ordained — 1; district meetings attended — 3; subscriptions to *The Alabama Baptist* sold — 109.



LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE

Toll-free: 888.699.9679
 AL local: 205.699.9679
 Call for **FREE** on-site consultation
 Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
 Visit www.LeedsStainedGlass.com
 for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!



Getting creative

When it gets cold out, winter activities can bring families together

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

If you're like many families, cold winter weather may keep you from enjoying the outdoor world. Cooped up inside, cold rain and sleet limit usual activities for parents and young children.

The next time the youngsters complain, "I'm bored — there's nothing to do," try these simple and inexpensive or no-cost ideas.

They're guaranteed to create interest and bring the smiles back during the winter doldrums. Use this time of family togetherness to teach children to thank God for His many blessings.

► **Draw the outline of a house (divide into rooms) on a large piece of poster board.** Provide catalogs and magazines showing furniture, pets and people. Guide young children to cut pictures and paste them in the appropriate rooms of the house. What pet would they choose to live in their house? Write a caption on the poster that reads, "God bless our home."

Say: Thank you God for our home.



Photo courtesy of Carolyn Tomlin

Spending time in the kitchen is one of the pleasures of being with your family.

► **Cover the kitchen table and surrounding floor with large towels or newspapers.** Provide small tubs of water and mild liquid bath soap. Encourage children to give their dolls a bubble bath and wash the doll clothes. Place clothes in a dryer after washing. Or, use a sink sprayer

as a car wash for toy automobiles. As you interact with your children talk about how God wants families to have fun together.

Say: Thank you God for our family.

► **Provide a roll of inexpensive foil for each child.** Ask, "Can you create an original design from this source?" Whatever the child designs, offer praise for participation. To get children started, suggest an animal, flower or a toy.

Say: Thank you God for hands that work.

► **Keep a "Special Days Bag"**

for unexpected events, such as a sick day, days when school is out from harsh winter weather or a car trip. In this bag place small puzzle books, crayons, coloring books, card games, small boxes of dried fruit and other things your child might enjoy. Only use this bag on occa-

sions that require something different for entertainment.

Say: Thank you God for surprises.

► **Play "Hide the Pennies" by placing 20 pennies in the house.** Hiding places should reflect the age of the child. When all the pennies are found, give a small reward or take a break and have a healthy snack, such as apple slices, milk or fruit juice.

Say: Thank you God for time to spend together.

Sports games

► **Save that long cardboard tube left from Christmas wrapping paper.** Use as a mallet and add a Nerf ball to play indoor golf. Make a net and see how many can hit the ball into the net.

Say: Thank you God for strong bodies that like to play.

► **Build towers and structures with cardboard boxes.** Collect an assortment of sizes and shapes. Is there an appliance box available? This makes a great place for taking books, a blanket and flashlight for looking at picture books. Add a friend for even more fun.

Say: Thank you God for simple things of life ... like boxes.

► **If the weather outside is dreary, pack a picnic lunch for inside.** Throw a blanket on the floor, add colorful plastic or paper plates in a picnic basket and have your meal in another room of the house. Perhaps your house has a large window that provides an open view. Recall a summer memory your family enjoyed.

Say: Thank you God for helping us have good memories together as a family.

► **Feed the wildlife in your yard this**

Woman's Missionary Union has put together "Bible Thoughts for Concept Area" that help younger children learn biblical concepts from verses. Here are some examples:

• **All that the Bible says is from God (2 Tim. 3:16).**

• **I will sing to God (Ex. 15:1).**

• **God made me (Ps. 139:14).**

• **Jesus went to church (Luke 4:16).**

winter. With ice and snow, songbirds and squirrels must search for food. Purchase "chicken scratch" (a mixture of seeds) in bulk from a feed store. Place in a metal can with a tight-fitting top to keep other animals out. Do you see any songbirds flittering around? Are squirrels scampering about the trees or ground looking for food? Using a book on birds, learn to identify those that visit your yard. Check YouTube to identify the song that each bird sings. Talk to your children about how God provides for His creatures.

Say: Thank you God for eyes that see.

Time in the kitchen

► **Spending time in the kitchen is one of the pleasures of being with your family.** Talk about concept words, such as measuring, stirring, sifting, rolling ... and, of course, tasting. Praise children for learning new skills and for working together.

Say: Thank you God for hands that work with others.

Use the cold days of winter to draw you closer as a family. Thank God for His blessings. ✝

Alabamians among recent seminary graduates

Alabama Baptists graduated with degrees at the master's level or higher from Southern Baptist seminaries and divinity schools in December 2017. *The Alabama Baptist* was provided the following list of graduates by the schools.

► Beeson Divinity School:

Master of Divinity — Robert Matthew Bowerman, Hoover; Thomas Jeremy Brown, Sylacauga; Julie Redmond Donavan, Chelsea; Cristopher Scott Harper, Birmingham; Blake Austin Harris, Birmingham; Mark William Jessup, Jasper; Alfred Ted Powell III, Tuscaloosa; Cameron Rashad Thomas, Goodwater

Doctor of Ministry — Calvin Lamar Bell, Bessemer

► Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts — W. Clark Watson, Birmingham

Master of Divinity with Christian Ministry — Justin Alan Alexander, Oxford; Daniel Lewis Drake, Hoover

► Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts in Theological Studies — Alaina Erin Davis, Highland Home; Valerie Taylor Seefeld, Montgomery
Master of Divinity — Jordan S. Atkin-

son, Winfield; James Streeter Wiatt III, Montgomery

Doctor of Ministry — Michael Truman Allums, Ragland

Doctor of Philosophy — Jackson Andrew Hester, Mobile

► New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts in Christian Education — Melissa Bowen, Prattville

Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry — James Early, Southside; Theron Hawkins, Northport

Master of Divinity — Kyle Bryant, Northport; Stephanie Davis, Birmingham; Joseph Gibbons, Mobile; Matthew

Welford, Mobile; Amy Young, Alexander City; James Choi, Montgomery

Doctor of Ministry — John Gates, Jasper; Seth Hood, Tusculumbia; Darrell Paulk, Anniston

► Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Theological Studies — Johnathan E. Evans, Hartselle; Jeremy S. Simpson, Alexander City (TAB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — There were no Alabama graduates with master's degrees or higher in December 2017 from Gateway Seminary or Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, according to the schools.

US sees rise in 'spiritual but not religious' adults

America's got an interesting mind these days when it comes to religion, according to a recent article in *The New York Times*.

More people are saying they are "not religious," but the people who do are twice as likely to believe in ghosts, the *Times* said. And the less religious you are, the more likely you are "to endorse empirically unsupported ideas about UFOs, intelligent aliens monitoring the lives of humans and related conspiracies" about the government trying to cover them up.

"The Western world is, in theory, becoming increasingly secular — but the religious mind remains active," the *Times* reported.

Increase in numbers

A recent Pew Research study backs up that idea — 27 percent of U.S. adults say they now think of themselves as "spiritual but not religious," a figure up 8 percentage points from five years ago.

That growth has been seen across men and women; whites, blacks and Hispanics; and across

people of many different ages, education levels and political leanings.

In the general population, only 54 percent of U.S. adults say they are religious, but 75 percent consider themselves to be spiritual.

"The growth of 'spiritual but not religious' Americans has come mainly at the expense of those who say they are religious and spiritual," Pew reports. "Indeed, the percentage of U.S. adults in this latter group has fallen by 11 points between 2012 and 2017."

What makes up the rapidly growing "spiritual but not religious" segment of the population? Most do actually identify with a religious group — includ-

ing 35 percent who say they are Protestant and 14 percent who say they are Catholic.

Another 37 percent say they are religiously unaffiliated, meaning they describe themselves as an atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular."

Nearly half of those in the "spiritual but not religious" group seldom if ever attend religious services.

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, said he's had conversations with people who would put themselves in this category.

"I have talked with many people who say they believe in God and are spiritually oriented but they are not sure about the deity of Christ and

they are skeptical of 'organized religion,'" he said. "Perhaps the numbers are growing but the presence of spiritually bent people has always been there because that is how God wired people."

Everyone is made to have a relationship with their Creator, Wolf said, pointing to Ecclesiastes 3:11.

Meaning and purpose

"The bottom line: people in all cultures, times and places have a deep proclivity to move beyond the physical to the spiritual to find meaning and purpose," he said.

And "spiritual but not religious" seems to be in vogue, Wolf said, but he uses that as an opportunity to share the truth of Christ.

"My unchanging goal is to always live the Lord's light and love," he said. "Jesus told us to share His message of salvation with everyone so I consistently look for opportunities to deposit gospel seeds into the hearing and hearts of receptive people then leave the results to God." (TAB)

"Perhaps the numbers are growing but the presence of spiritually bent people has always been there because that is how God wired people."

**Pastor Jay Wolf
FBC Montgomery**

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information about placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or ads@thealabamabaptist.org. Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Greenbrier Road Baptist Church is seeking full-time senior pastor. Submit resumés to: Pastor Search Team, 1235 Greenbrier-Dear Rd., Anniston, AL 36207 or email: pastorsearch@grbc.org.

PASTOR

FBC Silverhill, Alabama, is accepting resumés for full-time senior pastor position. Please send resumés to either fbcsilverhillsearchcommittee@gmail.com or hard copy to: FBC Silverhill Search Team, P.O. Box 237, Silverhill, AL 36576.

PASTOR

Calvary Baptist Church in Belmont, Mississippi, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are members of the SBC seeking the man God has prepared to lead us in His will. Please submit resumés to: cbcpastorapp@gmail.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR

Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a music director. This is a paid, part-time position. They will supervise the planning and leading of our worship services in an energetic,

blended style. Their primary additional responsibility will be to lead the choir ministry and choir rehearsals. Interested persons should send a resumé to: lburell@cablone.net and/or contact Lem Burell at 256-846-2807.

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.

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT MINISTRY

Redeemer Community Church in Oneonta, Alabama, seeks a full-time director of student ministry. This individual will be responsible to lead a student ministry for 6th-12th grade. Email resumés and references to: matt@redeemeroneonta.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, or you may email resumés to: stan@firstbaptistoxford.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

North Shelby Baptist Church is accepting resumés for the full-time position of business administrator. Responsibilities include overseeing the operations and maintenance of the facility and the financial activities of the church. Candidates should have knowledge of church operations, supervisory experience, physical facilities management, as well as experience and education in business management. Qualified candidates can send their resumé to: administrator@northshelbybaptist.org.

BUSINESS

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted

sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install statewide. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. Saving people a lot of money on walk-in tubs, stair-lifts and showers. Our lift-chairs and scooters are near internet pricing. A+ rating with BBB. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

GULF SHORES CONDO

1/2/3 BR luxury beachfront condos and 4 BR beach resort house. Owner direct save you \$\$\$. Chris 1-800-713-6435 or cashley945@earthlink.net.



(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

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



Sudanese officials evict pastors, take property

OMDURMAN, South Sudan — An Islamist judge in Sudan upheld the eviction of two pastors from their church-owned homes while 60 other Christians have been summoned to court over their refusal to relinquish property, sources said.

On Dec. 3, 2017, a judge rejected an appeal of the eviction of Yahia Abdelrahim Nalu, Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) moderator, and Sidiq Abdalla, a SPEC pastor, from their homes. The judge ruled that Muslim businessman Hisham Hamad Al-Neel should take over the houses.

The two pastors and their families remain homeless since police raided their houses Aug. 15, 2017, and evicted them. Abdalla has two children, ages 8 and 10, and Nalu has a 1-year-old boy.

More than 60 church leaders are facing charges in various courts in Khartoum for refusal to hand over church lands and estates to Al-Neel, sources said. On Nov. 28, 2017, a group of 25 SPEC leaders appeared in a court in Omdurman after Al-Neel accused them of refusing to hand over church property he claimed to own, they said.

Harassment, arrests and persecution of Christians have intensified since the secession of South Sudan in July 2011. No new licenses have been granted for building new churches in Sudan since 2013 and church buildings have been bulldozed.

Sudan ranked fifth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution. (MS)

Suicide attack on church kills 9 in Pakistan

QUETTA, Pakistan — Terrorists linked with the Islamic State (IS) group attacked a church in Pakistan on Dec. 17, 2017, killing at least nine worshippers and injuring more than 50 others.

Police and church officials told Morning Star News that four suicide attackers stormed the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in the provincial capital, Quetta, in the southwestern part of the country.

Pastor Saimon Bashir Masih said the church was holding a Sunday School Christmas program at the time of the attack. He estimated 400 worshippers were inside the church. Church security reacted quickly, shooting one suicide attacker and preventing another from detonating his explosive-packed jacket before entering the main prayer hall. Two other terrorists fled the scene.

"The loss of lives would have been colossal had either of the two suicide bombers detonated inside the church hall," Masih said.

Officials said the injuries resulted mainly from wooden splinters from the door and from glass blown out of the church's windows in the explosion. IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pakistan ranked fourth on Christian support group Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Indian seminarians detained for caroling

SATNA, India — A group of 32 Catholic seminary carolers in the Satna district of Madhya Pradesh were detained Dec. 14, 2017, following allegations they were involved in religious conversions. The carolers were visiting Christian institutions and singing carols.

National Catholic Reporter sources said police officials took the carolers into custody following a complaint from Hindu activists. Eight priests who went to the station to inquire about the seminarians also were taken into custody, sources said.

The carolers come from St. Ephrem's Theological College in Satna. Groups of seminarians have caroled in neighboring villages during the Advent and Christmas season since the college opened in 1992.

Protestant Christian communities have become a frequent target of Hindu extremists in India, which ranks 15th on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB)

Auburn BCM temporarily relocated; sale of building, property 'on track'

Auburn University Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) has relocated to a temporary space and the sale of the BCM property to the City of Auburn is "on track," according to a spokesperson for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

The Auburn city council approved an agreement to acquire the BCM building and property at its Dec. 19, 2017, meeting. The deal, which was approved by messengers to the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) in November 2017, will result in a new facility for the Auburn BCM and improvements to the nine other BCM centers across the state.

According to the agreement, the ABSC will sell the property to the city for \$2.33 million. The existing BCM building will be demolished to make way for a new 200- to 300-space parking deck for public use on the site.

A new 7,000-square-foot BCM space will be built on the first level of the parking garage. SBOM will determine the layout of the space.

The City of Auburn is provid-



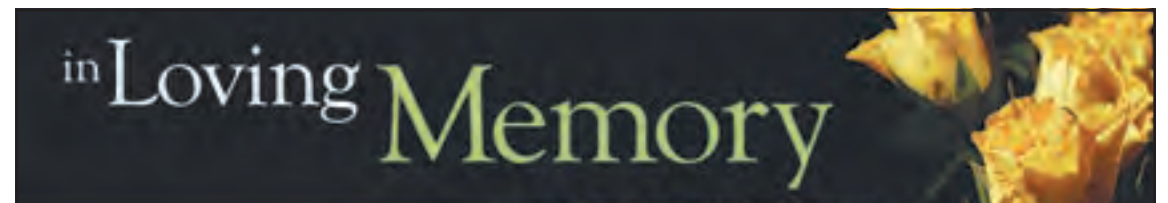
Photo by Jeremy Henderson

ing temporary space for the BCM in downtown Auburn, not too far from its historic location, for the duration of the construction phase of the project, according to Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director.

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

with existing campus ministry funds of approximately \$1 million to renovate the other nine BCM facilities in the state with no debt incurred, DuBois said.

Demolition of the BCM facility is set to begin within the next few weeks. David Dorton, director of public affairs for the City of Auburn, told the *Opelika-Auburn News* that the city wants to be ready to begin construction of the parking deck in June. Dorton estimated that construction will take 9 to 12 months. (TAB)



John Bolton

Former pastor, chaplain dies at 101

John Bolton, a former Alabama Baptist pastor, died Dec. 22, 2017. He was 101.

Born in 1916 near Evergreen, he graduated from Lyeffion high school, worked for the railroad and later joined the Army. At age 31, while a member of First Baptist Church, Evergreen, he felt the call to full-time ministry.



BOLTON

Bolton studied at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and at Howard College (now Samford University). He served part-time at churches in South Alabama while completing his education. Many of these were in Conecuh Baptist Association and included Bermuda Baptist Church, Repton; Holly Grove Baptist Church, Evergreen; Castleberry Baptist

Church; London Baptist Church, Castleberry; and Old Town Baptist Church, Evergreen.

He was later full-time pastor of Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, and Crescent Heights Baptist Church, Lipscomb.

Bolton also taught extension courses through Howard College and the seminary. He and his family moved away from Alabama in 1959 to serve churches in Tennessee and Georgia. Later, he served as director of missions in Tennessee's Salem

and Lawrence County Baptist associations.

He retired in 1981 but served for 20 more years as a chaplain. In 2002 he and his wife, Nellie, moved to Birmingham and became active members of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church. Both served as Sunday School teachers.

Bolton is survived by three children, eight grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Benjamin "Benny" F. Jackson

Longtime evangelist dies at 79

Benjamin "Benny" F. Jackson, a vocational evangelist from the Oxford area, died Dec. 27, 2017. He was 79.

Jackson was a native of the Friendship community of Oxford. He felt the call to preach at age 15 and served for 14 years as a pastor of Baptist churches in Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee. In 1974 he became a full-time evangelist, and for more than 42 years he averaged 30 crusades a year. He preached the gospel in 32 states and 20 countries, and scores of people reported making decisions to follow Christ.

Jackson served as staff evangelist for Kirby Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, before moving back to Alabama and operating Benny Jackson Evangelistic Association under the watch care of First Baptist Church, Pelham.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley Ann Austin Jackson; one child; and one grandchild. (TAB)

DINNER PROGRAM
with Nick Floyd,
lead teaching pastor of
Cross Church, Fayetteville, Ark.
"Reaching Millennials"
Monday, 4:30 p.m.
\$5 / person
for pastors & wives

FREE ADMISSION

2018 State Evangelism Conference

January 22-23, 2018

Monday at 6:15 p.m. • Tuesday at 8:45 a.m.

Eastmont Baptist Church

MONTGOMERY

Speakers

- Roc Collins
- Greg Corbin
- Nick Floyd
- Ronnie Floyd
- Kevin Hamm
- Terrence Jones
- John Meador
- Tom Richter

EVANGELISM RESURGENCE

Does your church have an effective evangelism strategy?

PRAYER CARE SHARE

For More Information,
contact Ministry Assistant Amy Nelson
at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, or
(334) 613-2258, anelson@alsbom.org



featuring

Selah



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

*This conference is made possible by gifts of
Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.*

‘Views on Booze’

‘Religious reasons’ low on list of reasons people abstain from drinking alcohol

Americans may disagree on politics and religion, but they do share something in common — a taste for alcohol.

“Most Americans are very comfortable with drinking alcohol,” Barna said in a recent survey titled “The Buzz About Alcohol: America’s Views on Booze.”

Two-thirds of U.S. adults 21 and older are at least occasional drinkers, according to the Barna report. Millennials are the largest consumers of alcohol, consuming an average of three drinks a week, compared to the average adult who consumes two per week. A lot of Americans admit they sometimes imbibe a little too often.

“Though most Americans are comfortable with drinking, 3 in 10 admit they sometimes drink more than they should,” Barna reported. Millennials and Gen Xers said they overdo it at larger rates than Boomer and Elders.

For those who tend not to over-indulge, religion is often the reason.

“Some Christian groups, particularly evangelicals and Methodists, encourage abstinence as a precaution against drunkenness, and other faiths like Mormonism and Islam outright prohibit it,” Barna noted.

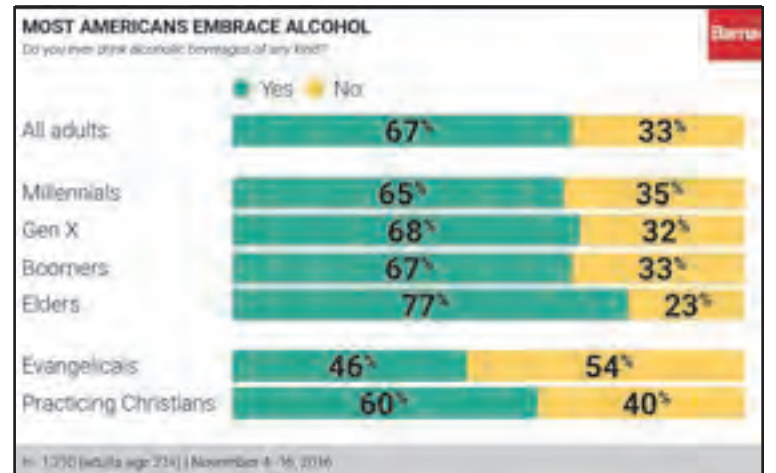
The survey found that 46 percent of evangelicals and 60 percent of practicing Christians — those who say their faith identity is important and attend services once or more per month — and 41 percent of those from other faiths are less likely to consume alcohol. And those who do, drink fewer drinks a week than the average American adult, Barna said.

Ambivalent attitudes

The report also found that many Americans harbor ambivalent attitudes toward alcohol consumption.

While adults who drink occasionally tend to have a more favorable opinion about alcohol than nondrinkers, others say they do not like the taste or worry about the health effects of drinking.

Seeing the negative impact of alcohol on friends and family members also affects attitudes.



Barna graphic

More than 4 in 10 adults (41 percent) say alcohol has caused trouble in their family.

Overall, however, American attitudes about moderate drinking are mostly positive. A majority of adults (62 percent) agree that drinking in moderation is either good for your health or makes no difference. Men are more likely than women to hold these views, as are Gen Xers, married adults and those with higher incomes.

Though some research has touted the possible cardiovascular health benefits of moderate alcohol use, medical professionals warn that the benefits are uncertain and the risks are great, especially for those who drink a lot.

Research published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that excessive alcohol use was respon-

sible for approximately 88,000 deaths from 2006 to 2010, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 30 years.

Alcohol abuse on rise

A study published in the American Medical Association’s JAMA Psychiatry in 2017 also reports an increase in alcohol use, high-risk drinking and alcoholism in the U.S. during the early 2000s, especially among women, older adults, racial/ethnic minorities and the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

The research “makes a compelling case that the United States is facing a crisis with alcohol use, one that is currently costly and about to get worse,” according to Marc Schuckit, a research physician who specializes in alcohol and drug use disorders. (TAB, RNS)

D-Life
Discipleship.
Anytime.
Anywhere.

What if you could successfully equip everyone in your ministry for a lifestyle of disciple-making. This is the purpose of D-Life. D-Life is an organic, simple and intentional process for equipping all believers for a lifestyle of making and multiplying disciples.

The Alabama Baptist, Life Bible Study and several others are sponsoring two D-Life Boot Camp training opportunities for Alabama Baptists:

Central Alabama D-Life Boot Camp
January 20, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., Samford University

South Alabama D-Life Boot Camp
February 24, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., University of Mobile

To register or for more details, visit www.livethedlife.com or contact Bill Wilks at 205-228-0030.

Thompson Sound, Inc.

Installing Excellence in
SOUND • LIGHTING • VIDEO

256.974.SOUND (7686)
www.thompsonsound.com

Our goal in business and in life is to glorify Jesus Christ and spread the good news of His grace.

Like us

ROYAL BEDDING
MADE HERE SINCE 1987

Reliable SIGN SERVICES **DIGITAL SIGNS**

“Reliable Signs took time to answer our questions and showed us different digital options available. They incorporated the digital sign into our main sign, and the two together provide Royal Bedding a professional image that catches the attention of those driving by on Hwy 31. They also provided quality training on the best way to use the digital sign. The sign has been a great investment for our business, and we look forward to the future returns on our investment.”

— Tom Vigneulle, President
Royal Bedding Manufacturing, Inc.

www.reliablesigns.com
1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 14

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

THE UNKNOWN KNOWN
Acts 17:22-34

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, engaging in the mission of God. In the passage this week we see Paul in Athens. This impressive city was in the “late afternoon of her glory” when Paul arrived. Athens was the birthplace of democracy and was the home of many influential philosophers, doctors, writers and artists. Athens was still considered the cultural and intellectual center of the Roman Empire.

At the highest point in the city there was a temple called the Parthenon. Inside there was a statue of Athena, the patron goddess of the city. About 50 yards from the Parthenon was a little hill about 50 feet high and about 150 yards long. On it a temple was built to the Greek god of war, Ares, who corresponded to the Roman god of war, Mars. Paul’s speech took place on this hill, known as the Areopagus or Mars Hill.

Unknown God (22-23)

Paul had seen all the idols in the city and it had deeply grieved him. He had been proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection in the synagogue and the marketplace. That’s how he was invited to speak at the Areopagus. He first established a point of contact with them. He identified with their religious interest. Then he sought to correct their theology. He focused on the altar to the “unknown god.” Paul declared that God has revealed Himself. He is not unknowable. The problem is not that people cannot know God but that we do not want to know God.

The Known Creator (24-29)

Speeches on the Areopagus would usually last two to three hours. With that in mind, the Bible records the outline Paul used in his presentation. He explained the Christian worldview. He put the gospel into

the bigger story of the Bible, showing the reasonableness of faith; the exclusivity of faith; and the necessity of repentance and placing faith in the resurrected Jesus.

Paul began with creation, stating that God made the world and everything in it. This fact makes it absurd to believe God can be contained in a shrine or temple. God is the sustainer of life. He is sovereign over history and geography.

God is knowable. Contrary to the Epicurean philosophers, who taught the gods were detached and uninvolved in daily affairs, Paul taught that God’s purpose in creating humans was that “they should seek God.” Paul’s language suggested the doctrine of sin, giving the imagery of blind people groping after God. We instinctively know God is there but because of sin’s blinding effects we need divine grace to give us the new spiritual eyes to find Him.

God also is the Father of humanity. Paul quoted two pagan poets to describe the truth about human nature. We humans are like our Creator in many ways, including being created in His image.

Judgment by the Son (30-31)

God is both the judge and the rescuer. The fact that God “overlooked” ignorance does not mean He ignored human rebellion. In great mercy He did not immediately visit humanity with the judgment they deserved. With the coming of Jesus a decisive turning point has taken place. Now everyone must repent or face God’s righteous judgment because all have sinned against God. But if they will turn from their sins and trust Christ, they will be saved.

Split Decision (32-34)

Some people mocked his message. Others, however, wanted to hear more. Some believed in Christ and were saved. May the Spirit of God fill us and empower us to engage in the mission of God. ✠

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

JESUS CORRECTS
Mark 7:5-15

Don’t neglect the commands of God. (5-8)

The terms “tradition of the elders,” “traditions of men” and “your tradition” all refer to the body of case law built up to show how the Torah was to be put into practice. (“Precepts of men” from the Isaiah quote in verse 7 refers to this body of law as well.)

The tradition was designed to protect the law; however, by the time of Jesus interpretations of these traditions had become a heavy burden (see Matt. 23:4). In reply, Jesus states that human tradition can never have the same authority as the Word of God. There were times that the religious leaders made even more of tradition than of the commandments. They were preferring religious ritual to that which is inwardly moral and spiritual.

Mark draws from the Greek translation of Isaiah 29:13, which differs from the original Hebrew text from which our English Bibles are translated. This explains the difference between the version we find in Mark and what we find when we turn to our English translations of the Old Testament rendering of the verse. It is likely that Mark draws from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (known as the Septuagint) in order for it to speak more clearly to Mark’s Gentile church situation, rather than to the original setting of the pre-Easter life of Jesus.

Don’t twist the commands of God. (9-13)

Whereas Jesus uses the tradition terms negatively, He makes positive use of the terms “commandment of God” and “word of God,” which refer to the laws in the Old Testament. As a specific example, Jesus cites the law on honoring father and mother, quoting from the fifth commandment

and from Exodus 21:17. Far from attacking the law, Jesus affirms the word of God expressed in the law and attacks the would-be defenders of the law for subverting it. The Corban law concerning duty to parents was doubly emphasized in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, many Jews had devised a means of evading it — and doing so under the cloak of piety. A son could pledge his money to be paid to the temple treasury. By doing this, the son was released from caring for his elderly parents in their time of need because his money was “Corban” — that is, under oath to the temple. A person committing this act substituted a human legalism for the law of God in order to justify complacency toward their elders.

Purity and righteousness begin on the inside. (14-15)

Having answered the Pharisees on the subject of tradition versus commandment, Jesus shifts to address the issue of defilement. He does this with a parabolic saying, and He follows the pattern of His teachings in parables as presented by Mark where Jesus alternately addresses the crowd and His disciples (see Mark 4:1-34). Here as there, the “parable” is given to the crowd, but the “interpretation” only to the disciples at a later moment (see verse 17). Jesus’ image is simple and clear: nothing external can pollute a person. The real source of all impurity is from within, a matter not of the hands but of the heart.

Jesus’ words about hypocrisy ring every bit as true today as they did in the first century. Even as believers we can fool ourselves into thinking that external codes of conduct matter more than the inner life of one’s heart. We can attempt to fool others with a thin veneer of spirituality characterized by holy language and pious behavior. But as the Lord declared to Samuel, “People judge by outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). ✠

Christian Crossword

By Evelyn Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Grisled and ___ horses. (Zech. 6:3)
4. They removed from _____. (Num. 33:28)
9. The ___ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isa. 7:18)
12. Villages in the plain of _____. (Neh. 6:2)
13. My son was dead, and is ___ again. (Luke 15:24)
14. Rodent.
15. David ... escaped to the cave _____. (1 Sam. 22:1)
17. ___ the son of Enan. (Num. 1:15)
19. Two ___ more hereafter. (Rev. 9:12)
20. ___ with zeal as a cloak. (Isa. 59:17)
21. Insensitive.
23. Lowest speed.
26. The ___, he is unclean unto you. (Lev. 11:6)
27. What ___ have ye? (Luke 6:32)
28. I am _____. (Isa. 41:4)
29. Assistance.
30. ___ that seek me early shall find me. (Prov. 8:17)
31. Whose ___ is in his hand. (Matt. 3:12)

32. ___, the son of Peleth. (Num. 16:1)
33. The ___ hear his voice. (John 10:3)
34. A sect.
35. Methods.
37. He ___ them all. (Ps. 147:4 NKJV)
38. ___ his garments. (2 Sam. 13:31)
39. The wicked man travaileth with _____. (Job 15:20)
40. Sharpen every man his _____. (1 Sam. 13:20)
42. Not in the ___ of the letter. (Rom. 7:6)
45. Took ___ by the hand. (Matt. 9:25)
46. There were ___ besides unto them. (Jer. 36:32)
48. A wave of the _____. (James 1:6)
49. One little ___ lamb. (2 Sam. 12:3)
50. Son, go work _____. (Matt. 21:28)
51. God ___ them in the firmament. (Gen. 1:17)

Down

1. A snake.
2. ___ yet I say unto you.

3. Given me to _____. (Eph. 3:2)
4. Idle _____. (Luke 24:11)
5. ___, that great city Babylon! (Rev. 18:10)
6. Edge.
7. St.
8. ___ on the land. (Mark 6:47; 2 words)
9. A ___ adorneth herself. (Isa. 61:10)
10. Eye, ___ nose, and throat doctor
11. Greek letter.
16. He that findeth his life shall ___ it. (Matt. 10:39)
18. Doth the ___ fly by thy wisdom? (Job 39:26)
20. A fastener.
21. Confusion.
22. In a very ___ day. (Prov. 27:15)
23. Put off thy _____. (Ex. 3:5)
24. I ___ not want. (Ps. 23:1)
25. A plain man, dwelling in _____. (Gen. 25:27)
27. A short essay.
30. Wash their hands and their feet _____. (Ex. 30:19)
31. Let the sea roar, and the ___ thereof. (Ps. 96:11)
33. His ___ in the east.

34. She conceived, and bare _____. (Gen. 4:1)
36. They look and ___ upon me. (Ps. 22:17)
37. Golfer’s aide.
39. Between ___ and _____. (Deut. 17:8)
40. ___ shall bring forth a son. (Matt. 1:21)
41. ___ thee two tables of stone. (Ex. 34:1)
42. The ___ number of them. (Num. 3:48)
43. Thou shalt ___ greater things. (John 1:50)
44. The people ___ down to eat. (Ex. 32:6)
47. “I _____.” (Wedding)



Clinging to Christ

“I want my life to look different because of the difference Jesus has made.”

Micah Tyler
singer/songwriter

Singer/songwriter Micah Tyler challenges audiences to be different, set apart for Christ

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In the midst of a difficult season filled with personal trials and storms, singer/songwriter Micah Tyler clings to Christ as his anchor and shares his struggles during concerts as a testimony of God’s sustaining power.

“A few months ago, we found out that my grandmother has blood cancer,” Tyler shared. “As hard as it’s been to watch her lose her hair as she takes her treatments, her faith has remained intact. A few weeks later, Hurricane Harvey came for my hometown. In two days, 44 inches of rain poured on my house. As we’re in the process of replacing the flooring and re-leveling our foundation, we keep waiting on things to get back to normal.

“Then, just a few weeks ago, we found out that my little brother, Daniel, has stage 4 colon cancer. After the shock and the tears, my family is preparing to fight by his side as he gets ready to start chemo. In the midst of all this, the prayer that I kept praying was, ‘Jesus, can you just change these things? Can you stop the cancer? Can you stop the storms?’ But He’s chosen not to stop these things just yet.”

Comfort and strength

Tyler hopes the message behind his music will resonate with audiences and draw them closer to Christ for comfort and strength. With the songs on his new album, “Different,” Tyler emphasizes the theme of Romans 12:1–2 and encourages people to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord so that others may see a difference.



Micah Tyler

Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

The title track is currently in the top 20 on the National Christian Audience Chart, with over 60 radio stations featuring the song.

“I wrote the song ‘Different’ a few years ago, but I feel like the Lord is teaching it to me in a whole new way right now,” Tyler noted. “I’m finding out that sometimes the best question is not, ‘Jesus, can you change these things around me?’ but rather, ‘God, can you change me so that I can handle the things that you’re walking me through?’ So I keep singing and praying and believing the words of ‘Different’ because I know that He is changing me.

“That’s making all the difference. I want my life to look different because of the difference Jesus has made. I’m ultimately

learning to embrace who God has called and created me to be.”

Tyler surrendered his life to the Lord at a young age and was involved in various ministries. He went on to serve in youth ministry for 10 years before sensing the Lord was leading him into an itinerant music ministry.

“I accepted Jesus as Savior when I was 10 years old at a Vacation Bible School,” Tyler said. “I actually don’t have a strong musical background. No one in my family sings or plays an instrument, aside from an aunt who plays a little piano. I started singing in our little children’s choir, and I played baritone in my junior high band in 7th grade.

“By the time I got to high school, my real passion was youth ministry and I sur-

rendered to that calling just before my junior year. I became a youth pastor right out of high school at a little church in my hometown.

“When I first started serving in student ministry, the youth group needed some music on Wednesday nights. I learned how to play guitar so I could lead with a few students. I served in student ministry for nine years at two churches. In 2011 the church where I had been serving for six years sent me out as a ‘music missionary’ after I sensed God calling me to step out into this new, exciting and unknown adventure.”

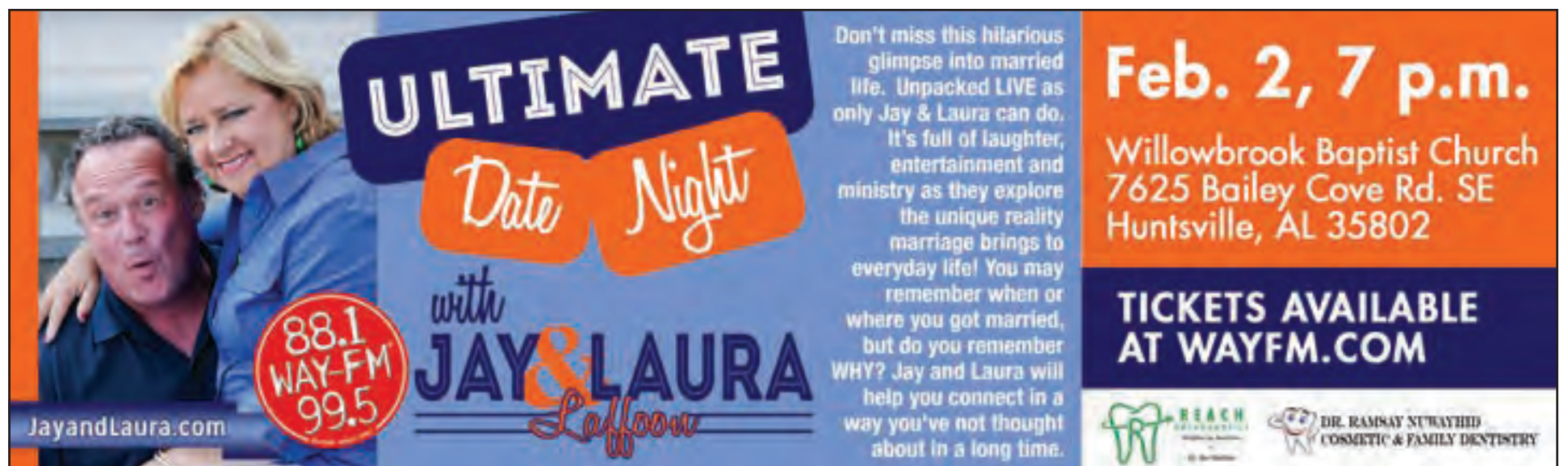
‘Southern soul’

While influencing audiences with a musical style that he describes as “Southern soul,” he is earning a reputation for heartfelt lyrics and solid melodies in his original songs. His satirical music video, “Gotta Love Millennials,” has garnered more than 65 million views and helped him gain national attention.

With a passion to creatively communicate the gospel through songs, Tyler stays focused on his mission and message as he performs concerts around country. Tyler is currently on the “Set Free Tour” with Big Daddy Weave and We Are Messengers.

Whatever the venue, his goal remains the same: to share the gospel through music.

“Anytime I get to share Christ with someone, one on one, is the most special experience for me,” Tyler said. “I love being a storyteller from a stage platform and watching people connect to the message behind the music is what motivates me to keep pressing on toward the goal.”



Don't miss this hilarious glimpse into married life. Unpacked LIVE as only Jay & Laura can do. It's full of laughter, entertainment and ministry as they explore the unique reality marriage brings to everyday life! You may remember when or where you got married, but do you remember WHY? Jay and Laura will help you connect in a way you've not thought about in a long time.

Feb. 2, 7 p.m.

Willowbrook Baptist Church
7625 Bailey Cove Rd. SE
Huntsville, AL 35802

**TICKETS AVAILABLE
AT WAYFM.COM**



IMB photo

IMB short-term workers hike across bridges built to avoid landslides and rugged terrain in the mountains of Nepal. It takes multiple weeks just to access many Tibetan villages from the capital city of Kathmandu.

Still recovering

Bagby family treks mountains to minister to Nepalese

Radford Bagby has long heard mountaineering referred to as a “selfish” sport — it can be risky and expensive, and climbers tend to like to keep to themselves.

But Radford found the more he got into it, the more God put a passion for other people on his heart.

“I got my bachelor’s in sports education and we watched a lot of mountaineering documentaries,” he said.

“The people interviewed in the films kept talking about how the mountains represented certain gods to them, and I kept thinking somebody needs to go and share truth with these guys.”

So Radford, his wife, Sarah, and their children have planted their lives in Nepal to take the hope they have to the hard-to-reach people of the mountains.

Getting to the 28 people groups in their country — each one with its own language and culture and separated from the next group by a massive mountain takes a journey of weeks. For the closest village, it’s a three- or four-day trip, partly by car and partly by trekking on foot.

For the farthest one away, best-case scenario it’s a 14-day journey one way.

“If everything goes right and you were to just go to their village, snap a picture, turn around and come right back, you’re still gone from home 28 days. Stay there for any length of time to establish relationships and we’re talking a long, long trip,” Radford said.

It’s a long-term type of work, he said, slow and largely thankless.

“I do think we will see a lot of progress in our lifetime; it’s just very slow. The fields are hard.”

But the Bagbys have watched God use two things to open hearts — a major earthquake and their children. The couple has trekked for days at a time uphill with toddlers, even while Sarah was pregnant.

The children got dirty, played with yaks and met strangers, and people warmed up to them.

“People see our kids and they open up about their lives and about the children they lost in the earthquake,” Sarah said. “For them to see us cry with them is a big deal.”

In one particular village, a rockslide from the earthquake came roaring down the mountain, burying a whole group of people underneath.

“It’s been more than a year since the earthquake and people in that village would start crying like it had just happened. It’s still very fresh,” Radford said. “It means the world to them that we came to hear their stories.” It’s in

those moments they get to share the hope that they have and pray God softens the rocky soil.

Pray for the Bagbys as they hike in to access unreached people groups. Pray that barriers are removed and hearts continue to be opened in Nepal. Pray for national believers to be raised up who will boldly take the gospel to other villages. (WMU’s *Missions Mosaic*, IMB)

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

“People see our kids and they open up about their lives and about the children they lost in the earthquake. For them to see us cry with them is a big deal.”

Sarah Bagby
IMB missionary

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

LGBT people may be denied Catholic funerals

MADISON, Wis. — Priests in Madison, Wisconsin, are permitted to deny LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people Catholic funerals, according to new directives in the Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin.

The idea is not an official diocesan policy, but Vicar General James Bartylla spelled out these directives in notes titled “Consideration of Funeral Rites for a Person in a Homosexual Civil or Notorious Union,” according to the *National Catholic Reporter*.

The directives came after pastors and priests had asked for advice on the topic and they encourage faith leaders to “think through the issue thoroughly and prudently.”

“The main issue centers around scandal and confusion (leading others into the occasion of sin or confusing or weakening people regarding the teachings of the Catholic Church in regards to sacred doctrine and the natural law),” the document said, “and thereby the pastoral task is to minimize the risk of scandal and confusion to others amidst the solicitude for the deceased and family.”

Other advice included keeping the surviving partner out of a prominent role in the funeral service and keeping the priest’s or parish’s name out of any obituary that lists a surviving partner, according to the *National Catholic Reporter*.

“No such policy could adequately cover every case, and it has always been the ‘policy’ of the Diocese of Madison, on the matter of public funerals in general, that pastors are charged with addressing the particular situations of their people — whom they ideally know well and whom they have accompanied, even until their death,” the statement said. (TAB)

Housing allowance order likely to be appealed

DALLAS — A federal district court judge in Wisconsin, as expected, has entered a final order declaring the minister’s housing allowance unconstitutional. The Dec. 13, 2017, order, however, has been stayed for 180 days after all appeals are exhausted, meaning it currently does not have any impact. Observers expect the government to appeal the order.

The minister’s housing allowance exclusion allows churches to designate part of eligible ministers’ income as a tax-free housing allowance. The Internal Revenue Service has interpreted the law broadly to include religious workers of various faiths as “ministers of the gospel.”

The case specifically applies to the cash housing allowance; the part of the tax law that provides for tax-free use of a parsonage or other church-owned home is not impacted.

O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources, said the Southern Baptist entity has “monitored these challenges closely and will be prepared to provide amicus briefs at the appropriate time. ... We look forward to advocating on behalf of all pastors along with other denominational pension boards and with our Southern Baptist partners.”

GuideStone has advised ministers to consult its annual tax guide, available at www.GuideStone.org/taxguide, and its housing allowance information, available at www.GuideStone.org/housingallowance, to ensure they are properly documenting any housing allowance and reporting it appropriately on their income tax returns. (BP)

Ohio passes Down syndrome abortion ban

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Pro-life advocates are celebrating Ohio Gov. John Kasich’s enacting into law a ban on the abortion of fetuses diagnosed with Down syndrome. Kasich provided his signature Dec. 19, 2017, and the law is expected to go into effect in March. The bill marks Kasich’s 20th pro-life law during his six years in office, according to WORLD News Group.

Abortionists who violate the law would face a fourth-degree felony charge, punishable by up to 18 months in prison but their patients would not face prosecution.

North Dakota and Indiana have already passed similar restrictions but a federal judge blocked the Indiana law. (TAB)