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Photo courtesy of Roland Brown

Members of Golden Springs Baptist Church, Anniston, minister to families in Nicaragua while on a missions trip in April. While they were there, civil unrest began that is still affecting the lives of national Christians and hindering the ability of teams to travel into the country.

# Political unrest

## Churches with Nicaragua missions plans weigh options as unrest continues

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**R**oland Brown said up until recently, his church felt "very, very safe" traveling to Nicaragua on missions trips.

But his team was there in April when protests began against President Daniel Ortega, sparking the worst political unrest the country has seen since the 1980s.

"We smelled the smoke, saw the gunfire and saw the tires burning in the streets," said Brown, pastor of Golden Springs Baptist Church,

Anniston, in Calhoun Baptist Association.

More than 200 people have died in the violence so far. In mid-June, pro-government forces killed an evangelical pastor and his family after he refused to let them shoot from the family's balcony, according to Evangelical Focus, a European news site.

At least 14 more people reported-

ly died in clashes over the weekend of July 7, according to the BBC.

Because of the continuing unrest, some missions agencies are choosing to suspend their trips to the Central American country. Alabama churches also are weighing how to proceed with missions trips they had planned there.

Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions for the Al-

abama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said churches trying to decide what to do in situations of unrest should:

**1. Keep in close contact with people on the ground.**

Sometimes the media will make things seem worse or more widespread than they are, he said.

For example, when Ukraine faced (See 'Personalized,' page 6)

## FBC Russellville team home after being stuck in Haiti

**A** missions team from First Baptist Church, Russellville, finally made it home July 10 after being stuck in Haiti for several days because of violent protests in the country.

Airlines began canceling flights to the capital city of Port-au-Prince on July 7 as civil unrest escalated over a government-ordered spike in gas prices. By the next day flights were

up and running again, but driving into the city was a problem because of roadblocks and unpredictable crowds.

### Booking flights

"We were looking for a charter flight to get us into the city, but many were booked up," said Patrick Martin, pastor of First, Russellville. The team ended up securing a charter

flight for five members of the team and a Mission Aviation Fellowship flight got the other nine into Port-Au-Prince just in time to catch a flight out July 10.

First Baptist Church, Montgomery, also had one family and three interns serving at its ministry in Haiti, Children's Hope.

The family is "safe and well on (See 'Teams,' page 6)

**To watch the videos from this week's issue, visit our YouTube channel or use the HP Reveal app on your phone or tablet and hover over the segments marked "AR."**

# COMMENT

## Strengthened with Power

Both the Old and New Testaments contain prayers lifted to God on behalf of others. Ephesians 3:14–21 is one example. Here the Apostle Paul prays that Christians in Ephesus will be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit (v. 16), filled with faith (v. 17), rooted and grounded in love (v. 17), understand Christ's love (v. 18) and be filled with the fullness of God (v. 19).

There is an urgency to Paul's prayer in these verses indicated by his posture. The traditional position of prayer for Jews was standing (see Luke 18:11–13). Here Paul "bows (his) knees," an indication of urgency and distress.

Paul's first petition is for strength in the "inner man" of each believer. "Inner man" is a term used in the New Testament for the part of a believer that is rooted in God, the part ruled by the Holy Spirit. The inner man is the part of the self that delights in God (Rom. 7:22).

Sometimes, as in 2 Corinthians 4:16, the inner man is contrasted with the outer man. The outer man can be wasting away daily but the inner man can be growing in the Lord's strength at the same time. Outward circumstances do not control what is happening inside the believer.

### Receiving God's blessings

Obviously Paul wants the Ephesian Christians to be strengthened so they can receive the blessings God has for them. It is like an ill person who must gain enough strength to take the medicine that will cure the disease.

But what were the areas in the Ephesian Christians that needed strengthening, and do Christians today need to be strengthened in similar areas to receive the blessings God has for them?

One area must have been everyday living. Then, like now, people were so busy going to and fro that they were worn out at the end of the day. There was never enough time to get everything done. One was left exhausted physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Today how many people are too busy to pray, too tired to read the Bible, too preoccupied to serve others in Jesus' name?



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Only God's strength in the inner man can help believers establish priorities that help them be a blessing to others as well as enjoy God's blessings for them.

The Apostle Paul struggled with temptation. Everyone does. In Romans 7:19 he explains, "For the good that I want, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not want." He describes the "war" raging between the law of God and the law of sin.

In despair he cries out in verse 24, "Who will set me free?"

In the following verse Paul answers his own question, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in the inner man to face temptation.

Like believers today, Ephesian Christians needed strength to face moral choices. Their city was famous for its devotion to the Roman goddess Diana. The tensions between the Christian faith and the historical religious devotion of the city almost cost Paul his life.

Today society appears to be moving back toward paganism. Cultural norms reject traditional Christian values and what was once considered immoral behavior is now protected by law.

Then, as now, followers of Christ needed to be strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in the inner man to make choices that reflected allegiance to God rather than to popularity.

### Persecuted 'on account of me'

But doing right can lead to suffering and suffering is something most people try to avoid. Yet Jesus called those reviled and persecuted "on account of (Him)" blessed.

Being mocked for faith in Christ or belittled for Christian values is called persecution. In many parts of the world, just as in Ephesus (Acts 19), Christians still face physical torture and death just for believing in Jesus Christ.

It takes strength from the Holy Spirit in the inner man to "(find) favor with God" through patiently enduring suffering for doing what is right (1 Pet. 2:20).

It also takes strength from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for the Christian faith. Imagine the Ephesian Christians after the Apostle Paul was almost stoned in their city. Would they be next if they spoke for Christ?

Today many believers are fearful of sharing their Christian faith with co-workers, family members, friends or neighbors. Despite God's promise that He will guide one's conversation in such times (Matt. 10:18–20), many choose to remain "closet Christians."

### Power of God

Only the power of God can move the hesitant and resistant to speak up for their Savior.

Matthew 25:31 and following provides the clear teaching that strength from the Holy Spirit in the inner man is necessary for one's life to support what one's lips proclaim.

Ephesians 2:9 clearly states salvation is "not as a result of works." One is saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8).

Matthew 25 teaches that a profession of faith not supported by performance is a faulty faith just like performance without a profession is faulty faith.

Believers are saved for service in His name.

Ephesians 2:10 says it clearly, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that

we would walk in them."

In Matthew 25:41, Jesus casts out those who professed faith with their lips but who did not back it up with lives of service to others.

Some find this a surprising teaching, yet as early as the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned that "not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Those invited in will be those who do "the will of (the) Father."

If the implication of the Apostle Paul's first petition is that the believer must be strengthened in all of these ways before being able to know the faith and love and fullness of God, then being strengthened in the inner man is important.

Perhaps we should agree to pray for each other that all believers will be "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

It really is an urgent matter. ✝

*"Only God's strength in the inner man can help believers establish priorities that help them be a blessing to others as well as enjoy God's blessings for them."*

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"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)

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# Focus on missions

## BWA 2018 emphasizes Scripture's power in hostile world

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

**B**aptists around the world are flourishing and maintaining a focus on missions, said leaders of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) at the organization's annual gathering July 1-7 in Zurich, Switzerland.

Paul Msiza, senior pastor at Peniel Salem Baptist Church in South Africa and president of BWA, reported that Baptists around the world "are doing well. ... Our focus on missions is exciting," he said. And, "as Baptists we are committed to a holistic approach that involves both 'word and deed.'"

Msiza said Baptists also recognize that "we live in a hostile world" and need to continue the work of advocacy — "to stand in the trenches with those who suffer. ... We need to stand for justice" until, like Amos in the Old Testament said, "justice rolls down like waters."

In his welcoming remarks to the 320 BWA participants representing 46 countries and 51 BWA member bodies, BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown stressed the power of Scripture to transform lives and the importance of building bridges as he welcomed the global Baptist community to Zurich, a key site in the Swiss Reformation.

### Transformative and alive

"As we gather here in this city, of all cities, we are reminded of the transformative power of God's Holy Word," Brown said. "As we gather, would you join me in praying that God's Word would be powerful and alive in our lives this week? For one of the themes woven throughout this week is the transformative power of the Scriptures."

Brown said many people around the world, including Baptists, are suffering persecution. Many are "even now feeling the weight



Photo by Stephen M. Stookey

BWA participants gather in the Täuferhöhle, a cave near Zurich where Anabaptists sought refuge during the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland in the early 1500s.

of God's Word and those who would seek to chain it down. As we begin we also remember them. They may not be able to join us, but we will join them."

Brown recently returned from a trip to South Korea, and he asked Baptists to be "especially mindful of our brothers and sisters in North Korea." After sharing details of his trip to Korea, Brown asked participants to gather in small groups of prayer for North Korea and its people.

"I pray that throughout this annual gathering we will be a community who builds bridges," Brown said. "We are recalling our bridges to our past. ... We will be building bridges to one

another in Jesus Christ. ... We will be building bridges to our shared future in ministry. ... For we still believe in the transformative power of God's Word."

In addition to its regular business (see sidebar), the BWA welcomed two new regional secretaries to the BWA leadership — Vee Tetseo of Asia-Pacific Baptist Federation and Jeremy Bell of the North American Baptist Fellowship. Kang-San Tan was welcomed as the new general director of BMS World Mission, a disaster-relief and development organization that works in many countries.

BWA's 2019 Annual Gathering will be July 7-13 in Nassau, Bahamas. ✝

## BWA resolutions address global issues

**I**n business sessions during the 2018 Annual Gathering, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Council spoke out on religious liberty, dignity of women and family unity through three resolutions.

The first resolution expressed concern about the curbing of religious freedom in eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces have taken control and are aiding those who would reorganize the area into an independent republic, the "Lugansk People's Republic" (LPR). The LPR has imposed laws requiring church registration and re-

porting on religious activities.

The "Resolution Opposing Violence and Abuse of Women and Girls" responded to issues raised by the #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements.

### Value of women

The resolution "affirms that women and girls are created in the image of God and invested with inestimable worth and dignity as gifts from God, and are essential to the health and vitality of families, churches, communities and national life."

It calls on BWA member bodies to protect women and girls from

abuse, noting the immorality of "harassment and violence" and the tendency of churches to cover up instances of abuse.

A third resolution was inspired largely by U.S. actions that have separated many children from their parents at the U.S. border with Mexico but recognized family separation as a global problem among immigrant and refugee communities.

The "Resolution on Preserving the Primacy of Family in Immigration" notes that "the human desire to preserve and protect one's family from violence, disease, economic depravity and

other threatening conditions is universal and drives millions of people to leave their homelands seeking better lives for themselves and their family members."

The resolution "affirms the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger." It calls for support of family solidarity and a challenge to "immoral policies that seek to undermine the rights and dignity of immigrants, migrants and refugees."

Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, is a member of the BWA Resolutions Committee. ✝

# Anchored in faith

## Yates family knows God is in charge of their story after heart-wrenching loss of baby girl twins

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**aron Yates said that before his 40th birthday he had all his theology in a neat little box — full of hopes and full of prayers.

And then going “over the hill” turned out to be more than just one hill — it became an emotional rollercoaster more tumultuous than he could’ve ever expected.

Around that time, he moved his family to Orlando, Florida, to start a good, new season. Then his brother died suddenly of an overdose.

“That kind of rattled me,” said Aaron Yates, an ordained Southern Baptist pastor currently serving as the head of the Bible department at Orangewood Christian School in Maitland, Florida. “It made me question and walk through a lot of things. It was a test on my faith, and it warmed me up to dealing with some things with God that I had never dealt with before.”

Then came the next hill and valley.

His wife, Amanda, found out she was expecting. They already had three children — two biological and one adopted — and were about to begin the process of adopting a fourth child when they heard the news. They had been told they wouldn’t be able to have more biological children.

“We were really surprised,” said Aaron Yates, who also served as youth pastor at Bluff Springs Baptist Church, Ashford, in Southeast Alabama Baptist Association, while attending the Baptist College of Florida.

Then they found out they might have twins. But something didn’t look quite right.

At eight weeks they found out the twins were conjoined.

“We just sat in the car and cried. It was heartbreaking,” Amanda Yates said.

And as they cranked the car, MercyMe’s song “Even If” came on — a song that closes with the lyrics to “It Is Well With My Soul.”

“We began to pray, ‘God, whatever You want,’” Amanda Yates said.

The couple believed they knew immediately one thing He didn’t want — for them to terminate the pregnancy. As they went from doctor to doctor, the idea of ending the pregnancy was pitched around a lot, Aaron Yates said. “We knew that wasn’t an option for us.”

*“We began to pray, ‘God, whatever whatever You want.’”*

**Amanda Yates**

And the rollercoaster rocketed on.

They found a doctor who was willing to take on the challenge of surgery to separate the girls. Then they had to go before an ethics committee to get permission to attempt it.

“It’s amazing that you can terminate them before they’re born anytime you want if you go to the right state, but for division surgery you have to go before an ethics committee to talk about their quality of life,” Aaron Yates said.

### Only option

The decision for division wasn’t about getting an ideal life — it was about keeping the girls alive, Aaron Yates said. They couldn’t survive sharing a heart. Division was the only option.

“Each conjoined case is unique and it does create some ethical conundrums you never would imagine you would have to consider,” he said.

They got the green light.

But things stayed rocky. Leading up to the birth, Amanda Yates went in every week for tests, and every time the doctors



Photo courtesy of Aaron and Amanda Yates

Ashlyn Hope Yates (left) and Adalyn Rose Yates were born Aug. 28, 2017, by C-section — with a chaotic room full of medical staff at the ready.

felt they saw something different.

They thought the twin girls were conjoined at the liver and heart. Then they thought each one might have her own heart, which would give them both a better chance of survival. Then they thought they might be able to save one, but not both.

Then they thought they might be born without a cerebellum.

“We found out through all of this that they’re wrong a lot of times, that looking at a sonogram is like looking at a mud puddle,” Adam Yates said. “They projected so many things with our pregnancy that

***“It’s amazing that you can terminate them before they’re born anytime you want if you go to the right state, but for division surgery you have to go before an ethics committee to talk about their quality of life.”***

**Aaron Yates**

didn’t happen. Sometimes we would leave hopeful and sometimes not.”

For Amanda Yates, the back and forth was a painful ride.

“We went through that whole nine months without having any (baby) showers. We didn’t set up a nursery,” she said.

When she would run into strangers at the grocery store and they would ask her how far along she was or if she was excited, she didn’t know how to respond.

“It was like I’m carrying these babies, but we aren’t able to rejoice about it,” she said. “It was an interesting perspective for me. You don’t ever think when you see someone who’s pregnant that her baby might not make it.”

She said she and Aaron knew God was in charge of their story. They tenaciously hoped and prayed that their babies would live.

And when the girls were born Aug. 28, 2017, by C-section — with a chaotic room full of medical staff at the ready — Amanda Yates listened for her babies’ cries even while fighting for her own life on the operating room table.

She didn’t hear them.

“I thought they were dead,” she said. “Then I heard a little cry — one was crying.”

And the doctors whisked them away.

Amanda Yates had lost a lot of blood but was stable. The girls — Ashlyn Hope and Adalyn Rose — were stable too. They were born conjoined at the heart and the liver. They both had totally normal brains.

But they were a lot more fragile than expected.

### **‘Another sad thing’**

For three weeks, the baby girls stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit, and the couple visited them daily. The girls fought hard, but rather than getting strong enough for doctors to attempt surgery, over time they faded. Their blood pressure began to

drop and they began to get infections.

“We didn’t get to hold them for the first time until they were passing away because they were so hooked up to machines,”

Amanda Yates said. “That was another sad thing. We didn’t get to hold them right after they were born — not until they were dying.”

### **Clinging to Jesus**

Aaron Yates agreed.

“We were there the night they removed life support,” he said. “We held them as they went to Jesus. It was a rough three weeks leading up to that — we knew it would be a miracle if they survived. We grieved the whole time.”

But Aaron Yates said that in the forge of his brother’s death he had learned to cling to Jesus when things didn’t make sense.

“We preach these pain-free lives, but there are some ugly parts in the Bible about suffering,” he said. “This whole experience has made God more tangible to us. We see Him as life and breath. He’s not a crutch — He’s a stretcher.”

And they trust God is working things together for their good, even if they don’t see what He is doing until they get to heaven, he said.

“This has definitely brought us closer to God,” he said. “We rest on the fact that He is good. Life here is unpredictable, but this is not it. There is more to come (in eternity). We’re in a different place now. We don’t cling to this world as much.”

More unexpected valleys have come even since the girls died Sept. 19, 2017. Aaron Yates’ mother was diagnosed with cancer.

The journey the family has been on has anchored them even more deeply to the truths of their faith that they knew and were sure of, Aaron Yates said.

Amanda Yates agreed. “It was challeng-



Photo courtesy of Aaron and Amanda Yates

Aaron (right) and Amanda Yates hold their baby girls right before they died. The only time they got to hold them was after they were unhooked from the machines.

ing but also strengthening,” she said. “I never would’ve imagined going through something like this. But I know God has a reason and a purpose for it.”

Part of the purpose Aaron and Amanda can already see are the friendships they have formed with other families who are expecting or have lost conjoined twins. Amanda Yates has been able to befriend a number of families through Facebook groups, even meeting up with some of them to swap stories and talk about their hope.

Some of them have babies with a better chance of survival. Others are walking the same road of grief as the Yateses.

For all of them, Amanda Yates included, it’s been a tough journey. She still has a big C-section scar that reminds her she came home from a painful hospital stay empty-handed.

“Sometimes it feels like a bad dream and I think — did it really happen? But it did happen and God brought us through,” she said.

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU), said the Yateses’ story has been a testimony of hope to the people around them.

“I have watched them grow from teen-

agers who desired to follow hard after God to young adults living out that same faith in their marriage and raising their children,” said McIntosh, who was mentored by Aaron Yates’ mother, Florida’s WMU president back when McIntosh was serving in Florida.

### **‘At the feet of Jesus’**

When the Yateses were faced with the “heart-wrenching” news about their little girls, “they met every moment at the feet of Jesus,” McIntosh said.

“As they trusted the giver of life for their daughters, from a distance I watched God use their testimony to speak truth to those around them, always lifting high the name of Jesus,” she said. “The legacy of their precious girls lives on day by day through the unwavering faith displayed by their parents.”

The Yateses are now back in the process of becoming foster parents and possibly adopting through the Florida Baptist Children’s Homes. The road has had more bumps than they ever could’ve imagined, but they know God has them right where they are for His purpose — and their good.

“We just want people to know God is in control. We knew God was in charge of our story,” Amanda Yates said.✠

***I know You’re able and I know You can ~ Save through the fire with Your mighty hand ~ But even if You don’t My hope is You alone ~ I know the sorrow, I know the hurt ~ Would all go away if You’d just say the word But even if You don’t ~ My hope is You alone ~ It is well with my soul ~ It is well, it is well with my soul.***

“EVEN IF” BY MERCYME

# Personalized security training available for your missions team

(continued from page 1)  
 an invasion in the far eastern side of the country a few years ago, it seemed from the news that the whole country was affected, Goldman said.

“Our teams in western Ukraine didn’t experience any difference at all,” he said.

But other times people on the ground may affirm that teams can’t safely come.

That’s the case with Roland Brown’s missions partner in Nicaragua. Not only did he recommend Golden Springs not go forward with plans for a fall trip at the moment, he decided it was time for him to get his family out of the country too.

“He feels it’s beyond the normal tension,” Brown said. “He loves those people. For him to get to the place where he feels he needs to leave — it breaks my heart.”

## 2. Consider the threat level.

In addition to listening to the advice of locals, check with the U.S. State Department and see what their recommendations are for travel to the country, Goldman said.

Then with all of that information in mind, consider your own team and how they might handle the threat level, he said.

“Sometimes depending on the situation, it may depend on who is on your team whether you should go or not,” he said. “For instance, if it’s most of the team’s first or second trip, or first time to the country, it may not be a good idea to go. But if it’s a team that has been there multiple times and knows the country well, it may be more possible to go.”

Adam Brown, missions and education

pastor for Southside Baptist Church in Etowah Baptist Association, said his church decided to postpone its planned trip to Nicaragua as unrest escalated.

“We have had a team that has consistently gone for the past several years. We’re hoping to go back but we’re not really able to set a date right now,” he said. “It really just depends on the situation there. Some parts (of the area) seemed OK, but we didn’t feel comfortable with the situation around the airport. If we are going to err on one side, we decided we are going to err on the side of caution.”

## 3. Consider security training.

If you do decide at any point to go to a country where there might be threats, consider getting personalized security training for your team, Goldman said.

The SBOM now partners with a security company to provide training for any Alabama Baptist missions team — training personalized to the team and location of the trip, Goldman said.

“We’ve changed the way we’re doing that. It used to be more of a one-size-fits-all kind of crisis training. Now the company researches threats in the particular area and tailors the training to that specific team,” he said.

The training is done via webinar and lasts between two and a half and three hours, Goldman said.

“The advantage of having the training is that it helps you know what to say or do so if you get in a situation you know what to do and we can respond accordingly,” he said.✝

**To schedule training for your team, call the SBOM office of global missions at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 387, at least one month before your trip, Goldman said.**

# Teams cancel, postpone trips to Haiti

(continued from page 1)  
 our campus in Jacmel,” and the interns flew back to Alabama on July 12, said Jared McCrory, executive director of Children’s Hope.

A team had been scheduled to arrive July 7, but they were able to cancel the trip the night before as things began heating up, McCrory said. “We’re keeping a close

eye on the security situation as we consider upcoming teams that are scheduled to travel down over the next few weeks, and we’re praying for peace to return this week.”

A team from Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville, was supposed to leave for Haiti on July 8 but was able to postpone their trip. (Grace Thornton)

# Someone You

# Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett

Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

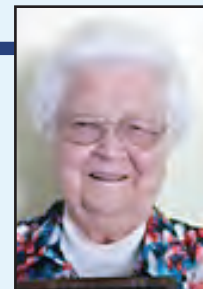
## Dorotha Turner

For 48 years, Dorotha Turner served as treasurer of her church. The 84-year-old Vernon woman gave up that post in June. She also has taught Sunday School, was involved in Woman’s Missionary Union and volunteered in Vacation Bible School.

**MINISTRY DESCRIPTION:** Long-time church treasurer

**CHURCH NAME:** Academy Baptist Church, Sulligent, in Lamar Baptist Association

**LIFE VERSE:** “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” (1 Corinthians 15:19)



TURNER

**Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.**

A: Staying involved in church and encouraging others; praying for others as they lead and guide people to Christ.

have faith in God and trust Him. It’s not really the amount of faith but the object of your faith — God.

**Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?**

A: One of our wonderful pastors, Don Baggett, encouraged me. I was not one to speak out. He encouraged me to teach a Sunday School class. I told him I couldn’t. He said to ask God and He would help. I took the class and it was a real blessing. I taught about 15 years.

**Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?**

A: One of them was the Billy Graham book “Peace with God.” I was going through a really rough time and it meant a lot to me.

**Q: What has God been teaching you lately?**

A: More patience and to wait on God. He works on His timeline. When I get impatient I’m reminded that I need to wait on God’s time.

**Q: Does your church have any special traditions that mean a lot to you? What are they?**

A: We have always had an all-day singing the second Sunday in August. It has been a tradition as long as the church has been there. A lot of people who attended earlier come back for that. It’s an occasion to fellowship with old friends.✝

**Q: If there was one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?**

A: You can really do anything if you

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# Protecting children

## Southern Baptists look for ways to make churches, missions field safer place for children

By Margaret Colson  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**R**ather than being sanctuaries of safety and well-being for children, far too many churches and ministries have become sanctuaries of protection and shelter for child sexual predators.

Child abuse is a heartbreaking problem. Conservative studies indicate that 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys will be sexually abused before reaching 18 years of age, according to the National Center on Child Abuse.

Because sexual predators target trusting environments where children are present, the incidence of abuse is sometimes higher in the Christian community, including churches or church-related activities, such as summer camps or church missions trips.

Even the missions field is not immune to this epidemic. The International Mission Board (IMB) has highlighted a survey of 600 missionary kids from several agencies revealing that 7 percent said they had been sexually abused.

What are Southern Baptists doing to combat this insidious assault on children? Southern Baptists' two flagship missions agencies have policies in place to protect children from abuse.

Many churches are adopting similar policies.

### Online statement

An online IMB Statement on Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment says, "The IMB is committed to zero tolerance for child abuse and sexual harassment among our personnel. Further, the IMB is committed to communicating clearly and cooperating with our partners to guard against child abuse and sexual harassment."

In preventative and proactive measures to support their zero-tolerance commitment, the IMB conducts comprehensive background checks of personnel and volunteers serving with the missions organization, according to Julie McGowan, IMB public relations manager.

Detailed interviews also are conducted and references are collected. The IMB also provides training for its personnel and volunteers "in providing a safe and secure environment for children," she said.

Additionally IMB uses a "two-person rule" requiring at least two adults be present in any IMB activity or ministry involving children, McGowan explained.

Still, in spite of these measures, what about the rare instance in which observed or suspected child abuse may occur?

The online statement tells "anyone in the



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

IMB" to report observed or suspected child abuse, emphasizing, "If anyone suspects or sees something, they need to say something."

Multiple avenues are available to make these reports, according to the statement, including a confidential hotline. IMB personnel and volunteers are trained in how to report any possible abuse, McGowan added.

"Any time there is an accusation of child abuse, IMB's first step is to take measures to protect the child," McGowan said. IMB also is committed to offering "compassionate care" to victims, the online statement reads.

The IMB also "strongly encourages any church, entity or other employer who is considering working with or partnering with a former IMB personnel to contact IMB to obtain a reference on that individual," McGowan said. That can be obtained by emailing [references@imb.org](mailto:references@imb.org).

Former IMB personnel are asked to sign a release authorizing IMB to release such information.

"In most cases IMB will have positive information to share," McGowan said. "However, in the rarer cases where IMB has information to share concerning child abuse or sexual misconduct by that former personnel, or the former personnel refuses to sign the release, then the church, entity or employer will be in a better position to evaluate a future relationship with that former IMB personnel."

The North American Mission Board (NAMB), like IMB, has policies in place to

perform background checks on its endorsed missionaries and volunteers during the application process.

NAMB's employee manual also directs all NAMB personnel who see a crime committed or suspect a crime has been committed while they are conducting NAMB business to report the incident, first to local law enforcement personnel and second to NAMB's chief human resources officer.

### MinistrySafe

NAMB also partners with MinistrySafe to ensure that all NAMB-endorsed missionaries, as part of their approval process, complete awareness training related to child abuse.

MinistrySafe training, according to Mike Ebert, NAMB's executive director of public relations, "provides information to identify behaviors associated with child abuse, such as abuser characteristics, the grooming process by which an abuser prepares a child

for inappropriate sexual behavior, methods to reduce the risk, peer-to-peer abuse, what to do when a child reports abuse, impact on children and responsibility to report."

Such training, he explained, is particularly helpful to NAMB's church planters who are setting policies in place to safeguard children at their church plants, which are autonomous congregations.

### Creating holes

The autonomy of Southern Baptist churches can sometimes create some holes when it comes to clear-cut policies on child safety.

Many congregations have implemented policies — such as background checks, training and automated check-in systems for children — in an attempt to curtail any potential threat to children.

Some churches partner with external organizations such as MinistrySafe for guidance in these matters. Also, Protect My Ministry provides discounted rates and a streamlined online process for conducting background checks, reviewing the results and safeguarding the data.

Still some church leaders are requesting additional assistance from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in their efforts to safeguard children. At the 2018 annual meeting of the SBC, two motions were referred to SBC entities for consideration, with a follow-up report to be presented at the 2019 annual meeting in Birmingham.

Wade Bureson of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Enid, Oklahoma, made a motion that the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission study expanded resources to help churches protect themselves from sexual predators, and Phillip Bethancourt of Redemption City Church, Franklin, Tennessee, made a motion requesting a task force for helping churches protect themselves from sexual predators.

There has been some discussion in recent years of establishing an online SBC-wide database of clergy sex offenders, but such a database has not been approved. ☛

## Former Baptist leader charged with sexual assault

**M**ark Aderholt, a former employee of the South Carolina Baptist Convention and International Mission Board missionary, has been charged with sexual assault.

Aderholt, 46, was arrested July 3 in South Carolina on charges of sexual assault of a child under 17, the *Fort Worth*

*Star-Telegram* newspaper reported.

The offense allegedly occurred in Arlington, Texas, in 1997, and is punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary confirmed that Aderholt was a student at the seminary when the crime was allegedly committed. (BP)



The personnel committee, trustees and staff of the State Board of Missions congratulate Executive Director **Rick Lance** for his 20 years of faithful service and compassionate leadership.

# CONGRATULATIONS



# Hepzibah invites community to VBS through parade and free ice cream

Three years ago, the people of Hepzibah Baptist Church, McCalla, realized their neighborhood had a lot of families and a lot of kids that the church hadn't reached.

So someone floated an idea — ice cream.

"We rented an ice cream truck and did a parade through the immediate surrounding community," said Larry Sumrall, pastor of Hepzibah Baptist. "Both children and adults will come out for ice cream."

And since that first year, it's been a tradition.

Volunteers from the church, which is in Pleasant Grove Association, walk ahead of the truck, knocking on doors, letting people know about the ice cream — and inviting people to Vacation Bible School (VBS). A line of decorated cars follows the ice cream truck, increasing interest even more.

The parade and free ice cream give the members of Hepzibah Baptist a way to connect to the community, Sumrall said. "We get to talk to a lot of parents that way. We've had nothing but good responses."



Photo courtesy of Brandy Boyd

Hepzibah Baptist Church, McCalla, holds a Vacation Bible School parade and gives away free ice cream. The event provides members with a way to connect to the community.

As a result, the church — which averages 400 or 450 — welcomed in about 400 children June 10-15 for VBS.

### VBS outreach

Ten new families now attend the church because of the VBS outreach in recent years, Sumrall said. "We gain two to three families a year from VBS."

And this year, 20 children professed new faith in Christ — and two adults did in the adult VBS classes.

"All of it has been a great tool to meet people and try to get them connected to the church," Sumrall said. "Where the church is located there is a lot of turnover because of the rental houses. Each year there are new faces." (Grace Thornton)

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# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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## BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host a gospel singing Aug. 3 featuring Gospel Barn Quartet. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and music will start at 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Scott Bush is pastor.

## BETHEL

► **Lamison Church, Catherine**, will hold VBS on July 22–25. Sunday activities will be 5–7 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday activities will be 9 a.m.–noon. Lunch will be served on Wednesday. Benny Harrison is pastor.

## CHILTON

► **Carla Griffin**, wife of Robert Griffin, pastor of **Highland Church, Clanton**, died July 7 at Brookwood Medical Center, Birmingham.

## COFFEE

► **New Home Church, Enterprise**, will host a back-to-school event Aug. 1 featuring Brother Billy Bob Bohannon. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. with the program beginning at 6 p.m. Clifford Quincey is pastor. ► **Newbia Church, Elba**, will hold a concert featuring the Cavaliers Quartet on July 28, 6 p.m. For more information call 334-308-7510. Will Jordan is pastor.

## GENEVA

► **David Zorn** is the new pastor of **Corinth Church, Slocomb**. ► **First Church, Geneva**, will hold revival services Aug. 4–5. The Saturday service will begin at 6 p.m. and the Sunday services will be at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Brooks Braswell will be the guest speaker. Josh Wilson

will be leading a special children's service during each revival service and nursery will be provided. On Sunday there will be a men's breakfast at 8 a.m. Edwin Scott is pastor. ► **Hartford Church** will celebrate its homecoming July 22, 10:15 a.m. Teddy Ward will be the guest speaker. Lunch will follow. Les Hughes is pastor.

## MOBILE

► Several Mobile church leaders are part of the **Pledge Group**, which is holding **Shrink the Divide: A Gathering for Racial Reconciliation** on July 24, 6:30–8:30 p.m. at the Mobile Civic Center. The event will feature **Russell Moore**, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and **John Perkins**, civil rights activist, author, founder of the John

& Vera Mae Perkins Foundation, and co-founder of the Christian Community Development Association. For more information, visit [shrinkthedivide.com](http://shrinkthedivide.com).

## NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Mount Zion Church, Warrior**, will hold a concert featuring Wes Hampton of the Gaither Vocal Band July 29, 6 p.m. Sammie Reid is pastor.

## WINSTON

► **New Prospect Church, Haleyville**, will hold revival services July 22–23. Sunday's services will begin at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday's service will begin at 7 p.m. Guest speakers will include Phil Hoskins, Tom Richter and Fred Luter. For more information visit [www.newprospect-web.org](http://www.newprospect-web.org). Ron Horton is pastor. ☞



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### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Seeking bivocational pastor for a church with average attendance of 100. Send resumé to: Old Union Missionary Baptist Church, 2640 County Road 70, Nauvoo, AL 35578. Contact information: 205-522-4884 (Carmilla) 205-544-1802 (Zac).

#### STUDENT PASTOR

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Moulton, Alabama, is seeking a full-time student pastor to plan, promote and lead activities for students 7th grade through college. Anyone interested in applying should send a resumé to: [uarome@bellsouth.net](mailto:uarome@bellsouth.net) or contact Jerome Porter at 256-565-5103.

#### YOUTH PASTOR

Raimund Heights Baptist Church in Bessemer is looking for a part-time youth pastor to work with a small group of young people. Send email with resumé to: [tnc4him.2@hotmail.com](mailto:tnc4him.2@hotmail.com).

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR WORSHIP & MUSIC

Concord Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Anderson, S.C., is seeking an associate pastor for worship and music. This person must have the calling, gifting, training and heart to lead a large and diverse

ministry of worship. We are excited about our future! For a job description and/or to submit a resumé/profile, please contact [jjames@concordbaptist.com](mailto:jjames@concordbaptist.com). Please also visit [concordbaptist.com](http://concordbaptist.com) for more information about our congregation.

#### WORSHIP PASTOR

Redeemer Community Church in Oneonta, Alabama, seeks a full-time worship pastor to lead worship that is radically Christ-centered, theologically rich and stylistically modern. Please send resumé, references and videos to: [matt@redeemeroneonta.org](mailto:matt@redeemeroneonta.org).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Hopewell Baptist Church, Hanceville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send your resumé to: Hopewell Baptist Church, ATTN: Ed Hart, P.O. Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. [eedhart@yahoo.com](mailto:eedhart@yahoo.com).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Butler Baptist Association is accepting resúmes for a part-time director of missions position. The deadline for resúmes is Aug. 1. Please submit your resumé to: Calvary Baptist Church, ATTN: Resúmes, P.O. Box 67, Georgiana, AL 36033 or email: [butlerbaptist@camelliacom.com](mailto:butlerbaptist@camelliacom.com).

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Birmingham Baptist Association is a network of biblically faithful churches building one another up and working together to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ. The executive director of missions provides visionary leadership for the association staff, its ministries and its financial support. The executive director of missions should be an effective communicator of the gospel who is able to work with leaders from churches of various sizes and settings. The ability to represent the association among other city leaders is vital. Resúmes can be submitted to: Greg Corbin, 2865 Old Rocky Ridge Rd., Birmingham, AL 35243, or [gcorbin@lakesidebaptist.com](mailto:gcorbin@lakesidebaptist.com).

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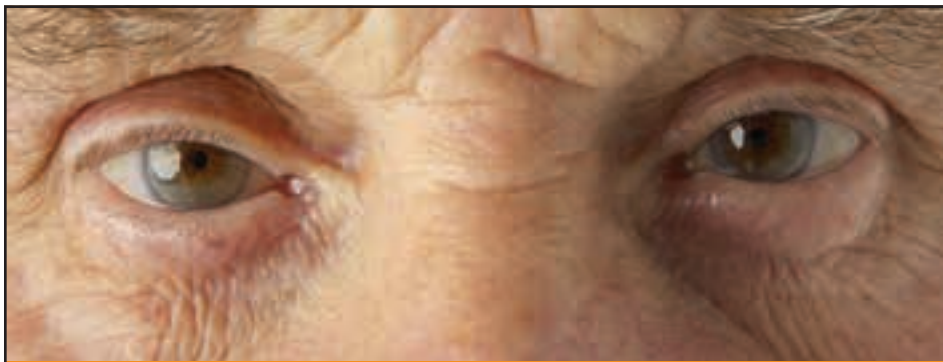
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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Christology Through Imagery Bridegroom

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

**T**hinking about Christ through the many images that are used to refer to Him, we have considered Christ and His saving work illustrated in images such as bread, lamb, light, shepherd, door, vine and cornerstone. This week we turn to the image of bridegroom. In biblical marriages there are two central figures, a bride and a bridegroom, with the bridegroom being set forth as one of the images for Christ and with His followers collectively being His bride. From our vantage point the bridegroom image has to do with Christ's first coming, His present ministry and His future glory.

Centuries before Christ came, God introduced the marriage analogy in the prophetic hope He gave His people Israel through the prophet Hosea, saying, "It shall be in that day, says the Lord, that you will call Me 'My Husband'" (Hosea 2:16) before adding, "I will betroth you to Me forever" (v. 19).

John the Baptist tapped into the marriage analogy in order to explain his own role in relation to Christ at His first coming.

John began with the straightforward clarification, "I am not the Christ," before explaining, "I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled" (John 3:28-29). Clearly, John meant his bridegroom analogy to be a reference to Christ with his own role like that of a best man who hears the bridegroom's voice and announces the bridegroom's coming.

Jesus later identified Himself as the divine bridegroom in His explanation why His disciples did not need to fast while He was with them (Matt. 9:15).

The analogy of marriage also serves to elaborate on Christ's present relationship to and ministry on behalf of the church. For example, the Apostle Paul explained his own ministry by means of the betrothal of a bride to her groom, writing,

"I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). His explanation clearly pointed to Christ as the bridegroom for whom the Church is being prepared as His bride.

Christ's present ministry in relation to the Church or to believers collectively is one of purifying the Church for presentation to Himself as the heavenly Bridegroom. Christ's present ministry is one of loving us in order to "sanctify and cleanse" us so that we become "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

To this end of a beautifully perfected bride, Christ gave Himself for the church. His sacrificial love continues in the ongoing cleansing and sanctifying work enabled by the Holy Spirit whom He sent. As believers, we are to see ourselves as part of the collective bride of Christ, being prepared for a future presentation to Him.

### Marriage celebration

This glorious future is described in Revelation 19:7-9 as a marriage celebration in which the participants, Christ the heavenly bridegroom, and glorified believers as the perfectly prepared bride are forever joined: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready," to which is added the benediction, "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"

*Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.*





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# McCalla church to host homeland security active shooter workshop

Active shooter incidents are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Knowing what to do can be the difference between life and death.

To help security personnel prepare, The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla, is hosting an Active Shooter Preparedness Workshop on Aug. 14 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The workshop leaders are from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security National Protection and Programs Directorate Office of Infrastructure Protection.

The one-day training is co-sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, InfraGard Birmingham Member Alliance, InfraGard Huntsville Member Alliance, Birmingham Citizens' Academy Alumni Association, the U.S. Attorney's Office of Northern Alabama and *The Alabama Baptist*.

It is open to private sector businesses, facility security professionals, supervisory first responders, human resources managers, community response officials and DHS representatives.

Church and school officials from across the state, as well as any organization or business deal-

**To register, visit [www.govevents.com/details/28545/dhs-active-shooter-preparedness-workshop--mccalla-al](http://www.govevents.com/details/28545/dhs-active-shooter-preparedness-workshop--mccalla-al).**

**For more information regarding the DHS Active Shooter Program, visit [dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness](http://dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness) or call Greg Carden at 202-841-1907.**



ing with large groups of people in one place at one time, are especially encouraged to attend.

The workshop will describe how to incorporate key elements of successful incident management into planning efforts, such as:

- ▶ Developing communication and incident plans for employees,
- ▶ Building relationships with local first responders,
- ▶ Coordinating with first re-

sponders before, during and after an incident, and

▶ Integrating public affairs systems and policies into incident management.

Registration closes Aug. 12. To attend, participants must bring a government-issued ID.

The Baptist Church at McAdory is located at 4954 Eastern Valley Road in McCalla. Lunch will be provided. (TAB)

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 22

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

## DEPOSED

### 2 Samuel 15:10-16, 24-30

Absalom, King David's son, strategically won a following of loyal supporters. Over time the prince "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" by intercepting would-be visitors to Jerusalem, hearing their grievances, campaigning for a place of prominence in the kingdom and endearing himself to them through his affectionate welcome. The opening verses of the chapter provide details of Absalom's strategy to depose his father as king.

### Entitlement (10-12)

Prince Absalom conspired to declare himself king. Religious deception was his ruse, explaining to David that he had previously made a vow to Yahweh that must be fulfilled in Hebron (15:8). It seems that he felt entitled to be king, just as he justified his murder of Amnon. Men who accompanied the prince to Hebron became tangled in the web of Absalom's conspiracy, discovering the prince's plot only after their arrival.

Upcoming generations of Baptists must avoid the temptation to assume entitlement to positions for which they are not called or equipped. Like Absalom, some gain roles of prominence by means of popularity, without demonstrating any measure of spiritual commitment or maturity. Without proper discernment a church may find itself with positional leadership, which demonstrates neither biblical wisdom nor doctrinal understanding. To avoid this scenario, the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy that overseers must not be novices and that deacons must be tested before being ordained to service.

### Fright (13-16)

David feared for his family and for the city of Jerusalem. Absalom had a murderous streak and he had no inhibitions about killing members of the royal family. Unlike

David, who honored Saul as the Lord's anointed king even as Saul hunted him, Absalom had no such convictions. David told his servants to leave quickly for their own sake and the sake of the city.

### Flight (24-30)

As a man of war, David knew that there were times to take flight and times to stand one's ground in the face of danger. He faced down a lion and a bear, felled a giant and survived the onslaught of a king troubled by an evil spirit. No one could accuse David of cowardice. Out of concern for his people and honor for God, he took the inhabitants and the Ark of the Covenant out of Jerusalem. Even resident aliens were protected by the king's edict to evacuate.

Though David fled the city, the king had not given up hope. He strategically placed loyal men in the midst of Absalom's camp. He also established communications by which he would be kept informed of his son's plans.

Separation is sometimes the best solution for divided people. After all, Jesus said, "No city or house divided against itself will stand" (Matt. 12:25). Abram separated from Lot, Jacob moved away from Esau and Paul refused to travel again with John Mark. Abram would later rescue Lot. Jacob would return to Esau. Paul would later note that Mark had become "useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). David had previously separated from Absalom, leading to eventual reconciliation. Perhaps it would happen again.

Our sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2). Apart from His grace, we stand condemned in blatant rebellion or passive resistance to His authority. As the Spirit convicts us of our sin against God, may we humble ourselves and surrender to our sovereign King. May we become faithful ambassadors of His message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21).✠

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

## PRAY

### Nehemiah 1:1-11

Anne Lamott writes in "Traveling Mercies" that our two best prayers are, "help me, help me, help me" and "thank you, thank you, thank you." Nehemiah would agree. At the heart of this man's spirituality is an awareness of how desperately he needs to turn to God, to trust in God and to have confidence that God will answer his prayers.

### Prayer arises out of sense of need. (1-3)

Nehemiah's name means "Yahweh has comforted." He is employed in the Persian court as a cupbearer to the king, selecting his wine, tasting it as a defense against assassination attempts and acting as a companion to the king. It is a privileged position which allows Nehemiah to learn news of his homeland in Judah. He hears a report of the sad and disgraceful condition of God's people back in Jerusalem. The city walls have been broken and the gates which provide protection have been burned. His concern is not merely for a physical city but for a people whose lives have been shattered, whose faith in God has been undermined, who need the comfort of which Nehemiah's name speaks so powerfully. His response is one of prayer, sitting in mourning and crying out to God in silence.

### Prayer acknowledges an awareness of sin. (4-7)

Nehemiah suddenly becomes aware of the fact that this disaster has come as a result of the people's sin, and he comes in mourning and fasting before God. He acknowledges the majesty of God as the one who is the God of Heaven, the sole and universal God who is great and awesome. Yet he comes to confess his sins with the confidence that God is the one who comforts. No

sin is too great for the God whose unique character means that grace triumphs over judgment. Mercy meets him in his deepest need. Nehemiah comes before a God who is neither remote nor distant nor detached from the realities of our daily experience but one to whom we can turn even as we are aware of our sinfulness and cry to him for forgiveness.

### Prayer is assured of God's intervention. (8-11)

Prayer invites divine presence. It is like a bridge between two worlds. It offers unassailable protection. It determines the purpose of one's life. It endows one with supernatural power. It gives one a powerful identity. It gives courage. It is visibly transforming.

Thomas Goodwin, an English Puritan in the 17th century, speaks about "suing God for his promises." He means that as we come into the presence of God, we come on the basis of his invitation, of his grace. He has entered into a covenant relationship with His people which is founded on His faithfulness.

Nehemiah holds God to his promises. God's promises put God under obligation to His people. Nehemiah asks God to fulfill what He has promised. Holding God to His promises enables us to hold on to God ourselves so that we do not despair when the days are dark and doubts arise in our heart. We are not reminding God of something that it seems He has forgotten; rather we are reminding ourselves that God is a God of faithfulness.

Through his prayer, his example, his tenacity in trusting in God, Nehemiah reminds us of the God in whom we have placed our confidence. We are being encouraged to join in the chorus of all God's people, down through the centuries, who have turned to God in confession and confidence and God has answered their prayers.✠

## Christian Crossword

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### Across

1. First person pronoun.
2. An insect abundant in Palestine. (Prov. 6:6)
4. A basket of \_\_\_ fruit. (Amos 8:2)
8. A negative reply.
9. Teach thee in the way which thou shalt \_\_\_. (Ps. 32:8)
10. In regard to.
11. Hebrew prophet swallowed by a fish.
13. He made the \_\_\_ also. (Gen. 1:16)
14. To exist; to live.
15. Which is Christ in you, the \_\_\_ of glory. (Col. 1:27)
18. United States of America. (abbr.)
20. Thou shalt not make unto thee any \_\_\_ image. (Ex. 20:4)
22. Be \_\_\_ your sin will find you out. (Num. 32:23)
24. Mary ... \_\_\_ at Jesus' feet. (Luke 10:39)
25. A coarse file.
27. An aquatic carnivorous

animal with flippers.

30. An exclamation of surprise.
32. I am the \_\_\_ of Sharon. (Song of Sol. 2:1)
33. Associated Press (abbr.)
35. \_\_\_, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)
36. Sign of God's covenant with Noah.
41. A prefix meaning "not."
42. Innings Pitched. (abbr.)
43. An early king of Edom. (Gen. 36:37)
44. No man is \_\_\_ of life. (Job 24:22)
45. Fire that \_\_\_ between the cherubims. (Ezek. 10:7)
46. Rosemary's nickname.
47. Neuter pronoun.
48. Neither too good nor too bad.
50. Hath \_\_\_ man condemned thee? (John 8:10)
51. They ... came down to \_\_\_. (Acts 16:8)
52. The garden where Adam and Eve lived. (Gen. 2:8)

### Down

1. Belonging to me.
2. Popular middle name for girl.
3. Man who built the ark. (Gen. 6)
4. \_\_\_ our eyes wait upon the Lord. (Ps. 123:2)
5. A female parent.
6. To sin.
7. Rephah was his son, also \_\_\_. (1 Chron. 7:25)
11. God's son.
12. Pigs.
14. Vehicle for public conveyance of passengers.
16. We commune with God through \_\_\_.
17. Man did \_\_\_ angels' food. (Ps. 78:25)
19. Ye \_\_\_ a chosen generation. (1 Pet. 2:9)
21. Symbol for sodium.
23. First.
26. Sung by one person.
28. Ring.
29. To the seven churches which are in \_\_\_. (Rev. 1:4)
31. A dried grape. (1 Sam. 25:18)

34. One of the planets farthest from the sun.
37. Took away the sheep, and the oxen and the \_\_\_. (1 Sam. 27:9)
38. Deborah was Rebekah's \_\_\_. (Gen. 35:8)
39. Without shedding of \_\_\_ is no remission. (Heb. 9:22)
40. Four-wheeled vehicle.
45. \_\_\_ will have all men to be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4)
49. Southeast. (abbr.)





# Media reviews

**TV/MOVIES**

## Netflix's 'The Toys That Made Us' tops July's streaming entries

By **Michael Foust**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One of my best childhood memories involved three correlating things: the Service Merchandise catalog, "Star Wars" toys and my Christmas wish list.

Each December during the 1980s, I would study the catalog and make my Christmas list. The Luke Skywalker action figure, the X-wing and TIE fighters, the R2-D2 remote control and the coveted (and expensive) AT-AT Walker — they all made the list.

My generous parents bought me most things

on that list, although I never did get the AT-AT. But that's okay. It likely taught me a few valuable lessons about life, and I had a blast playing with the other toys anyway.

Childhood toys elicit emotions and memories that few things can. They're also often one of the possessions that we simply refuse to throw away.

Netflix knows this and has

taken advantage of our nostalgia with a fun original series, "The Toys That Made Us." Season 1 covered "Star Wars," Barbie, He-Man and G.I. Joe toys, while Season 2 — which recently debuted on Netflix — examines "Star Trek," Transformers, LEGO and Hello Kitty toys.

Each episode spans about 43 minutes and examines the little-known history of the toys of our youth, such as how Kenner — a little-known toy manufacturer of the 1970s — landed the "Star Wars" contract. Or how LEGO nearly went bankrupt before it became the huge corporation

of today. Or how Barbie's creator drew inspiration from a German toy.

It's not a dry documentary though. It's a fast-paced and sometimes quirky trip-back-in-time that will leave you wanting more. But please, don't start collecting toys again. The Bible has something to say about that (Matt. 6:19-21). Besides, you're an adult.



Photo courtesy of Netflix

Each episode is rated TV-14, and there is only occasional language.

### Also streaming Netflix

► **Disney's "Bolt"** (July 22,

PG) — A pampered Hollywood dog enters the real world and discovers that he doesn't have the super powers he had on the big screen. Animated. Rated PG for some mild action and peril.

► **"Jurassic Park" trilogy** (July 1, PG-13) — Long before the "Jurassic World" trilogy got its start, moviegoers flocked to theaters to watch the original trilogy: "Jurassic Park" (1993), "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" (1997), and "Jurassic Park III" (2001). Be honest: You enjoy watching dinosaurs chase people through the forest (provided the people get away, of course). All three films are rated PG-13 for sci-fi terror and language.

► **"The Who Was? Show"** (TV-Y7) — It's always fun when

parents can learn something from a kid's show. That's certainly true with "The Who Was? Show," a live-action series that offers an irreverent look at historical figures. It's rated TV-Y7, although I noted a few moments that some parents would find inappropriate.

### Amazon Prime

► **"A.I. Artificial Intelligence"** (July 1, PG-13) — A robotic "boy" becomes the first robot programmed to love and to live within a family. But is he a boy or a robot? Directed by Steven Spielberg. Rated PG-13 for some sexual content, minor language and violent images.

► **"Victoria and Abdul"** (July 28, PG-13) — Set in the later years of Queen Victoria's life, this film is based on a true story and tells about the unlikely friendship between the queen and a prison clerk, Abdul Karim. Rated PG-13 for some thematic elements and language.

► **"Alpha and Omega" film series** (July 1 and 8, various ratings) — My children enjoyed the 2010 animated movie "Alpha and Omega," but did you know there also was a series of sequel-type straight-to-DVD films? Four "Alpha and Omega" films come to Hulu on July 1: "Alpha and Omega" (2010), "Alpha and Omega: The Great World Games" (2014), "Alpha and Omega: Dino Dogs" (2016) and "Alpha and Omega: The Big Fuhreeze" (2016). Another one comes to Hulu on July 8: "Alpha and Omega: Journey to Bear Kingdom" (2017). I haven't watched all of them, but they're worth a shot on a rainy day. "Alpha and Omega" was rated PG; the others are unrated.

### Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

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Pictured here is the sanctuary of the Cave Church in Garbage City, Cairo, Egypt. Egypt was ranked 17th on Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. IMB photo



### *American Bible Society to require sexuality codes*

NEW YORK — One of the oldest nonprofit organizations dedicated to distributing Bibles around the world will soon require all employees to adhere to orthodox Christian beliefs and heed a conservative code of sexual ethics.

Employees are resigning in protest of the new policy, which will effectively prohibit sexually active LGBT people and couples in cohabitating relationships from working for the American Bible Society. The organization presented its "Affirmation of Biblical Community" to employees in December 2017. It requires employees to "refrain from sexual contact outside the marriage covenant," which it defined as man and wife. The document also requires employees to be "involved in a local Christian church." Beginning in January 2019 all employees will be required to sign the document. Those who don't will be asked to tender their resignation.

At least nine of the organization's 200 or so employees have quit already. Some said they are looking for jobs elsewhere and will likely take another job on or before January. (RNS)

### *Court affirms pregnancy centers' speech rights*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court delivered a victory for pro-life pregnancy centers June 26 by a 5-4 vote.

The high court reversed a lower court decision regarding California's 2015 Reproductive FACT Act, which requires pro-life pregnancy care centers to promote abortion services by posting or otherwise informing clients that the state offers free or low-cost access to abortion. The court ruled the pregnancy centers that challenged the measure would likely succeed in their assertion it violates the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Pro-life advocates said the law was an attempt by California government to force pro-life pregnancy centers to provide free advertising for abortion, thereby restricting their freedom of speech.

In a brief opinion concurring with the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy sharply criticized the law, writing, "Governments must not be allowed to force persons to express a message contrary to their deepest convictions." (BP)

### *Social media proves to be a space to share faith*

VENTURA, Calif. — Nearly 3 in 10 Christians have shared their faith with nonbelieving friends and acquaintances on social media, according to a report by the Barna Group.

Barna surveyed 1,714 American adults and found that 28 percent of Christian respondents shared their faith on social media.

Other findings from the report titled "Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age," included 30 percent of Christian respondents saying that they're equally likely to share their faith online or in-person, 44 percent saying that technology has changed how they share their faith and 88 percent saying they share their faith online through personal posts.

"Technology and rapid cultural shifts may have altered the face of evangelism, but the Great Commission remains. This new report tracks what has changed so that leaders can coach Christians to be effective in sharing the unchanging good news," explained Barna. (TAB)

### *High court annuls ruling against florist*

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court provided a promising directive June 25 in the ongoing effort by business owners to practice their faith convictions.

The justices issued an order that annulled a lower-court ruling against Washington state florist Barronelle Stutzman, a Southern Baptist who declined to design flowers for a same-sex wedding. The order also instructed the Washington Supreme Court to reconsider its previous decision that Stutzman's refusal to use her artistic ability constituted discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in light of the justices' June 4 opinion in favor of a Colorado cake artist who refused to design and decorate a cake in celebration of the wedding of two men. (BP)

# With impunity

## Muslim mobs attack Christian churches in Egypt

Christians coerced into an out-of-court settlement following an Islamist attack on a church building in Egypt recently saw the usual outcome — a closed church. This practice has long oppressed Christians, according to Middle East observers.

Members of an armed Muslim mob that attacked a church building in Meinin village, Beni Suef Governorate, in April were acquitted on May 22 of mobbing, fighting and possession of unlicensed firearms based on a "conciliation" settlement calling for the church site to close.

Nine Christians were arrested — with five held illegally for a month — and charged with failing to have a church building license in a country where officials are slow to approve licenses if at all. Middle East specialist Raymond Ibrahim noted on his website. The State Security Court handed the nine Christians and 11 Muslims one-year suspended sentences, essentially acquitting them based on the out-of-court settlement.

Coptic villagers told *Watani*, a newspaper that covers Coptic culture and tradition, that authorities had recently visited the site in preparation for legalizing the church building, prompting the attack.

### Church building law

Obtaining or constructing a church building in Egypt was nearly impossible before a 2016 Law for Building Churches, and the Meinin Church of the Holy Virgin and Pope Kyrillos had applied for legalization under the law — which stipulates that no church that has submitted its application to officials shall be closed, according to *Watani*.

Muslim attacks on church buildings create the threat of sectarian conflict that then serves as the pre-text for closing them, Ibrahim notes.

"Authorities tell Christian leaders things like, 'Yes, we understand the situation and your innocence, but the only way to create calm in the village is for X (the offending Christian and extended family, all of whom

may have been beaten) to leave the village — just for now, until things calm down,'" Ibrahim wrote in a previous article. "Or, 'Yes, we understand you need a church, but as you can see, the situation is volatile right now, so for the time being, maybe you can walk to the church in the next town six miles away — you know, until things die down.'"

Should the Christians refuse and demand their rights as citizens against the assailants, authorities smile and say "Okay," he says.

### Making arrests

"Then they go through the village making arrests — except that most of those whom they arrest are Christian youths," Ibrahim writes. "Then they tell the Christian leaders, 'Well, we've made the arrests. But just as you say so-and-so (Muslim) was involved, there are even more witnesses (Muslims) who insist your own (Christian) youths were the ones who began the violence. So, we can either arrest and prosecute them or you can rethink our offer about having a reconciliation meeting.'"

The dejected Christians see no alternative but to comply, or else their young men will go to prison and be tortured, Ibrahim notes.

Islamist assailants are then further emboldened to attack the next church about to be legalized, he adds.

The Meinin village church had used its now-shuttered building for about 10 years, according to *Watani*. It is one of 3,370 churches that Samuel Tadros, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, said had applied for licenses. Earlier this year the government announced the legalization of 53 church buildings under the new law, all constructed before the 2016 church building law went into effect.

Egypt was ranked 17th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)