



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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JSU baseball stadium named after coach who invests in player's lives

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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."



Facebook photo

Avery Brekle is doing well after receiving a kidney donated by her sister, Sara. Avery and Sara, sisters through adoption, were first thought to be an unlikely match. Below: On Feb. 10, just a few days before her surgery, Avery was baptized by her pastor, Jeff Fuller, at Rockford Baptist Church in Central Baptist Association.



Photo by Sara Brekle Duncan

'Perfect match'

Rockford family sees God work through physical, spiritual salvation

By Joel D. Glover
Special to the Alabama Baptist

A familiar face is temporarily missing at Rockford Baptist Church, but if she has her way, 9-year-old Avery Brekle will be back soon — just as soon as she recovers from her recent kidney transplant.

Avery, the daughter of Milton and Cindy Brekle, received the kidney Feb. 14 from her sister, Sara, which might not sound so unusual unless you know the Brekle family's story.

The Brekles have been foster parents for 16 years. During this time they have fostered nine children long term and more than 100 short term.

The couple's foster parenting journey began with their love of children and their desire to reunite sibling groups separated while in the foster care system.

However, with their first set

of foster children, a group of three siblings, Cindy and Milton quickly learned that often reunification isn't possible.

Upon learning of the termination of the parental rights of the children's parents, the Brekles decided to adopt the trio so the children would not be separated.

Loved and wanted

Four more children placed in the Brekles care would eventually be adopted into the family, including Avery.

Throughout their journey the Brekles' desire has been to make children feel loved

and wanted. Cindy Brekle said the challenges and triumphs of foster care taught them "beyond a shadow of doubt" fostering was God's plan, not theirs.

Through 16 years of fostering there have been many highs and lows, and Milton and Cindy have each faced their own medical problems. Milton has experienced heart issues and other health concerns, while Cindy has twice battled cancer. She is now in remission.

The Brekles' health care issues helped them grow more (See 'Continuing,' page 12)

Ways to experience TAB content digitally

Are you on the go often? Do you prefer to receive your news content in the palm of your hand? Do you enjoy the convenience and accessibility of social media? *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) gives you options for how you can experience TAB.

Along with the print issue of the paper delivered weekly to readers' mailboxes, TAB also offers a digital edition that is emailed weekly to digital subscribers.

Anywhere and anytime

The digital edition contains the same content as the print edition — except it's in full color — but you can view it anywhere and anytime as long as you have email access.

For information on the digital subscription contact us by emailing subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

Readers also can interact with TAB by visiting its social media sites on Facebook and Twitter.

These sites allow readers to leave comments, share content and give feedback on the news published by TAB every day.

"We are excited to continue grow-

ing our social media and hope our Facebook and Twitter feeds will give us a chance to interact directly with our readers," editor Jennifer Davis Rash said.

The team at TAB wants to hear from its readers. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org and have your voice heard.

Another way readers can experience TAB is through the new TAB News podcast and radio show.

The TAB News podcast provides

content from *The Alabama Baptist* each week in a radio-show-style format for listeners to download and listen to at their convenience.

'Fun and informative'

A host will guide the show, along with several readers and guests who will be invited in to talk about some of the story topics in depth.

TAB News also includes a "Reader's Digest"-style audio version of the paper with some of the stories featured in the print edition read by TAB staff members.

"I love being a part of TAB News each week," Debbie Campbell, director of communications, said. "It's such a fun and informative time, and I'm happy we can provide our content in this new way."

Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts, such as iTunes or Stitcher, or visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts. New episodes are released weekly. (TAB)

For more information on any of the services described, email news@thealabamabaptist.org.



(augmented reality)

- 1** Download the HP Reveal app from your app store.
- 2** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3** 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.
- 4** Look for *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) augmented reality logo (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.
- 5** Each week when TAB arrives, look for the AR logo to watch the video extras through the app.



UPDATE FROM PREVIOUS NEWS STORY:

Judson College removed from alleged harassment suit

A lawsuit filed against Judson College alleging sexual harassment of a former student by a former employee of the college has been dismissed by a federal judge.

The suit filed in U.S. District Court by Alexis Burt, a 19-year-old Judson student at the time, claimed former Judson employee J. William "Billy" McFarland Jr. sexually harassed her over two days in May via Facebook Messenger.

McFarland previously was special assistant to the president for business development at Judson but ended his employment on April 30, 2018, according to Susan Jones, senior vice president and dean of students at Judson.

Burt said in her complaint that McFarland sent her a friend request following a luncheon in Marion on May 21 and immediately began making sexually explicit suggestions. Burt dropped out of Judson soon after being contacted by McFarland.

According to the judge, the dis-

missal of Burt's claims against Judson automatically vacated the claims against McFarland, but Burt retains the right to refile her claims against McFarland in state court, which Burt's attorney said she plans to do.

Jones said, "Judson has multiple policies in place to protect students and ensure that relationships between faculty, staff and students are appropriate, nurturing and God-glorifying."

Mission focused

"All of us here at Judson are glad to put the lawsuit behind us to focus exclusively on our mission of educating and supporting young women as they seek to discern and follow God's call in their lives," Jones said.

Burt plans to continue her studies at Judson this fall, Jones added.

"We look forward to welcoming her back to our campus community, and we are humbled by this opportunity to model Christian reconciliation to the world." (TAB)



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

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MY RASHIONALE

By **Jennifer Davis Rash**
President and Editor-in-Chief

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Showing up with no strings attached makes all the difference

Some days are truly overwhelming — and while that doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad thing it is an opportunity for us to serve others.

An affirming moment will quickly and easily overwhelm me in a positive, uplifting and encouraging way. However, it's the drowning-in-life moments that tend to take top billing in most of life for the concept of being overwhelmed.

We all have different levels of what we can handle before feeling the effects of too much pressure. And we all react in our own way when overwhelmed.

It's not a right or wrong thing but it is interesting to watch how the environment is impacted by the variety of responses.

Some process their stress with nervous energy, frantic reactions and out loud play-by-play interpretation. Others remain steady and calm on the outside while their minds are in a frenzy. And everyone else falls somewhere in between.

Many of us may describe our overwhelmed seasons as being extra busy, not recognizing we are stretched beyond the max — you know, that “burning the candle at both ends” situation.

I'm still learning how to best manage those days and weeks that seem out of control, how to be more proactive in avoiding those situations to start with and how to know exactly what others need when they are drowning in life.

One thing I have learned is that many times we sincerely want to help our overwhelmed

friend, but we don't take the time to assess what will truly be helpful.

We decide for ourselves what we think is best for our friend and do that instead. I've been guilty of doing this to others and I've had it done to me.

While the meaning behind the effort was and is always appreciated, it didn't accomplish the goal and in some cases actually added more stress rather than lightening the load.

Learning to help others in ways that makes sense to them means we have to remove our

opinions, life experiences and many times what makes sense to us out of the equation — at least in the heat of the moment.

We should avoid scolding, teaching, sharing how we have a better idea, etc., in the middle of a stressful experience. Being present, helping with exactly what the overwhelmed person has outlined and staying focused on the situation at hand is the best way to help.

It's already hard enough to allow someone to help, but I can promise there will be even more of a hesitancy in the future if the offer to help comes with a price.

It's true that we all can work on better life management to plan for and avoid intense situations in many cases, but we'll never be able to control every circumstance in life so we also must learn to adapt when our day doesn't go as planned.

And in all cases we should remember others are carrying heavy loads as well.

I recently read about a man who always put others ahead of himself. Even in traffic he would let others merge ahead of him “because where they are going is just as important as where I'm going.” 🙏

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS



Have you listened to Debbie Campbell and Jennifer Rash on the TAB News podcast? Well, what are you waiting for? Join in on the fun today!

Your Voice



Share your comments, letters to the editor, blog excerpts, social media posts

Being vs. doing: Sustained joy for the journey

By **Kevin Blackwell**
Interim Pastor, FBC Pleasant Grove

Being a follower of Christ is a journey, and too many followers sit as abandoned cars on the side of the road to heaven simply because they either lost faith or the joy of the journey.

Our heavenly inheritance is wonderful, but the journey of our Christian faith after our conversion is just as amazing, just as beautiful and just as fulfilling. I sense that too many Christians have forgotten the joy of the journey. Not to suggest everything will be wonderful and beautiful, but the one who walks with us on the journey is always wonderful and perpetually beautiful.

There are many whose Christian journey becomes what I call the death march of “doing.”

These people become stuck in a constant state of guilt and shame, trying to measure up to the ideal Christian motif. They measure their journey by the number of holy, religious or spiritual things they have accomplished.

Some feel as though God is only happy with them when they are doing something spiritual; therefore their life becomes a task-driven list.

This type of mindset leads to spiritual burnout because the joy of the journey becomes diminished. True joy, real spiritual growth and sustained faith are never based on

what you have done for Him. Rather these are grounded in a relationship with Christ and what He has done for you.

Being with Him, learning of Him and placing your spiritual roots deep into what He has done for you catapults you into a greater passion to do more for Him.

The Christian journey is not a sprint, it is not a laborious list of tasks. In its simplest form it is a beautiful walk with Jesus Christ.

The road to heaven would be much less littered with spiritual refugees if we would spend more time being with Him and less time trying to please Him through our endless spiritual tasks.

When we spend time BEING with Him, we are reminded of all we have in Christ, therefore our DOING has greater purpose.

I ask you to reflect on the current BEING/DOING balance in your life. Will you be counted among the many Christians who have simply stopped walking the journey? I urge you to hold tightly to the hand that saved you and see your journey not as a task-driven sprint, but rather a joy-filled walk with a friend. Sustaining joy for the journey is found in the one who journeys with you.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Kevin Blackwell is executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University. This is an excerpt from a blog post found at www.DrKevin-Blackwell.com.

Daily life and ministry demands can quickly turn our passions into frustrations. To combat this, we need solitude and silence with Abba Father.

Russell Klinner
Executive director
Shocco Springs
Conference Center

The world does not need Christians to be regular people. It needs us to be irregular, unusual — out of sync with this world because we have seen God.

John Piper
DesiringGod.org

If you can get people to fall in love with Jesus, then everything else will take care of itself.

Billy Harris
Retired Alabama
Baptist pastor

My dad always told me, “If you put God first, others second and yourself last, you’ll make it.”

Gale Hutchens
Business owner
and church member

Letters to the Editor

On the most basic level what distinguishes one individual from another? Most would agree that biologically each of us is defined by our genetic code — our DNA. So perhaps the question should be when does an individual’s DNA first appear? The answer is each person’s DNA is formed when the egg is fertilized at conception.

If life is defined as self-generated action then it’s clear the embryo represents an individual life. There are no little fingers in the mother’s womb sculpting a being out of an undifferentiated

mass of cells. The mother provides the environment and materials (oxygen, food) from which the embryo creates itself.

It makes no sense to argue that since the embryo is not physically apart it is a separate entity.

Women have the right to do what they wish to their own bodies, but that right does not extend to destroying the life of another except in self-defense. Only the individual possesses rights — common to all — the most basic of these being the right to life.

Michele Alice
Williamstown, Mass.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Inaction is not an option.”

ED STETZER

Executive Director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College

Five Considerations for Pastor/Deacon Ordinations

1. Include a background check for your candidates.
2. Incorporate other church leaders from your denomination.
3. Involve your associational leadership.
4. Investigate theological beliefs by developing a written questionnaire.
5. Interview the candidate and spouse together. Do this in advance of the ordination service, before the service is scheduled.

Chris Crain, executive director Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

Scripture is our starting point, not desire or tradition. Rather than

thinking of what we would enjoy or asking others what they would like, we ask the simple question, what would please God most?

Francis Chan
“Letters to the Church”

Pew reports that an unbelievable 30 percent of self-identified Southern Baptists think abortion should be legal in all or most cases. For the conservative Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, it's 46 percent. And Pew reports that a majority — 54 percent — of those who belong to the Presbyterian Church in America say they support legal abortion. ... Even if the numbers are as much as 15 points off, they still represent a catastrophic failure of discipleship in our churches. For

a third to half of Christians in officially pro-life denominations to support legal child-killing means that there is a massive disconnect between pulpit and pew.

John Stonestreet
Breakpoint.org

We must sacrifice ourselves to live for Jesus Christ even in our parenting. This means that we are to raise our children in the ways of the Lord. We must sacrifice our lives to God, and teach our children that a life of dying to self for the glory of God is more satisfying than success or materialism.

Intersectproject.org
A project of Southeastern Seminary's Center for Faith and Culture

From the *Twitterverse*

@Jeff_Noblit

There are wonderful teachers and theologians that we all benefit from, however they are not as beneficial as your local pastor who exegetes the scripture with application for your specific local church. His teaching is essential while all others are helpful.

@MichaelCatt

The legislative branch of the federal government has voted to kill babies in or out of the womb. Let that sink in! Read Romans 1-3 — God has given this nation over to reprobate minds.

@BeesonDivinity

“The church's life is a great conversation, and this conversation is none other than our hope-filled participation in the communion of the Father, and the Son and the Spirit.”

Dr. Michael Pasquarello preaching [2/26/19] in #HodgesChapel on John 3:1-17. <https://youtu.be/t3O-HufSYmxc>

@FredShelton3

I praise the United Methodist Church yesterday for voting to reject homosexuality and gay staff members.

@JoWiKi

I was skeptical at first about preaching through the @ExploreTheBible plan. But I really, really like it and knowing that the entire church is discussing the same text I am preaching with robust resources for them, the Small Group Leaders is empowering. @LifeWay

@EdLitton

WARNING to my fellow SBC family: Passivity is a powerful

negative activity. Passivity is deceptive because it looks like we are doing nothing. In fact we are doing something. We are stepping over the wounded, looking away and going on our way.

@macbrunson

God told Jeremiah (3:3) that Judah had the forehead of a prostitute — meaning the nation could not blush at sin because she was too familiar with it. See also America 2019.

@BethMooreLPM

None of us can see the future & we're Christ's to lead wherever He pleases in whatever crisis surrounds us. For some of us, it's go. Others, it's stay. But either way, let it be because He led & not because we fled. We are not cowards. Legacies of shame can be broken in His name.



Photo by SBOM

Ray Burdeshaw is interim executive director of the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers.

‘Through all your lifetime’

The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers (ABRC) ministers to senior adults through affordable independent housing in a safe Christian environment, for as Isaiah 46:4 says, “I will be your God through all your lifetime, yes, even when your hair is white with age.”

Recently an elderly mother and son, displaced by Hurricane Michael, showed up at one of our centers with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Manager LaJuana Holloway not only quickly provided them with shelter, she and several residents gathered food and household items to furnish an apartment.

Upon leaving Panama City this mother and son encountered an elderly barefoot woman on the side of road who had also lost everything. She was disoriented with no place to go so they brought her with them. LaJuana helped her reunite with friends in Nashville.

The mother and son now both have apartments and are so grateful to ABRC for the loving provision they have been shown.

This is one example of the many ways we demonstrate God's love to the elderly in our state.

—Ray Burdeshaw

There are options

Long-term care becoming fact of life for growing number of Americans

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

You've paid off your mortgage on your comfortable home, are eligible for Medicare and have a liveable, if not generous, retirement income.

You're pretty much set for your golden years, right?

Wrong.

Odds are, you're going to spend several years of your life in some sort of long-term care scenario.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):

- ▶ 69 percent of us will need some sort of long-term care for an average of three years.

- ▶ 65 percent will need care at home for an average of two years. About half that time will be unpaid care.

- ▶ 37 percent will spend an average of one year in an assisted living or nursing facility.

Medicare estimates that by 2020 some 12 million people in the United States will need long-term care, a number that's being driven up by the aging Baby Boomer population. The likelihood of needing long-term care — and for longer periods of time — increases with age, disability and chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

Longer care

Since women usually live longer than men and outlive their mates, they are more likely to live alone and need care for longer: 3.7 years,

on average, versus 2.2 years for men.

But don't think you get off scot-free if you are middle-aged — HHS research says that 8 percent of people between ages 40 and 50 have a disability that could require long-term care services.

Service options

Long-term care services include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Medical and non-medical care for people with a chronic illness or disability

- ▶ Support with everyday tasks such as housework, taking medication or paying bills


- ▶ Assistance with activities of daily living such as eating, dressing, bathing and using the bathroom.

Long-term care can be temporary, as in weeks or months, to rehabilitate after a hospital stay or surgery, recovery from injury or illness, or end-of-life medical services.

But long-term care also can be perma-

nent. Months and years may be required for permanent disabilities, chronic and severe pain, chronic medical conditions or cognitive impairment, bringing a need for constant supervision and assistance with activities of daily living.

Long-term care can be provided at home, in the community or in an assisted living or skilled nursing facility.

In this four-part series *The Alabama Baptist* will look at some of the options older adults and their families have for long-term care. 



Able family, community support allow many to 'age in place'

Cyndi Arnold says her mom, Barbara Dean, was like the Energizer bunny — she stayed active and independent as long as she possibly could.

“But in the summer of 2016 it became very evident that she needed some help,” said Arnold, a member of Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery. “She was on some medication that made her disoriented. She didn't need to drive anymore and she wasn't taking good care of herself.”

So Arnold's family began the difficult conversations of what to do next — what kind of care did she need? What were their options?

In the end they found a way for her to “age in place,” which for Dean meant living in Arnold's house. That fit well for them and that's where Dean wanted to be.

Living together

The Arnolds fixed up one of the bedrooms and bathrooms to accommodate her and her needs, and they were able to care for her there more easily.

“She was very happy to have a room in our home,” Arnold said of Dean, who passed away in 2017. “She had pictures and needlepoint from her house that made her feel comfortable there. I think for her living there with us brought a sense of home but also a sense of relief.”

Older adults like Dean who have a willing, able and available family member or friend, may receive long-term care at home, but it's not always possible — or easy.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that about 80 percent of care at home is provided by unpaid caregivers who spend an average 20 hours a week giving care. More than half of these caregivers have intensive responsibilities that include a personal care activity, such as bathing or feeding.

About 43.5 million people in the U.S. have served as an unpaid caregiver during the previ-



Photo courtesy of Cyndi Arnold

Cyndi Arnold (left) fixed up one of the bedrooms in her house to accommodate her mom, Barbara Dean, for long-term care.

ous year, according to a 2015 study by the AARP and National Alliance on Caregiving. Two-thirds of these caregivers were women and 14 percent were 65 or older.

With more Baby Boomers remaining childless, unmarried or living far away from family members than previous generations, unpaid home care may not be possible. Paid home care may include a nurse, home health or home-care aide, or a therapist who comes to the home daily or as needed.

“Adult day care services” may be an option for working caregivers or those just needing a break from the 24-hour demands of caregiving. Community-based, structured programs can provide daytime social and support services in a protective setting for functionally or cognitively impaired adults who still live at home.

Social support

Additionally community support services that may help people who are cared for at home include meal delivery programs through local senior centers or faith-based organizations, public transportation and in some communities low-cost housing programs that provide senior services. (TAB)

Comforts of home

What to consider when a loved one wants to live out their days at home

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

You or someone you know may have been there, or you may be there right now. An aging parent, grandparent or other relative is losing mobility or the ability to live independently, and they've expressed before they don't want to move into a long-term care facility.

What do you do? Are there ways to respect their wishes but keep them safe and get them the care they need?

The struggle between staying at home and staying safe is a common one for caregivers of aging parents who want to "age in place," or live as long as they can in the place of their choice, whether that be their own home or the home of a family member.

Making changes

Sometimes the needs are too great for that to be possible. But other times, putting some help in place and making some changes to the home can enable loved ones to live where they want to with the comforts of home for months or years longer.

What are the needs to consider? Let's walk through a few of those here.

1. Accessibility changes.

Sometimes an injury or a change in stamina and balance can be the factor that pushes your family to have the conversation about where it's best for loved ones to live.

It's possible that mobility issues may be solved by getting the right wheelchair or scooter.

Aginginplace.org offers a guide that can help you navigate finding the right wheel-

chair and helping your loved ones adjust to using it. They also offer a guide to finding portable ramps you can take with you when your loved ones need to get out and about.

And perhaps one of the biggest issues — getting in and out of the house safely — can be tackled with the addition of a wheelchair ramp outside the home.

Don't know where to start? Contact your local Baptist association and ask if they or a ministry they know of has a carpenters group that could help.

For instance Larry Thompson, associational mission strategist for Washington Baptist Association,

For a free online planning guide visit ageinplace.org/planning-guide.



Photo by Wikimedia Commons

Older adults who have difficulty getting to the grocery store may find a meal-kit delivery service like Hello Fresh or Silver Cuisine or a meal delivery service like Meals on Wheels helpful for meeting daily needs.

said his group, Christians on Missions, has built around 100 ramps for people in the community in the past several years.

Other groups all around the state stand ready to help too.

You also might want to take some time walking around the house to determine if adjustments can be made to make it safer for your loved ones.

Do halls or showers need to be widened for a chair to fit? Do you need a walk-in bathtub, grab bars in the bathroom or higher toilets?

Making some of these changes could help provide your loved ones with a safer way to stay independent in their home or yours.

2. Meal planning.

Something else mobility can affect is buying food and preparing it for themselves. This may be something easy to handle if your loved ones are choosing to "age in place" in your home where you can make sure they have meals each day.

But if they're staying in their own home an option to consider might be a meal planning service.

If your loved ones are able to get around in the kitchen a good option might be a meal-kit delivery like Diet-to-Go, Silver Cuisine or Hello Fresh, all of which will deliver anywhere in the continental U.S. These boxes with prepared ingredients and

recipes are delivered as scheduled. Most meal kit options cover three or four meals a week.

If cooking isn't an option a meal delivery service might fit your loved ones' needs better. Local services like Meals on Wheels may provide meals ready to heat or eat. Research to see which one fits your loved ones' needs and budget.

3. Caregiving needs.

If you're considering hiring a caregiver for your loved ones there's a lot to consider. Do you need help a few times a week, overnight or around the clock? Will you hire someone independently or a company that provides medical or nonmedical caregivers? As with most things there are pros and cons to both.

If you hire someone independently you get to be more selective and flexible in who you choose. They can be less expensive too. But your caregiver most likely won't have backup when he or she is sick or liability insurance if something goes wrong.

Through a company caregivers are easy to hire and they have backup caregivers and insurance, but they can be pricier and may provide a limited range of support services.

Ask around and listen to other people's experiences. Do your research and decide which one works best for you and your family. 🌈



Unsplash.com

Medicare estimates that by 2020 some 12 million people in the United States will need some form of long-term care for an average of three years, a number that's being driven up by the aging Baby Boomer population.

UM names interim president following Smith's resignation

Trustees of University of Mobile (UM) announced plans March 1 for interim leadership following the surprise resignation of former UM President Tim Smith on Feb. 25.

Current UM board of trustees chairman Fred Wilson was named interim president. David Conner will assume the role of chairman of the board of trustees. President Emeritus Mark Foley will serve as a consultant during the search for the university's fifth president.

Smith had served as president of UM since April 2016. He cited personal reasons for his decision to step down effective immediately following his announcement to the board.

Forward momentum

In announcing Smith's resignation, Wilson praised the "significant accomplishments" made at UM under Smith's tenure and said the board is "grateful for his leadership." Under Smith's leadership UM added doctoral and several other programs of study, built a state-of-the-art facility for health and science professions and grew in enrollment.

Wilson, who has served on UM's board of trustees for more than 12

years and was beginning his third term as chairman, immediately begins his role as interim president.

"The board of trustees is committed to building on the university's forward momentum. Immediately having leadership in place who are already knowledgeable about the university will enable University of Mobile to continue its mission without missing a beat," Wilson said.

Wilson previously served as a partner in P.J. Lumber Co. of Mobile, where he handled international sales and export marketing. He retired in 2017. Conner is an attorney with

Blackburn & Connor P.C., headquartered in Bay Minette.

Foley served as UM president from 1998 until his retirement in 2016.

Under his leadership the university invested millions in capital projects, added programs and integrated Christian service into campus culture. (UM, TAB)



WILSON



SMITH

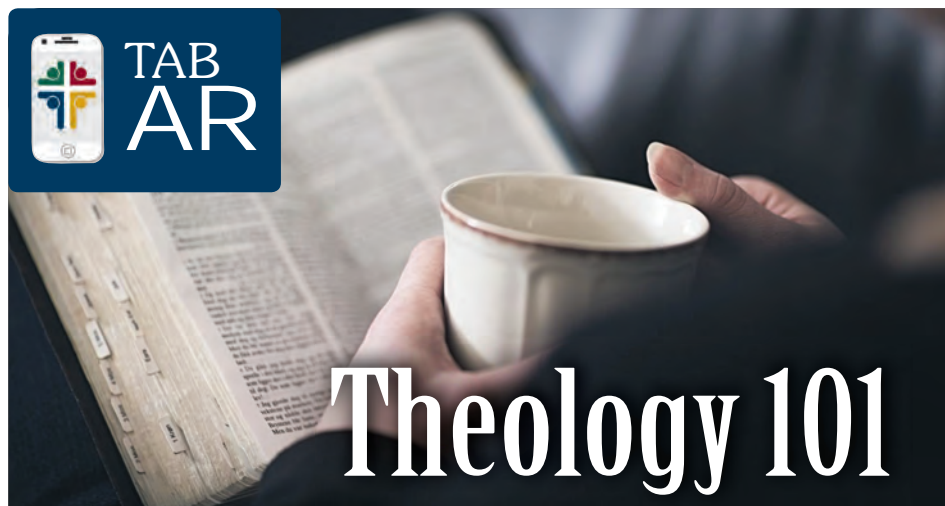


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University of Mobile

Photo courtesy of UM



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Insights through questions

A Question about Truth

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

Theology 101 is currently asking what theological truths are brought to light when pondering biblical questions. Previously we have given thought to questions that raise the topics of the nature of Christ and the nature of man. This week our focus is the question Pilate asked when Christ was on trial: "What is truth?"

Pilate's question was in response to Christ's assertions that He came into the world to bear witness to the truth and that everyone who is of the truth hears His voice (John 18:37-38).

Pilate could have been asking a sincere question or a cynical one. Since we do not have access to the intonation in his voice or the expression on his face, we cannot know for sure the intention of his question. We simply take it at face value as a starting point for pondering the nature of divine truth.

Sacred truth

When we allow the Bible to answer Pilate's question, the answer would be in the wording of the confession in Psalm 119:142, "Your law is truth," amplified further in Psalm 119:160, "The entirety of Your word is truth." Such is the confession of Christ in His well-known prayer in John 17, "Your word is truth" (v. 17).

We might think of this as "inscripturated" truth — truth conveyed in written form in the sacred Scriptures.

When we allow Christ Himself to answer Pilate's question, He

would add, "I am the truth," as well as the way and the life (John 14:6).

Such also was the testimony concerning Christ borne by those like John who kept company with Him during His ministry: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

'Settled in heaven'

When we allow the apostolic witness to answer Pilate's question that witness would add, "The Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6).

This witness accords with what Christ Himself attested when speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit: "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit indwells all believers we might think of this as "indwelling" truth.

As the psalmist exclaimed, "Behold You desire truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6).

Divine truth is not on a sliding scale. What was true in Bible times is true today, despite popular thought. We confess with Psalm 119:89, "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven." 🌟

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.



Challenged and **inspired**

2019 State Evangelism Conference encourages participants to ‘put feet to their faith’

By **Grace Thornton**
The Alabama Baptist

Roger Willmore said he will hit his knees a little differently in the mornings after hearing the last sermon of this year’s Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference.

The sermon, preached by Jeremy Morton, was an “arresting and sobering” message, said Willmore, director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association.

“He preached on Mark 1 about the prayer life of Jesus and closed his sermon with powerful personal examples of how to develop the discipline of prayer,” Willmore said.

Refreshing time

After hearing them Willmore went home and printed out theologian John Stott’s morning prayer in order to have it close at hand in the mornings. And he said he will “never forget” Morton’s impassioned exhortation to “get up, get up, get up” and use the morning hours to pray.

“The conference was a time of refreshing for me,” Willmore said.

He wasn’t alone. More than 500 people gathered for the conference, held Feb. 25–26 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Many shared testimonies of being

challenged and inspired to pray and share their faith more urgently.

It was a “sweet time,” said Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, which organizes the conference.

He said each speaker for the main conference and related events encouraged everyone to put feet to his or her faith when it comes to evangelism.

Speakers for the conference were:

▶ Kie Bowman, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church/The Quarries Church

in Austin, Texas

▶ Jay Lowder, evangelist, author and founder of Jay Lowder Harvest Ministries in Wichita Falls, Texas

▶ Russ Quinn, pastor of Enon Baptist Church, Morris

▶ Jeff Meyers, pastor of First Baptist Church, Opelika

▶ David Eldridge, pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist

▶ David Burton, evangelist from Jacksonville, Florida

▶ Dennis Watson, pastor of Celebration Church, New Orleans

▶ Morton, co-pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia.

Christian apologist Alex McFar-



Photo by Tracy Riggs
Sandi Patty performs and leads worship at a concert Tuesday evening at the State Evangelism Conference.



**2019
STATE EVANGELISM
CONFERENCE**

Photo by Travis Frontz
The choir and orchestra for Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham — host church of the 2019 State Evangelism Conference — leads worship during Monday night’s session.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

People at the conference got the opportunity to explore a variety of evangelism resources and ministries at an exhibit area near the church sanctuary. They also got to speak with many ministry leaders and learn more about them.

land also spoke at the banquet for pastors, staff and wives Feb. 25, sharing about how to reach millennials. Diana Davis, a minister’s wife and author, spoke at the ministers’ wives luncheon Feb. 26.

Stories on each speaker’s message will be published in upcoming issues of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Gilbreath said another highlight of the conference was the “incredible” way Dawson Memorial Baptist hosted the event.

“Their pastor, their staff, their volunteers — they had such a servant’s heart,” he said.

‘Gathered together’

Dawson’s choirs and orchestra provided music on Monday night, followed by the Enon Baptist choir on Tuesday.

Singers Sandi Patty and Lynda Randle also led worship, and Frank Jones played the piano for the pre-session music each day.

Those at the conference got the opportunity to explore a variety of evangelism resources and ministries at an exhibit area near the church sanctuary.

And all through the conference

program associational mission strategists from Birmingham-area associations prayed for the local Crossover outreach event that will

take place in June in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Eldridge said it was an honor for Dawson Memorial Baptist to host the conference.

“What a humbling experience to witness so many pastors, pastors’ wives and lay leaders gathered together to pray, worship and affirm the great call that we have to be salt and light in the state of Alabama,” he said.

“Our prayer is that God will use this time to encourage Alabama Baptists as they prepare for the Southern Baptist Convention and for the Crossover events planned for Birmingham this summer,” Eldridge added.

To watch videos from this year’s conference visit alsbom.org/event/state-evangelism-conference-2019. To see photos visit <https://bit.ly/2EFqg4>.

Next year’s evangelism conference will be held Feb. 24–25 at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery.✠



Photo by Tracy Riggs
Gospel singer Lynda Randle leads worship during the afternoon sessions of the State Evangelism Conference.

Gospel healing, gospel hope

Spiritual implications of sexual abuse in the local church, Christian community

By Michael Bozeman
M.A.C.E., MA, LPC
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The enemy has won many victories through sexual abuse in the local church. When one is abused by someone who is an authority figure the ramifications are detrimental. I believe it is even more detrimental when the authority uses the name of Christ to carry out the abuse. There is no doubt it leaves an altered perception of the truth in the mind and heart of the victim.

Hope of healing

Such abuse can leave one with a great sense of betrayal, confusion, guilt and vulnerability. The loss of trust and security will be hurdles that the victim will struggle to overcome. The loss of fellowship that was once prevalent in their life seems to be ripped away.

It is easy for the victim to question God on why He would allow a church leader to hurt them. Through this abuse the idea of church and one's relationship with Christ no doubt comes into question.

The great news for any victim is that Jesus offers the hope of healing through even the toughest situations. Psalm 147:3 reminds us God heals the broken-hearted and binds their wounds.

It is so important that the abused seek help from those who will point

them to the truth. Since the abuse came at the hands of one meant to protect and nurture, this process can be lengthy.

Over the course of time the hope is the abused can come to an understanding that the actions of their abuser were wicked and not that of a man or woman of God. The abuser used their status or position to manipulate and to selfishly gratify their own sinful desires. The Bible speaks directly to this: "For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life — is not from the Father but is from the world" (1 John 2:16).

For the abused moving forward can be a tough process. The great news of the gospel is that it brings

hope to all situations. The love that Christ has for His children is even more prevalent in tough times. The Word promises in James 4 that if we draw near to

the Lord He will draw near to us. As the enemy tries his best to continue to take victory through such a tough situation, the truth will cast light into that darkness and offer a place of rest and healing.

Isaiah 41:10 promises, "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

These promises give any child of God, no matter their circumstance or



Pixabay

Christ is present in all situations and we can trust Him no matter our circumstances.

situation, assurance they do not have to struggle alone. God has an unbelievable love for His children and will walk with them through even the toughest of circumstances.

The church should be a safe place for all who enter the doors. When the enemy uses church leaders to bring shame on the name of Christ through their actions, the fallout can be monumental.

Trusting Him

Abuse in the church brings reproach on the name of Christ and has ramifications felt by the abused for years. The church has an opportunity and responsibility to victims of sexual abuse — to be ready to walk alongside them, love them well, hurt with them and be Christ's hands and feet in the healing process.

Walking in and believing the truth

of Christ will cast out the deceptions and lies set forth by the enemy.

Christ is present in all situations and we can trust Him no matter what our circumstances. 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us to cast all our anxieties on Christ because He cares for each of us personally.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Faith & Family is a monthly look at important spiritual, cultural and relational issues facing today's families.

For more articles on contemporary topics like these go to PathwaysProfessional.org/blog.

Michael Bozeman is a licensed professional counselor serving in central and northeast Alabama for Pathways Professional Counseling, a sister ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

A safe place

Finding a trauma-competent Christian counselor for processing, recovery

By Lisa Keane
MAMFC, LPC-S, NCC
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Anyone affected by abuse should seek mental health care. After any major childhood trauma we can see long-term affects

to the brain, physiological changes, struggles in future relationships and other impacts to daily functioning.

For these reasons finding a counselor who understands all these things can be a daunting task and can feel overwhelming. Here are

some simple guidelines of what to look for should you or someone you know need help finding the best therapist for trauma processing and recovery.

▶ A licensed professional. When you seek counseling from someone who is licensed, you will know they have met certain educational and experiential criteria for licensure. You will also know they are bound by a code of ethics and must follow the health care laws of your state.

Trust and care

▶ Someone who understands trauma and its long-term effects on the brain. There are multiple studies that show trauma has long-term, lasting implications on our lives. You need to find a counselor who understands these impacts and is willing to help you understand how the trauma has affected you.

▶ A therapist who can tailor techniques, interventions

and modalities that best meet your needs. You will want to ask if that therapist is trained in trauma-in-

formed modalities and ask if they have experience helping people heal from your specific type of trauma.

▶ An open therapist who is willing to answer your questions. I often explain that finding the right therapist for you can feel like dating. You need to feel the freedom to interview your therapist and break up when you don't feel it is the right fit for you. Therapy is very personal and requires you fully trust your therapist and feel comfortable with them in order to gain the greatest benefit from therapy.

▶ A therapist who will integrate your Christian

faith into counseling. Not all Christian counselors are the same. Be willing to converse with them asking

how they integrate faith, spirituality and psychology into their work.

To find out more about finding a trauma competent

counselor read this in depth article from The American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/ed/resources/trauma-competencies-training.pdf>.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lisa Keane is clinical director of marriage and family and a registered play therapist-supervisor serving in the Birmingham area for Pathways Professional Counseling, a sister ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministry.



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Continuing to rejoice

'He sent us our first to save our last,' mom says

(continued from page 1)
knowledgeable about the needs of the children in their care, and they trained to provide care for medically fragile children and those with other therapeutic needs.

As a result the Brekles have fostered many children with exceptional needs — behavioral, emotional and physical. But Avery's medical challenges have been significant.

Lengthy process

Born with VATER syndrome, a term used when a child is diagnosed with birth defects in three or more body parts, Avery has extra discs in her back, a missing muscle in her eye, extra joints in her fingers and many missing arteries.

She also was born with

only one low-functioning kidney and no bladder.

While receiving educational training on how to care for Avery at Children's Hospital of Alabama the

Brekles were told finding a kidney match for Avery would likely be a lengthy process. The odds of finding an "exact match" from a non-relative donor were big

— about 1 in 100,000. Avery's prognosis was poor, they said.

When the family learned of Avery's desperate need for a kidney several members stepped forward offering to donate.

Among those was Sara, the Brekles' first adoptive child, now an adult with her own family.

Extensive testing revealed God was again at work — not only was Sara a match,

she was a "perfect match."

The doctors said she couldn't have been a better match if she was an identical twin, which once again confirmed to Cindy that "it was God's plan for us to be foster parents. He sent us our first to save our last."

Trusting God

Jeff Fuller, pastor of Rockford Baptist Church, said it has been "awesome how everything has transpired" in the Brekles' circumstances.

The sisters' surgeries took place Feb. 14, Avery's at Children's Hospital and Sara's at UAB Hospital. Both are home and doing well. For Avery recovery will take some time — she still has a bladder reconstruction surgery ahead.

But as always, the Brekles are trusting God for the next steps.

"There is no end to our blessings," Cindy Brekle said. "Praise the Lord!"

*"There is no end
to our blessings.
Praise the Lord!"*

Cindy Brekle



Photo by Joel Glover

Sara Brekle Duncan (right) donated a kidney to her sister, Avery, who was born with only one low-functioning kidney. The sisters were each adopted from foster care several years apart and are unrelated biologically, but extensive tests revealed Sara was a 'perfect match' for Avery.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information on placing a classified ad call 205-870-4720, ext. 102 or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mount Zion Baptist Church in Hartselle, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumes to: Mount Zion Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 679, Falkville, AL 35622.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Seventh Street Baptist seeks God's man to serve as a bivocational pastor for a traditional service. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search, 513 Seventh Street South, Bessemer, AL 35020.

PART-TIME INTERIM WORSHIP LEADER

Seeking part-time interim music worship leader. Send resumes to jenny.russell@parkviewdecat.org. This is a paid position.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Hopewell Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send your resumes to: eedhart@yahoo.com or Hopewell Baptist, P.O. Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. ATTN: Ed Hart.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Anderson seeking bivocational music minister. Please contact: Lindsey Dabbs, secretary, at 256-247-3871. Send resumes to Anderson FBC, P.O. Box 67, Anderson, AL 35610 or email fbcananderson@gmail.com.

RECEPTIONIST/MINISTRY ASSISTANT

First Baptist Church of Birmingham is seeking someone for the front desk position. Duties include answering the phone, membership, attendance, publications and assisting the associate pastor. Part-time, 29 hours a week. Please send resume to: cjames@fbcbbm.org.

MINISTER OF MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

FBC Vincent, Alabama, seeking part-time minister of outreach and missions. Will work with the pastor giving coordinating leadership to current missions endeavors. Design/organize/facilitate an outreach ministry to Vincent/Harpersville area. Minimum 20 hours/week. Send resume to admin@fbcvincent.org.

RESOURCES

YOUTH GROUP FUNDRAISING

Youth group need a great fundraising idea? Backpack promise clip-ons — colorful and decorative scripture verses attach to

boys and girls backpacks, lunch boxes, sports bags, etc. Contact Debbie Ingle: 205-412-1970 or debbieingle5@yahoo.com.

MAKING HYMNS GREAT AGAIN

Life FM and the Blackwood Brothers Quartet have come together to promote and make hymns great again. Hi, I am Bob McClure founder of the Dove Awarded Life FM Radio Network, and a World War II Veteran US Navy, stationed in the South Pacific. I ended my service at the massive invasion of Okinawa in 1945 when the USA exploded the two atomic bombs over south Japan, which began the Atomic Era. By the way, the Lord allowed me to build WWQK FM in Oak Ridge, TN (Knoxville area), where the two bombs were made, called "Fat Boy" and "Little Man" and where the famous Oak Ridge Quartet originated. So I may be "Radio Active" Ha! Over the past seventy plus years I have seen a steady decline of use of hymns in the church. Billy Blackwood and the Blackwood Brothers Quartet have developed a program to promote the hymns during these last days — Rev. 12:12. Do you want an event at your church? And at no cost to you? Email me: Bob@TheLifeFM.com.

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Christian legacy

JSU baseball stadium named after coach who invests in players' lives

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Coach Jim Case's list of accomplishments is a mile long. Scroll through it and you'll find conference championships and conference-wide coach of the year awards, among many other things. In 2016, Case celebrated the 500th win of his baseball career.

And in September 2018, Jacksonville State University (JSU), where he's served as baseball coach for the past 17 years, named its baseball stadium after him. It's a testimony to the "first-class" program he's built, school officials say.

But Todd Stewart — pastor of First Baptist Church, Saks, in Anniston — said there's a different part of Case's legacy that he'll always remember. It's the image of the coach standing before a crowd of men and holding up a black leather Bible.

"During his testimony Coach Case shared how important the local church has always been in his life," Stewart said, referring to

Case's message at an October 2018 men's event at the church that drew the whole JSU baseball team. "As a child he lost his father at age 5. Through the hard work of his mother, the faithfulness of God and the faithful servants in the local church,

"The joy of my job has come through relationships."

Jim Case
head baseball coach
JSU

Coach Case and his brothers all made it. The local church literally helped raise him."

Among those church members were two men who stepped in as male role models in his father's absence. One of them, a local dentist who also led music at

the church, would come over and cut the boys' hair when the family couldn't afford haircuts.

Christian example

"A lot of people may say they have heroes in athletics, people who have meant a lot to them. But for me it was different," said Case, who grew up at Pike Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham. "The men I consider real heroes were the two men who were a great example to me of what a Christian man should be."

And when Case left for college



Photo courtesy of Jacksonville State University

JSU baseball coach Jim Case speaks at a Sept. 27, 2018, ceremony at which JSU's new baseball stadium was named after him. Among other achievements Case has twice been named Ohio Valley Conference Coach of the Year.

his mother gave him the black leather Bible, the one he held up to the crowd, and she told him it had all the answers he would ever need. He says he still believes that. And a big part of his baseball program is trying to be for the players what those two men at Pike Avenue Baptist were for him.

"The joy of my job has come through relationships," said Case, who started out playing baseball at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, then started coaching at Mississippi State University (MSU) in Starkville. He eventually went on to the University of Alabama at Birmingham before going back to MSU, then moving to JSU in 2001.

"It's been 40 years counting the four I played in college," he said. "It's kind of all I've known."

But Case has tried to leverage those 40 years to be a mentor to the guys on his teams. He says no matter what line of work you're in, the opportunities to be an influence for Christ are there, "to help people and point them in the right direction."

Stewart says Case's impact is visible to everyone around him.

"As a pastor I am proud to call Jim Case a friend and fellow servant of the Lord," Stewart said, noting that Case has faithfully attended his church for years.

Case knows how to build a winning program, but even more than that he builds young men who are ready for life, Stewart said. "All the JSU baseball players are fortunate to play for a coach who cares about their baseball skills and the type of men they will become when their baseball careers are over."

'Great honor'

Case said starting the 2019 season Feb. 15 at Jim Case Stadium was "a great honor," but it's an honor he shares with a lot of people who have worked really hard over the years.

"My whole life it seems I've been surrounded by a lot of good people," he said. "It's been a real blessing." 🙏



Photo courtesy of Jacksonville State University

JSU baseball coach Jim Case (pictured with his family) says the local church was influential in his family's life following the early death of his father. The men who invested in the lives of Case and his brothers were 'real heroes,' he said.



CASE

3 stories you should know



Photo by Tracy Riggs

The Not Alone Conference, held Feb 22–23 in Huntsville and Albertville, addressed the issues so many deal with but few talk about — suicide, mental illness, addiction — issues that are stigmatized in the church. Kay Warren, author and cofounder of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California, was among those who spoke about their personal struggles and practical ways the church can help erase the stigma and make an impact in many lives.

SCOTUS hears case on cross in Maryland

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments Feb. 27 in a case involving a 40-foot-tall cross that stands on public land in Bladensburg, Maryland.

Justices seemed inclined to rule the nearly 100-year-old World War I memorial known as the Peace Cross constitutional, but avoided a sweeping ruling on the place of religious symbols in public life.

The cross' challengers include the American Humanist Association, which argues the cross is a violation of the First Amendment.

The cross' defenders include the American Legion, which raised money for the monument, and Maryland officials who took over maintenance of the cross nearly 60 years ago to preserve it.

A decision in the case is expected by the end of June. (RNS)

UMC decides in favor of traditional marriage

A special session of the United Methodist Church (UMC) General Conference meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, decided Feb. 26 to strengthen the denomination's ban on the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ people.

The Traditional Plan was one of three proposals for the church to move forward together despite deep divides over the inclusion of LGBTQ members.

The failed One Church Plan would have allowed individual churches and regional annual conferences to decide whether to ordain and marry LGBTQ members.

The One Church Plan was recommended by the UMC's Council of Bishops, but the denomination's global decision-making body passed the Traditional Plan by a vote of 438–384. (RNS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

FBC Dothan's Fain to retire in July after more than 40 years in ministry

Back in 1976, while he was in college, Johnny Fain stood in Mulberry Baptist Church, Maplesville, and surrendered to God's call on his life to preach. And that's what he's done ever since.

On July 31, Fain will retire from First Baptist Church, Dothan, in Southeast Baptist Association, after 15 years as pastor.

Before coming to First, Dothan, Fain served at First Baptist Church, Selma; Dawson Street Baptist Church, Thomasville, Georgia; and Calvary Baptist Church, Albany, Georgia. He holds degrees from the University of Montevallo and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

During his time at First, Dothan, Fain said he wanted the church to be a going-and-giving church.

"I wanted us to be missions-minded. To ex-

pand outside of our four walls into the community and the world," he said. "I wanted to create a praying, Word-honoring congregation."

Though Fain is retiring from the pastorate, he isn't retiring from the Great Commission. He formed a missions ministry — Assignment International Ministries. According to Fain, it's purpose is to "equip and mentor pastors in their spiritual life and the ministry."

Fain and his wife, Debbie, have two children and four grandchildren. Fain is available to fill pulpits in Alabama and can be reached at 334-798-1251. (TAB)



FAIN

At least 40 Christians killed in two attacks in Kaduna State, Nigeria



MARO, Nigeria — Numerous people were killed in a Muslim Fulani herder attack on a Christian area of north-central Nigeria on Feb. 26, sources told Morning Star News.

An area resident said the attackers numbered more than 400 in the early morning assault that came just weeks after a Feb. 10 attack on Angwan Barde in the same county that killed 10

Catholic Christians along with an unborn child.

In this week's attack Fulani herdsmen also damaged church buildings and property, and the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) reported many of its missionaries have been displaced.



Kaduna state, Nigeria. (Wikipedia)

A boarding school for the missionaries' children in Kufana town has been closed, said Bakari Ibrahim, director of the ECWA's Evangelical Missionary Society.

A women's fellowship leader of the ECWA congregation in Maro said women were meeting at the church building when the herdsmen invaded and "many" had been killed.

Christians make up 51.3 percent of Nigeria's population, while Muslims living primarily in the north and middle belt account for 45 percent.

Nigeria ranked 12th on Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution. (MS)

News near you

BESSEMER

► **Integrity Baptist Church, Hueytown**, will celebrate its six-year anniversary March 17 at 9 a.m. Rod Marshall, president and CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, will be the guest speaker. Morris Johnson is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, Birmingham**, will host a retirement celebration for administrative pastor **Dennis Anderson** on March 17. The morning worship service will begin at 10 a.m. and the afternoon reception will be from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Anderson has served at Vestavia Hills Baptist for 34 years. Gary Furr is pastor.



ANDERSON

COFFEE

► **County Line Baptist Church, Enterprise**, will host Kite Day on March 16 from noon to 2 p.m. The event will include entertainment by The Crazy Tie Guy and Family, Emerald Coast Kite Flyer Club demonstrations, kite displays and sales by Kewl Kites,

kite flying tops, a hot dog lunch, face painting, bubbles and much more. For more information visit www.CLBConthe.net or call 334-347-6082. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Sylavon Baptist Church, Sylacauga**, will hold a revival March 18–20. Danny Cotton will be the guest evangelist. Billy Williams is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Babbie Baptist Church, Andalusia**, will host Lloyd Vanderburg of New Generation Ministry on March 10 at 10:40 a.m. He and his wife, Cathy, will be leading praise and worship, and he will bring the message. Dwayne Seay is pastor.

LAMAR

► **Fernbank Baptist Church, Millport**, will hold a revival March 22–24. Friday and Saturday services will begin at 7 nightly. The Sunday service will begin at 10:30 a.m. Featured guest speakers will be Caleb Hughes, pastor of Springhill Baptist Church, Millport; James White, pastor of Lighthouse Community Church, Vernon; and Scott Stokes, associational mission strategist for Lamar Baptist Association. The church will also celebrate its annual homecoming on Sunday. Drew Moore is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile**, will host the Royal Ambassadors (RA) Racer Tournament on March 16. Car check-in will begin at 2:30 p.m. with the race beginning at 3 p.m. The tournament is open for all RAs first through sixth grade. Deadline to register is March 11. To register call 251-661-7111 or

email kjones@mobilebaptists.org with the racer's name, age, grade and church. Charles Brown Sr. is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Carrollton Baptist Church** will conduct a senior adult revival March 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lunch will follow. Robert Heard is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens**, will hold the Associational Kid's Expo on March 12 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The expo will highlight this year's Vacation Bible School themes. Tim Keenum is pastor.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro**, will host the associational revival, "Awaken America — A Call for Spiritual Renewal," on March 11–13. Guest speakers will include Phil Hoskins, Southern Baptist evangelist; Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church; and Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida. Rick Stone, worship pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, will lead worship. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening services will begin at 6:30, and the Wednesday morning service will begin at 10. A combined associational choir will sing at each service and will meet in the fellowship hall 45 minutes prior to worship time each day. David Moorman is pastor of Center Point Baptist and Dwight Everett is associational mission strategist for Tennessee River Baptist Association.✠

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Charleen Hobbs, SBOM ministry assistant, completes 25-year career



Charleen Hobbs, longtime ministry assistant in the office of communications and technology services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), has retired.

Hobbs began serving at the SBOM in 1994. In 2012 she transitioned from full-time service to a part-time role until Feb. 21, 2019.

Through the years she assisted with convention arrangements, the SBOM calendar and Resource Directory, and "hundreds of other things most people never see," said Doug Rogers, director of communications and technology services for the SBOM.



Facebook photo

"Her organizational skills, efficiency, commitment to excellence, attention to detail and servant spirit have honored the Lord, as she consistently has gone beyond the call of duty

for me, our office, the State Board and churches across our state," Rogers said. "I'm so grateful for her ministry and for the privilege of having worked alongside her." (TAB)

Samford alumnus Adam Greenway elected SWBTS' ninth president



Adam Greenway has been elected Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SWBTS) ninth president.

During a special called meeting on the seminary's campus Feb 26–27, SWBTS trustee Danny Roberts, chair of the presidential search committee, recommended to the board that Greenway be elected president as well as professor of evangelism and apologetics.

Greenway is an alumnus of Samford University in Birmingham, SWBTS, the University of Notre Dame and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

In remarks at a Feb. 27 press conference fol-



GREENWAY

lowing his election, Greenway said he wants to continue Southwestern's legacy as the "big-tent seminary of the [Southern Baptist Convention]," where Southern Baptists who differ on secondary theological issues can unite behind rigorous scholarship, missions and evangelism.

He also spoke of continuing the seminary's heritage of strong faculty and producing Southern Baptist Convention leaders. Greenway said he has "no intention" of "trying to create a miniaturized version of Southern," where he served until recently as dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry.

Texas court rules all-male military draft unconstitutional



VICTORIA, Texas — A federal judge in Texas has ruled the all-male military draft unconstitutional saying the "time has passed" for debate on

whether women belong in the military. Since a 2015 decision by the Pentagon made women eligible for combat, Federal District Court Judge Gray Miller said they are just as eligible for a draft. (BP)



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March 12, 2019



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Online info and registration: alsbom.org/senioradultsingin



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Abortion restriction passes; born-alive regulation blocked

Pro-life advocates are watchful after back-to-back decisions on abortion restrictions emerged from Washington in late February.

On Feb. 24 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a final regulation that bars the use of Title X money “to perform, promote, refer for or support abortion as a method of family planning.”

The Protect Life Rule, as it is being labeled, would reduce the amount of government money received by Planned Parenthood and its affiliates, which combined performed more than 332,757 abortions in the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Protection act

On Feb. 25 the U.S. Senate voted to block consideration of a measure that would punish any doctor who fails to provide medical care to a child born alive after an attempted abortion.

The Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act would require a health care practitioner to “exercise the same degree of professional skill, care and diligence to preserve the life and health of the child” as he or she would to “any other child born alive at the same gestational age.”

The bill includes criminal penalties, a right of civil action for an affected mother and a mandatory reporting requirement for other health providers.

Alabama Sen. Doug Jones was one of three Democrats who voted with Republicans to bring the bill to a vote, but the measure did not get the necessary votes to proceed.

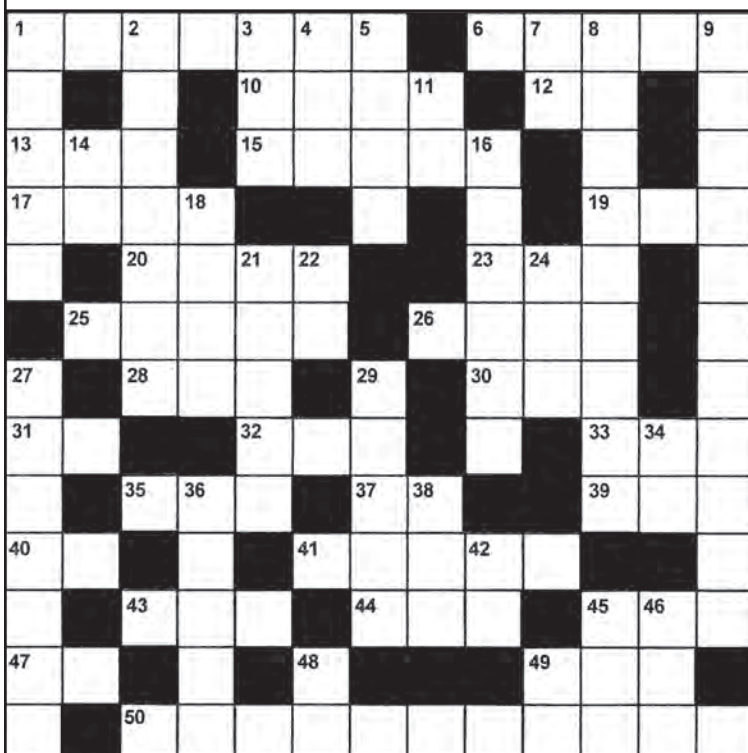
Supporters of the bill say new state-level legislation removing barriers to late-term abortions necessitate federal action.

Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), the bill’s author, has described it as an “infanticide ban” that aims to protect innocent newborns. (TAB, BP)

Looking for the answers to this week's crossword? Those are now on page 2 so we can make the puzzle clues larger and easier to read. Happy puzzling!

Christian Crossword

Mrs. Chester Vance Jr. Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. God of my master _____. (Gen. 24:42)
6. Thine only son _____. (Gen. 22:2)
10. Suffix indicating names in zoology.
12. Obstetricians (abbr.).
13. Idle chatter.
15. Even the men of _____. (Gen. 19:4)
17. Lifted up his _____. (Gen. 22:4)
19. Abbreviation for Micah.
20. Military cap.
23. Small deer.
25. Departed out of _____. (Gen. 12:4)
26. Vitamin ____.
27. Symbol for hydrogen.
28. Children by _____. (Gen. 16:2)
30. Lemon ____.
31. ____ the father of Lecah. (1 Chron. 4:21)
32. A spider: ____ chnid.
33. Roman numeral for 201.
35. Pursued them unto _____. (Gen. 14:14)
37. Government issued.

39. Abram removed ____ tents. (Gen. 13:18)
40. Neither ____ thou any thing. (Gen. 22:12)
41. But ____ shall her name be. (Gen. 17:15)
43. Son of Haran. (Gen. 11:27)
44. Behind him a _____. (Gen. 22:13)
45. All that he _____. (Gen. 13:1)
47. Called the altar _____. (Josh. 22:34)
49. That I ____ bury my dead. (Gen. 23:4)
50. King of Salem. (Gen. 14:18)

Down

1. ____ of the Lord. (Gen. 22:15)
2. Abraham's daughter-in-law. (Gen. 24:67)
3. And Ishmael ____ son. (Gen. 17:25)
4. Bustle, fuss.
5. Assembled or created.
7. ____ shall thy seed be. (Gen. 15:5)

8. ____ and Phichol. (Gen. 21:22)
9. When he was _____. (Gen. 17:24)
11. Ex officio.
14. Expresses surprise or distress (Span.).
16. Get thee into the land of _____. (Gen. 22:2)
18. Dry, withered.
21. Dwelt in the wilderness of _____. (Gen. 21:21)
22. ____ the choice. (Gen. 23:6)
24. Twenty years _____. (Gen. 23:1)
27. ____ of Abram's cattle. (Gen. 13:7)
29. Sarai's handmaid. (Gen. 16:1)
34. Roman numeral for 101.
36. To make amends.
38. Abbreviation for Individual Retirement Account.
42. Behold, here I _____. (Gen. 22:1)
45. I ____ rather be a doorkeeper. (Ps. 84:10)
46. Yes (nautical).
48. Roman numeral for 600.
49. I.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 10

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



FORGIVES Mark 2:1–12

Faith Expressed (1–5)

The primary focus of this story is not on the four men, the paralyzed man or even the hole in the roof. Mark's emphasis is on the triumphant Jesus who enters Capernaum under increasing suspicion and jealousy from the religious leaders. To the crowds Jesus was like none other they had seen or heard. His love, power and teaching drew them in masses.

The four men, by faith, realized Jesus was the only hope for their paralyzed friend. Because of the crowds the only way to Jesus was by creating a hole in the roof. Very simply, they did whatever they could to get their friend to Jesus.

Perhaps startling some readers today Jesus first and foremost declared the forgiveness of the man's sins. The Jews of old would have viewed suffering and disease as consequences of God's anger over personal sin.

Very clearly Jesus came to earth to offer forgiveness. Along with this truth humans have a responsibility to introduce people to the Messiah who forgives all who approach Him.

Authority Questioned (6–7)

The scribes were present, probably in the seats of honor. As guardians of orthodoxy they wanted to make sure Jesus was teaching correctly. The Jews taught rightly that only God could forgive sins.

So when Jesus declared this paralytic forgiven it must have been a shock; they thought He was blaspheming God which came with the penalty of death (Lev. 24:16). Perhaps you can imagine a smirk across the faces of these self-righteous religious leaders. Jesus, so they thought, was a fraud.

Power Proclaimed (8–11)

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, proclaimed by His words and actions that He is God. He doesn't question their belief that only God

can forgive sins. Instead He asks them if it is easier to say "your sins are forgiven" or "rise and walk?" At face value it is easier to speak than to heal a paralyzed man.

However, at a much deeper level, the Gospel of Mark will soon show forgiveness of sins is actually the most difficult. Ultimate forgiveness only can be granted by God — at the cost of Jesus' death on the cross for each and every one of us.

This thought is beyond the religious leaders' comprehension. So Jesus puts the discussion on their level by saying in essence, "You see this man is paralyzed and you believe He cannot be healed unless his sins are forgiven. Watch this. Stand up, son."

Wow. There should be only one conclusion — Jesus was and is the expected Messiah. Who else forgives sins? Who else instantly heals a paralyzed man? None but the one true God. The scribes refused to believe this truth.

Authority Demonstrated (12)

By walking out of the house the man demonstrates Jesus is who He claims to be; Jesus has the authority and power to forgive sins and heal. Certainly this act left the religious leaders in a state of baffled rage. However, for the crowds it was a time of awe and worship.

Jesus came to offer forgiveness for sin-sick humanity. Although we do not understand fully the link between illness and the power of sin, Mark points to a day when Christ will be victorious over both.

Christians affirm a day is coming soon when there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain (Rev. 21:4).

In summary Jesus is God and has the power to forgive and to heal. What are we doing with the Messiah? Are we rejecting Him like the scribes? Or does He invoke awe in us? Are we anxious to worship Him? 🌟

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University



THE PROBLEM WITH PLEASURE Ecclesiastes 2:1–11

Last week we were introduced to the book of Ecclesiastes. Your study Bible may note the author calls himself "the teacher" or "the preacher." He speaks in the voice of King Solomon through chapter 2. Beginning in chapter 3 he speaks like one of us: an average Joe who lived long enough to observe the way the world worked, to test his assumptions about what was worthwhile and to decide much of what he valued was "mere breath" and "herding wind" (most translations say "vanity of vanities" and "chasing after wind").

He can find no evidence that one is rewarded for doing good or punished for doing bad. Though he struggles to find meaning in the contingencies of life, he does not conclude that one should do as one pleases.

In today's passage he speaks as a king who could have whatever brought him pleasure: building projects, possessions, wealth and sex. This tale is practically as old as time, isn't it? In the telling we have heard over and over again people with power and wealth learn that no genuine or lasting pleasure comes from indulging their desires.

Pleasure for pleasure's sake accomplishes nothing. (1–3)

The teacher decided to test whether or not he was right about pleasure and in verse 1 he anticipates his findings: he had pleasure but it was fleeting and he could find no use for it. Note he wanted to "see what was good for mortals to do" (v. 3), but by "good" he did not mean "morally upright." He meant "effective" — whatever would succeed in gratifying him.

Possessions fill our lives with everything except what matters. (4–8)

It turns out much would gratify him. He drank wine; built impressive works; amassed wealth in the

form of slaves, flocks and precious metals; listened to beautiful music; and brought many mistresses into his harem. Moreover, he "laid hold on folly" (v. 3) more impressively than prior kings did (v. 9).

What the teacher hoped would please him was to leave a legacy of buildings, vineyards, gardens and parks in Jerusalem; to subdue nature by planting fruit trees and by redirecting runoff and springs to irrigate his man-made forests; to treat human beings like livestock; and to indulge his desires.

Pleasure and possessions may feel like rewards for our work, but they are rewards that don't last. (9–11)

The teacher succeeded in doing three things. First, he found pleasure. Second, he outdid his predecessors. Third, he says he retained wisdom. He suggests that he was able to avoid being mastered by his desires and to reach a valid conclusion about their value.

Surely the language in verses 10 through 11 is ironic. The teacher claims, "My heart found pleasure in all my toil," but other people toiled at his command. He says, "Then I considered all that my hands had done," but it was others' hands that blistered and grew callused by doing what pleased him.

In any case the teacher did find pleasure in these things, but he suggests that pleasure was not enough in the end. "And this was my reward for all my toil," he says. The pleasure he enjoyed "was mere breath and herding wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun" (v. 11).

Having made a test of pleasure, next he will consider wisdom itself. That is for next week. Today we ask whether we are capable of learning from the teacher: can we accept his conclusion that pleasure, as its own reward, has no lasting value? We can indeed with God's help. 🌟

The crossword has moved! It is on page 17 this week and can now be found on the page before the Sunday School lessons each week. Happy puzzling!

TOP 9

best-selling Christian books

FICTION

1. **Becoming Mrs. Lewis**
By Patti Callahan (Thomas Nelson)
2. **With this Pledge**
By Tamera Alexander (Thomas Nelson)
3. **To the Moon and Back**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard Books)
4. **The Book of Mysteries**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)
5. **Amish Sweethearts**
By Amy Clipston (Zondervan)
6. **The Shack**
By William Paul Young (Windblown)
7. **Redeeming Love**
By Francine Rivers (Multnomah)
8. **When We Were Young**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard Books)
9. **The Masterpiece**
By Francine Rivers (Tyndale)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time

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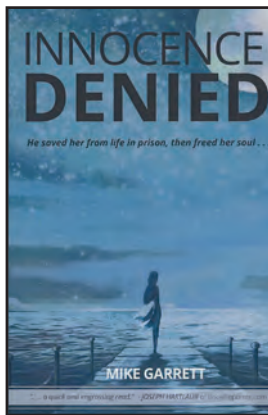


Media reviews

Innocence Denied

Mike Garrett. Castle Rock, CO: Crosslink Publishing, 2018. 232 pp. (Paperback).

A man hires a killer to murder his wife but ends up dead himself. The innocent wife is charged with his murder. Not necessarily my favorite kind of storyline, but it took about half a page for this book to pull me in and my attention never flagged. Although this is only Mike Garrett's second novel (and his first Christian novel), it is clear he knows how to write a story.



The plot is fascinating and believable, and though complex it is easy to follow. The pace is fast enough to keep me on the edge of my seat. The writing is clear and engaging, the characters are realistic and the message subtle but clear. Think

John Grisham but with a more pronounced Christian message like Terri Blackstock. The book doesn't easily fit into a genre; according to Garrett, "It's a love story but not a romance; it has elements of suspense but isn't a suspense novel." Well, whatever it is, it's a great read.

Thy Kingdom Come: Life in the Millennial Age

Tom Grantham. Opelika: TNG Publishing, 2017. 222 pp. (Paperback).

I don't think I have ever read a book quite like "Thy Kingdom Come" before. I expected a dry theological tone that would put me to sleep, but it was far from that. Pastor Tom Grantham of Purpose Baptist Church, Opelika, has used what he has learned from Scripture, added his very active imagination and produced a book that is a delight to read.

Grantham makes it clear at the beginning that it is not his purpose to instruct in any theological doctrine, although he has made every attempt not to introduce anything that is contrary to Scripture. Instead he wrote the book to shed a little light on the hereafter — what it might be like during the millennial age in heaven.

Am I the only one who had never thought that the New Jerusalem described by John is the place



where we will live eternally, but not until after the 1,000-year millennial reign? So what about that period before we walk the streets of gold? Where will it be? What will life be like? Grantham brings his ideas of that time to life, describing experiences and travel and family — yes, family — time. According to Grantham, there are so many wonderful experiences and places to visit on earth, we couldn't possibly see them all in one lifetime, but "when we realize that we have a thousand years, unencumbered by the restrictions of finance or schedule ... a whole new horizon of opportunities presents itself."

The Winter War

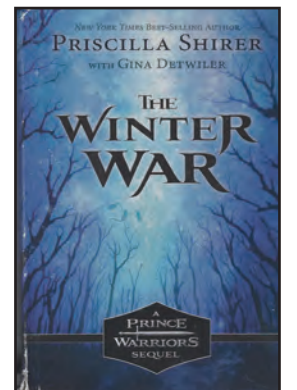
Priscilla Shirer. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2018. 331 pp. (Hardback).

Ladies who love Priscilla Shirer's Bible studies — don't get excited. This is not for us! This is for the children. You didn't know she wrote children's books? Neither did I until I heard two of my grandsons talking excitedly about her newest one.

This book is billed as a sequel to the earlier series of three Prince Warrior books.

According to my grandsons, this one is every bit as good as the earlier ones. The boys could hardly raise their heads from the book once they got their hands on it. In typical 9- and 11-year-old boy fashion, their pronouncement was, "It was good. We liked it." That's the best I could get out of them.

The condition of the book tells a more eloquent story — it has ragged edges and worn pages. It presents a review of its own; a story of a book carted to school to be read during breaks and in the family van on the way to ball practice and their many activities — a book greatly enjoyed by two future warrior princes for the Kingdom. 🏰

**Meet the reviewer**

Martine Bates
Fairbanks, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



BookReviews@charter.net

Immersive experience

International Mission Study in Georgia brings refugee crisis and ministry to life

By **Trennis Henderson**
WMU National Correspondent

Countless refugees around the world often cope with adverse weather conditions and inadequate shelter as they navigate hostile environments or endure crowded refugee camps.

Inclement weather during Kiokee

Baptist Church's recent International Mission Study (IMS) gave dozens of children an impromptu lesson as they splashed from tent to tent amid a steady downpour.

The wet, rainy Saturday morning failed to dampen the impact of the refugee missions study attended by almost 100 children and leaders from seven area churches.

As they gathered at Pine Knoll Farms in Appling, Georgia, the children learned that refugees generally need such basic necessities as food, shelter, blankets, shoes and medicine as well as the gospel of Christ.

Providing area youngsters a hands-on glimpse of missions has been a key focus for event organizer Patty Blanton for years.

Blanton, who taught Girls in Action (GA) at Kiokee Baptist Church when her own children were young, has continued to coordinate the church's annual IMS.



WMU photos by Pam Henderson

Patty Blanton (center), coordinator of Kiokee Baptist Church's annual International Mission Study, visits with fellow volunteers Susan DeFoor (left) and Jane Wells prior to the recent study on refugees held at Pine Knoll Farms in Appling, Georgia.

Each year Blanton and other volunteers spend weeks planning and transforming her farm into the featured country or people group being studied.

Understanding missions

"I just really love doing it," Blanton said. "I want to make it an experience and not just going to a study and learning about a country. I want them to kind of feel some of it."

Planned hot air balloon rides for the children were scuttled because of the weather, but the rest of the morning went on as planned. Organizers even moved the rented balloon's

gondola into Magnolia Barn for the children to climb into and pose for photos. They also received paper hot air balloons to take home that had adorned the barn for the study.

Affirming the impact on the children who participate in the missions study, volunteer Susan DeFoor said, "I think it's really, really important for them to get it at an early age and to understand about missions and missionaries and not just what they do, but how they themselves can be a missionary. We talk about that. We try to make it personal. We try to talk about it in a way that makes it so that they can apply it to their lives." ✝

How to pray:

► Pray for more children to come to know Jesus as Savior and to spread the gospel no matter where they are or their age.

► Pray for refugees around the world to find safety and peace — both physically and spiritually. (TAB)



Sherry Matherly (right), director of children's ministry for Kiokee Baptist Church, Appling, Georgia, leads a study from the gondola of a hot air balloon during the church's International Mission Study event.

TAB AR