



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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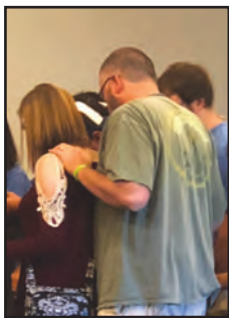
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Jarman Leatherwood (right) planted House of Hope and Restoration in Huntsville five years ago and Highlands Baptist Church recently gifted the church its first permanent building. The church has worked to reach its community with the help of many, including Huntsville City Council President Devyn Keith (left).

Photos courtesy of Jarman Leatherwood

‘Greatest ministry’

Huntsville church plant ‘called to give hope’ to low-income community

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jarman Leatherwood says he can sum up his church’s story in four words — “from mortuary to miracle.”

The mortuary part isn’t figurative either. Five years ago, on the first Sunday that House of Hope and Restora-

tion gathered together as a church, they met in a local funeral home. Leatherwood says he told the 30 or so people present that he believed the Lazarus story but if somebody came walking from around the other side of the wall, he would be the first one running out the door.

That didn’t happen, he joked — but God has still surprised him in the ways He’s breathed life into a ministry that started at zero.

“Seeing God do what He’s done it’s like — wow. How does this happen? Because

God is real,” he said. “We started out literally with nothing, and He comes in and does all this.”

‘God sent help’

“All this” is taking a young church plant and growing the congregation into a thriving church of several hundred people in a low-income area of north Huntsville. And “all this” is moving in the hearts of another congregation to give them a 250,000-square-foot facility for free.

“God sent help and He continues to do it,” he said. “We believe God called us here to

give hope. Madison County has 400,000 people and more than 200,000 don’t go to church. That’s the burden we have.”

Leatherwood himself knows what it’s like to need hope — his father committed suicide when he was 9.

“People are hurting all over this county just like I was hurting,” he said. “Through God’s work in me I began to realize that for all of us some of your greatest misery can give birth to some of your greatest ministry.”

(See ‘Constantly,’ page 11)

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.”

Interested in upcoming ministry opportunities around the state? We can help connect you.

Members of *The Alabama Baptist* staff checked in on the recovery effort in Beauregard this past week and discovered there's still much work ahead for the community.

The current needs list is somewhat specific to certain skill sets and navigating insurance claims, FEMA paperwork, decisions about rebuilding or relocating, etc.

More general help will be needed down the road but for now they have plenty of water, clothes, gift cards and basic supplies.

The best way to help Beauregard in the immediate future is to donate to the work being done out of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika (providencealive.com), or Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association

(tuskegeelee.org). They are working with individuals and families to determine what is not being covered by insurance, FEMA, etc., and trying to meet those needs.

Another good option is to help support the work of **Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR)** by giving to sldr.org/donate.

Long after the intensity of the immediate recovery efforts have subsided Alabama's Yellow Shirt Army will still be working until the community is settled.

Another important way to be involved is to **continue praying for the families** of the storm's victims. Life will move on around them and others will go about their daily activities, but those who lost loved ones have a hole in their lives now. The grieving process will be a long, painful journey.

Chaplains serve an important role for the families and workers in the aftermath of a tragedy like the tornadoes that devastated Beauregard.

Think about being trained by ABDR to serve as a chaplain or in other service roles with ABDR.

Several members of our *TAB* team are signed up for April training events with the ABDR leadership. Others are planning to be trained at future events.

For more information about **ABDR training** visit alsbom-gm.org or call 334-613-2356.

Another unique opportunity to serve will take place in June with the **Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting** in Birmingham.

If you are interested in serving as an usher or greeter during one of the sessions June 11 or 12 call Birmingham Metro Baptist Association at 205-599-3245 or email Katie Hobbs at katieh@bmbaonline.org.

If you are interested in participating in Crossover Birmingham events prior to the SBC annual meeting visit www.namb.net/events/crossover-birmingham/ or call the evangelism office at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 800-264-1225.

These are a few options readily available. Let us know if you are looking for other ways to serve and we will help connect you. (*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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(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.

Transition to new subscriber system going well at TAB

The transition to the new billing and subscription management setup at *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* is on schedule for the planned April 1 swap.

All current subscription files were frozen for two weeks starting March 21 to allow for the files to be moved to the new database.

You are welcome to submit changes to your subscriptions during the transition period. Those changes will be made as soon as the new system is up and running.

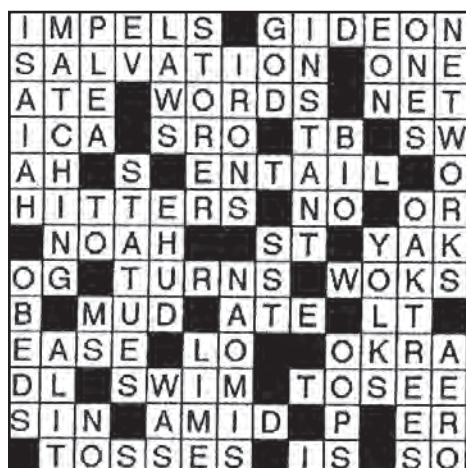
Once the subscriber list for the April 11 issue of the paper is processed on April 4, *TAB* staff will be able to provide updated lists.

We appreciate your graciousness and patience during this two-week transition period and look forward to showcasing the new aspects available to you as a subscriber on the other side.

For those of you who have been requesting a way to pay for your group subscriptions more conveniently by credit card you will be able to do that with the new system.

And sharing gift subscriptions, paying for your individual subscription for multiple years, etc., will be much easier going forward.

For more information email us at subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org or call 800-803-5201. (*TAB*)



Thank you to NorthPark Baptist Church

Special thanks to Barry Goggins and the college students at **NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville**, for repainting the stripes in *TAB*'s parking lot as a ministry project. We can actually see where to park now! Thanks to Stephen Hall for connecting us with the team.

MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Courage to remove blinders, invest in others truly changes lives

Dewayne Rembert's story pierces me every time I hear it. He's been sharing the gospel every way he knows how for the past 17 years, but his first 26 years of life were filled with emotional pain and confusion. He spent most days bitter, angry and doing the wrong thing.

Like he says though, it isn't different from so many other kids growing up without a father in the picture.

I guess that's what pierces me even more — there are young lives all around us desperately hoping for someone to truly love and care for them, to rescue them.

Dewayne tells his story in his book "Flatlined 2 NGauge" and we've featured him in *The Alabama Baptist* in the past. A quick search on www.thealabamabaptist.org will pull up the story. A bit about his bio can be found on the staff page of Montgomery Baptist Association (mgmbaptists.org) and he is our guest on this week's TAB News podcast (also found on TAB's website or anywhere you get your podcasts).

Even if a young boy is attending church with his mother or grandmother that doesn't mean everything is OK with him, Dewayne explained, reminding us that in most cases boys aren't going to admit they are hurting.

There's a pride element but there's also the fear of being rejected or hurt again, so they don't share their pain, their loneliness or their anger with anyone. They just stuff it down until it comes out in unhealthy ways.

As Dewayne recounted his own childhood struggles of searching for somewhere to belong and desperately seeking a sense of security, I thought of all the kids in the homes and communities around us who are in a similar situation.

How many times are those kids right in front of us but we are not aware enough of our surroundings to notice?

How many days do we spend obsessing over our own schedules and to-do lists, to the point of missing an opportunity to share Christ's love to "one of the least of these"?

Another friend of mine recently stopped pursuing a coaching career to wash and detail cars for a living.

He said he spends each day ministering to the people whose cars he washes. "It's what God called me to do so I can be available to minister without having to worry about the time," he told me.

My friend, who has had his own difficult season of life, never knows what may come his way on any given day and many times that means he ends up spending more time listening and sharing with someone than

it took to wash the person's car.

Along with ministering one-on-one he also prays for the owner of the car as he works to make the inside and outside of the vehicle sparkle. Another reminder that we all could slow down to pray for those we come into contact with each day.

I love the hearts of these two sold-out servants of the Lord and am challenged to step up my own walk. Dewayne's ministry verse is Romans 6:11. It's a good one for all of us to remember: "Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."✠

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS



Tonya Knight (top photo, right) helps manage the disaster response center set up at Providence Baptist Church, Opelika.

Knight, a member of Providence, shares with TAB's Haley Piersol (left) on March 19 her experience of helping share social media updates about the storm as it neared and immediately after it passed.

She has been one of many volunteers working nonstop since the March 3 tornado devastated the community of Beauregard. (TAB)



Your Voice



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

Camp's impact lasts long after summer

By Maura Lyle

Staff member, WorldSong Missions Place

One night during GAs, someone from WorldSong came to tell us about camp. She told us about all the fun things we would get to do, and I went home that night and told my mom all about it.

That following summer, I attended mini-camp, and my mom and little sister attended Mom and Me. Since then, WorldSong has been a huge part of our family.

I was a camper for 7 years, making lifelong friends with other campers who later became my coworkers. In 2015, I applied to be on staff. I had always looked up to

my cabin leaders. I wanted to be just like them and make the same impact on campers as they had on me.

After my first summer on staff, I knew there was no way I was going to do anything else with my summers. WorldSong has continued to push me and grow me and become a refuge for me and so many others.

One of my favorite WorldSong memories happened in 2016. At the end of candlelight, it was raining outside so we prayed as cabins in the chapel. After everyone finished their time of prayer, we all started singing and worshipping without any music or instruments leading us.

It was one the purest forms of worship I have ever experienced. It

was genuine and glorifying to God, and it was so cool to experience girls from second grade to high school pouring out praise, drowning out the sound of the pouring rain.

Another favorite memory isn't a single moment. It's watching the amazing growth that happens as girls and boys grow in Christ and become strong leaders searching to know and love Christ more.

For so many years, I was wrapped up in choosing camper's choices, ziplining and making new friends that I missed the whole point. It wasn't until I was on staff that I saw how God was using WorldSong.

I have learned so much about myself through my time at camp. I have learned how to love others, how to serve and how to glorify and praise God in everything I do.

WorldSong has taught me that our faith is not confined to one place or to certain people. The relationship we have with Christ is deep and more than just something to read about. His love is something that should set us on fire, and we should show His love to others every chance we get.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Adapted from a blog post at www.worldsongdailynews.wordpress.com. WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs is a ministry of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). WorldSong offers camps for boys, girls, teens and families. For more information or to register go to www.alabamawmu.org/camp.

The large majority of pastors oppose sports betting and pastors are willing to put their ministry where their mouth is by being ready to help those hurt by gambling and to discourage people from participating.

Scott McConnell
Executive director
LifeWay Research

Providing a tax exemption does not "connote sponsorship, financial support and active involvement of the [government] in religious activity."

Judge Michael Brennan
U.S. Court of Appeals
for the Seventh Circuit
Chicago

Our plan was to build an English church; God's plan was apparently to build a Hispanic church and God's plan is always better than ours — always.

Pastor Billy Austin
Vance Baptist Church
Vance, Ala.

Modern culture is opposed to those who seek to live their faith as Scripture commands.

Cleve Mallory
YMLink.org

My Jesus Story

When my wife, Josey, was in the nursing home, her friend Connie would go there to visit and talk to her.

Connie wrote down what they talked about. She told me before my wife passed away she had a surprise for me.

At the funeral she read "Josey's Letter from Heaven." It begins, "to my dearest family ... I'm writing this from heaven. Here I am with God."

The words Connie shared have helped ease the pain of Josey's death a little bit, and I've shared the letter with others.

I believe it brings comfort to them like it did me when they lose a loved one, especially if they know where their loved one is now.

"Josey's Letter" says, "if you meet somebody who is sad and feeling low just lend a hand to pick him up as on your way you go."

It helps me to know that I'm helping someone else by sharing the hope Josey had through "Josey's Letter from Heaven."

Larry Gentry
Crestview Baptist Church
Prattville, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“It’s a wonderful day,
because God has made it happen.”

TANITOLUWA “TANI” ADEWUMI

8-year-old New York state chess champion and Christian asylum seeker from Nigeria

Reach those who the Lord has given unto you. Don’t try to reach those others are already reaching.

Pastor Jeff Meyers
FBC Opelika

I believe very strongly that God’s plan for the family is ... for parents to raise the children in the home. And one of the things that interferes with that is parents often don’t know what to do.

Jess Dickinson, Commissioner
Mississippi Department of
Child Protection Services

Let me recommend boredom to you. This is the time when you can hear the still, small voice in your head. It’s the time when you

are convicted, encouraged and reminded by the Holy Spirit of those things you’ve learned during busier times. Quiet periods can be the times when you plan or think creatively about things you’ll need to do another time. With practice it can be a time when trivial things like viral videos no longer break in to your awareness.

Gary Ledbetter, Editor
Southern Baptist Texan

The one major I was trying to avoid was theology. My dad is a pastor and now so is my brother. Then in my senior year of high school, I felt God calling me to it at a summer camp. A lot of what I study at University of Mobile is

teaching me the ins and outs of the Bible and Christianity. These classes are helpful because they teach you how to grow and help your ministry thrive. I hope, after I graduate, I can become a student pastor and help students find their faith.

University of Mobile
#MyWhy — Connor

Have you ever thought about what a scar is? A scar is simply a wound that has healed. God heals wounded people, then He uses their scars to help others who are hurting.

Pastor Keith Shorter
Mount Airy Baptist Church
Easley, S.C.



Photo courtesy of ABCH

Rod Marshall serves as president and CEO of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries

Sowing seeds of grace

At your Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes (ABCH), we are in the ministry of planting seeds. We seek to be so generous with the overflowing grace of God that this grace gets scattered over every child we serve.

Sometimes our sowing is deliberate. Other times, the seed is scattered like birdseed out of a feeder and we hope it finds fertile soil.

We do all we can to soften the hearts of the children from hard places who are in our care so that the seeds of the steadfast love of God might find a place to take root and grow.

Sometimes, we actually get to help harvest the fruit that the planting of God’s Word has had on their lives. Many times, we trust that God has prepared other workers to bring the harvest of the seeds we have planted.

We are so thankful for supporters like you who desire to see every child in our care become rooted in Christ. Your prayers are our fertilizer. Your generosity encourages us to continue planting.

For more information about how you can help ABCH ministries, go to alabamachild.org/rooted or call 888-720-8805.

Thank you for helping us!

—Rod Marshall

From the *Twitterverse*

@LifeWay

We can’t respond to everyone, but know that we’re grateful. We look forward to continuing to serve you with trustworthy resources, like we always have, but in new ways in the near future.

@DustyMcLemore

George Clooney: “I don’t believe in Heaven and Hell. All I know is that as an individual, I won’t allow this life — the only thing I know to exist — to be wasted.” Exactly what Prov. 14:12 warns!

@revandyfrazier

By the grace of God, He has put people into our lives that love us through heart-refreshing encouragement. If you have those kind of people in your life, thank God and thank those special people today. (See Philemon 1:7)

@joeyhanner

A man of great courage is a man of great love. The Bible says “everyone will know you are my disciples because of your love for one another.” John 13:35. Love is not a weakness but a strength, I can be Strong Spiritually and physically while at the same time show compassion.

@shanesjournal

In knowledge — the more I learn about Christ, the more keenly aware I became of how far short I fall of His glory. In relationship — the more time I spend with Him, the more my heart is molded to His heart so that the things He loves become the things I love.

@pastorkja91

Even when the assignment or geographical location doesn’t

match the caliber of pastor or preacher that you are ... remember God called you to be faithful there and God will give you fruit there.

@RevKevDeYoung

It is often the case that people come to faith in steps, not usually all at once.

@SWBTS

“I want to be a seminary that is building bridges, not burning them ... an agent of reconciliation and unity in the Southern Baptist Convention.” President @AdamGreenway

@globalhunger

Hunger does not discriminate. Global Hunger Relief feeds families in the U.S. and internationally.

Until we meet again



Photo courtesy of Lori Brooks

Facing the end of life: making decisions ahead of time will help loved ones

By **Grace Thornton**
The Alabama Baptist

Believers in Christ know they have a hope and a future in heaven after life here is over. They know with confidence the sting of death doesn't last.

Even so it can be hard to face mortality and end-of-life issues. It can also be hard to walk with loved ones who are nearing the end of their lives and be reminded they won't always be around.

But it's important to prepare intentionally and think through the things needed to make the last years of life as smooth and comfortable as possible. Careful planning helps loved ones know how to carry out end-of-life wishes.

Here are a few things to consider.

1. Choosing an adviser

Preparing financially for the last years of one's life is an important step. Many people enlist a financial planner to help navigate their financial needs and goals.

Be prepared

Others who might be helpful include an investment adviser to help plan long-term strategies, an insurance agent to review long-term care insurance options or an estate-planning attorney to help draft needed legal documents.

But AARP advises individuals to do their research when choosing an adviser. Get referrals from friends and family then request an interview with at least three profes-

sionals. If they don't offer a free initial meeting cross them off the list. And during a consultation ask questions about their credentials and what and how they charge for their services. (Learn more at www.aarp.org/money.)

2. Collecting documents

An estate-planning attorney can help draft important documents such as a will, a financial power of attorney and directives for end-of-life decisions.

These decisions can be hard to face, but it's important for family members and caregivers to have guidance on critical medical decisions for their loved ones such as resuscitation or intubation. Advance planning can ease everyone's mind.

It's also helpful to have other documents in one place and to let someone else know where they are — things like contact information for doctors and attorneys, social security numbers, birth certificates, marriage or divorce papers, military records, bank and tax information, username and passwords for website or accounts and funeral arrangements.

3. Choosing care

Faced with a major medical situation, palliative care or hospice care could provide comfort for you or a loved one.

The quick difference between the two is this — while both seek to improve quality of life, hospice is focused on the terminally ill.

Hospice care begins when a per-

son's treatment has ended and he or she is expected to live for six months or less. Its goal is to keep a person comfortable and free of pain as much as possible.

Palliative care has different goals in mind than simply pain relief and comfort. It begins at the time of diagnosis and can be used for a wide range of conditions from cancer to dementia. It's a multifaceted approach to finding treatments and care that work for the individual's situation.

Questions and research

Both palliative care and hospice can be offered at a person's home or at a long-term care facility. Physicians can help determine which type of care is right for an individual's situation.

Like with financial advisers ask around and do some research to determine what services are available in your area and can best provide what you or your loved one needs.

4. Conversing intentionally

One way to be intentional about making the most of your final years, months and days is to have needed conversations with friends and family.

If you're the one nearing the end of your life make a point to invite your loved ones into these types of conversations — they have things they want and need to express.

It may be that you have some relationships that need healing. If so, now is the time to approach that in love.

And if you're on the other end of that conversation and you're caring for a loved one who is nearing the end, there may be some things you need to say.

David Heineman, a chaplain with Crossroads Hospice and Palliative Care, has a list he calls the five essential things to say to someone nearing the end of his or her life:

1. Please forgive me.

"If you believe your loved one holds any grievances towards you it will be of great relief to the both of you to let those go," Heineman said.

2. I forgive you.

To say this to dying loved ones can offer them peace in their final days.

3. I love you.

No matter how recently you've said it say it again, Heineman said.

"If ever there was a time to share these words it's now."

4. Thank you.

Whether it's thanking the person for being who he or she is or for the way he or she taught you or cared for you, it's important to express that gratitude — and soon.

5. Goodbye.

If goodbye is too hard to say try something like, "Until we meet again."

EDITOR'S NOTE — All articles in the "Where do we go from here? Growing older, caring well" series are available at thealabamabaptist.org and a downloadable resource is available at www.TABonline.org/caregiving.

Believers in Christ know they have a hope and a future in heaven after life here is over. They know with confidence the sting of death doesn't last.



‘They chose joy and they did great’

Finding best time and place to begin assisted living, end-of-life care

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Up until their early 90s, Lori Brooks’ parents lived in the home her dad had built on top of a mountain.

“They stayed there as long as they could, but it got to the point that just doing daily chores was hard, like going to the mailbox or getting the grass cut,” Brooks said.

So they moved into an assisted living apartment at

the Oaks on Parkwood, located in the Hoover area.

Brooks’ sister decorated it to look as much like their home on the hill as she could. They wanted their parents to be as comfortable as possible in the transition.

“They chose joy and they did great,” Brooks said. “Mother especially did really well there. She loved the activities.”

But as the years went on Brooks and her sister knew they were starting the journey of “walking them home.”

About four years after her parents moved to the Oaks her dad developed heart failure and had a heart attack. Soon after he passed away while the sisters held hands over his bed and sang the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

“We watched as God took him to heaven,” Brooks said.

Her mother, Freda Sheffield, lived in her apartment at the Oaks for four more years after her husband’s death. Her church, North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown, in Bessemer Baptist Association, ministered to her, sending cards and letters regularly that helped her know she wasn’t forgotten.

She stayed active. But then one night she broke her hip and had to undergo surgery.

After rehab Sheffield returned to her assisted living apartment at the Oaks on Parkwood, but a year later she fell again and broke the other hip.

Hands-on approach

Brooks said she and her sister have been very hands-on in their parents’ care through the aging process — they wanted to honor and care for them in the best way possible.

“I believe they thrived as long as they did because of family involvement,” Brooks said.

But what that looks like has changed over the years, she said. “Mother is 100 now and we knew she needed some extra help.”

They could tell she was starting to decline and be-



Photo by Lori Brooks

Visits from Freda Sheffield’s family, especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, make her feel like she isn’t forgotten.

gan to look into their options for the best type of end-of-life care for their mother.

“We considered bringing her home to live with one of us, but our homes aren’t wheelchair accessible,” Brooks said. “As we asked about whether or not she was eligible for hospice we found out that there were several different aspects of end-of-life care available.”

In the end they decided what was best for Sheffield was to be in skilled nursing care at the Oaks.

The facility offered famil-

iar surroundings and faces and Sheffield receives the care she needs provided by a team. Some help with medical treatment others with everyday care like bathing.

And the family also has the option of services like a chaplain to come around and sit and talk with Sheffield regularly.

‘Closer to heaven’

“At 100 years old she’s definitely thrived, but with her health declining, we feel like we’re a little closer to heaven than we were yesterday,” Brooks said. 🙏

“I believe they thrived as long as they did because of family involvement.”

Lori Brooks



Photo by Lori Brooks

Freda Sheffield, a longtime member of North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown, loves to receive letters from the CARE (Caring and Reaching Everyone) ministry at her church. The letters make her feel appreciated and loved.

Cadence Call offers courses for first responders and military

As tornadoes ripped across Lee County in early March, Alabama's first responders were right there ready to serve. As ambulances and hospitals filled up with storm victims policemen, firefighters and emergency medical personnel saw the kind of suffering and heartbreak that can take a significant toll. And that's just one day on the job.

Life-altering impact

All across the state first responders and combat veterans regularly face the kind of trauma that can cause life-altering impact — impact that John Murphy understands. Murphy, a Marine who served two tours in Iraq, dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder that continued to get worse until a family friend encouraged him to go to a Christ-based recovery center. And it changed his life.

That's why he started a ministry called Cadence Call, a nonprofit ministry aimed at helping veterans and first responders facing trauma or transitional issues. It's not a support group — it's a course where participants can get practical help to take steps toward healing in a safe environment, said Murphy's wife, Anita, who serves as administrator for the program.

"It's for anyone who deals with trauma on a regular basis as part of their job," Anita Murphy said.

Cadence Call's next courses start March 28 (dinner at 6 p.m., course at 6:30 p.m.) and will be held at Canterbury United Methodist Church, Mountain Brook. Veterans will walk through a course called Reboot Combat Recovery, and first responders can take a course called Firstline. Materials and meals are free.

And for churches interested in learning more there are a lot of ways to get involved, said Anita Murphy,

who for more than 30 years was a member of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Trussville.

"There is such a huge opportunity for churches to impact their church members who have these traumas," she said. "A lot of times they mask those traumas, they don't feel like they have anybody to talk to who understands. Being a part of our ministry and connecting people with us can help."

That's why he started a ministry called Cadence Call, a nonprofit ministry aimed at helping veterans and first responders facing trauma or transitional issues. It's not a support group — it's a course where participants can get practical help to take steps toward healing in a safe environment, said Murphy's wife, Anita, who serves as administrator for the program.

Find a course

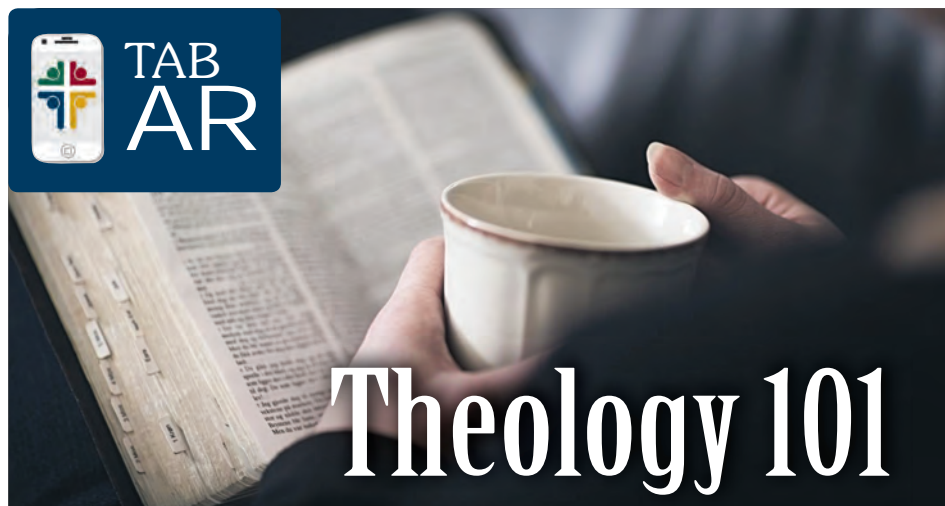
For more information visit the Cadence Call Ministries page on Facebook. To register for classes visit rebootalliance.com, click on Reboot or Firstline, choose "join a course" and select the Birmingham location when you register. (Grace Thornton)

For more information visit the Cadence Call Ministries page on Facebook.



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Cadence Call is a nonprofit ministry aimed at helping veterans and first responders facing trauma or transitional issues. It's not a support group — it's a course where participants can get practical help to take steps toward healing.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Insights through questions

A Question about Lifestyle

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

Last week's question was about Christ's lordship; this week's is about a Christian's lifestyle. This question is raised in the concluding chapter of Peter's second epistle following a vivid description about the coming day of the Lord.

The coming day of the Lord is described in part as a time "in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

The question posed against the backdrop of the coming day of the Lord is a very practical one about a Christian's lifestyle in view of that coming day: "Since all these things will be dissolved what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" (2 Pet. 3:11)

Godlikeness

The first aspect of the Bible's answer to this question is actually included in the question itself. We ought to be persons of "holy conduct and godliness."

Godliness is a shorter way of saying godlikeness. So when it comes to the lifestyle of Christians we might say simply that we are to be godly, a shorter way of saying godlike.

In reading the Old Testament we might reduce godlikeness to the single word holy. People refrained from using His name lest they profane it or took off their sandals since His presence

made the ground holy. God is holy. In reading the New Testament the most prominent term that expresses what God is like is love: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). What kind of persons ought we to be? If we would be godlike the Bible's answer is we must be holy and loving.

Turning back to 2 Peter 3 we read that the Bible urges us not only to be godly persons but also to be guarded persons. In verse 14 of that passage the urging is that we "be diligent to be found by Him in peace without spot and blameless."

Guarded and growing

In verse 17 of the same passage we are instructed to "beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked." Being warned to be "diligent" and to "beware" alerts us about the need to always be on guard against error or wickedness.

The concluding verse of 2 Peter 3 admonishes us also to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (v. 18). Hence this section of the Bible calls for believers to develop a lifestyle characterized by being godly, guarded and growing.✠

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.



Cost concerns

Churches, pastors face questions about pay, insurance and benefits

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

As Mike Jackson travels around the state meeting with churches in transition, he says one question comes up more and more frequently than any others.

“What I’m seeing is a lot of churches who are wrestling with should we move from full-time ministry to bivocational when it comes to hiring a pastor,” said Jackson, director of the office of LeaderCare and church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

“Most realize they’ve got to be able to help a pastor make a living one way or another, and they’re asking themselves if they can afford to continue to hire one full time.”

Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the SBOM, said a number of factors contribute to that.

Economic factors

Some are economic — giving to churches took a hit with the Great Recession and, though the economy has largely recovered, churches are still recovering financially.

At the same time the costs of employing a full-time pastor are ever rising, Wright said. One of those costs is health care.

“I read back in the ’90s that around 90 percent of churches provided health insurance,” he said.

“Today it’s a lot fewer. It’s just so expensive.”

The cost of health insurance has stabilized recently — a moderate 6 percent raise in costs in 2019 — but it’s still high, he said. It sometimes can be hard for a church to afford it for full-time or part-time pastors and that often puts the burden on the pastor and his family.

Some have opted for medical-sharing ministries or the health care marketplace. Others have found

other ways of getting insurance that require more commitment from the pastor’s family.

“We see the pastor’s wife working largely for the health insurance, or a pastor driving a school bus on the side to get insurance,” Wright said.

He said he remembers the advice young men who were interested in ministry were given

years ago — to avoid considering any other kind of job.

“They would say, ‘If you’re going to be a professional at ministry, don’t have an alternative career because you’ll take that as an out,’” he said.

It’s the total opposite of that today, Wright said. “I think every minister who is preparing for ministry should be able to serve bivocationally.”

More than 50 percent of Alabama’s pastors are bivocational — a way churches and pastors can meet in the middle when finances are a struggle.

But whether a church hires a full-time pastor or a bivocational one, there are a few things churches

“What I’m seeing is a lot of churches who are wrestling with should we move from full-time ministry to bivocational when it comes to hiring a pastor.”

Mike Jackson
SBOM



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should keep in mind, Wright said.

1. Remember that better compensation means a better functioning pastor.

It’s not that compensation is everything to a minister but providing for him adequately can free him up to do ministry more effectively and with less stress. Younger pastors have a big hill to climb in ministry these days to find financial stability, according to a *Christianity Today* article called “The Pastor’s Pay in 2019 and Beyond.”

In fact the article cites a 2018 ChurchSalary poll that found 3 in 10 church leaders personally knew someone who had left the ministry because of inadequate pay.

Pay is a little better for full-time pastors in Alabama than the nationwide average, Wright said.

But even so the 2018–2019 Layman’s Salary Study states there’s still room for improvement. In Alabama full-time pastor compensation rose but didn’t keep up with inflation the past two years. The state’s full-time pastors are 9 percent behind in benefits and bivocational pastors are 10 percent behind the national average in compensation. There’s an even greater deficit for them in benefits.

2. Avoid the package approach.

Some churches will give a pastor a lump sum of money and let him decide how he wants to spend it — whether as salary, health insurance or other types of benefits.

“When they talk about salary with a pastor they will say, ‘Here’s X number. Divide it up how you

want to,’” Wright said. “What typically happens is he’ll designate a certain amount as car allowance and that does him no good if he doesn’t have an accountable reimbursement plan.”

3. Be aware that pastors can’t write off expenses as they could in the past.

Gone are the days when pastors could write off business expenses like cars on their taxes, Wright said.

Helping pastors

“A lot of ministers would tell me in the past that they didn’t want an accountable reimbursement plan because it was a hassle,” he said. “But they are an employee for federal purposes and this would be under Schedule A itemized deductions. Before they would itemize it as unreimbursed business expense and that’s totally gone. Lots and lots of pastors don’t know that yet.”

Churches can help their pastors by providing them with a dedicated housing allowance.

“It doesn’t cost the church anything

to do it that way,” Wright said. “Many churches want to help their minister and help avoid paying any unnecessary taxes, they just don’t do it the way it needs to be done to make that happen.”

To access the 2018–2019 Layman’s Salary Study, visit alsbom.org/ccs. The study includes worksheets that your church can use to take a look at its compensation structure.✝

To access the 2018–2019 Layman’s Salary Study, visit alsbom.org/ccs.

‘Power of the living God’

Quinn urges pastors to prepare their churches to carry out God’s ‘game plan’ for them

By Jessica Ingram
The Alabama Baptist

Jesus has a game plan for every church.” That was the encouragement Russ Quinn gave at the 2019 Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference held at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Feb. 25.

Quinn preached from Luke 24 and listed three requirements of God’s game plan for churches.

1. Churches must be biblical.

“We need to be clear about what the gospel is,” Quinn said. “You can’t be wrong about the resurrection and be saved.”

Quinn, pastor of Enon Baptist Church, Morris, also stressed the importance of the Bible

in its entirety and not just what Christians today might deem “relatable.”

“Apparently the disciples could be in the presence of the resurrected Jesus and still not understand who He

was without the Old Testament,” Quinn said referencing Luke 24:44–45. “We need the Old Testament to understand the gospel.”

The Jesus promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament is the Jesus we serve today, he said. “Jesus is the great I am. He’s not who we want Him to be. He is who He is” — the Savior for all people regardless of their differences.

“There’s not a white Jesus, a black Jesus, an American Jesus, a Republican Jesus, a Southern Jesus,” Quinn said.

Quinn also implored those present at the conference to be sure they are not treating Jesus as “mascot” instead of master.

“Jesus might be your mascot

if you love religion more than you love relationships, the ballpark more than church ... if you get more fired up about not praying in schools or at football games than not praying in

your own home,” he said.

2. Churches must be missional.

Just as Jesus called the disciples in Luke 24:48 as “witnesses of these things,” Christians are called to be witnesses of the Kingdom.

“We are to be witnesses, not spectators,” Quinn said. “Spectators have zero responsibility but if you’re a witness you have a responsibility to tell the truth.”

Pray for boldness

One way to ensure if someone is following Jesus is whether or not he or she is sharing Jesus, Quinn said.

“To know Jesus is to share Jesus. If Jesus Christ is living in your heart He will come out of your mouth,” he said. “I believe the greatest sin we’re facing today is the silence of Christians.”

Christians shouldn’t be afraid to share. Even the Apostle Paul asked for prayers for boldness.



QUINN

Photo by Tracy Riggs

Christians shouldn’t be afraid for others to ask them something they don’t know, Quinn said. “Everyone is an expert on what Jesus has done for him or her. Just say, ‘I don’t know [the exact answer to your question], but let me tell you what Jesus has done for me.’”

3. Churches must be spiritual.

Luke 24:49 commands the disciples to stay in the city until they are “clothed with power from on high” —


until the Holy Spirit descends on them.

“It’s the Spirit who guides and strengthens,” Quinn said. “The game plan of Jesus is not advanced by the brilliance of leaders of the Church but by the movement of the Spirit.

“The Spirit of God is not an alternative option for the life of the church,” Quinn said. “It is central. I hope we will be a people who talk in the power of the living God.” ✝



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'Constantly grateful'

Huntsville church plant continues to grow after Highlands Baptist donates building

(continued from page 1)

With that thought driving him Leatherwood got to work planting a church, but he was “all passion without the practicality,” he said. So he called Madison Baptist Association for help and the leadership there connected him with Lamar Duke, church planting strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“From there, I went to the church planters’ training, and things just kind of catapulted,” Leatherwood said.

Duke was able to help Leatherwood secure the church’s first building out-

side the funeral home, and House of Hope and Restoration continued to grow.

“We had our first service there and 393 people showed up,” Leatherwood said. “In that building we baptized probably 40 people within a few months. It was just rapid growth — stuff started happening.”

But they

still had space issues and Leatherwood’s connection with the local Baptist association put them on the radar of Highlands Baptist Church, a church in a changing neighborhood that was no longer filling its building on Sundays.

For more information on church planting contact Lamar Duke at lduke@alsbom.org or 334-613-2332.

“I got a message from Pastor Tony Guthrie saying he wanted to meet with me, and I went over there and he showed me around the building,” Leatherwood said. “I told him we were a young church — I didn’t think we could afford a building like that. And he said, ‘We’re going to give it to you.’ They had opportunities to sell it, but they wanted to continue the legacy of Highlands through a sister church.”

God’s vision

From there things took off, Leatherwood said. House of Hope and Restoration moved into its new home in January and the creativity in ministry started flowing.

“God just began to give vision,” Leatherwood said. “We have an auditorium there that we’re calling the Hope Center.”

In the Hope Center they’re hosting a variety of activities for local students — things like art and dance classes and talent shows. They’re also running mentorship groups to talk about topics like bullying and peer pressure.

And they’re feeding the community once a month and will soon bring jobs in by opening a child development center in the church.

“When you live in a place like that where morale is low, you realize God has given us a missions field where we can see life change and watch people grow up and allow God to use their gifts,”



Photos courtesy of Jarman Leatherwood

House of Hope and Restoration and the Huntsville City Council shared a vision to use an ice cream truck to reach the community. The city council pays for the ice cream, gas and maintenance.

Leatherwood said. “All that God is doing is awesome.”

And it didn’t stop there. House of Hope and Restoration got a vision to use an ice cream truck to reach the community and one day Leatherwood happened to mention it when he was meeting with a city councilman.

“He jumped up and ran out of the meeting,” Leatherwood said. “And when he came back he told me he couldn’t believe I’d mentioned the ice cream truck. The city council and the mayor had been talking about

Duke agreed. “It is just absolutely amazing what God is doing there,” he said.

To see Highlands Baptist — a church of 700 — get down to 23 but continue the work through this new church plant is a blessing, Duke said. It’s a win for a church plant like House of Hope and Restoration that’s struggling to find and afford space, and it’s a win for a church like Highlands that wants to see the work of God continue in a changing community.

Generously blessed

“Now there’s going to be life in those buildings — salvations, discipleship and ministry that wasn’t going on before. It’s putting the resources of God where the activity of God is. That’s what we want to see happen.”

Leatherwood said his church’s partnership with local and state Baptists has been vital to its ministry.

“We never wanted to be lone rangers,” he said. “We have definitely been blessed by the generosity of Highlands Baptist and those who have given to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. We are constantly grateful.”

“... God has given us a missions field where we can see life change and watch people grow up and allow God to use their gifts.”

**Jarman Leatherwood
pastor, House of Hope
and Restoration**

wanting to do the exact same thing to bless the community.”

So they offered to pay for the church’s ice cream, gas and truck maintenance — and send a policeman with them as they went around the community.

“It’s incredible,” Leatherwood said.



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Photo courtesy of Serving You Ministries

Thrive Together Jefferson County is a joint effort between three organizations that provide food and utility assistance, trauma counseling, life skills training and housing help to families in need.

Birmingham-area ministries work together to help those in need

Going to bed hungry and waking up without power — they're struggles John Gibson hears about all the time.

For 10 years the ministry he leads — Serving You Ministries (SYM) — has been working to find a way to effectively meet families' physical needs in Jefferson County. SYM started food banks, began ministries to offer job skills training and provided other kinds of resources. And the ministry — originally started by NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville — collaborated with other churches to find ways to work together.

One umbrella

And in recent months SYM found a new way to pull those resources under one collective umbrella — Thrive Together Jefferson County, three organizations that provide immediate relief with food and utility assistance, then trauma counseling, life skills training and eventually housing help.

Myron Thomas, president of Thrive Together Jefferson

County, said the hope is to offer a complete path to independence.

"We take people who are in crisis mode and walk them all the way to the point where they can get a house of their own," Thomas said.

For example, when they take in new clients they enter them in a central database used by all the organizations. A hub coach assesses their needs to find a good starting point and then sends them to the right organization.

If they're in crisis they start with SYM for food assistance and training in life skills and nutrition.

"About 90 percent of our clients are single moms," Gibson said.

From there clients move on to Hope Inspired Ministries (HIM), a ministry that started in First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and expanded to Birmingham.

HIM can prepare low-skilled and chronically un-

employed men and women to find and keep employment.

And from there East Lake Initiative works to help families by providing tutors to schoolchildren and acquiring distressed properties and renovating them.

All of these organizations also provide a variety of resources like financial literacy classes and domestic violence ministry as well as things like starting businesses that provide jobs for low-income families.

"We're trying to get them out of the cycle and off of assistance," Gibson said. "Instead of giving them fish we want to teach them how to fish."

Thrive Together is staffed by a majority of volunteers and is always in need of those willing to help. The ministry is also looking for church and corporate partners. For more information visit ThriveJC.org. (Grace Thornton)

"Instead of giving them fish we want to teach them how to fish."

John Gibson
Serving You Ministries

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FBC McCalla is seeking a part-time student minister. Church is located in the western part of Jefferson County, close to McAdory High School. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 268, McCalla, AL 35111 or email it to: tdjproductions1@gmail.com. We will accept resumés through March 31.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR

FBC Odenville looking for bivocational youth pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor, 363 Alabama Street, Odenville, AL 35120.

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR

FBC Centre, Alabama, is looking for a full-time children's director. This person will have a calling to share the gospel with children, he or she will oversee programs for birth to 11 years old and

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The Alabama Student Ministers Network is an initiative to provide local and regional opportunities for volunteers and staff members who work with youth to discuss ministry issues and support each other through prayer and training.

Community of support



SBOM photo

Ministering to ministers: regional network to encourage those who work with students

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

Few would argue that student pastors have a tough job. Providing spiritual instruction and building relationships with teenagers is challenging on the best days, and student leaders can feel ill-equipped to handle the many different situations that come at them from week to week.

Knowing others are in the trenches of student work with you can help, said Scooter Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

That's why he's excited about the Alabama student ministers network — an effort to connect staff members and volunteers who work with youth so they can support and encourage each other in the work of student ministry.

“Having a group of people that we can spend time with and know that we're not doing this alone can make a big difference,” Kellum said.

Around the state some student leaders have already found encouragement through informal networks at the association level. Their meetings tend to be casual and relaxed, often involve lunch or dinner and provide an opportunity to just talk. “Sometimes it's good to be challenged,” Kellum said. “But sometimes it's good to be able to get away and talk and just be heard.”

Kellum hopes to replicate that general template through regional luncheons. The luncheons will bring student ministers and leaders together to talk, share ideas and resources and connect with other leaders in their area.

The luncheons will not be just for paid church staff members though,

he said. In fact the idea is to connect with those leaders who often feel they are working in isolation.

“A lot of our youth pastors are volunteer, bivocational or part time,” Kellum said. “We want to emphasize community instead of competition and talk about how they can work together.”

A vision

When Travis Seagle, minister of students and education at Coaling Baptist Church, became associational student ministry director for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, he had a vision for a similar type of cooperation among student leaders.

Seagle has served bivocationally for most of his ministry and knew most trainings and conferences were geared toward full-time staff members.

“We purposely created our network so meetings were during supper not lunch and we used associational funds to do training close by,” Seagle said.

“It's been a fantastic opportunity for a lot of churches who can't pay to send their bivocational minister to a training,” he said. “They can send their youth minister and a spouse, and we even gave some scholarships for them to go to other conferences and trainings.”

Seagle said the Tuscaloosa Baptist Association student ministers network has helped student leaders

move beyond “45 minutes of dodge ball and 10 minutes of Bible study to something that has a Kingdom impact.”

Kellum hopes the statewide network will help student leaders in other associations do the same.

“Youth ministers have a desire to reach out to the teenagers in their community, students in their church and those outside their walls,” Kellum said. “We want them to realize they have to be intentional and authentic and give teens an opportunity to experience community.”

That kind of cooperation will help both student leaders and their students as well, Kellum said.

“We're finding that many of our students go to school together but go to different churches,” he said. “So if they could all go to an event

together and see that person's a Christian and that one too — they'll see they have more things in common.”

Seagle is excited about the possibilities, but he stressed that the network will not be applying a “cookie cutter” approach to every area of the state. The goal is to help those who come, he said.

“As long as people see that there is a desire to minister to the student minister so [he or she] can be more effective, folks who have a genuine desire for their ministry to grow will jump in,” he said. 🌱

For more information contact Scooter Kellum at skellum@alsbom.org or 334-613-2280.

“Having a group of people that we can spend time with and know that we're not doing this alone can make a big difference.”

**Scooter Kellum
youth ministry strategist, SBOM**



SBOM photo

3 stories you should know



Facebook photo

Tropical Cyclone Idai brought torrential rain and wind as it made landfall near Beira City, Mozambique, in southeast Africa. Hundreds are confirmed dead in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Congo4Christ said colleagues in the country are assessing the situation to see how Baptists from the United States might help. Reports are that Baptist pastors in the area are safe, but many churches and homes are damaged. To help visit GoBGR.org.

All LifeWay retail stores will close in 2019

Alabama's 10 LifeWay stores and the rest of the company's 170 brick-and-mortar retail stores will close by the end of 2019.

The official announcement from LifeWay came March 20 though rumors of impending closings have been circulating since LifeWay announced in January that "some" stores would close due to declining customer traffic and sales.

"While we had hoped to keep some stores open current market projections show this is no longer a viable option," said acting president and CEO Brad Waggoner.

"The decision to close our local stores is a difficult one," Waggoner added. "Our retail strategy for the future will be a greater focus on digital channels, which are experiencing strong growths. LifeWay is moving into a new era." (TAB)

Appeals court OKs housing allowance

A three-judge panel of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled unanimously March 15 that the long-standing clergy allowance, known as the ministerial housing allowance, is constitutional and does not violate the First Amendment clause that prohibits government establishment of religion.

The decision reversed a federal judge's 2017 opinion that invalidated the allowance as a violation of the establishment clause.

A 1954 federal law permits churches to designate part of eligible ministers' income as a housing allowance enabling "ministers of the gospel" and leaders of other religious faiths to exclude for federal income tax purposes a portion or all of their gross income. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Milford to retire after long career spent planting churches for the deaf



For the past couple of decades, Ricky Milford has invested his life in planting churches among the hearing impaired all over the state of Alabama.

And on Feb. 24, Coosa River Baptist Association celebrated his legacy and said thank you as he prepares to retire.

"Bro. Ricky Milford served the hearing-impaired community for many years," said Randy Hagan, associational mission strategist for Coosa River Association. "He and his wife, Vicki, have given their hearts to this ministry through the churches they served."

The couple will now have more time to spend with their grandchildren, but Hagan said he's sure Milford "will continue to serve the deaf community with sound preaching and be a voice for them in the hearing world." (Grace Thornton)



MILFORD

Illinois legislature to vote on LGBT history education for K-12 schools



SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — The Illinois state Senate could soon vote on a measure that would require K-12 public schools in the state to teach LGBT history. The measure would require textbooks "include the roles and contributions of all people protected under the Illinois Human Rights Act" and "the teaching of history of the United States shall include a study of the roles and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the history," reported the Illinois News Network.

State Rep. Anna Moeller, a sponsor of the bill, said the measure would give LGBT students role models to look up to in history books. She said it would help students who feel like outsiders.

State Rep. Tom Morrison expressed concern about the bill's lack of parental opt-out or notification provisions and asked why someone's sexuality is important, "especially when we're talking about kindergarten and elementary school history?"

The Illinois Senate approved a similar plan in 2018, but lawmakers left Springfield before the bill came up for a vote in the Illinois House. (TAB)

Study: Strong link between daily use of marijuana and psychosis



A new study published March 19 in *The Lancet Psychiatry* medical journal shows a strong link between daily marijuana use and the risk of later psychotic episodes. The study of patients from several European cities found that daily users of marijuana were three times more likely to have a psychotic episode at some point in the future compared to someone who never used the drug. Those who started using cannabis at the age of 15 or younger had a slightly more elevated risk than those who started using in later years.



Photo by Pixabay

News near you

BETHEL

▶ **Nanafalia Baptist Church** will hold a homecoming celebration April 14 at 11 a.m. Ty (Tyrone) Parten, pastor of Thomasville Baptist Church, will be the guest speaker. A love offering for the Nanafalia Cemetery Fund will be taken. Lunch will follow the service. Logan Denson is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO

▶ **Glenn Sandifer** is the new pastor of **Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville**. He previously served at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Gordo. He holds degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Marti, have two children. ▶ **First Baptist Church, Overton**, celebrated its centennial Feb. 24. Pastor Jimmy Ray preached and church member Vicki Lowe sang a solo. Johnnie Sentell with the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a certificate commemorating the anniversary.



SANDIFER

Butch Henderson also presented a certificate on behalf of the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association. Lunch followed the service and featured a cake with “100 years for Jesus” printed on it. “It was a great day,” Ray said.

MORGAN

▶ **Rob Hatfield** is the new pastor of **Central Baptist Church, Decatur**. Hatfield has served in the ministry for 17 years. He previously served as pastor of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. His first Sunday will be May 5. He and his wife, Laurie, have three children.



HATFIELD

CHEROKEE

▶ On March 10, **Pisgah Baptist Church, Piedmont**, celebrated its 175th anniversary.

Former pastors Rodney Ledbetter and Eric Mackey spoke during the service, and Ledbetter shared some of the history of Pisgah Baptist. Church member Linda Highfield sang a solo, the choir performed and Ivan Ray, guest pianist, played for the service as well.

Missionary families who have lived in the church’s missions house — including the Page family who served in Indonesia and are now church planters in Arkansas and the Stonecyphers who served in Nigeria and Niger and are now retired — shared how Pisgah had blessed them.

Jamie Baldwin, with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, presented the church with a plaque. Wendell Dutton, Cherokee Baptist Association associational mission strategist, presented

a certificate from the association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

“We were thrilled. It was a wonderful spirit-filled day. We felt revived. It recharged our batteries,” Highfield said.

COFFEE

▶ **Bethany Baptist Church, New Brockton**, will host a concert featuring Dixie Echoes on April 13 at 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information call 334-488-0904. Greg Cotter is pastor.

SHELBY

▶ **Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster**, will host a concert featuring the **Crimson City Quartet** on April 7. The concert will begin at 1:30 p.m. A love offering will be taken.



CRIMSON CITY QUARTET

For more information visit siluriabaptist.org or call 205-663-7904. Michael Brooks is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

▶ **New Life Baptist Church, Centreville**, will host a revival April 7–10. The revival will be led by Skyland Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. Sunday services will be held at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., and Monday through Wednesday services will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Jimmy Garner is interim pastor of New Life Baptist. Jon Wiggins is pastor of Skyland Baptist. ☞

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Those using what researchers called “high potency cannabis” (marijuana with more than 10 percent of tetrahydrocannabinol or THC, the compound responsible for the drug’s psychoactive effects) had higher rates of new cases of psychosis than the other cities in the study.

Other recent studies show the average potency of marijuana in Europe and the United States in 2017 was 17.1 percent, up from 8.9 percent in 2008.

Recreational marijuana is now legal in 10 states; medical marijuana is legal in 33. (TAB)

Texas bill would protect churches that report sex abuse allegations



AUSTIN, Texas — Southern Baptist pastors and leaders have initiated a Texas bill to allow nonprofits including churches to disclose credible but unproven sexual abuse allegations with no fear of civil liability.

The bill would protect charitable organizations and their volunteers when disclosing such information to prospective employers, even when no criminal charges have been filed

against the accused. Those who spread allegations with “malicious purpose” or “in bad faith” would remain open to civil liability, according to the bill.



Photo by Wikimedia

The bill’s intent is to strengthen churches and other charitable organizations in hindering repeat offenders by shielding them from potential lawsuits if they “pass on information that they ... have good reason to believe is true,” said Ben Wright, pastor of Cedar Pointe Baptist Church, Cedar Park, Texas, who helped initiate the bill.

Supporters said the bill “could become a concept for other states to consider.” (BP)

Alabama legislators to consider two lottery proposals, passage expected



Two lottery bills were introduced in the Alabama Senate on March 19, and observers believe the issue is once again headed to a statewide ballot.

Sen. Jim McClendon (R-Dist. 11) introduced Senate Bill 116, known as the Alabama Lottery Act, which would create a lottery commission and lays out administrative details of the proposed lottery.

Senate Bill 130 proposes an amendment to Alabama’s constitution to establish a state lottery, along with entities to run the lottery. During a press conference McClendon said the proposal would not change the status of casinos and card or table games, which are illegal in Alabama.

The proposal would split lottery proceeds evenly between the Education Trust Fund and the General Fund.

In a March 20 email Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), said “the general feeling is that a lottery bill will pass the Legislature and be placed on the ballot as a constitutional amendment for the people of Alabama to decide.” (TAB)



Flickr.com



children's Honor choir BRINGS MESSAGE OF HOPE DURING Recent TOUR

The Alabama Baptist Children's Honor Choir returned from its annual tour energized about the significant ministry opportunities it experienced, even beyond the music performed during two concerts in Lynn Haven, Fla.

The March 1-3 tour by the auditioned choir, which included 151 students in grades 4-6, took it to an area that had been ravaged by Hurricane Michael in October.

The choir, sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, brought a message of hope through music and word to two communities impacted by natural disasters.

At the first performance, a Saturday afternoon mini-concert held in a public park, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers served hamburgers and hotdogs to attendees. That evening the choir presented a full concert at Emerald Coast Fellowship. At both locations, concertgoers received more than the gift of music and the message of the Gospel – gift cards provided through Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief were distributed to help area residents rebuild homes and lives.

State Missionary Karen Gosselin, who plans the tour and directs the choir, said the performance had been scheduled in the community long before Hurricane Michael hit, but she felt the Lord had called the choir to still travel and perform there for a reason.

"We felt that 'for such a time as this' Children's Honor Choir just might be the method of hope from God that the residents hit hard by the storm could use," Gosselin said, referencing Esther 4:14. "The songs already chosen for the children were of strength, hope and belief!"

Parents and Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers serve hamburgers and hot dogs before the outdoor mini-concert in Lynn Haven, Fla.

On Sunday, March 3, the choir performed in both services at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Enterprise, Ala. A few days prior, the community had recognized the 10-year anniversary of a tragic tornado, so several church members said they appreciated the choir's songs for focusing on believing in the Lord even during difficult circumstances.

The choir performed 10 songs, and several included sign language, art and dance. Some of the children also had speaking roles used as transitions between songs.

Gosselin said this tour was the most impactful she had been on because it was about more than the performances. She added that she enjoyed seeing the children not only learn their music but also learn how they as Alabama Baptists can participate in disaster relief and help those in need.

Many times children do not see parents give," Gosselin said. "I wanted them to see how the Cooperative Program works – to know how money is used to help people and, specifically in disaster relief, how people come to the rescue. I wanted them to see the Alabama Baptist 'Yellow Shirt Army' and let them be a part of it on their tour."



The 151-strong Children's Honor Choir, along with CHC alumni, sing for the Sunday morning service at Hillcrest Baptist, Enterprise.



By Sydney Basden
SBOM Intern



Parents and Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers serve hamburgers and hot dogs before the outdoor mini-concert in Lynn Haven, Fla.



During a rehearsal, a choir member practices his part of a painting, another art form used at the concerts.

Photos by Sydney Basden

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Event and location is followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613-2 + the extension, or visit alsbom.org.

APRIL

- 4-6 **State Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5 **State Disaster Relief Cleanup/Recovery Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **State Disaster Relief Mass Feeding Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **State Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **Mom & Me Spring Fling**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 8-9 **Church Planter Assessment Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Lamar Duke, ext. 332, or Lynn Graham, ext. 244
- 8-10 **Transitional Pastor Training**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or Debbie Dickey, ext. 218
- 8-10 **Fulfill (formerly Senior Adult Retreat)**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 11 **North Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, East Highland, Hartselle, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 11 **South East Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Ridgcrest, Dothan, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 11 **South West Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Tillman's Corner First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 12 **Pastor-Spouse Date Night**, Grace, Fayette, Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or Debbie Dickey, ext. 218
- 12-14 **Deaf Men Zone**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 311
- 13 **State Disaster Relief Shower & Laundry Unit Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 14 **Palm Sunday**
- 14 **Cooperative Program Sunday**, Lori Lockett, ext. 304
- 14 **North Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Meadow Brook, Birmingham, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 14 **South Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Prattville First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 15 **South West Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Spring Hill, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 15 **West Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Fairhaven, Demopolis, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 15-17 **Interlink Youth Ministers Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 16 **North East Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Mt. Zion, Alexandria, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 19 **Good Friday**
- 21 **Easter Sunday**
- 26-28 **OneVoice Tour**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Keith Hibbs, ext. 217
- 27 **State Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Montgomery First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 30 **Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Sandy Harman, ext. 266

MAY

- 2-4 **Alabama Church Planting Basics**, Birmingham Baptist Association, Lamar Duke ext. 332
- 3-4 **Church Weekday Education (CWE) Leadership Training**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Linda Hicks, ext. 263, or Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 4 **State Pinewood Derby Race**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Monica Thompson, ext. 227
- 4 **North Alabama Spring Library Workshop**, Shoal Creek, Deatsville, Marty Woodall, 334-569-3854
- 5 **Senior Adult Sunday**, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 6 **Senior Adult Evangelism Conference**, Lakeside, Birmingham, Amy Nelson, ext. 258
- 7 **Church Insurance: Protecting People and Property**, Dale Baptist Association Office, Ozark, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 12 **Mother's Day**
- 12 **Children's Homes & Family Ministries Sunday**
- 12-18 **Christian Home Week**, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 14 **Church Insurance: Protecting People and Property**, Northbrook, Cullman, Linda Hicks, ext. 263

'The Bible is enough'

Meyers warns pastors of temptation of imitation, substitution, exhaustion

By **Jessica Ingram**
The Alabama Baptist

What does it really mean to do evangelism? To have a strategy? What does it really mean to use the community, the people group, the demographic to purposefully share the gospel?"

Those were the questions posed by Jeff Meyers, pastor of First Baptist Church, Opelika, at the 2019 Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference held at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Feb. 25.

According to Meyers, the keys to effective evangelism are avoiding three temptations: the temptation of imitation, substitution and exhaustion.

Meyers highlighted Acts 13:44: "On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord."

"If Paul didn't reach everybody, I probably won't either," Meyers said, emphasizing the word "almost."

Churches have fallen into the temptation of saying, "I guess we need to start doing what they're doing."

"No," Meyers said. "Do what God has called you to do, not what He has called another church to do."

One church's giftedness may not be another's giftedness and one church's emphasis may not be another's emphasis.

"I often get asked, 'Why don't we have a gym at our church?'" Meyers said. His answer? "Because there

are a dozen churches doing gym ministry in our community. We don't need a thirteenth."

Many churches miss those the Lord has put in their backyards because they're too consumed with what the Lord is doing down the street.

"Reach those who the Lord has given unto you," Meyers said. "Don't try to reach those others are already reaching."

Churches also fall into the temptation that something could be more attractive than the word of God. If we need something more than the Bible to reach people then we've substituted that for the Bible, Meyers said.

"The Bible is enough," he said. "It doesn't matter the

hardened soul, the discouraged atheist, the eastern mystic, when you open the Bible and read the Word it hits people in their hearts."

"If the Scriptures were good enough for Joshua, for Amos, for Jesus Christ, why aren't they good enough for us?" he asked.

Because pastors have fallen into the temptation that something else is needed to woo and entice people to Christ, he answered.

"If churches win people with the Scriptures churches will keep them with the Scriptures. But if they win them with lights and music and personality, they better hope they don't lose all that stuff," Meyers said.

The last temptation pas-

tors must fight against is the temptation for exhaustion.

"We don't fight against flesh and blood," Meyers said. "We fight against rulers of darkness."

Pastors get exhausted because they hear and see the words and expressions of people around them and they think those individuals are the enemy, he said.

"The enemy is not the atheist or the doubter, the enemy is the one behind the scenes," Meyers said.

'Stay focused'

The cure for exhaustion, Meyers encouraged, is telling people about Jesus, seeing them get saved, then standing with them in the baptistry.

"We weren't called to buildings or programs. We were called to the ministry of the gospel," he said. "Stay focused on the gospel and don't fall into other temptations." 🌿



MEYERS



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

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12						13			14	
15				16					17	
18				19			20	21		22
23			24		25					
26		27		28			29			30
	31					32			33	
34			35			36		37		
		38				39			40	
41	42				43			44		45
46			47	48				49		
50		51		52						53
	54							55		56

Across

- Forces.
- The sword of _____. (Judg. 7:14)
- A horn of _____ for us. (Luke 1:69)
- But _____ mightier than I cometh. (Luke 3:16)
- Consumed.
- Nor hear your _____. (Matt. 10:14)
- He is cast into a _____. (Job 18:8)
- International Cooperative Alliance. (abbr.)
- Standing room only. (abbr.)
- A disease of the lungs. (abbr.)
- Wind direction.
- Exclamation of satisfaction.
- To impose a necessary accompaniment or result.
- Batters.
- Negative.
- Either/_____.
- Lamech ... begat _____. (Gen. 5:30)
- Saint. (abbr.)
- A large, long-haired Asian animal.
- The kingdom of _____ in Bashan. (Josh. 13:31)
- To take _____.
- Oriental cooking pans.
- Very wet dirt.

- I _____ no pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3)
- Left tackle. (abbr.)
- Shalt thou find no _____. (Deut. 28:65)
- _____, I come to do thy will. (Heb. 10:7)
- Small, green Southern vegetable.
- Roman numeral for 550.
- Lest any of them should _____ out. (Acts 27:42)
- For I trust _____ you. (Rom. 15:24)
- Lay not this _____ to their charge. (Acts 7:60)
- In the middle of.
- Emergency Room. (abbr.)
- Throws.
- Made ... the sea, and all that in them _____. (Acts 4:24)
- _____ Abram departed. (Gen. 12:4)

Down

- A prophet.
- Identical.
- Request.
- Electron volt. (abbr.)
- Abraham ... kept ... my statutes and my _____. (Gen. 26:5)
- A person who saves things.
- They were both righteous before _____. (Luke 1:6)

- Continuing _____ in prayer. (Rom. 12:12)
- Long period of time.
- I have commanded my sanctified _____. (Isa. 13:3)
- NBC, CBS, ABC.
- Fill his skin with barbed _____. (Job 41:7)
- Having to do with a natural science (prefix).
- Idols.
- Christ went up _____ Jerusalem.
- The son of Gera. (Judg. 3:15)
- A strong wood comes from these.
- Supersonic Transport. (abbr.)
- Part of an egg (plural).
- Belonging to the son of Ephial. (1 Chron. 2:37)
- Belonging to Ruth's mother-in-law. (Ruth 1:2)
- Used instead of "Miss" today.
- _____ lamp.
- Citrus fruit.
- Expression of regret after a mistake.
- Having to do with airplanes or space.
- God _____ with the lad. (Gen. 21:20)
- Yes or _____.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 31

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



SENDS

Mark 6:7–13, 30–32

Sent by Jesus (7)

Jesus called His disciples to go into the world with His good news. In awe they listened to His teaching and saw remarkable signs. Now the time had come for these early followers to go beyond the role of spectators. Jesus empowered and sent the Twelve in pairs to proclaim repentance, to cast out demons and to anoint the sick.

Similarly, Jesus doesn't call us to only "come and be filled," but to come and be filled so that we might be sent out. In other words Jesus' calling is not for us to become self-centered and "fat" with knowledge, but to be trained so we can be sent as change agents in this world.

Knowing this truth do we focus on gathering as a church as an end in itself? Or are we as individuals and the Church consistently going beyond the walls to impact our world? Make no mistake a professing Christian (or church) who focuses primarily on coming to services, Sunday School/small group or other inward activities while neglecting the daily aspect of being sent into the community and world will be spiritually weak and flabby. Jesus still calls to send.

Equipped by Jesus (8–11)

Jesus sent the Twelve with minimal provisions as they went out in His name. Lacking essentials caused the disciples to remain dependent entirely upon God which served to strengthen their faith.

Traveling in poverty and weakness is an effective means of proclaiming repentance. Moreover since it is Jesus who equips His followers with His words, people who reject the message will be cut off from the kingdom of God, signified in these verses by the disciples shaking the dust from their feet.

We are not suggesting every missionary should be sent without provisions. Jesus' instructions were specific to His time. Nevertheless

the principle of total dependency remains important for all Christians. While nothing is inherently wrong with a church having a large bank balance, it is sinful when we begin to trust in money rather than Jesus. "Secure" Christianity is, at best, a powerless Christianity.

Empowered by Jesus (12–13)

The Twelve were sent without material possessions, but they went with something far more valuable; they were empowered by Jesus. The gospel message of repentance was accompanied by signs of the Kingdom — demons fled and the sick were healed. These signs and wonders could only be explained in the fact that Jesus sent and empowered the Twelve. God alone receives all the glory and praise.

The application is not that we will always see signs and wonders in our ministry; God doesn't always choose to give the world new signs. After all the greatest sign is Christ's resurrection; the tomb is empty. Because Jesus is alive we have confidence that He empowers us for any God-given task.

Resting with Jesus (30–32)

Between the sending and return of the disciples came the news of John the Baptist's death. This death was a reminder the Twelve's success with signs and wonders would not exempt them from suffering and death. Therefore the disciples needed time to withdraw and rest in preparation for ministry.

The same is true today. I have often heard in ministry, "I would rather burn out than rust out." Neither option is good. The Bible is clear — Christians are sent into the world. At the same time we are commanded to undergo periods of rest. Jesus is looking for neither superstars nor couch potatoes. He seeks disciples who will remain faithful to the end. Let us be faithful in both going and resting in and with Jesus. 🌿

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University



THE PROBLEM WITH WEALTH Ecclesiastes 5:10–20

In Ecclesiastes the "teacher" or "preacher" asks what brings prosperity during the short span of life. Living like a king? No. Acquiring wisdom? No. Work? Also no.

In today's passage he returns to what he said in chapter 2 in the persona of King Solomon. Now he speaks as an ordinary Israelite. Hence his accomplishments lie within the reach of his readers, for whereas only the king commands the country's resources, many amass wealth and many die as paupers.

The link between wealth and enjoying life forms the passage's theme (for context, read Eccles. 5:8–6:9).

Although it is the last in today's lesson verse 20 contains the passage's central statement: God gives joy.

While reading remember that "vanity" in most Bibles is probably better translated "breath," and "chasing after the wind" can be "herding the wind."

The teacher is saying that all things are as fleeting as vapor and while they exist we do not control them.

Pursuing wealth never brings the satisfaction we think it will. (10–12)

No matter how high a person climbs on the economic and social ladder, and no matter how willing someone is to oppress the poor and to violate justice on the way up, someone always sits one rung higher.

In 1 Timothy 6:10, Paul reminds us the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. Here the teacher explains why: the one who loves money is never satisfied with it. Neither is the person who acquires goods.

Why not? The only gain the owner has is "to see [the things owned] with his eyes." That is, no one truly possesses anything.

We can add this: from experience

we know that neither wealth nor what we buy with wealth pleases us so much as anticipation does.

Once we gain things we no longer anticipate them, and we must pursue new money and new things in order to feel pleasure. Shopping is mood-altering, is it not?

In the teacher's day "laborers" possessed little beyond what was necessary to sustain their needs for food, shelter and clothing.

What they thought of as luxuries we might regard as trifles. Yet the teacher says, laborers sleep sweetly in comparison to the wealthy who have no satisfaction.

Wealth offers no guarantee of security. (13–17)

The teacher addresses the case of the rich person who loses everything. This is horrible to contemplate and worse to endure, but it turns out that no one takes a penny beyond the grave.

One and all we will lose everything we have gained in this lifetime.

Furthermore in verse 17 the teacher states a great irony: while we are alive we cannot enjoy what we do possess. Or can we? The teacher is about to answer that question.

Find contentment in God who provides. (18–20)

The word "good" is the same as in chapter 2:3, where the teacher spoke not of what is morally good, but of what is "effective" in gratifying us. So it is here.

What causes us pleasure is to be satisfied with our lot: "to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us" (compare Eccles. 2:24).

That sounds like a contradiction of verse 17. What is the difference? This joy is as much a gift of God as life itself is.

God, not wealth, is the source of joy. Amen? 🌿

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!



Media reviews

Singing Contractors

Working on a Building
Gaither, 2019

Real-life contractors Josh Arnett and Aaron Gray became YouTube sensations with renditions of “Mary Did You Know,” “How Great Thou Art” and others. In this, their debut album, they



deliver 16 impressive harmonizing tracks with a mixture of toe-tapping fun (such as the title song, “Working on a Building”) and powerful hymn renditions (such as “Amazing Grace” and “Because He Lives”). They sing “In the Garden” and “Why Me Lord?” too. Overall it’s impressive.

Bethel Music

Victory
Bethel, 2019

It’s the newest album from the worship band that was born out of Bethel Church, Redding, California, and it’s one of their most stirring ones yet. The 14-song album was recorded live.

The lyrics are inspired by the story of King Jehoshaphat and his unlikely victory as recorded in 2 Chronicles 20.

For powerful worship tunes try “Goodness of God,” “There is A Name,”

“Living Hope” and “Praise is the Highway.” For something up-tempo, listen to “Raise a Hallelujah” and “Drenched in Love.” (Michael Foust)



Passion

Photo courtesy of sixstepsrecords

For God’s glory

Passion’s goal: Worship songs rooted in Scripture

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Passion’s Brett Younker acknowledges that it sounds daunting to release a new worship album each year as the band has done since 2010.

“It does sound a little crazy,” Younker said, “but we have amazing teams of people that help do all of it.”

But Younker has another eye-opening surprise — he and his bandmates write many songs that don’t make the cut.

‘Best of the best’

“What we’re actually getting down to for the album is the best of the best,” Younker said.

Passion’s latest worship album, the 10-song “Follow You Anywhere,” was released in January and set a band record its first week with 2.6 million digital streams.

The band is an outgrowth of the

Passion movement, founded by Louie and Shelley Giglio. Passion held its first annual conference in 1997 for college students and young people ages 18–25. Roughly 40,000 people attended this year’s conferences.

The band, like other worship groups, is a conglomeration of many voices. Younker is the lead voice for one song (“Lift Up Jesus”), although the album features other lead voices too, including Kristian Stanfill and Melodie Malone. Sean Curran and Crowder also contribute.

Passion’s primary goal is to connect young people to Christ through songs with solid theology, Younker said. The band’s message to students is this: “You were made for one purpose and that’s to live for the glory of God.”

“We want songs that are rooted in Scripture while at the same time expressing the emotion and the ebbs and flows and the ups and downs of

our lives,” Younker said. “I want to sing about what’s true and I want to declare that and hold on to that. I want to exalt God and whatever could help move my heart to do that ... I just want to connect with Jesus.”

The album’s title track, “Follow You Anywhere,” mirrors this songwriting strategy, Younker said.

“It really embodies the whole heartbeat and message of Passion, which is that Jesus is the One who’s ultimately going to satisfy our souls. He’s worth following.” ✝

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.

‘Gave me my faith’

Christian Women’s Job Corps ministry offers women ‘a future and a hope’

By **Trennis Henderson**
WMU National Correspondent

Future & Hope Christian Women’s Job Corps (CWJC) definitely lives up to its name. Based in Paragould, Arkansas, Future & Hope equips women during in-depth 10-week sessions that tackle practical

life skills such as basic computer skills, money management, parenting and healthy relationships blended with weekly Bible studies and mentoring.

Amanda, a CWJC participant who has been on her own since age 15, is now a 24-year-old mom with three young sons who currently live in foster care. Earning her CWJC certificate and gaining related life skills “is going to better my life and my kids’ lives and give me something solid to start with,” she said.

Pursuing the vision of “women helping women change their future and find hope,” the vision of the Paragould ministry echoes the words of Jeremiah 29:11.

“We always talk about, ‘You are who God says you are regardless of what other people have said about you or to you,’” said Carol Foster, site coordinator for Future & Hope.

How to pray:

▶ Pray for women like Amanda who are participating in the program offered by Future & Hope CWJC.

▶ Pray that God will continue to bless and provide for Carol Foster and Future & Hope CWJC. (TAB)



WMU photos by Pam Henderson

Carol Foster, founder and site coordinator of Future & Hope Christian Women’s Job Corps, pauses outside the ministry’s office provided by FBC Paragould, Arkansas.

“They begin to get a little sense of that. I see them learning about God through the teachers here, not just in the material but in the way that they’re accepted and loved on throughout the program.”

‘The biggest thing’

“It allows us to treat them like they’re special because we know that they are, but they just haven’t seen it so often. To me that’s the biggest thing,” she said.

With a background in school counseling and prison ministry Foster said she realized there were so many needs among women and families

struggling. “When I first heard of Christian Women’s Job Corps it was just like God said, ‘That’s what I want you to do,’” she said.

For Amanda — and dozens of other women who have gone through the program — Future & Hope CWJC already has made a major impact.

“I’m learning things that I probably should have learned a long time ago as far as making good choices and decisions,” Amanda shared. “Christian Women’s Job Corps gave me my faith and my hope.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Name changed to protect participant’s privacy.



Keyboarding instructor Rhonda Davis interacts with CWJC participants as they gain instruction on developing practical life skills.