



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



LifeWay Showcase to be unveiled at state convention in Daphne

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Go, Taste and See — Franklin, Tenn.

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WWII veteran, pastor emeritus shares how God got his attention

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To watch the videos from this week's issue, visit our YouTube channel "TAB Media."



Sherry Senn (far right) leads the congregation of Birmingham Community Deaf Church in 'Great are You, Lord.' Amara Checkwa (standing, center), music director of the church, helps Senn keep up with the music because the concrete flooring prevents her from feeling the vibrations of the music.

Photo by Tracy Riggs



Photo courtesy of Diann Pearson
BBDC's ministry team includes (l to r) Pastor Jerry Pearson, Diann Pearson, Carmen Stewart, Robert Stewart and Sharon Jones.

'A NECESSITY'

Deaf church meets need for interpretive gospel ministry

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Birmingham Community Deaf Church has a long history among Deaf worshippers, serving the Deaf community in the Birmingham area since 1957 by providing a preaching service in American Sign Language (ASL).
Established at Woodlawn

Baptist Church (now The Church at Liberty Park, Vestavia) by Neal Peyton, the church became an interpretation ministry, changing locations several times through the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1982, Deaf members from local Deaf ministries met together at McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham, and agreed to start a Deaf church.

By 1989 the congregation had sent its first missionaries, Stan and Lynn Stepleton, to serve the Deaf in Dominican Republic.

The church currently meets at Briarwood Church, Birmingham, and has 30 regu-

lar members. Interim pastor Cromwell Josey preaches in ASL, a more complete and natural experience for lifelong signers, according to experts in the language.

Permanent location

The church is led by Deaf worshippers who come from all over north central Alabama. The congregation supports missions, gives through the Cooperative Program and is active in the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

"We are looking for a permanent location like being in partnership with a Baptist hearing church so that the

hearing children of Deaf parents can be ministered to," Josey said.

Alabama's Deaf Baptist churches receive resources and support from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) office of associational missions and church planting.

According to Kristy Kennedy, SBOM community ministries coordinator, three Deaf churches and 23 churches currently provide interpretive ministries.

Still, an estimated 1,500 Deaf people die every day without knowing Jesus.

(See 'Deaf people,' page 10)

First-person: Impressions at the border

In the initial planning stages of the trip our TAB team took to the border in September, I was not nervous at all. I had enjoyed my trips to Peru and Italy and a cruise to Cozumel and there had not been issues with security on those journeys.

However, after a coworker spoke with us about her travels and we were briefed on security travel tips by a representative from Counter Threat Group, I became anxious.

My heart also was heavy about the conditions in Tijuana and I felt in a constant state of prayer. I knew the circumstances in parts of Mexico were sad, complex, overwhelming, somber and appeared hopeless in some cases.

Shining eyes

The first few hours of our trip allowed us to contrast San Diego with what we would later experience just south of the border.

San Diego is beautiful with its hills, beaches and lovely multi-million dollar homes but the scenes certainly looked different once we crossed the border that evening. We were in Tijuana with its areas of poverty, locked gates and iron bars on the doors and windows.

My heart hurt as we entered the nondescript building the next morning with the small tents lined up inside, knowing families were living in that few feet of space — space



Photo by Cynthia Watts

not large enough to stand up or even stretch out.

The children smiled as they lined up to receive their trays of food. Knowing no Spanish, I could only touch their faces or shoulders and they would look up at me with shining eyes. They never pulled away.

The Spanish-speaking churches in Tijuana are providing ministries that impact hundreds of migrants.

The early and long hours to prepare food, the effort to transport the meals, the cost, the commitment of the people to provide daily nourishment are all examples of dedication rarely seen.

Still the most impactful sight for me was at the beach in Tijuana.

Standing in the middle of the plaza

above the beach a person could look to the left and see waves rolling onto shore, families picnicking and swimming, children skipping along the edges of the water — normal beach scenes.

Looking to the right a person would also see the exquisite ocean with the sun bouncing rays of light off the water.

However, no people were on that side because running far into the water is the extension of the wall — the tall, long, steel wall that had distracted our sightseeing with its dominating, unyielding presence.

Those moments along with others during the trip touched our hearts and whetted our appetites for more information. (Cynthia Watts)



"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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— Convention update —

The location of the Alabama Church Planter Network Dinner on Nov. 10 has changed and will now be held at 3Circle Church, Daphne, 4:30-8:30 p.m.



The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 21.

Golden anniversary of dedicated service



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Ann Moseley (second from right) is honored for 50 continuous years of service as clerk of Kellyton Baptist Church in Central Baptist Association. She was surprised Oct. 7 with the recognition and presentation of a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission by Central Association 2018-2019 moderator Jeff Fuller (right), pastor of Rockford Baptist Church, during the Central Association annual meeting held at Kellyton Baptist.

MY RASHIONALE

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Tis the season to be stressed but hang tight to your joy

The week leading up to the end of Daylight-Saving Time always seems chaotic to me.

People are generally more hyped up — ask any teacher about the level of craziness in his or her classroom — and traffic patterns even change.

Drivers are more aggressive and out and about more than normal, at least so it seems.

While the hecticness makes me want to stay close to home, I do love the excitement in the air at this time of year.

The anticipation of seasonal activities as well as all the family and church traditions pumps up the adrenaline in many of us.

The fun kicks off with fall festivals, trunk or treats and trick-or-treating for the children — and maybe the opportunity for adults to be creative with their own costumes as well.

There's also the World Series, the final high school football games and the start of state playoffs.

College football games continue to capture our Saturdays but the coming national championship has sports commentators more heavily focused on the top five or six teams.

The weather is typically cooling down by now (it definitely did this year — within a matter of hours last week).

And college students are nearing the end of the fall semester, while parents and grandparents find themselves preparing frantically for their own final exams

for the year — Thanksgiving and Christmas.

A friend of mine mentioned a few days ago how he is looking forward to Thanksgiving. Describing it as his favorite holiday, he talked about special memories of his dad meticulously preparing the food.

My friend can still recall the smells and the impression all the food on the table as well as all the family being together made on him as a child.

The relaxed feel of Thanksgiving Day and weekend also remain special to him because

it's a time where everyone is expected to slow down, rest and remember what all we are thankful for, he told me.

As my friend shared his memories I realized how being thankful brings a sense of peace and contentment to our lives.

The opportunity to slow down and reflect helps us remember to show gratitude all year long — even when the routine days are exhausting or when a season of life turns out to be especially difficult.

Romans 15:13 says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy

and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 says, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

James 1:2 says, “Count it all joy.”

Finding joy amid hard times and pain isn't easy but the Holy Spirit will guide us and God can do tremendous work in our lives in those moments if we can dig deep and find the joy.✝

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

‘What little baby could bring the whole city, nation and world together except she was sent by God?’

My heart sank like so many Mothers did when the Oct. 13 Amber Alert showed up on my phone.

I didn't personally know 3-year-old Kamille “Cupcake” McKinney nor do I know her family but her sweet smile, bright eyes and adorable face looking back at me from the photo tugged at the Aunt Jen Jen side of me.

My thoughts were similar to the words said in prayer by Birmingham-area AME pastor Alvelyn Sanders Swafford at Cupcake's funeral:

“Lord, we don't know how we

got here. We just know we are here. ... Help us. Holy Spirit, heal the hurt and pain. Encircle this family.”

In the days between her abduction Oct. 12 and the discovery of her body Oct. 22 a city and state found a common bond as we all waited anxiously, wanting desperately for an ending we did not get.

But even in the midst of our heartbreak, “there is a man whose name is Jesus,” Swafford reminded those attending the funeral service. “We stand on the name of Jesus. We thank you for what you are going to do.”

Pastor Sylvester Wilson of New Beginning Christian Ministry in

Birmingham, who preached the sermon at Cupcake's service, reminded family and friends to run from revenge and straight to Jesus.

“God didn't cause it but He allowed it to happen to do His work,” Wilson said. “The whole world is watching her life unfold now. ... What little baby could bring the whole city, nation and world together except she was sent by God?”

Swafford referenced a similar sentiment: “There was a baby named Kamille who made us all stop and check ourselves. She made us all stop and look in the mirror and [ask], ‘Are we really who You called us to be? She made us look twice at ourselves and see if we are really doing the work of the Church.’” ✝



Screen capture from CBS 42

Your Voice



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

'My Struggle, His Glory' excerpt: Jesse

By **Barbara Anderson**
Author, "My Struggle, His Glory"

It was a beautiful Thursday morning in September that started like most others. I prepared for work without a burden or care in sight, other than competing with my husband, Johnny, for the one shower in our home.

I was fighting the clock as I prepared for work. I was also trying to get a jump on a birthday meal for our youngest son, Joshua, who lived a short distance from us. His older brother, Jesse, who lived in Auburn, had invited him up for the weekend. Jesse had purchased Auburn versus Arkansas State football tickets so they could attend the game together on Saturday.

I scurried out the door and into my car heading to my job as a surgical nurse. My car radio was tuned to my favorite Christian radio station. I was happy and singing along. I saw it as an opportunity to offer up my small gift of praise and worship to God for the 20 minutes it would take me to get to work.

I crossed the four-lane highway that morning and turned onto the road that would take me to my destination. But this morning was different. In my rearview mirror God had positioned the sunrise in such a precise manner that the view totally took my breath away. The Bible says in Psalm 19:1 that even the heavens declare the glory of God. I was privileged to have a front-row seat this morning even if it meant I was looking in the rearview mirror.

I was in the presence of Jehovah and His peace was so surreal. I talked to Him as though He was a physical passenger in my car. I told Him I loved Him. ... I thanked Him for my family. I told Him, "Father, You are so good to me all the time."

He replied back in that small, still voice that I remember today with this question: "Am I good all the time?"

I said, "Yes, Lord, You are good all the time." Then came His second question, "Am I still good in the bad times?"

Still focusing on the masterpiece of the sunrise I responded, "Yes, Lord. You are still God, and You are still good even in the bad times." In less than two hours I would come face to face with those questions once again.

As I clocked in at work I quickly checked the schedule and hurried to my designated area to prepare for the day. My first patient was a pediatric patient with severe Down Syndrome.

Normally I would never carry my personal phone into the operating room but for whatever reason I did this morning. Toward the end of this baby's surgery I heard my phone ring from the desk where I had stored it. Not recognizing the number I quickly dismissed it, which I would later regret. Within a matter of minutes I received an overhead page.

One of my coworkers said with a tone of urgency, "Barbara, it's your husband. It's an emergency. He needs to speak to you now."

My first thoughts were that something had happened to one of our elderly parents. With his voice shaking and frantic he blurted out that I needed to come home immediately.

Jesse had been involved in a motorcycle accident and had been flown to the trauma center in Columbus, Georgia. Our presence was requested as soon as possible. Our other son, Joshua, would meet us at the hospital. That three-hour drive seemed like an eternity. Few words were spoken between us.

My husband had received specific instructions from the hospital liaison in regards to where and what we needed to do upon arrival. We were met by a kind and compassionate woman who I later learned was designated to handle the trauma cases. She made a phone call and we were ushered to the critical care floor.

Upon arrival there we identified ourselves and were quickly ushered by two neurotrauma surgeons into a private conference room.

Reaching out and holding my hand, one doctor uttered four words that would forever change the entire course of our lives. "There is no hope."

EDITOR'S NOTE — This is an excerpt from "My Struggle, His Glory," a book featuring more than 40 stories of God's grace and provision through seasons of trial. I worked as editor on this book alongside Boyd Deal and was deeply touched by each story I read. (Jessica Ingram)

The depth of depravity in the human heart is so much worse than any of us can possibly imagine. It is capable of the worst of atrocities but even so Jesus chose to willingly lay down his life in order to redeem us.

Kevin Blackwell
Interim pastor
Eastmont Baptist Church
Montgomery

There are so many things for which we can be thankful to God, grateful to people who serve in association programs and aware of churches that support with prayer and finances.

John Granger
Director of missions
Coffee Baptist Association

For the Christian, it is more important than ever to understand and apply God's word correctly.

Mel Johnson
Lead mission strategist
Autauga Baptist
Association

The Bible challenges believers to express thankfulness at all times.

Don Smith
Associational missions
director, Winston Baptist
Association

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“If our vision carries us no further than the present, we have very little vision at all.”

MIKE SNOW

Associational missions director, Bethel Baptist Association

The word saved is a simple word but it is a word that has eternal significance.

Chris Guinn
Associational missions director
Sand Mountain
Baptist Association

The gospel, the good news that God lavished His kindness on us in Christ, creates a kind of people [and] it creates a people of kindness.

Pastor Matt Mason
The Church at Brook Hills
Birmingham

God's grace goes deeper than our ugliest sins. Just look at the story of Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well, Zacchaeus and countless others, including you and me. It is this

amazing grace that continues to radically change lives today.

Larry Thompson
Director of Missions
Washington Baptist Association

Let me issue a challenge to all of us. During these next two months, let's show the world through our actions and attitudes what Jesus has done for us so they can see what He is willing and able to do for them. Let's shine the light of His great love on everyone we meet.

Pastor Ben Hayes
FBC Dadeville

Some Christians see little significance in belonging to a community of believers, and many Christian communities show little inter-

est in joining together in common praise and service. ... Our concern should be corporate cohesion and [the] wellbeing of our community, brought together through genuine praise, celebration and worship.

Gene Bridgman
Associational missions director
Bullock Baptist Association

At times my compassion is diminished by knowing some people are in need by their own doing. I have been praying to feel like Jesus regardless. His compassion led Him to the cross for me, who is the least deserving.

Steve Dunn
Associational missions director
Bethlehem and Pine Barren
Baptist associations

From the *Twitterverse*

@Slsellers7170

As a follower of Christ, it is easy to fall in to the trap of basing how God loves us on what we do — performance. We cannot do anything less or more to be loved by our Lord — He just loves us! May today we enjoy the embrace of His grace.

@GaryBCM

“Every part of your story ... for His glory.” — Rachel Pate
@1MissionStudent @JSUBCM

@kevinwilburn

Hey, Christian! When someone professes Christ as Savior ... celebrate, love them, pull them in, invest in them.

@RevRKlotz

“True church revitalization can never take place and be maintained unless it is the product of a biblical

pulpit. Churches in need of revitalization more than likely need revitalized pulpits.” — Michael F. Ross

@MBChurchAL

[The] good news tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

#MBChurchAL

@jaroland74

I just read @AlabamaBaptist [and] @RashionalThts for the first time in a while. It is super! I really enjoyed the “Created to Move” secret on exercise. Thanks so much! You all are doing a great job!

@HeatherTDay

Spoke for a conference. At the end the sound guy pulls me aside

and says, “I don't believe in God. At all. That said, something happened to me in here this weekend. I can't describe it but something is happening to me!” God leaves the 99 to pursue the one.

@Stu_Davidson

Every choice is crucial. Even small decisions can detour your day from positive to negative. ... Using prayer as a filter for every decision will add to the fruitfulness of your life. #pastorponders #trustinhim

@Charleswsmithjr

The Church is called to welcome new converts with warm support, not cold skepticism. Yes, in time, “we will know them by their fruit,” but gospel fruit rarely emerges from the cold, rocky ground of “wait and see” discipleship.



SBOM photo

Ray Burdeshaw is acting president of the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers.

Holiday acts of kindness

The Alabama Baptist State Convention and the holiday season are fast approaching and the theme “Fruitful” is on our minds at Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers.

Our centers located in Montgomery, Dothan and Roanoke are gearing up for the season of Thanksgiving. However, holidays can be times of loneliness for many, including senior adults. It is not uncommon for many seniors to find themselves without family and friends visiting regularly.

Our managers work tirelessly in their administrative duties and in ministering to our residents through acts of kindness and scheduling activities to help them stay involved in community.

Through intentional outreach we as believers spread the love of Christ, thereby being fruitful for the Kingdom.

We welcome and encourage outreach ministries to visit our centers. Seeing the joy on the face of a resident who experiences worship through music, meals, crafts or other involvement is an incredible blessing.

Perhaps this season would be the perfect time to visit one of our centers and get involved. Contact one of our managers through our website at www.abrc.org or call us at 334-613-2329 to learn how.

—Ray Burdeshaw

Long-held PARTNERSHIP

LifeWay Showcase to be unveiled at Alabama Baptist State Convention in Daphne

By Margaret Colson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The traditional LifeWay Christian Store, a decades-long fixture at Alabama Baptists' annual meeting, is being transformed into LifeWay Showcase, a streamlined display of selected products for church leaders to browse and evaluate.

The products at the LifeWay Showcase are "just a few of the resources offered on lifeway.com," explained Carol Pipes, LifeWay's director of corporate communications. Annual meeting attendees can place orders within two weeks of the annual meeting at lifeway.com or by calling LifeWay's Customer Service Center, she said.

"As a way to thank churches for their partnership," a promotion code for a 30% discount on B&H Publishing books, including the Chris-

tian Standard Bible, will be provided to annual meeting attendees, Pipes explained.

The LifeWay Showcase continues a long-held partnership between publisher and state convention, said Dan Garland, LifeWay's director of church partnerships.

"LifeWay and state conventions have long been partners in the work of distributing books, Bibles and discipleship resources. Our strong partnership continues as LifeWay offers showcases at annual meetings of state conventions.

The showcase will display key titles from LifeWay and B&H Publishing for church leaders to browse and evaluate. Plus all showcases will also include special sale pricing on select titles and free shipping on all orders placed during the convention."

The LifeWay Showcase comes on the heels of LifeWay announcing in

The LifeWay Showcase continues a long-held partnership between publisher and state convention.

**Dan Garland
director of church
partnerships, LifeWay**



Photo by Matt Miller

LifeWay Christian Resources will unveil the LifeWay Showcase at the 2019 Alabama Baptist State Convention in Daphne. The showcase will be similar in concept to LifeWay's 20,400-square-foot exhibit at the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Birmingham.

March that it will be closing all of its 170 brick-and-mortar stores by the end of 2019. At the time of the announcement 10 LifeWay stores were located in Alabama. Today only two of those stores, one in Montgomery and one in Birmingham, remain open, but those two stores will be closed by year's end.

Nationally, LifeWay Christian Stores date back to 1925 when the then-named Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention purchased the Baptist Book Concern in Louisville, Kentucky. The first Baptist Book Store in Alabama was opened in Birmingham on Feb. 15, 1927, after the Alabama Baptist State Convention authorized the opening of such a store in cooperation with the Sunday School Board. In the joint venture the Sunday School Board invested \$1,000, and Alabama Baptists provided "Crumpton colportage books valued at \$1,001.19," according to "Baptists in Alabama: Their Organization and Witness" by Avery Hamilton Reid.

"Baptists in Alabama" reports that first store was located in the

educational building of First Baptist Church, Birmingham, for 18 years before moving "closer to the center of Birmingham's business area." The first manager of the store was T.M. Floyd who held the position for more than 28 years.

"She was an unusually capable business woman with experience both in business and the work of Baptist churches and the denomination. She was untiring in her efforts to acquaint Alabama Baptists and the general public with the services offered by the book store," Reid wrote.

'Services provided'

Even with the Great Depression and the resultant reduction in household incomes the store was able to keep its doors open.

An innovative leader, Floyd regularly traveled throughout Alabama which included providing an ongoing presence at Alabama Baptists' annual meeting with an array of books and church supplies. She "was always welcomed to speak about the services provided by the book store," Reid wrote.



TAB photo

In March 2019, LifeWay Christian Resources announced it would close all 170 of its brick-and-mortar retail stores by the end of this year.

The 1932 “Annual of the Alabama Baptist State Convention” referenced a “Convention Book Room” at that year’s meeting. A “considerable reduction in the price of many of its best books” was announced with the goal of being able to “place all the best books within reach of the reduced incomes of our people.”

Three years later in 1935 the state’s executive board approved a proposal to convey the convention’s interest in the store to the Sunday School Board which would continue to operate the store and return any profits to the state convention for the promotion of its work.

‘Greater dreams’

Nationally the stores changed names from Baptist Book Stores to LifeWay Christian Stores in 1999 and conducted business through retail stores, online, catalog and direct sales, according to an April 20, 2001, Baptist Press article “LifeWay Christian Stores: 75 years of growth and service.”

At that time then-LifeWay Christian Stores president Mark Scott said, “Our dreams must be greater than our memories.”

On the occasion of the stores’ anniversary in 2001, Alabama Baptist Linda Jackson, then a LifeWay Christian Store regional director, spoke about her 35-year-career with the Christian store.

Jackson, who began working at age 22 in the Birmingham store, said that for every Christian there are “defining moments when you see God working and you recognize His work with such clarity.” One morning as she drove to work she reflected on whether she was following God’s call on her life. In the store that morning before others arrived, she said, “God gave me a calmness and a peace and I just knew this was where I belonged. This was my place of service.

“While we are serving our customers God is blessing our lives.”

Jackson was not alone in her passion for ministry through LifeWay Christian Stores. In November 2018, LifeWay was ranked No. 1 in customer service in brick-and-mortar bookstores, according to a



BP photo

The decision to close LifeWay’s retail stores ‘expands the opportunity to provide LifeWay resources globally,’ according to the LifeWay FAQ report. ‘LifeWay has an incredibly bright future,’ said LifeWay President and CEO Ben Mandrell.

Newsweek market research survey.

Such face-to-face service had been a hallmark in LifeWay Christian Stores for nearly 100 years, until LifeWay’s executive leadership team, with the full support of the trustees, decided recent financial losses of LifeWay Christian Stores could not sustain the stores’ ongoing brick-and-mortar presence and LifeWay stores would need to be shuttered.

“The decision to close our local stores is a difficult one,” said then-LifeWay acting president and CEO Brad Waggoner.

In a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) report compiled by LifeWay, through the past

five years the cumulative losses of LifeWay Stores reached nearly \$50 million and would have grown to more than \$60 million by 2021.

“Sustaining losses at this rate is poor stewardship and compromises the overall ministry of LifeWay,” the report stated.

LifeWay Christian Stores is not

the only Christian retailer to face tough financial times and decisions. Family Christian Stores went out of business in 2017.

With the closure of its 170 stores nationwide this year LifeWay is shifting primarily to a digital strategy following industry trends. LifeWay also launched on June 1 a network of “authorized dealers,” allowing independent retailers to stock LifeWay resources (see sidebar, this page).

‘Expanded opportunity’

In addition to the LifeWay Showcase at state convention annual meetings LifeWay Stores will be provided at regional and national events.

“The closure of our proprietary brick-and-mortar stores expands the opportunity to provide LifeWay resources globally through multiple retail channels. ... The changes we are making in 2019 give us opportunities to expand our reach, better serve our customers and get the message of the gospel to the world,” according to the LifeWay FAQ report.

“LifeWay has an incredibly bright future,” said LifeWay president and CEO Ben Mandrell, and will keep the mission and the message the same while adjusting the approach.✝

“The changes we are making in 2019 give us opportunities to expand our reach, better serve our customers, and get the message of the gospel to the world.”

LifeWay FAQ report

LifeWay authorized dealers in Alabama

Do you desire the traditional shopping experience for LifeWay products? Do you like to chat with bookstore employees while making your selection of LifeWay products? Do you want to browse LifeWay products before making your selection? The Alabama LifeWay Authorized Dealers listed below provide a selection of LifeWay products for their customers:

- ▶ **Sanctuary Christian Book/ The Amen Corner, Inc.** — Alabaster
- ▶ **Faith-N-Hymn Christian Bookstore** — Rainsville
- ▶ **Blessings, A Christian Store** — Prattville
- ▶ **Tabby D’s Christian Book & Gift** — Andalusia
- ▶ **Dove Christian Supply** — Dothan
- ▶ **Lambert’s Bibles and Gifts** — Boaz
- ▶ **By His Hands** — Albertville
- ▶ **The Gathering Place** — Decatur
- ▶ **Smith’s Christian Books and Supplies** — Fayette
- ▶ **Southern Traditions** — Jackson
- ▶ **Christian Book and Supply** — Anniston
- ▶ **Yates Christian Bookstore** — Cullman
- ▶ **One Way** — Selma
- ▶ **Stewart Family Pool and Christian Books** — Jasper
- ▶ **Christchurch Bookstore** — Montgomery
- ▶ **The Carpenter’s Shop** — Vestavia Hills

Their 'Jerusalem'

Eagle Creek, Dadeville, members use carpentry skills to update pastorium

For the past 15 years, Randy Patterson has been putting his carpentry skills to work all over the map with Carpenters for Christ.

"I've worked at the post office for 30 years, but I've built stuff all my life," said Patterson, a member of Eagle Creek Baptist Church, Dadeville. "So when some of the guys I worked with at the post office invited me to go with them on that first Carpenters for Christ trip, I said yes."

And he kept going.

But this year he decided to do something different with the tools in his toolbelt — he took a look at Eagle Creek's pastorium and realized God might have a project for him in his "Jerusalem."

James Smith, director of missions for Tallapoosa Baptist Association, came to speak at Patterson's church one night and talked about how Acts 1:8 told Christians to go — but it told them to work at home too.

"He talked about how the missions field is right outside our door," Patterson said. "He said there were things we could do right here to help share what Jesus has done for us."

And Patterson realized one of those was to get a functional, up-to-date house ready for his church's new pastor.

So he talked it over with the church properties committee and got together with church member Leonard McElvey to tear out some walls and the floor in the kitchen.

'All glory to God'

"Many other people lent a hand — it wasn't just me," Patterson said, noting his wife, Vicky, laid the tile in the bathroom.

After everyone finished the pastorium some church members got together to redo the flooring in the back of the church and add two bathrooms.

"God has put people in place to accomplish whatever He wants to accomplish," Patterson said. "All glory goes to God."

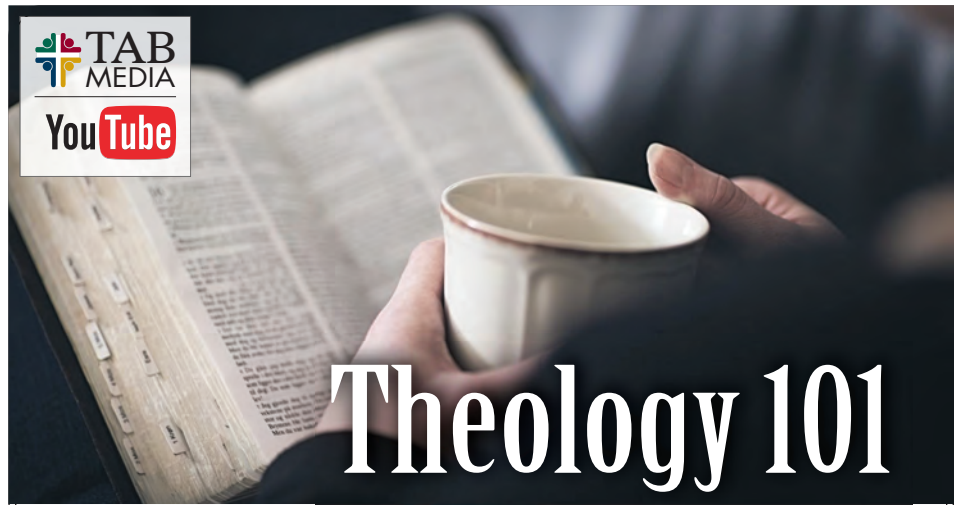
Smith said it was amazing to see the project come together. The pastorium was completed just days before the new pastor arrived.

"He felt called to do that," Smith said. "He's an example of Acts 1:8, of how we need to be involved in missions in every way possible." (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Randy Patterson

Randy Patterson, who has worked with Carpenters for Christ for the past 15 years, put his skills to work renovating the pastorium at his church, Eagle Creek Baptist, Dadeville, for the arrival of the church's new pastor.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Tempted and tried

Temptations

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

Special to The Alabama Baptist

Sometimes ordinary words can be hard to nail down to their precise or intended meaning. Three such words are the verbs tempted, tested and tried. Their meanings depend on the context or how they are used and what their subject might be.

If we limit consideration of these verbs to just their use in the Bible, their exact meanings still can be somewhat elusive. Consider several verses in which these common words appear.

In the New King James Version of Scripture, Matthew 4:1 reads, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted* by the devil." Matthew 22:35–36 records concerning Jesus: "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, *testing* Him and saying, 'Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the law?'"

In 1 Peter 4:12 we read, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery *trial* which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you."

In these verses the same Greek term lies behind the words tempted, tested and tried.

'Drawn away'

This week Theology 101 draws attention to one of these three terms, that of being tempted. We understand being tempted as being enticed to commit sin. As is often summarized, solicitations to sin might come from the flesh within us, the world around us or the devil aligned against us.

James 1:13–14 speaks to the first of these sources, that of our own sinful nature: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God;' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

Crucify the flesh

Another source of temptation into sin is the world around us. The admonition of Romans 12:2 pleads, "Do not be conformed to this world." The contemporary wording of this verse in the J.B. Phillips paraphrase yields, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own [mold]." The world's pressure for Christians to conform to its standards and behaviors (or misbehaviors) can be quite subtle and powerful.

In the third source of temptation Satan's goal is to get God's people to slide into sin. To that end Satan gets at us through our own sinful natures which can be enticed by the world around us.

When it comes to temptations, God's word admonishes His people to crucify the flesh, to love not the world and to resist the devil.✠

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.



Christmas cheer, charm, history

Franklin, Tennessee, a holiday destination that refuses to play second fiddle

By **Connie Pearson**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Shopping, restaurants, music, historic sites and festivals lured 1.72 million visitors to Franklin, Tennessee, in 2018 and the city continues to grow to the point that it is no longer just a “little sister” to Nashville. It is playing second fiddle to no one.

While Franklin’s neighbor city may be known for being home to the Tennessee Titans, countless country singers and contemporary Christian artists, Franklin’s appeal is growing and the accolades keep rolling in.

An impressive number of those country and Christian musicians actually choose to live in Franklin and with good reason.

Southern Living called it one of “the South’s prettiest towns” and *Architectural Digest* included Franklin’s Main Street as being among “the 30 most beautiful main streets across America.”

Holiday events

The month of December will be a particularly fun time to visit.

The first weekend in December kicks off with the First Friday Art Crawl on Main Street followed by a Christmas parade and tree lighting.

The Christmas parade in Leiper’s Fork, only eight

miles from downtown Franklin, is planned for Dec. 14. Expect a folkier vibe for that one with antique tractors, goats and pigs among the entries.

The Franklin Theatre on Main Street will host the Night of Hope Tour with Christy Nockels on Dec. 8–9 and the David Archuleta Christmas Show on Dec. 11–12. The mu-

sical “Cinderella” will be performed at the Jamison Theater at The Factory on Franklin Road on Dec. 6–29.

Perhaps the most well-known Franklin holiday event is Dickens of a Christmas, which will be held Dec. 14–15. Area residents will dress as characters from a Charles Dickens novel and stroll the historic downtown while street musicians perform on every corner and craft and food vendors hawk their wares.

Arrive early to find a good parking spot. Otherwise you’ll likely have to walk for several blocks.

Places to eat, stay

Franklin is also home to a growing number of one-of-a-kind, chef-driven eateries, including Red Pony, 55 South, Cork & Cow and Gray’s on Main. Others near Main Street are Merridee’s Breadbasket and Puckett’s Grocery and Restaurant.

The Grilled Cheeserie and Ruby Sunshine are the newest additions to the downtown culinary scene.

Mafiaoza’s and Music City Seafood at The Factory get great reviews, but be sure to save room for a 100-layer donut from Five Daughters Bakery.

Dozens of chain restaurants are also available.

More than 5,000 hotel rooms welcome guests in Franklin with The Harpeth Hotel sched-

uled to open on Main Street soon. Magnolia House B&B and a number of Airbnb’s also will be happy to host overnight guests. Several are within easy walking distance of Main Street.

You can’t miss Drury Plaza Hotel. It’s the tall building at Exit 67. In addition to a fabulous breakfast they also offer a light supper for guests at



Dickens of a Christmas

Photos courtesy of visitfranklin.com

5:30 p.m., a welcome amenity after a day of shopping.

Place to shop

Speaking of shopping Cool Springs Galleria (at Exit 67) is likely to get the most attention, but you’ll want to check out the antique stores scattered throughout Williamson County and the boutiques on historic Main Street and at The Factory.

Leipers Fork also contains some unique shops and art galleries that are worth a visit. Only one street runs through this tiny town so they won’t be hard to find.

Historic sites

Franklin is home to several significant historic attractions, many of which will be decorated beautifully for the holidays.

Three historic homes, Carnton, Carter House and Lotz House, all played prominent roles during the 1864 Civil War Battle of Franklin.

Another historic home, the Corn House, is now Biscuit Love, where you can combine breakfast or lunch with a side of history. The Corn family, owners of Franklin’s Lillie Mills, occupied the home from 1920 until the 1980s.

If you find yourself in Franklin on a Sunday morning and want to attend a worship service with Alabama


connections, consider The Church at West Franklin at 700 TN-96 with services at 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

The pastor, Matt Pearson, was saved and baptized as a child at First Baptist Church, Hartselle, and was ordained to the ministry at Central Baptist Church, Decatur. (He’s also my son.) The music minister and the children’s minister are also products of Alabama so you’re bound to find people who speak your heart language. The church’s Christmas concert will be presented Dec. 8 at 3 and 5 p.m.

More holiday cheer

If you have a few more days to spend in the area and yearn for even more holiday cheer, Gaylord Opryland Resort has much to offer and is less than an hour’s drive from downtown Franklin.

The interior, atrium and grounds feature breathtaking lights and displays, plus several child-friendly activities such as gingerbread decorating, scavenger hunts and tubing.

Holiday shows include ICE! featuring “A Christmas Story,” “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer: The Musical” and the dinner show “The Gift of Christmas with Trace Adkins and Friends.” For more information visit tickets.gaylordopryland.com.



Leiper’s Fork Christmas Parade

Deaf people one of largest unreached people groups in U.S.

(continued from page 1)

By most estimates Deaf is one of the largest unreached people groups in the U.S. with only 1–2% attending any denomination.

Kennedy outlines three models of ministries for the Deaf:

► Interpretive ministry provides an ASL/English interpreter for weekly services and is the least effective model, not always meeting the needs of Deaf members.

► The Deaf ministry model involves a Deaf group within a large church with an interpreter for weekly worship, separate Deaf small groups and social events focused toward Deaf needs.

► The Deaf church model is the most effective with a separate Deaf church on the property of a sponsoring church. These congregations make their own decisions and have their own pastor with services in ASL.

Bethel Baptist Deaf Church (BBDC) is a Deaf church plant under the umbrella of Bethel Baptist Church, Dothan. It began in 2014 after 35 years of Deaf ministry and averages almost 40 in attendance with two deaf and blind members. Services are voice interpreted for hearing persons who attend.

Significant need

“BBDC is more of a regional church than a local Deaf church,” said Carmen Stewart, ministry team leader. One-third of the members travel up to an hour and a half to attend, she said.

According to BBDC pastor Jerry Pearson, Deaf congregations possess a significant need for visual accompaniments, like PowerPoint presentations, to enhance their understanding of the message.

The church also offers live video on Facebook for

those unable to attend. Because many in the Bethel Deaf community have lower incomes, Bethel Baptist supports the church financially.

Bethel Baptist also offers a deaf adult Sunday School class taught by Robert Stewart, who helps with setup at the Deaf church in the Bethel gym each Sunday.

In the past year two deaf children have begun coming to Bethel, said BBDC coordinator Diann Pearson. So ministry team member Sharon Jones, who also is an interpreter, started a Sunday School class for deaf children.

“We felt it was important for them to have a class,” Diann Pearson said.

Steve Dye, SBOM Deaf ministry catalyst, said many

Deaf churches begin as an interpretive ministry because someone in the church or community is not being served.

In his case the friendliness of Jacky Connell, pastor of Eden Westside Baptist Church, Pell City, led Dye to join in 2018 even though the church didn’t have a Deaf ministry.

Members were eager to serve the Deaf community, he said, and Eden Westside began an interpretive ministry in January 2019 with

12–15 in attendance.

The ministry transitioned to the Deaf ministry model in August, providing a Bible study group taught by the Deaf for the Deaf.

Since then attendance has grown to more than 40 and Eden Westside is providing

ASL classes for those who wish to learn.

“We have had many come and visit but many prefer a Deaf Bible study class or Deaf Church service with a Deaf pastor,” Dye said.

Dye believes this will happen in God’s time.

“Eden Westside is in agreement with our group to be patient and wait for the right time to transition to the next and final step ... a Deaf church,” he said.

‘Plan of action’

Interpretive ministries face unique challenges including inconsistency of interpreters and an inability to communicate well with hearing church members, Dye said.

“Having a way to communicate with the Deaf is a necessity to be able to minister to and with them,” he said.

“Having a plan of action to reach out to them is a great way to start.”

To learn more about Alabama Deaf ministries visit www.deafministriesal.org or contact Kristy Kennedy at 334-613-2311.

Hallelujah
for the
Cross

"The power of sin is overcome ... it is finished, it is done!"

<http://albaptistpc.com>

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EASTERN SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH, DAPHNE
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2019

Featured Speakers



DR. STEVE GAINES
Senior Pastor
Bellevue Baptist Church
Cordova, TN



DR. JOHNNY HUNT
Senior Vice President,
Evangelism and Leadership
North American Mission Board
Alpharetta, GA



REV. TERENCE JONES
Pastor
Strong Tower at
Washington Park
Montgomery, AL



DR. FRED LUTER
Pastor
Franklin Avenue
Baptist Church
New Orleans, LA



DR. RICK LANCE
Executive Director
Alabama State
Board of Missions
Prattville, AL



DR. ROBERT MULLINS
Pastor
Crossroads
Community Church
Elmore, AL



DR. DANA WATSON
Chief Operating Officer
South Alabama — Alabama Baptist
Children’s Homes & Family Ministries
Mobile, AL



DR. JAY WOLF
Pastor
First Baptist Church
Montgomery, AL

"...but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 (NIV)

Someone You

Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett

Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Amelia Reid Pearson

Amelia Reid Pearson, 66, of Alexander City, worked in higher education in Alabama for 40 years. Six of those years she was president of Southern Union State Community College in Wadley. She holds a bachelor's degree from University of Tennessee and a master's and doctorate from Auburn University. Pearson also served on the board of directors for The Alabama Baptist for eight years, two of those as chairperson. She and her husband, Bob, have been married 38 years and have two children and seven grandchildren.

MINISTRY DESCRIPTION: Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain and church WMU president

CHURCH NAME: First Baptist Church, Alexander City, in Tallapoosa Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).



PEARSON

Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts:

A: When our children were in the youth group I went on youth missions trips. I have served my church as Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) director, discipleship training director and as finance committee chairman. I have been president of my WMU group (Baptist Bold Women) for more than 30 years and we do at least six missions projects each year. In preparing for retirement my husband and I trained to operate a feeding unit through Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief and made our first trip last fall to Hope Mills, North Carolina. I also trained as a disaster relief chaplain.

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

A: Growing up in the mountains of East Tennessee, I grew to love bluegrass gospel music. One of my favorite groups is Volume Five, who sings a song entitled "In the Time That You Gave Me." The song asks the question, "Did I do all I could do in the time that you gave me?" That song spoke to me and I realized that I, as well as most of us, would have to admit that we have not done all that we could do. 🙏

DO YOU KNOW A PERSON WHO SHOULD BE FEATURED AS
Someone You Should Know?

Send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to Someone You Should Know, c/o *The Alabama Baptist*, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209, or to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Baghdadi operation named for young Christian captive

Following a U.S. counterterrorism operation named in her memory, Kayla Mueller is being touted for her ability to hold on to her faith despite her capture, torture, rape and murder.

The Oct. 26 operation reportedly killed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Mueller was a member of the Northern Arizona University (NAU) chapter of United Christian Ministry, an ecumenical group supported by the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ, according to the organization's Facebook page.

While in IS captivity Mueller defended her faith in front of an IS executioner who paraded Mueller before other prisoners, according to an ABC News report based on comments from former hostages who shared cells with Mueller.

"One of the (IS militants) started to say, 'Oh, this is Kayla, and she has been held all by herself. And she

is much stronger than you guys. And she's much smarter. She converted to Islam,'" former hostage Donald Rye Ottosen told ABC in 2016. "And then she was like, 'No, I didn't.'

"I would not have had the guts to say that. I don't think so," Ottosen said. "It was very clear that all of us were impressed by the strength that she showed in front of us."

NAU President Rita Cheng spoke fondly of Mueller's faith.

"Kayla was actively engaged in serving others even in her time as an undergraduate at NAU and her faith fueled her desire to work

with Syrian refugees," Cheng said. "Losing Kayla was a great loss to all those whose lives she touched and the many she was certain to help in the future."

Mueller's death was confirmed in February 2015. She was 26.

Al-Baghdadi is accused of keeping Mueller as an IS slave after terrorists kidnapped her in 2013 while she was working at a hospital in Syria. (BP)



MUELLER

FBC Montgomery hosts Youth Choir Kick-Off



Photo courtesy of Doug Rogers

Lance Maddox (front, center), worship pastor at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, leads a time of praise and worship at the 2019 Youth Choir Kick-Off held Sept. 29 at FBC Montgomery. Assisting Maddox in leading are students Michaela Knighton (front, left) and David Powell (front, right). More than 300 students and leaders from seven Alabama Baptist churches across the state participated in the event, which is sponsored by the worship leadership office of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Office director Keith Hibbs says it is one of his favorite ministry events of the year. "It is great to hear the students as they lead worship and to see a video highlighting the missions trips each choir takes during the year," said Hibbs. "The discipleship that occurs through the year is evident in the results of those missions trips."

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



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TIM COX



JASON ALLEN

MESSAGE, TUESDAY EVENING
JASON ALLEN
PRESIDENT, MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, KANSAS CITY, MO.
SPECIAL MUSIC BY VOICES OF MOBILE



RICK MARSHALL



ANNEL ROBAYNA

CONVENTION SERMON, WEDNESDAY MORNING
RICK MARSHALL
RETIRED PASTOR, EASTERN HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTGOMERY



JARMAN LEATHERWOOD



BEN STUBBLEFIELD

"FRUITFUL" THEME INTERPRETATIONS

ANNEL ROBAYNA
STATE MISSIONARY, HISPANIC MINISTRY
TUESDAY MORNING

JARMAN LEATHERWOOD
PASTOR, HOUSE OF HOPE AND RESTORATION, HUNTSVILLE
TUESDAY AFTERNOON

BEN STUBBLEFIELD
PASTOR, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, JACKSON
WEDNESDAY MORNING

FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONVENTION, PLEASE VISIT ALSBOM.ORG/CONVENTION.



VOICES OF MOBILE

Promise to preach

World War II veteran, pastor emeritus shares how God got his attention

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

James Johnson said the question rang in his ears like the shot heard round the world.

He had lived through getting wounded twice in World War II. It was miraculous, he said. But less than a decade later doctors were saying he only had six months to live.

“I got really sick,” Johnson said. “After the doctors told me that I went to a doctor who was a good friend to get another opinion.”

‘Special service’

That doctor’s opinion was the same — it didn’t look good. But he had something extra to verbalize — a question. He asked if Johnson had ever made God a promise he hadn’t followed through with.

“And I said, ‘Yes, sir. I promised God I’d preach,’” Johnson said.

That promise went way back, way before the war, “back when this ol’ boy was 11 years old,” he said. “I was saved that year, then at 12, I felt the Lord would be with me to preach.”

He told his pastor about his decision and grew up with intentions of following through, but then the war came and in 1943 he was drafted.

“I served for four years and was wounded twice. I got the Bronze Star for special service,” he said. “And I kind of forgot about preaching.”

When Johnson got back from the war he thought about his promise again, but he didn’t pursue it too much. He got married, joined a Birmingham-area church and went to school for electronic engineering.

He started his own busi-



James Johnson

ness and all was going well — until he became sick and his doctor asked him that question.

“That was in 1956,” Johnson said. “I went back to my church and asked [for] forgiveness.”

And that set him on a

course of ministry which started with teaching a junior boys training union class and kept going through a number of pastorates and theological training.

Johnson started attending Howard College in Birmingham (now Samford University). He eventually obtained his master’s degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, while working as the electronic engineer for the seminary’s radio station.

And his road eventually brought him, his wife Mary and their four children back to Alabama, where he served nearly two decades as pastor of Tharptown Baptist Church,

Russellville. Along the way he earned his doctorate. In 1978 he received a call to serve a church in Huntsville, then in 1985 he accepted

the pastorate of Sunny Home Baptist Church, Haleyville, where he stayed until he retired in 1989.

“I don’t feel worthy to have been asked by my Lord to serve that long,” Johnson said.

But in reality it’s even longer — “retirement” isn’t really an accurate way to describe the years since 1989. He hasn’t really ever stopped preaching, or at least teaching.

In 2000, the year his first wife passed away, he began serving as pastor of Cherry

Hill Baptist Church, Russellville, in Franklin Baptist Association, where he’s been ever since. He had to step down from preaching full time in 2014 when he started experiencing health issues, but he’s still actively involved. He’s now their pastor emeritus and for years he’s led Wednesday night Bible study as often as he can.

Living testimony

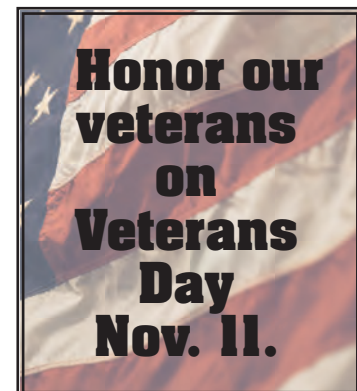
Church member Patsy Bobo said Johnson’s Bible studies are a work of engineering themselves. He writes them, prints out a student book to accompany them, assembles them and distributes them to church members. He’s done more of those studies than he can count and along the way he’s shared them with other preachers who are interested in using them too.

“He’s an amazing man,” Bobo said. “He’s a man of service and he’s been constant all these years. It’s unbelievable how he has kept going even when he’s had health issues.”

When illness has kept Johnson away, “it’s like a huge vacuum” in the church, Bobo said.

But Johnson says he just feels like he’s living the testimony God graciously gave him.

He and his wife, Gladys — a “gem” whom he married at Cherry Hill Baptist in 2008 — are “still active and we go when we can,” Johnson said. “I can’t preach much anymore, but if Jason (Thorn, the current pastor), needs me to preach for him, I can do it — as long as I cut it short.”



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3 stories

you should know



Facebook photo

Alabama WMU is on track to meet its 2019 goal of 9,500 Christmas backpacks. Each backpack, like those shown above packed by members of FBC Enterprise, contains toys, school supplies, hygiene items, snacks and other age- and gender-appropriate gifts, as well as a copy of 'The Christmas Story.' For information about opportunities for missions groups and individuals to participate in backpack distribution contact Alabama WMU at 334-613-2226.

Judge puts Alabama abortion law on hold

Alabama's restrictive new abortion law is on hold after U.S. District Court Judge Myron Thompson issued a preliminary injunction Oct. 29.

The Alabama Human Life Protection Act, signed May 15 by Gov. Kay Ivey, criminalizes performing an abortion in Alabama by making it a felony in almost all cases. The law would have gone into effect Nov. 15.

Abortion rights groups and providers filed a challenge to the law in May saying it would result in a near-total ban on abortion.

Ivey called the bill "unenforceable" because of *Roe v. Wade*, but supporters hope the law could be the basis for the Supreme Court to reconsider and ultimately overturn the 1971 ruling that legalized abortion in the U.S. (TAB)

SBC church: Pastoral vote affected by racism

First Baptist Church, Naples, a Southern Baptist church in southwest Florida, has acknowledged that "racial prejudice" was a factor in its congregation's decision not to appoint Marcus Hayes, a black pastor candidate.

Hayes, a leader of Biltmore Church, Asheville, North Carolina, received 81% of the vote by "a record 3,818" but fell short of the 85% threshold needed for approval based on the church's bylaws, according to an email from the First, Naples' pastoral staff. The email said "racial prejudice was introduced" into the voting process through "social media, texting, phone calls and emails."

The staff said they are "deeply grieved" by the actions and called on "anyone who took part in the divisive and sinful actions to immediately confess and repent." (RNS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Pleasant Valley, Jamestown, pianist recognized for 50 years of service



Charlotte Sentell says when she was young she felt compelled to bang on the piano. It wasn't long before her parents found someone to give her lessons.

"It was several miles to where the man would meet me for lessons and I would go with my younger brother and ride my bike there," she said.

She kept practicing — "especially when the dishes needed washing," she joked.

And eventually she assumed a role that she's had for the past 50 years — serving as pianist for Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Jamestown, in Lookout Mountain Baptist Association.

Her church recently honored her for her decades of service.

"I've enjoyed it, loved every minute of it. It's been my calling through the years," Sentell said. "I'm still strong. I make a lot of mistakes but I just go with it. And I hope I can keep doing it for a long time." (Grace Thornton)



SENTELL

Audit reveals April missions offerings error; AAEO, LMCO totals affected



A routine year-end audit of an unnamed state convention partner revealed an error in giving receipts to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee (EC) resulting in a change in 2018–2019 fiscal year totals for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO).

The original report showed \$823,222.01 in AAEO receipts and \$156,748.05 in LMCO receipts in the April 2019 wire transmission but the figures had been inadvertently transposed. The corrected amounts are \$156,748.05 for AAEO and \$823,222.01 for LMCO.

The corrected amounts bring the 2018–2019 totals for AAEO to \$61.4 million, still the highest giving total on record, and the totals for LMCO to \$157.3 million.

The EC said it has worked with the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board to correct the distributions it sent to the organizations as a result of the error. (BP)

McWilliams celebrates 25 years in ministry at Enon, Morris



In September Ken McWilliams celebrated 25 years at Enon Baptist Church, Morris. McWilliams served for 13 years as minister of music and students and continues to serve Enon Baptist as minister of music.

In his time at Enon Baptist, McWilliams has led the Enon Celebration Choir to minister during conferences, dramas and other special events in addition to leading worship each week.

"Ken has a passion for worship and loves teaching and leading the Celebration Choir to not only sing well but to present the message of the gospel in everything they do," said McWilliams' wife, Gail. "The Lord has richly blessed his ministry throughout the years at Enon and continues to do so."

Many of McWilliams' former students have grown up to serve in leadership roles at Enon Baptist and at other churches.



MCWILLIAMS

News near you

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Camellia Baptist Church, Prattville**, will host a yard sale for missions Nov. 16 from 7 a.m. to noon. All proceeds will support the Guatemala Youth Missions Team. Rick Marshall is interim pastor.

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Bayside Baptist Church, Lillian**, will host a concert featuring The Southern Plainsmen on Nov. 16 at 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information call 251-256-0226. Tom Harris is pastor.

BESSEMER ASSOCIATION

▶ On Oct. 27, **Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove**, honored Pastor Rick Cato and his wife, Essie, with a retirement celebration. The Catos have been at Bethel for more than 16 years and in ministry for 43 years.



Photo courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church

BETHEL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Sweet Water Baptist Church** will host the Voices of Mobile in concert Nov. 10 at 6

p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. Clay Davis is transitional/interim pastor.

BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mexia Baptist Church** will hold revival services Nov. 17–20 featuring evangelist Scott Dawson. Sunday services will be held at 8:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday services will begin at 6:30 p.m. Randy Breedlove is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Tarrant**, will celebrate its 92nd anniversary with a homecoming service Nov. 17 at 10:30 a.m. John Hollingsworth will be the guest speaker and Chris Crain, executive director of missions for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, also will speak. The theme for the event will be “Koinonia” — a Christian’s fellowship and participation with Christ. The church’s 50-year time capsule will be opened. A covered dish lunch will follow. Roy Spears is pastor.

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

▶ **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host its third Sunday night singing Nov. 17 at 6 p.m. featuring Southern Heritage. For more information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CHEROKEE ASSOCIATION

▶ On Sept. 29, **First Baptist Church, Centre**, celebrated its 175th anniversary. Pastor Eddie Nation preached.

Lonette Berg, with the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission; Jamie Baldwin, with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; and Chero-

kee Baptist Association’s associational missions director Wendell Dutton presented certificates.

Photos, a sketch of the old white frame



Photo by Lonette Berg

church building, church memorabilia, a quilt and a pew from the former church building were on display.

The church recognized Sunday School teachers who have given more than 50 years of service as well as past and present staff. The longest serving minister, Melvyn Salter, shared memories.

“It was a full day that went off without a hitch,” Eleanor Brown said.

PLEASANT GROVE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Nathan Vanderburg** is the new pastor of **Big Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood**. He previously served at Duncanville Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. He and his wife, Heather, have two children.



VANDERBURG

SOUTHEAST ALABAMA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Malvern Baptist Church** will host a homecoming service Nov. 10 at 10:30 a.m. Jerry Grandstaff will bring the message and Ricky Ward will bring special music. A covered dish luncheon will follow the service. Hosea Parker is pastor. 🇺🇸

— NEWSBRIEFS —

McWilliams and Gail, who sings in Enon Baptist’s choir and plays in the orchestra, have been married for 28 years. (TAB)

Gospel artist Kirk Franklin announces boycott of GMA, Dove Awards, TBN

Gospel music mogul Kirk Franklin said he will boycott the Gospel Music Association (GMA), the Dove Awards and Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) after broadcasts deleted mentions of racial injustice from his acceptance speeches.

During his acceptance speech for Gospel Artist of the Year at the Oct. 15 GMA Dove Awards, Franklin mentioned the killing of Atatiana Jefferson, who was shot by a police officer in Franklin’s hometown of Fort Worth, Texas. Franklin requested prayer for Jefferson’s family and those affected by the shooting. The comments were deleted from the Oct. 20 broadcast of the awards on TBN. A similar incident occurred in 2016 when Franklin’s



FRANKLIN

comments regarding other racially charged killings were deleted.

Franklin said he made his decision to boycott after prayer and consultation with his team and his pastor, Tony Evans. Franklin said his goals were “reconciliation as well as accountability.”

GMA president and executive director Jackie Patillo said GMA had apologized to Franklin and said the 2019 comments were deleted to meet broadcast constraints. Franklin’s comments are included in a video of the awards at tbn.org.

“Although completely unintentional we understand it caused great harm and deeply wounded many in the African American and gospel community,” she said. “... It is not our intent to disregard or silence any of our artists and we are deeply saddened by this perception and are committed to change this.” (BP)

Powell honored for 40 years of service to Bigbee Association

Forty years ago Muriel Powell was working at her church when someone from Bigbee Baptist Association called looking for someone to fill in for their

secretary. Powell was the one who answered the phone, and she said, “How about me?”

And four decades later she’s still “filling in.”



POWELL

The association honored her for her years of service at their annual meeting Oct. 15. She’s worked for 11 associational missionaries during that time and for many of those years it was a dual role — she also served as secretary for the Baptist Campus Ministries of the University of West Alabama (UWA).

“I enjoyed working with the students,” Powell said. “They’d come in and want me to balance their checkbook, listen to their complaints, give them advice. I’m a people person so I loved that.”

Brad Campbell, now Bigbee Associations’s director of missions, was one of those students.

“I’ve known her since I started UWA in 1986,” he said. “It’s awesome having someone who knows the role like she does. She’s the background person, the one who keeps things in order. She’s instrumental in everything we do.” (Grace Thornton)

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GRACE gifts

Memorials are listed to the side (the name of the deceased is bolded).

- Bell, Mary Frances, Gallion: Providence BC of Gallion
- Brown, Patricia Price**, Prattville: Virginia Waldrop
- Burkes, Herbie, Centreville: Pat Richardson
- Butler, Marguerite, Guin: Ben & Emily Burlison, T. Gilbert Butler, Don & Gwyneth Jones
- Gullatte, Margaret Hodge**, Salem: Evelyn Gullatte, Pleasant Grove BC of Salem
- Horace & Pat Lee, Hayden: Rickey Reid
- Plier, Dorothy (Dot), Jemison: Jemison FBC
- Yelverton, Hunter, Demopolis: Providence BC of Gallion

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UM partners with FBC Chickasaw in revitalization project

Statistics show that 100 churches across our country close their doors every week and we don't think God is ready for us to be one of those 100," said Reid Guy, pastor of First Baptist Church, Chickasaw.

It takes prayer, hard work and many hands to revitalize a 30-member church that once attracted 1,200 worshippers.

Project Serve

Some of those hands were more than 120 University of Mobile (UM) students in Alabama School of the Arts who stepped in to help make the impossible possible during their annual Project Serve event Oct. 25.

Students helped accomplish major projects that would have taken years for First, Chickasaw, to complete on its own.

"This was a megachurch

before we really had the term megachurch and it has the facilities to accommodate all that comes with a large church. First, Chickasaw, was a hub for our community," said Guy.

Due to a handful of struggles membership had fallen to about 30 and they found themselves close to shutting the doors. But just at the right time, Reid Guy, husband of UM assistant professor of music Lori Guy, stepped in.

"I began interviewing for the role as pastor in May and obviously saw the struggle but also found that this church was not ready to close its doors," he said.

Guy became pastor in September and the church is now averaging around 50 people on Sunday. New members are joining and the church has launched a new children's ministry.

There is still a lot of work



Photo courtesy of UM

University of Mobile (UM) freshman Madilyn Donald (front, center) cleans pews at FBC Chickasaw. A few days later Donald sang with the UM ensemble Sofree as the congregation worshipped in the sanctuary for the first time in more than a year.

that needs to be done on the church building and that is where UM students helped.

UM interim president Lonnie Burnett said the university emphasizes student involvement in local churches and this Project Serve event symbolizes that partnership.

"Local churches are our lifeblood — they send us students, they send us donations and this is our chance to give back," said Burnett.

Because of financial struggles and size First, Chickasaw, has not met in

the sanctuary of its building in more than a year. UM students helped paint, clean and do carpentry work to help the church family get ready to move back into the sanctuary Oct. 27.

'Invaluable work'

"It's pretty cool that UM gets to go out and serve. And it means even more because my grandparents got married in this church. I'm excited to help the church grow," said Abigail Breland, a sophomore nursing major.

Abigail was one of the students who helped clean more than 100 pews. Students also helped paint rooms in the education building, children's building, fellowship hall and parts of the sanctuary. Students also cleaned the church's gym.

"The work they did was invaluable to our church. We are better positioned to reach our community for the gospel because of the work they did," said Guy. "I honestly believe that indirectly through the work done by these students, people will come to know Christ and/or grow in their relationship with Him."

To celebrate moving back into the sanctuary Oct. 27, the UM ensemble Sofree sang during First, Chickasaw's morning service and RamCorps played in the evening. More than 80 people attended the service that included the first baptism in more than two years.

"This partnership with the University of Mobile is God-honoring and one we are so grateful for," said Guy. (UM)



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Photo by Tracy Riggs

Rick Burgess (standing, right), co-host of the Rick and Bubba Show, closes the First Priority Greater Birmingham benefit lunch held at Vulcan Park on Oct. 29 with a time of prayer.

Burgesses share hope at First Priority lunch

Rick and Sherri Burgess are no strangers to suffering. Their youngest son, Bronner, drowned in the family's pool in 2008.

But through that tragedy the family found comfort in the hope of Christ.

"Everybody needs hope," said Sherri, who wrote "Bronner: A Journey to Understand" in 2016. "Everybody wants to know that in the end everything's going to be OK. And it will be for those who believe."

Message of hope

The hope of the gospel was the message the Burgesses brought to those present at the First Priority Greater Birmingham lunch held Oct. 29 at Vulcan Park in Birmingham.

"The problems may differ as you've heard in these incredible testimonies, but the answer remains the same," said Rick Burgess, co-host of the Rick and Bubba Show. "It's been the same answer since the fall of mankind ... Deep down what every single person wants and desires is peace. That's the beauty of First Priority going out and representing Christ to a generation of young people who are just crying out ... they just want to know that

everything's going to be all right."

And that's the goal of First Priority ministries across the state and country: to share the peace and hope of Christ with students searching for a purpose and encouragement.

Along with the Greater Birmingham area, First Priority has a strong presence in north Alabama (Decatur/Huntsville) and Enterprise.

For more information about First Priority Alabama or to discover how you can support the ministry visit www.firstpriorityal.com. (TAB)

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PASTOR

Prospect Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Tenn., a conservative Southern Baptist church, is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Seminary education preferred but not required. 32 Prospect Rd., Fayetteville, TN 37334. rjones@fpunet.com.

PASTOR

College Heights Baptist Church, Glencoe, is searching for a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: College Heights Baptist Church, 411 Rabbittown Road, Glencoe, AL 35905.

PASTOR

The Flint Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama, is accepting resúmes for a pastor. Email resumé to: flintbaptistchurch@att.net or mail to: 4119 US Hwy 31 South, Decatur, AL 35603.

PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, prayerfully seeking God's choice for a full-time pastor. All applicants should have previous senior pastor experience and have earned a master of divinity. Resúmes with photo may be mailed ATTN: Pastor/Search. www.cbcprattville.org.

PASTOR

Grove Hill Baptist Church, Grove Hill, AL 36451, is prayerfully seeking God's lead for a full-time pastor. All applicants should have previous experience and have a seminary degree, master's preferred. Resúmes with photo may be mailed to: Grove Hill Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 849, Grove Hill, AL 36451, or emailed to: ghbc@grovehillbaptist.org,

ATTN: Pastor Search Committee.

BIVOCATIONAL/PART-TIME PASTOR

Fairview Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational or part-time pastor. To apply, submit cover letter and resumé to: Fairview Baptist Church, 600 River Rd., Valley, AL 36854, or email to: fairviewbaptistch@gmail.com.

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Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, Alabama, is seeking an individual with experience to provide full-time leadership in developing a comprehensive music ministry that will lead our congregation into authentic worship. This individual needs to be experienced in leading contemporary worship, a worship choir, praise band and in developing the music ministry with multiple teams of all age levels. Experience in utilizing the areas of sound and video technology within the sanctuary and through various types of social media is desirable. For more information, visit www.sbc.net and go to job openings. Send resúmes to: ATTN: Southside Baptist Church Search Committee, 1213 West Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420 or southside@sbcandalusia.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Judson Baptist Association is now receiving resúmes for the position of DOM. Resúmes may be mailed to: JBA, ATTN: DOM Search Committee, 532 Ozark Road, Abbeville, AL 36310. Resúmes may also be emailed to: jba4christ@comcast.net. Deadline to receive resúmes is Dec. 1.

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Limestone Association revitalizes camp with new ministries

By **Lanell Downs Smith**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

This fall Limestone County community members enjoyed a pumpkin patch at Camp Helen, creating new memories and carrying on the Limestone Baptist Association's tradition of ministry through its 32-acre camp in Harvest.

Looking for a way to connect with area residents and to create revenue for the camp, association leaders envisioned hosting a pumpkin patch on a spot once used for softball fields. A local supplier provided the pumpkins and volunteers helped prepare the site.

The pumpkin patch

opened the last Saturday in September and the first two weekends in October, with private bookings throughout October. Local patrons enjoyed hayrides and photo opportunities with the association's 1978-model fire truck.

Kevin Ward, Limestone Association's AMD, said the camp provided a distinctly "gospel-focused pumpkin patch" with Scripture passages posted around the camp.

Camp Helen began in 1961 when Helen Balch donated the land to the as-

sociation. Today the camp boasts accommodations for 60 campers with a kitchen, fellowship hall, pavilion, basketball and volleyball courts, a 100-foot slip-and-slide, a double-decker hammock station, fire pits and a new pool.

Ward said many area residents have child-

hood memories of visiting Camp Helen in the 1970s and 1980s.

It was the site of the association's Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action camps and it hosted camping weekends, fish fries and church league softball.

But camp usage began to decline. When Ward became AMD in 2015 he proposed plans to revitalize the camp.

The association's offices were moved to the camp to streamline expenses.

The sale of the association's office building near downtown Athens provided funds to renovate the camp.

Since then the association has rebranded the camp and

To learn more about Camp Helen, visit www.limestonebaptist.org.



Photo courtesy of Kevin Ward

The Camp Helen 1978-model fire truck is just one of the features of Limestone Baptist Association's Camp Helen's pumpkin patch.

renovated facilities to give them a more modern feel.

The camp has hosted family reunions, birthday parties, church functions, a 5K run and even a band camp.

Important tool

Ward said the association's churches considered the camp a valuable asset so they set about making it a central point of ministry.

"We try to figure out what our niche is to connect with churches," Ward said. "It's about things we need to do in the community and be-

yond. The camp has become an important tool for us."

The pumpkin patch generated interest in Camp Helen and the camp is almost completely booked on weekends from spring through the fall of 2020, Ward said.

"We are trying to create new memories and reconnect with a new generation. It's an opportunity for a new generation to connect with God and to have some great spiritual experiences on a property where our older folks had those same kinds of experiences." ✝

PASTORS' WIVES DINNER



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Wife to Jonathan & mother of three children.
Bible teacher, writer & event speaker.
Children's Ministry Director, First Baptist Church, Prattville.

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1 John 4:16

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Woodyard continues serving 70 years after joining FBC Leroy

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

From his childhood days of riding to church in a horse-drawn wagon to more than 60 years spent teaching, George “Buddy” Woodyard has been part of First Baptist Church, Leroy, all his life.

On Sept. 1, Woodyard “retired” and was honored for his service.

Woodyard received Christ and joined First, Leroy, around age 12.

“I started singing in the choir,” he said. “My wife-to-be, Barbara Ann, was also singing in the choir.”

He began teaching at First, Leroy, in his early 20s after he returned home from college in 1957 to care for his ailing father and manage the family farm in Jackson. He has been teaching God’s word there ever since.

Initially Woodyard was a Royal Ambassador leader working with young boys and leading them in missions projects.

But he also taught Sunday School, a job he would continue for the next six decades.

For the first 10 to 15 years he taught the young adult class. Later he led the adult class and finally the adult men’s class.

“I enjoyed it,” Woodyard said. “I enjoyed the men. They were older than I but they were deep, deep into Scripture.”

And during those decades of teaching Woodyard influenced many lives, including that of his pastor.

“I have only been pastor here for a year but he has already been a great source of encouragement for me personally,” said First, Leroy, pastor Ben Posey. “I have also heard countless stories from other members, especially deacons who served alongside him and were taught or mentored by him.

“He is one of the most humble men I have ever met and he is fully devoted to the future success in ministry of this church,” Posey said.

Woodyard retired from the pulp and paper industry after



Photo by Ben Posey

George ‘Buddy’ Woodyard

a 40-year career and since retirement God has enabled him to be a witness not only in his church but also with former co-workers.

“I have had two or three folks ask what makes me different from the average person,” said Woodyard.

Those conversations give him the opportunity to tell others about Jesus.

Grateful to be used

One particular gospel conversation enabled Woodyard to lead a friend to salvation. Woodyard is grateful to have been used by God that day

because that friend died six months later from cancer.

Though he will not be actively teaching Woodyard still plans to be actively involved at church.

He and Barbara Ann are still singing in the choir. And one of the next projects on his to-do list is to help expand and enlarge the church’s playground.

“The road is crowded with things we do,” he said. “I know a lot about First Baptist Church, Leroy, and I know a lot about Jesus Christ. I just hope the good Lord will say well done.”

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Primate.
4. Every perfect gift is from _____. (James 1:17)
9. Fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
12. Another fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
15. ____ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 15:7)
16. South American mountains.
17. What a pregnant woman does.
19. Sacred image.
20. Poem.
21. Wesley (nickname).
22. Behold, I will do a ____ thing. (Isa. 43:19)
23. As a ____ adorneth herself with jewels. (Isa. 61:10)
25. The priest shall ____ his fingers in the blood. (Lev. 4:6)
27. The ____ of knowledge. (Gen. 2:17)
28. Digging tool.
30. ____ of God. (1 John 4:7)
33. Sarai was ____; she

had no child. (Gen. 11:30)

34. Son of Shemidah. (1 Chron. 7:19)
35. In royal apparel of _____. (Esther 8:15)
36. Missing in Action. (abbr.)
37. The elder unto the well beloved _____. (3 John 1)
39. Chlorine, caron (symbol).
42. Put off ... the ____ man. (Eph. 4:22)
44. Soviet Socialist Republic. (abbr.)
45. Fire causeth the waters to _____. (Isa. 64:2)
46. The daughter of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:15)
48. Major artery.
49. Not. (prefix)
50. Study of places.
52. Compass direction.
53. Ruth’s sister-in-law. (Ruth 1:4)
54. Socioeconomic status. (abbr.)

Down

1. ____ I say, Rejoice.

- (Phil. 4:4)
2. British coin.
3. He shall surely ____ her to be his wife. (Ex. 22:16)
4. Einstein and Gore.
5. ____ ye transformed. (Rom. 12:2)
6. For a righteous man will _____. (Rom. 5:7)
7. Heal me; for my bones are _____. (Ps. 6:2)
8. Extrasensory perception. (abbr.)
10. Ye make clean the ____ of the cup. (Matt. 23:25)
11. Years. (abbr.)
13. Red dragon, having seven heads and ____ horns. (Rev. 12:3)
14. A time to rend, and a time to _____. (Eccles. 3:7)
18. So Hiram gave Solomon ____ trees. (1 Kings 5:10)
20. Minerals.
23. ____ ye all the tithes. (Mal. 3:10)

24. His hands were hairy, as ... ____ hands. (Gen. 27:23)
26. My tongue is the ____ of a ready writer. (Ps. 45:1)
27. Late-afternoon meal.
29. Before. (prefix)
30. Book written by Jeremiah. (abbr.)
31. Buckeyes.
32. Seven ____ full of the seven last plagues. (Rev. 21:9)
33. Cloud or confuse.
35. A ____ must be blameless. (1 Tim. 3:2)
38. Fall flower.
39. Military subdivisions.
40. Flexible.
41. Loams.
43. Decimeter. (abbr.)
45. Feather scarf.
46. Ride a yellow one to school.
47. Cornelius said, Four days _____. (Acts 10:30)
48. Argon, hydrogen (symbol).
51. Peach tree state. (abbr.)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 10

Explore the Bible

By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



WALKING WISELY Ephesians 5:15–21

Be Wise (15–17)

The Christian life is one of intention. As we intentionally follow Christ, God reveals to us what He wants us to do in any given situation.

Some people think knowing God's will is a difficult task — that somehow God has a special secret plan for each person that is largely unknowable. But this is not the case. One way we follow God's will is by acting as Christians in our daily lives.

Through the past hundred years or so in the United States one of the problems of Christianity has been that many people believe they are Christians because they live in the U.S. However, many have had no discipleship and live in ways antithetical to the gospel. With many people no longer claiming to be Christian because it is not socially expedient to be so the Church has an opportunity to represent Christ well. Christians today are forced to count the cost of following Jesus and once you count the cost and believe Jesus is worth following you understand that culture is at odds with God.

Living an intentional Christian life means trying to please God in every area of living. This gives us an opportunity to show the world what Christians live like, leading to an opportunity to share why we live the way we live — the gospel.

In Paul's day it was easy to recognize evil. Pagan temples, gladiator games, persecution of Christians — these made it easy for the Christians to recognize this world was not their home and they looked forward to their eternal destination. It is not too different for us today in our country.

The culture is increasingly at odds with Christianity which makes the divide between Christians and non-Christians easier to see. Therefore the need for people to hear the gospel is growing in the U.S. In fact, by some studies we have the fourth largest number of non-Christians in the world behind

China, India and Indonesia.

Christians can't sit back and squander the time God has given us. We need to glorify God in how we live and act and part of that is in how we interact with those around us who are lost in a confusing and dying world.

Be Filled (18)

Paul tells us to be wise in this world. One way Christians exhibit wisdom is in their avoidance of mind-altering substances. The problem with alcohol is that when people have too much they lose control of their emotions, coordination and actions.

This prohibition against drunkenness applies to other forms of mind-altering substances as well. Various drugs cause the user to act in ways contrary to God's will. Christians are wise not to intentionally take drugs recreationally, legal or not, that cause the user to lose control of his or her actions and emotions.

Paul contrasts the mind-altering effects of wine with the need to be filled with the effects of the Holy Spirit. This does not suggest that Christians can have the Holy Spirit and then lose the Holy Spirit, but rather Christians need to allow themselves to be controlled by the Spirit.

Be Genuine (19–21)

Once we are influenced by the Holy Spirit a natural consequence is the uplifting of one another by encouraging them in gospel truths. One of the best ways to encourage one another is in the singing of hymns and affirming biblical truths.

Therefore Christians should know Scripture and songs that reflect the Bible and biblical truths accurately so we can remain encouraged and press on in service to the Lord.

Furthermore, Christians need to be thankful. Paul was thankful even in the midst of persecution. Christians can represent the security of our salvation and our trust in Christ by possessing a thankful attitude, especially as we enter into the season of Thanksgiving. 🇺🇸

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



GOD'S WILL AND MY CIRCUMSTANCES Romans 8:26–32

I'm sure every student of the Scriptures is drawn to a different part of the rich tapestry of the life of Jesus woven by the four Gospels. Some will return again and again to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, others to the account of His walking on the sea or His feeding the multitudes. Many, perhaps most, will keep finding their way back to the Gospels' accounts of the cross or the empty tomb. For me it is the story of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane.

At Gethsemane we see the Lord Jesus in His most vulnerable moment. Mark tells us that when He left the disciples behind and took with Him only Peter, James and John, He "began to be greatly distressed and troubled" (Mark 14:33). He confessed to these three, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death," and He asked them to watch and pray on His behalf (Mark 14:34). As He went off a little further to be alone He was overcome with the stress of the moment. He fell to the ground and began to pray (Mark 14:35).

The subject of Jesus' prayer in this tender moment was the very subject that has occupied this series: wrestling with the will of God. Turning again to Mark we read, "Father, all things are possible for You. Remove this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36). As He faced the most difficult of circumstances Jesus wrestled with God's will for Him.

Whatever our circumstances, the Holy Spirit intercedes and helps us pray as we seek His will. (26–27)

In his letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul picks up the topic of facing difficult circumstances and finding confidence in God's will. His encouragement in Romans 8 touches on many of the same dynamics found in Jesus' prayer in the garden. Paul assures us that when we do not know how to pray the Holy Spirit helps us in

our weakness.

He goes on to say, "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." It is interesting to note that in the midst of His agony in the garden an angel from heaven appeared to Jesus, strengthening Him in His time of weakness. We may not see an angel when we pray, but we have the Spirit's assurance that He will be there to help us wrestle through our difficult moments.

God will use our circumstances to accomplish His will and make us more like Christ. (28–30)

As Paul continues he encourages the Roman believers to trust that God's plan for them was the right one. He assures them that God had already chosen them, called them and saved them. Surely He would see His will through to bring them through this difficult moment. This is surely the same logic that is at work in Jesus' words, "Not my will but your will be done." However much Jesus dreaded the cross, He knew God's plan must be the right one and He would sacrifice everything to remain obedient to it.

We can trust God to work for our benefit. (31–32)

Paul goes on to make what is really his strongest argument for having confidence in difficult times. We trust God because we know the kind of God we serve. Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane begins with the words, "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36). From the moment these words are uttered we know how Jesus' prayer will conclude. No matter how much He might have wanted to be released from the cross, Jesus would go on to do God's will because it was His father's will. It was the will of the God in whom He trusted, the God whose love and care He knew to be real.

Paul draws a lesson from this moment for his own readers: If God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us, can there be any doubt He will be with us in even the most difficult of times? 🇺🇸



Media reviews

MUSIC

The St. Nemele Collab Sessions

TobyMac, Various
Forefront

TobyMac collaborates with some of the biggest names in Christian music to create new spins on tunes from his previous album, “The Elements.” My favorites are Ledger on the title track “The Elements,” Cory Asbury on “I Just Need You,” Aaron Cole



on “Horizon” and Sarah Reeves on “Scars.” All four are at least as

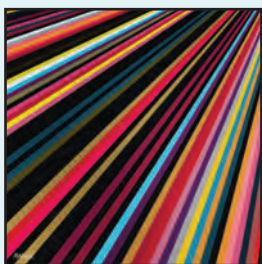
good as the original songs. Also featured on the album are Crowder, Bart Millard, Jordan Feliz and Cochren and Co.

Awake

Hillsong Worship
Hillsong

The latest album from the group behind some of the church’s most popular tunes, “Awake” does not disappoint. For a powerful slow song try “From Whom All Blessings Flow,” which surrounds the traditional “Doxology” with additional lyrics. Other good ones include “No One But You,”

“Every Breath” and “King of Kings.” (The latter has received



radio airplay.) For an upbeat, jump-up-and-down song try “See the Light.” For an 80s-sounding tune try “I Will Praise You.” ✝

‘A higher calling’

Seventh Day Slumber’s music points rock fans to Christ

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Seventh Day Slumber’s music isn’t for everyone but as lead singer Joseph Rojas acknowledges, it’s not supposed to be.

The band’s music is for Christians who enjoy rock music but are craving a faith-centric element.

It’s also for nonbelievers — like Rojas was long ago — who are in a dark place and need hope.

Rojas grew up listening to mainstream rock bands like Rage Against the Machine, Metallica, Stone Temple Pilots and Soundgarden. They sang about the despair he was experiencing — yet they “had no answers” for the problems he faced, Rojas said.

“I feel like Seventh Day Slumber offers something unique and something special,” said Rojas, whose band released its latest album, “Closer To Chaos,” in May.

Rojas grew up in a broken home. His father beat his mother and then abandoned him before Rojas was in kindergarten. Rojas hung out with the wrong crowd as a child and through his teenage years. By age 12 he was contemplating suicide. At 14 he tried cocaine. By 18 he was a full-blown drug addict.

“I was hurting so much inside. I felt like I was worthless,” he said.

He attempted suicide at the age of 22 but God had other plans. He was living at the time with his mother,



Seventh Day Slumber

Photo courtesy of Seventh Day Slumber

who came home early from work to see him overdosing and dying. His mom, a Christian, cried out to God for help.

‘Hand of God’

“Paramedics got there quick,” he said. “And in the back of an ambulance I felt the hand of Jesus — the hand of God. I gave my life to Him in the back of an ambulance. That began the journey. I’m alive today because of a praying mom.”

Rojas is the founder of Seventh Day Slumber, which won a Dove Award in 2009. The band is comprised of Rojas, Jeremy Holderfield (guitar), Rojas’ son Blaise Rojas (drums) and Ken Reed (bass).

“Closer to Chaos” debuted this year in the Top 20 on Nielsen SoundScan’s Current Hard Music Albums chart. The 10 tracks on the album tackle such subjects as emotional trauma, self-worth and sobriety.

“We feel like there is a higher calling than just to rock out and to make our fans feel good,” Rojas said. “We want [listeners] to know that there is hope for you. We want to point them to Christ. ... The same God that delivered me is the same God that wants to deliver them.” ✝

“We feel like there is a higher calling than just to rock out and to make our fans feel good.”

Joseph Rojas
lead singer, Seventh Day Slumber

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.

'More than just A GREAT GLOVE'

Washington Nationals' 3rd baseman Rendon puts World Series win in perspective

For Anthony Rendon of the Washington Nationals being a superstar baseball player comes with a lot of baggage that he can do without.

He doesn't like doing interviews. He doesn't like being idolized.

"I don't want to seem like it's all about me, me, me," Rendon told the *Washington Post*. "It takes away from what I do for Him, for the Lord."

He'd prefer simply to do his job on the field.

"He is just a genuinely humble guy," said Gregg Matte, pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, who has developed a friendship with Rendon in recent years. "He's one of the best players in baseball and yet not a lot of people know his name. And so he hasn't tried to over promote himself at all. He's just been humble and done his job."

Part of history

Now Rendon, a Houston native, is part of history. The Nationals won the 2019 World Series in their seventh and final game against the Astros in Houston. And star third baseman Rendon played a big role.

A homer by Rendon in the seventh inning of Game 7 sparked a Nationals comeback. They won the final game 6-2.

Rendon also homered twice in Game 6 and batted in a team-leading

eight total runs during the series — a fitting end to the best season of Rendon's seven-year career.

Though a bit overshadowed in recent years by his former teammate Bryce Harper, Rendon busted out this year after Harper's departure. He set career-highs in batting average (.319), home runs (34), RBIs (126), on-base percentage (.412) and slugging percentage (.598).

But Rendon keeps a low profile and doesn't like to flaunt his successes. In a video Matte shot with him in 2018, Rendon referenced a quote from Christian rapper KB.

"They label me as a Christian rapper, but all I know is

I want to be more 'Christian' than 'rapper,'" Rendon quoted KB as saying. "I was thinking about that. I want to be known as the Christian baseball player. I'm still trying to grow into that. But at the end I want to be more 'Christian' than 'baseball player.'"

"If I just try to stay in the Word and try to surround myself with good people and have good community I think that will just guide me on that path."

'Bigger things going on'

In post-Game 7 interviews Rendon put the game into perspective.

"I feel like there's bigger things going on in this world," Rendon told *The New York Times*. "A baseball

game might get magnified because it's the World Series, but we're not taking bullets for our country in Afghanistan or wherever it might be. This should be a breeze."

Matte, who is Rendon's pastor in the off-season and author of "Difference Makers: How to Live a Life of Impact and Purpose" said Rendon is definitely a "difference maker."

"Anthony is a big-time difference maker on the field and even more importantly off the field," he said.

"Humility, kindness and trust shine through him, showing he has more than just a great glove. He has a great heart."

Matte said Rendon is "very laid

back," and that comes from a place of trust in the Lord that despite the pressure situations he's in, with thousands of people watching him, Rendon can relax and do his job.

'Just a great guy'

Matte and his son Greyson recently went to Washington to see the Nationals play. Rendon got them tickets and met them after the game, providing them with autographs and spending time with them.

"We talked to one of the coaches on the team who just bragged about what a difference maker Anthony is on the team, and just a great guy,"

Matte said. (BP, TAB)



RENDON



Photo submitted to BP

Gregg Matte (left), pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, and his wife, Kelly, are pictured during a visit to Washington with Nationals third baseman Anthony Rendon (right) and his wife, Amanda.

**"Anthony is a big-time difference maker on the field
and even more importantly off the field."**

Gregg Matte
pastor, Houston's First Baptist Church

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