



# The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201  
www.thealabamabaptist.org

January 2, 2020

Vol. 185, No. 1  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



**ABCH's Watson knows firsthand how family ministry changes lives**

◆ Page 7



**Three Alabama cities declared sex trafficking-free zones**

◆ Page 9



**YouVersion announces most popular Bible verse of 2019**

◆ Page 12



# Happy New Year!

## New Year's resolutions for individual, congregational spiritual growth

**By Carolyn Tomlin**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**A**s 2020 begins, many people will optimistically make New Year's resolutions.

Historians aren't certain when this custom started, but the practice was recorded more than

4,000 years ago by the early Babylonians. They believed that whatever a person did on the first day of the year would affect the next 12 months.

Although the success rate of most resolutions is very low, almost half of Americans set at least one goal in honor of the New Year. The most common goals in the United

States are to eat healthier, exercise more and save more money. However, about one third of Americans are more realistic — they say they won't be setting any resolutions for the coming year.

For the Christian the New Year is a time to rededicate one's life to Christ and to follow His teachings. It is a time

to honor the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and to live a Christ-like life.

That's what Chuck Anderson, pastor of Shawmut Baptist Church, Valley, focuses on when it comes to resolutions.

"I don't want to miss a (See 'Engage,' page 13)

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

**FAITH & FAMILY**  
**New Year's GOALS** >> Page 6

# SCWC, TAB to host second annual book expo at Lakeside Baptist, Birmingham

Each year for the past nearly 30 years, the Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) has nurtured and encouraged writers of all ages and genres. Whether they write fiction, nonfiction, children's books or devotionals, writers find the conference — held annually in June — has something for everyone.

"We love to do as much as we can to encourage and support Christian writers," said Cheryl Wray, coordinator of the SCWC. "Our annual Southern Christian Writers Conference workshop is our main event, but we love to offer other events to authors."

Last year SCWC expanded it's reach past writers to include readers as well when it debuted a book expo. And the expo is back again this year.

On Feb. 1, Lakeside Baptist

Church, Birmingham, will host the 2020 Southern Christian Book Expo from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The expo is an opportunity for readers to browse books written by local and regional authors, meet and have those authors sign the books, listen as authors read selections from their best works, explore the services offered by professional vendors and win door prizes.

"Last year we had more than 50 authors display their

books and this year we hope to have even more," said Cheryl Wray, coordinator of the SCWC. "We also will be recognizing the winners of the first-ever SCWC Notable Book Awards at the expo and can't wait to honor those authors of both fiction and nonfiction books."

Books for every taste and every

genre will be available — Christian living, mystery, humor, romance.

"We wanted to do something for those avid readers who especially love faith-based nonfiction and fiction books," Wray said. "This will be a wonderful opportunity to meet authors, buy books from local, state and regional authors and enjoy time with others who also love to read."

The expo also will feature food trucks and local vendors for guests to visit between book browsing.

## 'Quality books of faith'

"The Southern Christian Book Expo is a wonderful opportunity for both writers and readers. It offers a place for writers to share their books with the public, and it gives readers a great place to find quality books of faith," Wray said.

The Southern Christian Book Expo is sponsored by the SCWC and *The Alabama Baptist*/TAB Media. (TAB)

**For more information, search for the Southern Christian Book Expo on Facebook or email [scwritersconference@gmail.com](mailto:scwritersconference@gmail.com).**



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)  
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201. Website: [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org) Email: [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or [subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org) Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

**ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
Includes print, digital and full web access

Group Rate per issue — \$16.25  
(Need at least five in your group to qualify)  
Individual — \$24.95 per year with 3-year plan

### JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts <i>Executive Assistant</i>	Janet Erwin <i>Executive Editor</i>
Debbie Campbell <i>Director of Communications</i>	Carrie B. McWhorter <i>Content Editor</i>
Bill Gilmore <i>Director of Sales</i>	Lauren C. Grim <i>Creative Services</i>
Melanie McKinney <i>Advertising Manager</i>	Jessica Ingram <i>Production Manager</i>
Pam Holt <i>Sales Representative</i>	Grace Thornton <i>Special Assignments Editor</i>
Susan Stevens <i>Sales Representative</i>	Hannah Muñoz <i>Digital Editor</i>
Linda Harrison <i>Human Resources</i>	James Hammack <i>Digital Services Manager</i>
Deb Lowery <i>Financial Assistant</i>	Haley Piersol <i>Digital Services Associate</i>
Annette Brown <i>Guest Services</i>	Sarah Gill <i>Customer Relations</i>
Richard Maddox <i>Computer Services</i>	Amy Hacker <i>Customer Relations</i>

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

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

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

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

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical  
Council for Financial Accountability



### 'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011,  
2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018  
as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist  
Communicators Association, Evangelical Press  
Association or Religion Communicators Council

## Special thanks to volunteer TAB News reader



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

You probably hear several familiar voices when listening to the TAB News podcast each week. One of those voices is volunteer reader Don Shipp (left), a member of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham. Don comes by TAB's office in Homewood each week to read one of the audio digest articles featured in the podcast. Special thanks to Don for volunteering his time to help make the TAB News podcast happen.

**Listen to the TAB News podcast  
anywhere you get your podcasts  
or visit [thealabamabaptist.org/  
explore/podcasts/](http://thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts/).**



**Do you have a  
Jesus story  
that you would like  
to share with us?**

Email us at  
[news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).

GAD	TSAR	AJAR		
LI	OKRA	DONE		
ADMONISH	ENOS			
DEEDS	EAT	ANT		
	DIG	BELT		
BAG	LOT	NAHUM		
ELOI	DEN	BASE		
ALLOW	NOD	NET		
	DUEL	WON		
ASH	BAG	RHODA		
SEAS	PROCLAIM			
PAVE	SARA	TEA		
STEW	EBBS	STN		

The crossword puzzle  
can be found on page 13.

OPINION

# MY RASHIONALE

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

[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
[@RashionalThts](https://www.instagram.com/RashionalThts)



## What will history write about our version of the 20s?

**O**ld things become new again — at least that’s how the traditional saying goes, right?

I’m hoping we might sidestep this thought process in the new year when it comes to repeating mistakes, especially as we now find ourselves officially in our version of the 20s — the 2020s.

My mind still thinks about the Roaring Twenties when I hear the “twenties” mentioned.

A Western society emerging from life beaten down from more than four years of world conflict found itself experiencing economic prosperity, rapid development in the manufacturing world and an explosion on the pop culture scene, especially the rise of the Jazz Age.

Life was moving faster than any had ever experienced — possibly in such mesmerizing style that no one thought it could be tamed. And for the first time, many Americans found daily living was no longer a difficult chore but actually cutting edge, convenient and fun.

In the end, however, a decade of “pedal to the metal” living and constant demands to push the limits drove Western society right into the middle of its worst nightmare — the Great Depression, which became another historical decade on its own merits.

And so here we are at the front end of a pristine new 20s.

Whether we refer to our new decade as the “twenties” or the “twenty-twenties,” we have been handed the opportunity to blaze a new, yet healthier, path by learning from the past.

What will history write about the 2020s one day? What statement will we make? How will we be branded?

We truly can shake off the past, let go of whatever is holding us back and make this our decade. Why not make it our goal to see and live with the clarity of 20/20 vision in the decade of the 2020s?

To have an opportunity at even coming close to that goal, it will require an official reboot of our lives by flushing out all the chaos and clutter.

Just like a computer needs to

be restarted from time to time to clear its brains, so to speak, we need to do the same.

It might be as simple as seriously reviewing the overload of responsibilities we’ve found ourselves juggling to determine which are vital and which can or should be removed.

It could be working through unresolved conflict with someone or letting go of bitterness we’ve been harboring or maybe even finding a way to forgive a person who hurt us.

It may mean forgiving ourselves and finding a way to let

go of the guilt and shame and give it to God. He truly will carry us and the load we bring.

Maybe there’s some sin hiding in the crevices of our hearts that needs to be brought to the light. The peace, freedom and release that comes from fully repenting of our sin is definitely the way to launch a new year with confidence and gusto.

Can you imagine the impact we can make for Christ if each of us, as individuals, would truly renew our lives, let go of the past while learning from it and forge ahead with fresh energy and unrelenting urgency?✝

## TAB TOTS IN THE NEWS

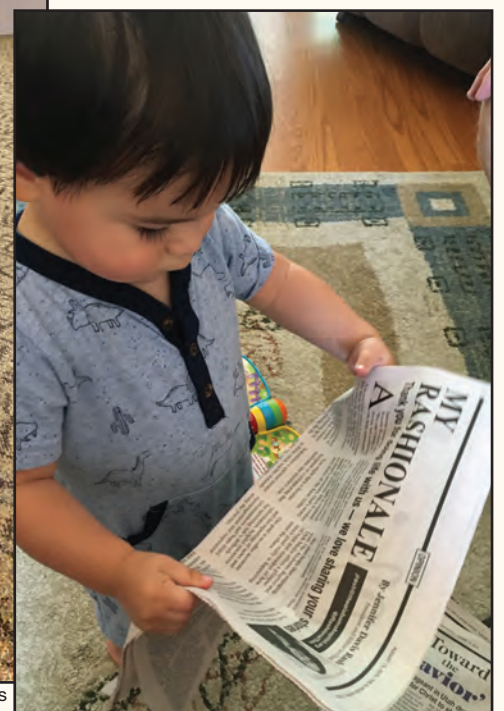
### We love all the young TAB promoters out and about across the state ...



**Liam** Photo courtesy of Liam’s grandparents



**Liv** Photo courtesy of Liv’s grandparents



**AJ** Photo courtesy of AJ’s grandparents

# Your Voice



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

## Prisoners of faith need US religious freedom agency

By Andrew Brunson  
Pastor and former prisoner

Little more than a year ago, I stood in a Turkish courtroom facing 35 years in prison — an effective life sentence.

This day of reckoning had come after two years of detention on preposterous charges that I had aided a terrorist organization and had engaged in espionage through my ministry as the pastor of a small Christian church in Turkey.

Instead of life, I was given a sentence of time served and allowed to return home to the United States, my freedom granted thanks to the tireless efforts of President Donald Trump and his administration, as well as many members of Congress.

But my release was aided in no small part by the dedication of a small government agency: the U.S.

Commission on International Religious Freedom, known as USCIRF.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. government commission that monitors religious freedom abroad and makes policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state and Congress.

It is led by nine commissioners appointed by the White House and congressional leaders from both parties, who are in turn supported by a full-time staff of fewer than 20.

Over its 20-year existence, the commission has played a critical role in sounding the alarm and highlighting the world's most severe cases of religious persecution — including that of Uighurs in western China, Rohingya in Burma, Baha'is in Iran and Christians in many countries.

[USCIRF] has also advocated passionately and effectively on behalf of individuals imprisoned for their faith, like me.

Turkish authorities detained my wife, Norine, and me in 2016 as potential “threats to national security” after we had spent 23 years living and serving primarily in the coastal city of Izmir in western Turkey.

My wife was released after 13 days, but I was moved to prison and placed with over 20 other inmates in a cell that was only built to hold eight. While prison authorities periodically permitted my wife and U.S. Embassy officials to visit me, I feared that I would be forgotten in that dark and despairing place.

A spark of hope was kindled in October 2017 when, a year into my imprisonment, two then-USCIRF commissioners, Kristina Arriaga and Sandra Jolley, traveled with a USCIRF staffer to Turkey to visit me in prison.

They reassured me that I would never be forgotten and that they would do everything within their power to secure my release and to return me to my family.

USCIRF brought attention to my case as an example of religious persecution, an opening created when the Turkish authorities charged me with attempting to divide their country through the “Christianization” of Turkey’s ethnic Kurdish population.

USCIRF’s commissioners and staff advocated for my release as part of USCIRF’s Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project, which has so far contributed to the release of 14 religious prisoners.

USCIRF also raises the profile of

additional individuals imprisoned or otherwise targeted for their beliefs in its recently launched Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List.

After that first prison visit, USCIRF continued to support and fight for me by attending three of my subsequent court hearings, including my final trial in October 2018. The day before that last hearing, Tony Perkins, then a commissioner and now the chair of USCIRF, personally delivered letters to me from Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. On the day I was allowed to leave the country, Perkins accompanied my wife and me on our flight home.

I will always be grateful for the crucial role they played in ensuring that I was not forgotten. It is imperative that Congress [fund] USCIRF so its commissioners and staff can continue to bring to light religious freedom abuses around the world and to advocate for other victims, like me, imprisoned for their faith.

Our world is in dire need of greater emphasis on the importance of religious freedom for all peoples, and USCIRF is uniquely placed to do so.

Congress, and by extension the American people, must stand behind the commission and its mission by seeing that it survives and succeeds for many years to come.

*EDITOR’S NOTE — Andrew Brunson, an American who spent 23 years as a pastor in western Turkey before being falsely accused of and imprisoned for terrorism, is the author of “God’s Hostage: A True Story of Persecution, Imprisonment and Perseverance.” (RNS)*

### My Jesus Story

As we begin this new year, I want to talk to you about a clean slate — a fresh start if you will. Many who read this already know Jesus but maybe you don’t.

Regardless of where you are in your relationship with Him, I’m going to challenge you to make a fresh start.

If you’ve never been saved, find a Bible-believing church, open your heart and your mind, confess your sins, give Him your life, be baptized and become a new creation in the Lord (Acts 2:21). Make a fresh start.

If you’ve not been to church

in a while, go this Sunday. Find somewhere to plug in. You may not need church but I bet church needs you (Heb. 10:25). Make a fresh start.

Finally, if you’ve been a faithful church-attending, Bible-reading Christian, pray for a new perspective, a new heart. I’ll pray with you (Prov. 3:5–6). We’ll both make a fresh start.

I hope you take me up on my challenge, I’m challenging myself as well. You never know where it may lead.

**Jenni Ingram  
Gantt, Ala.**

“A revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God.”

CHARLES FINNEY

19th century American minister

In Paul’s day, there were those who were critical of the apostles who taught the Word without apology and let the Holy Spirit do the work. Paul could rejoice that the testimony of his conscience before God was clear. At the end of the day, that’s all that matters.

**D. Jay Powell, Author**  
**“Be Inspired: 101 Thoughts for Every Christian Writer”**

Statistics show that by 2050, almost 40% of the world’s Christians will be in Sub-Saharan Africa. That’s the way the population and the shift of evangelicalism is going. So the question is: What kind of evangelicalism, what kind of Christianity is that going to be? At the moment it’s largely a charismatic,

neo-Pentecostal, faith healing, prosperity gospel brand of Christianity. We recognize that. The only way to really shape the future of the church is to begin shaping the future leaders so that they are equipped to rightly handle the Word of truth.

**Nick Moore**  
**IMB missionary in Zimbabwe**

You can’t down a generation you have taken time to invest in.

**Pastor Jarman Leatherwood**  
**House of Hope and Restoration**  
**Huntsville, Ala.**

If the year ahead were turned into a map with all its intersections named and its terrains described, would you dare study it?

We have no such maps. The year

ahead is as a dense, close fog. The road is there but we cannot see its ups and downs, its twists and turns.

When we think about how unknowing we are concerning the future, we tend to grow afraid and become pessimistic. We need not fear or despair.

One travels with us who has perfect knowledge of the road. He has traveled it and done so successfully, and now He whispers to us, “Follow Me.” Will we?

**Bob Adams**  
**Retired pastor**

Very few people live as if a resurrected Lord Jesus is alive and a vital part of their lives in the moment.

**President Jeff Iorg**  
**Gateway Seminary**

We must stop bemoaning the death of cultural Christianity. Such whining does us no good. Easy growth is simply not a reality for many churches. People no longer come to a church because they believe they must do so to be culturally accepted. The next time a church member says, “They know where we are; they can come here if they want to,” rebuke him. Great Commission Christianity is about going; it’s not “y’all come.”

**Thom Rainer**  
**Founder, Church Answers**

Every day we work with youth who will be aging out of foster care, having never had a permanent home. These are amazing young people who have great potential. Helping them helps all our communities.

**Children’s Aid Society of Alabama via Facebook**

I am grateful *The Alabama Baptist* highlights the ministries and missions projects of churches of all sizes. We are all partners in Great Commission work and we can learn a lot from each other.

**Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
**Content editor, TAB**

Friends are very special people  
 Who will share your joy and pain,  
 Through days that are fair as heaven,  
 Or when dark clouds may bring the rain.

Friends cannot be separated  
 Even when they are far apart.  
 Friendship is not in where you are,  
 But it lies deep within your heart.

**Excerpt from “Friends in Times Like These”**  
**By Charlie Button**  
**Huntsville, Ala.**

# From the *Twitterverse*

**@jedcoppenger**

Jesus meets us where we are, not where we wish we were.

**@BethMooreLPM**

Proverbs 11 this morning. First half of verse nine grabbed my attention and won’t let me go: “With his mouth the ungodly destroys his neighbor.” Has a generation ever been more relentlessly and thoroughly trained to use mouths as weapons? Jesus, rescue our neighbors and us from our own mouths.

**@isickadams**

“It seems to please God more to change people slowly rather than circumstances quickly.”  
 — @DonWhitney

**@kristenpadilla**

This is the confidence we have through Christ our God. It is not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God. He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3)

**@LifeWay**

“We must not abandon the church if we want to persevere in the faith. We must keep going to keep ourselves going.” — @\_MichaelKelley

**@KSPrior**

Controversies and debates abound. When one side says “up”

and the other side says “down,” it’s hard to know where truth lies. One thing to consider as you weigh sides: Is truth really the sole motivation? Or are attacks made and specific names invoked to build platform and get clicks?

**@DanaWatson**

God does not accept me just as I am. He accepts me because of what Jesus did. He loves me, not because of what I do but despite what I do. His grace is extravagant. His love is boundless. (Eph. 2:3–5)

**@careharrington**

If you’re weary, worship. If you’re worried, worship. If you’re winning, worship.

Share online or email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

# NEW YEAR'S GOALS

## Self-care allows us to better care for others, share good news of the gospel

By Rod Campbell, MAMFT, LPC-S  
Pathways Professional Counseling

**I**n my work with families I routinely come across moms and dads who are exhausted, burning the candle at both ends as well as in the middle, who give of themselves unselfishly in service to children, their churches and their extended families.

For these parents the day is often a blur of morning chaos, demanding jobs and evenings of homework, mealtime and extracurricular activities.

When I speak with these families about the importance of self-care, they often think I am talking about pampering themselves *instead of* taking care of their children. I contend parents must be capable of taking care of themselves *in order* to take care of their children.

Simply put, self-care is about being healthy physically, spiritually and emotionally.

Below are some specific tips to help you take better care of yourself.

### Physical self-care

Be certain you are getting 20–30 minutes of daily exercise. Walking or stretching is a good way to start but your doctor can help you determine your body's capabilities. Both our bodies and brains work much better if we get regular exercise, so choose a time each day for exercise, write it on your calendar and stick to your schedule.

Use the calendar to schedule your sleep too. Write down your daily wake-up time, then count back-

wards eight hours. Then subtract one more hour to find your “start getting ready for bed” time. Use this hour to prepare for bed so you'll be in bed and ready to get a good night's sleep.

Next take a hard look at how you eat. One of the most important lessons I ever learned is to “eat for fuel, not for fun.” A disciplined diet is a difficult thing to do consistently, but it is necessary to keep us properly fueled and not riding the ups and downs of wildly fluctuating energy levels that comes from repeated doses of sugar and caffeine.

### Spiritual self-care

Our most important connections are our connections with God and with His people.

There is no substitute for consistent, intentional and protected time in personal Bible study. This is another item that must be specifically planned on your calendar.

Likewise, your calendar needs to contain regularly scheduled intentional time of meaningful interaction with other disciples. This can take the form of small group Bible studies, discipleship groups, accountability partners or prayer groups — but no matter what they are called, they are integral to the health of the believer.

### Emotional self-care

We all need something that helps charge our batteries — something we look forward to and participate in because it offers us opportunities for challenge and self-improvement



Unsplash.com

as individuals. This can be a meaningful hobby, an artistic expression, some form of competition or other activity in which we take part that is not centered so much around entertainment as it is nourishment.

### Stress management

Stress management means not just handling the stress we have, but also being ruthless in cutting out unnecessary stress from our lives. I see people on an almost daily basis who are involved in unhealthy relationships, who have accepted the burden of someone else's responsibilities or who are substantially overloaded with “good” obligations.

We must recognize the very limited number of hours per day we have and prioritize well so we can accomplish those things that are most important to us.

Finally, we need to be certain we have attended to any old or recent emotional wounds that might keep us from operating at our full potential. Simply ignoring a history of abuse or neglect, past trauma,

anxiety, depression or other significant emotional stress can radically lower our effectiveness, especially in terms of being healthy parents, spouses and coworkers.

Give this intentional approach to self-care a shot for a couple of weeks. Schedule times for sleep, exercise, Bible study and fun with your spouse, children and fellow believers — then write it all down on a real calendar.

I promise you'll feel better, and I'm pretty sure you'll find that you enjoy your life more as well.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Faith & Family is a monthly look at important spiritual, cultural and relational issues facing today's families. Go to [PathwaysProfessional.org/blog](http://PathwaysProfessional.org/blog) for more articles on contemporary topics like these.*


*Rod Campbell is a licensed professional counselor serving in central Alabama with Pathways Professional Counseling, a sister ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. *





Photo courtesy of Michelle Glassford

Dana Watson (center) receives the Catherine Hershey Alumna of the Year award alongside Don Forrester (left), executive director of the Coalition of Residential Excellence, and Rod Marshall, president of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

# God can redeem a life

## ABCH's Watson knows firsthand how family ministry changes children's lives

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**D**ana Watson has seen things a child should never have to see. He was 8 when he hid around the corner and watched as his uncle began to hit his mom, with her boyfriend joining in too. Watson ran out into the street, looking for anyone who could help.

He found no one. Watson remembers his terror ramping up as he weighed his options. He thought about trying to defend his mom with a Wiffle ball bat. When her boyfriend went outside to his truck, Watson locked the door behind him.

He didn't foresee the man breaking the windowpane, letting himself back in and turning his anger on Watson.

### God's protection

The moments were tense but God protected them. His mom, with her face cut and bleeding, led Watson and his sister down the street to a pay phone.

"I was terrified," he said. "When you're a kid, your imagination runs wild about what could happen."

But he said that all changed the first time he stepped on the Mobile campus of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH). Once his mom placed him in ABCH's care, everything was different.

"I could lie in my bed at night and know that no one was coming in," he said. "I was protected, I was nurtured and over time I was restored."

Watson also never had to worry about where his next meal would come from.

"When I was living with my mom, I remember one Saturday morning looking for something to eat and the only thing I could find was a little bag of corn meal," he said.

So he got a pan out, put the cornmeal in it, poured some water onto it and made it into a patty. He cooked it for a little while, scraped it off the pan with a fork, put some ketchup on it and ate it as his meal for the day.

"At the Children's Homes we got up and ate meals together," he said. "We had a schedule and a routine. I felt like a real person. We loved each other and kept each other accountable."

And now Watson leads the very place where he learned about the love of Jesus and found his purpose in life. He serves as chief operations officer for ABCH's South Alabama campus and he was recently awarded Alumna of the Year by the Coalition of Residential Excellence, a national organization representing children's homes and boarding schools.

Rod Marshall, ABCH president,

called Watson a "very good leader."

"He is never afraid of having difficult conversations to ensure all of the programs under his supervision are excelling," Marshall said. "He is a good husband and a great father who takes great pride in his four beautiful daughters. He wakes up every day committed to ensure that they see him living out the gospel on a daily basis."

### A living testimony

Watson said it's a privilege to serve as a testimony of how God can redeem a life.

"When I was a kid I thought it would be great to be a superintendent here," he said.

And as he grew up, he realized more and more that's exactly what God wanted him to be.

"It was not because of anything I could give but had everything to do with what Christ called me to do," Watson said.

Much like the rest of his life, the journey to get there wasn't always clear or easy, but he said it always had purpose. He had to leave a previous job at ABCH because of cut-backs, but that allowed him the opportunity to work at Mobile County DHR for three years.

That's enabled him to understand both sides of social work and allowed him to care for the children at ABCH even more effectively, he said.

"I thought I was in a tough spot and off track, but God used that experience at DHR to prepare me for the Children's Homes," Watson said.

He also faced losing his mom to terminal cancer, but before she died he shared the gospel with her and she accepted.

"It builds your faith and trust in God's plan for your life to know He's in the middle of everything and always has a plan," he said. "The tough times may be hard,

but they help to build my faith."

Watson shares that message with the children in his care now — that God has a purpose for their lives.

"The kids know that I grew up here and that is a source of inspiration for them, but that's not going to help them write their story," he said. "I tell them, 'You're not me, you're you — but there's a plan for you just like there's a plan for me. All you have to do is prepare yourself and God will be your provider and source of strength.'"

For more information about ABCH, visit [alabamachild.org](http://alabamachild.org).

**All you have to do is prepare yourself and God will be your provider and source of strength."**

Dana Watson  
chief operations officer, ABCH's South Alabama campus



### CHURCH TAX CONFERENCES

Get the latest updates on tax changes affecting ministers, staff and churches. You will receive a packet filled with information directed at ministers, church employees, and the church itself.

- Thursday, January 9** - First Baptist Church, Decatur
- Tuesday, January 14** - Birmingham Metro Baptist Association
- Thursday, January 16** - Mobile Baptist Association
- Tuesday, January 21** - Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne
- Tuesday, January 28** - Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan

To register, visit [alsbom.org/churchtaxconferences](http://alsbom.org/churchtaxconferences)

### MINISTER'S TAX CONFERENCES

How can ordained ministers save tax dollars? Ministers, financial secretaries, personnel and finance committees will benefit from this conference.

- Tuesday, February 11** - First Baptist Church, Decatur
- Thursday, February 13** - Birmingham Metro Baptist Association
- Tuesday, February 18** - Mobile Baptist Association
- Thursday, February 20** - Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne
- Thursday, February 27** - Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan

To register, visit [alsbom.org/ministerstaxconferences](http://alsbom.org/ministerstaxconferences)

### AND DON'T MISS THESE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES LATER IN 2020!

#### CHURCH TAX CONFERENCES FOR SMALL CHURCHES

- Thursday, June 4** - First Baptist Church, Decatur
- Tuesday, June 16** - SBOM Office Facility, Prattville

#### FINANCIAL ISSUES TAX CONFERENCE

**Friday and Saturday, September 11-12** - Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, Talladega

#### EARLY BIRD TAX CONFERENCE

**Thursday, December 10** - SBOM Office Facility, Prattville

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

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

#### JANUARY

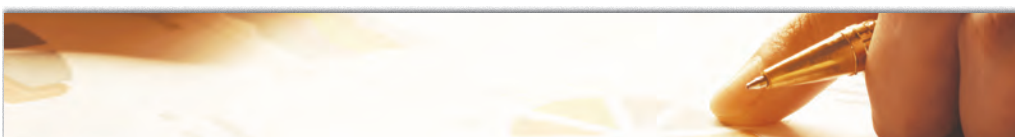
- 5-12 **January Bible Study**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 285
- 9 **Church Tax Conference**, Decatur First, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 12-13 **Who's Your One? Tour**, Gardendale FBC, Lori McGough, ext. 258
- 14 **Church Tax Conference**, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association Office, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 16 **Church Tax Conference**, Mobile Baptist Association Office, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 17-18 **Student Missions Weekend**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kaley Stephens, ext. 278
- 19 **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 289
- 21 **Church Tax Conference**, Eastern Shore, Daphne, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 23-25 **Southeast Youth Conclave**, Chattanooga, Tenn., Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 23-25 **Alabama Baptist Church Planting Basics**, House of Hope and Restoration Church, Huntsville, Jeff Mann, ext. 332
- 23-24 **Discipleship Network of Alabama**, Hunter Street, Hoover, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 285
- 28 **Church Tax Conference**, Calvary, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 30 **The Secret of Teams: What Great Teams Know & Do**, SBOM Facility, Prattville, Mike Jackson, ext. 210
- 31-2/1 **Alabama Bible Drill Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 31-2/1 **Activators Training**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Laura Glass, ext. 226
- 31-2/1 **Renovate 2020 Johnny Hunt Simulcast**, Boones Chapel, Prattville; Valley Church, Coker; Willowbrook Church Madison Campus, Huntsville, Larry Hyche, ext. 268

#### FEBRUARY

- 1/31-2/1 **Activators Training, WorldSong**, \*\*Listed on January calendar
- 1/31-2/1 **Alabama Bible Drill, Shocco Springs** \*\*Listed on January calendar
- 9 **Racial Reconciliation Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 289
- 11 **Minister's Tax Conference**, FBC Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 13 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Birmingham Baptist Association, Birmingham Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 16 **Hunger Sunday**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 283
- 18 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Mobile Baptist Association, Mobile, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 20 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 21-22 **Pursue**, First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Mike Nuss, ext. 276
- 21-22 **Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat**, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 22 **Renew...a day away with friends**, Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 23-24 **State Evangelism Conference**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Lori McGough, ext. 258
- 23 **Disciple Making Ministries Dinner**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 285
- 24 **Reaching Gen Z**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Lori McGough, ext. 258
- 24 **Ministers' Wives Luncheon**, Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 24 **Sharing Hope Conference for Pastors and Leaders (Hispanic)**, Heritage Baptist Church, Annel Robayna, ext. 270
- 27 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 28-3/1 **Children's Honor Choir Tour**, North Alabama area, Karen Gosselin, ext. 318

#### MARCH

- 1-8 **Week of Prayer for North American Missions and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering**, Laura Glass, ext. 226
- 5-6 **Ministry Evangelism Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 311
- 5-6 **Uplink on the Road**, State Board of Missions, Prattville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 6-7 **COMPLETE...A gathering for teen girls**, Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325





# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## What's New?

### Exploring 'all things new'

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

The beginning of a new year automatically suggests thinking about new things. Some will think about new resolutions for the new year. Others may think of changes they want to make, calling this the turning over of a new leaf.

Some may look back regretfully at prior resolves made at the beginning of previous years when good intentions fell by the wayside. By His grace, God has given us a new opportunity for renewed resolutions at the outset of another new year, which happens also to be the beginning of a new decade.

#### Nothing new under the sun?

Thus it may afford a good time for some long-range resolutions that stretch beyond the next 12 months and even span the next 10 years should God be gracious to give us that many.

A focus on new things stands in contrast to the thinking of Solomon in the beginning of Ecclesiastes. After reflecting on the monotony of the old, such as the repetitive cycles of nature and human generations, he concluded: "That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new?'" (1:9-10a).

One can hardly escape a note of despair or hopelessness that sounds in those ancient words when they are taken at face value.

Upon further reflection, how-

ever, we must remind ourselves that we have a completed Bible, which is something Solomon did not have. In the searching of the sacred Scriptures we discover a number of things that can properly be labeled as new.

In fact toward the end of the Bible we hear a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). From this sacred book we learn of a number of things that are new or will become new. So we might ask ourselves, "In light of the completed canon of Scripture, what's new?"

In the next several weeks of this new year Theology 101 will explore some of these things made new, such as a new covenant, a new commandment, a new creation, a new song, a new name and a new heaven and new earth.

Hopefully the outcome will not only be an intellectual exercise or doctrinal inquiry but an increasingly meaningful and hopeful experience of anticipating what God is up to in our lives and in His plan for His creation.

On a personal level the goal might be captured in the language of Romans 6:4, that "we also should walk in newness of life."

*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.*



## Three Alabama cities declared human trafficking-free zones

Three Alabama cities have declared themselves sex trafficking-free zones.

Vestavia Hills Mayor Ashley Curry signed a proclamation Nov. 25 making his city the first in Alabama to join the TraffickingFree Zone (TFZ) program, an initiative of the U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking (USIAHT).

Mountain Brook adopted the initiative Dec. 9 and Birmingham followed suit Dec. 10, becoming the largest city in the nation by population to join the initiative.

According to the USIAHT website, TFZ is a community-based initiative to reduce the number of buyers in the sex trade. The program is implemented in collaboration with community members and leaders, law enforcement, businesses, schools, health care organizations, churches and the media. The effort uses technology to reach buyers and victims on a massive scale.

The program helps communities come together to arrest and prosecute sex buyers instead of the victims who are being sold, educates people on sex trafficking and uses technology and research to reduce demand.

Curry said 17 sex trafficking arrests had been made in Vestavia since July. The Birmingham metro

area is often cited as a sex-trafficking mecca because two major interstates, I-20 and I-65, run through the city. More than 30 other arrests have been made since July throughout metro Birmingham.

Advocacy group Child Trafficking Solutions Project will train city staff to recognize the signs of sex trafficking and head community outreach. Child Trafficking Solutions Project is a statewide coalition comprised of human trafficking prevention organizations, law enforcement, government agencies, child protective services, survivor care providers and other organizations.

#### Training available

Training is available for law enforcement, first responders, medical personnel, educators, child-serving professionals and parents and students.

There were an estimated 4.8 million victims of sex trafficking, feeding a \$150 billion industry worldwide in 2016, according to USIAHT, and the U.S. is one of the largest global consumers of human trafficking goods and services. By some estimates as many as 100,000 children in the U.S. are sex trafficking victims, 60-70% of whom come from child social services or the foster care system. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Child Trafficking Solutions Project

Members of Birmingham City Council and partner organization Child Trafficking Solutions Project work together to train city staff, such as law enforcement, medical personnel and teachers, to recognize the signs of sex trafficking.

# 3 stories

## you should know



Submitted photo

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, celebrated a milestone during its 66th commencement Dec. 6 as 29 Spanish-speaking church planters earned their church planting certificates. (Two of those graduates also received master's degrees.) The certificate program began in 2017 with the vision of reaching the Hispanic community with theological education. This year the Spanish language program had 100 registered students. (BP)

### *Fairness for All Act draws opposition from both sides*

The Fairness for All Act gained introduction in the U.S. House of Representatives on Dec. 6 as an attempt to address the conflict between religious and sexual liberty.

The bill would amend the Civil Rights Act to protect LGBT people from discrimination in such contexts as employment, housing, adoption and places of public accommodation.

Meanwhile, the legislation would preserve the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and protect the tax-exempt status of religious organizations and universities. It also would safeguard small business owners and protect adoption agencies.

Some faith-based organizations endorsed the proposal, but the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and others expressed opposition. Leading LGBT and civil rights groups also announced their disapproval. (BP)

### *Crackdown on Christianity in China ramps up*

As more government officials in China are empowered to close churches and a "social credit" system threatens to block Christians from schools, bank loans and jobs, authorities have taken harsh measures against more churches.

In Beijing, Early Rain Covenant Church elder Qin Defu was sentenced to four years in prison Nov. 29, according to advocacy group China Aid Association.

In Shanghai, authorities raided Wheat Church on Dec. 1, broke up the unregistered body's worship service and ejected members, accusing them of conducting religious activities at an unapproved venue.

China ranked 27th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

## — NEWSBRIEFS —

### *Hunter Street minister of missions retiring after 20 years at church*

Countless short-term trips have filled the 20 years that Frank Blackwell has served as minister of missions for Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover. But he says he's gotten the blessing of seeing how those have added up in the long term.

"Being here a long time, you get to see the progress," said Blackwell, who will retire from the position in February. "You get to see God work, see prayers answered, see people commit to long-term missions and see people become more aware of unreached people groups."

When Blackwell moved his family to Birmingham from Mississippi in 1991, he wasn't in full-time ministry yet, but he had felt a call to missions since he was a young boy in Vacation Bible School.

"I didn't understand fully what that meant at

that time, but I did have a sense of calling," he said.

And when Hunter Street asked Blackwell to become their minister of missions in January 2000, it all clicked into place.

"It's been a joint effort all along," he said of his two decades at the church. "From our pastor at the top and with significant support of our staff and laypeople we have been able to reach people both locally and around the world with the gospel." (Grace Thornton)



BLACKWELL

### *SBC Credentials Committee establishes online submissions portal*

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Credentials Committee has established an online submission portal for reports of a church's alleged departure from Southern Baptist polity, doctrine or practice.

The new portal is available at [SBC.net/credentials](http://SBC.net/credentials). The form may be used to report concerns related to a church's handling of sexual abuse, racism and various other pertinent issues. However, Credential Committee chair

Stacy Bramlett said suspicions of recent or current sexual or other forms of abuse should be reported to law enforcement officials.

"The duty to investigate such crimes falls to law enforcement," she said. "Our committee has no investigative authority or power."

Messengers to the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting established the Credentials Committee to receive reports of a church's suspected departure from Southern Baptist polity, doctrine or practice and to make recommendations to the SBC Executive Committee (EC) regarding the possible disfellowship of churches from the SBC.

Bramlett said the committee's deliberations will remain strictly confidential. However, recommendations, when needed, will be reported by the Credentials Committee at SBC EC meetings, which are held in February, June and September. The Credentials Committee also will notify churches and submitters of the status of church inquiries through-



NEWS

# News near you

## BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

▶ On Oct. 27, **Springhill Baptist Church, Franklin**, celebrated its 125th anniversary. Tom Thurman, retired International Mission



Photo by Dalton Campbell

Board missionary to Bangladesh, was the guest speaker. Congregational singing was led by music director Don Dees.

Dalton Campbell presented the church with a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Various members shared memories from their time at the church.

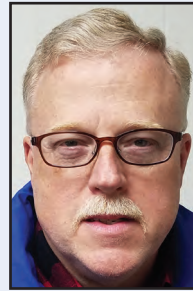
A historical presentation played in the vestibule and lunch followed the service.

“Former members came back to celebrate and worship. It was a great day,” said Rhonda Dees. Grady Milstead is pastor.

## DEKALB ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mike Miller** is the new pastor of **Ruhama Baptist Church, Fort Payne**. He and his wife, Sharon, previously served as missionaries in South Korea for 17 years. Miller

holds degrees from Jacksonville State University, Moody Bible Institute and Birmingham Theological Seminary. The Millers have two children and are expecting two grandchildren.



MILLER

## ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

▶ In November, **Riddles Bend Baptist Church, Rainbow City**, celebrated its centennial anniversary. On Nov. 3, Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was the guest speaker and on Nov. 10, Johnny Hunt, senior vice president of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board, was the guest speaker. Music was led both weeks by minister of music Carrie Maeger.

Sonja Adams presented the church with a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Eric Sexton presented a certificate from Etowah Baptist Association and read



Photo courtesy of Rodney Prickett

a letter from associational missionary Craig Carlisle. Historical church documents were on display.

The church’s old bell was recently found and refurbished and now hangs in a newly constructed bell tower that was dedicated Nov. 10 (pictured).

“The celebration honored our history while emphasizing the future,” said Pastor Rodney Prickett.

## HALE ASSOCIATION

▶ As **Greensboro Baptist Church** celebrated its 125th anniversary Dec. 8, missions work was the main emphasis.

The theme verse for the service was Acts 1:8. Frances Smith and Paige Paquette shared testimonies of the role Greensboro Baptist played in their love for missions. Brandy Royce, youth on mission coordinator, shared how students will be going to Alaska this summer as part of the Alabama-Alaska partnership through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Bobby DuBois, former pastor and current SBOM associate executive director, was the guest speaker. Special music featured the church choir, guest organist and former member Windi Washburn Wheeler and pianist Dianne Colburn.

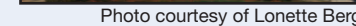


Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

Lonette Berg, from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Bobby Hopper, associational missions director for Hale Baptist Association, presented the church with certificates.

A photo history of the church’s missions projects was shown and photos of past church events were on display.

“We were thrilled with the day!” Regina Washburn said. “We wanted to look at the past while looking to move into the future with faithfulness.” Dee McGuire is pastor.✝

## — NEWSBRIEFS —

out the Credentials Committee inquiry process.

For more information about the responsibilities and procedures of the Credentials Committee, go to [tabonline.org/credentials-committee](http://tabonline.org/credentials-committee). (BP)

### *Retired Barbour Association DOM, R.C. Belcher, dies at 92*



R.C. Belcher, retired director of missions for Barbour Baptist Association, died Dec. 13. He was 92.

Belcher earned a bachelor’s degree in biblical studies from the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville. He served in ministry for 41 years, including 14 years at Barbour Association. He also served as pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Eufaula, interim pastor of Louisville Baptist Church and as pastor of a church in Georgia.

He served in the U.S. Air Force for 22 years.

Belcher was preceded in death by his daughter, Beth. He



BELCHER

is survived by his wife, Bobbie; three grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

### *Study: Families of Christians, Jews often differ from expectations*



Single-parent households are increasingly common especially among Christians, according to a new study from the Pew Research Center.

The study compared the size and composition of households among the world’s different faiths and found Christian children, more than any other religious group, live in single-parent homes. And women, particularly Christian women, are more likely than men to live as single parents.

The study also looked at size of households and found that Christians — as well as Jews and people of no faith — live in the smallest households. In the U.S. the three groups live in similarly sized households, on average — 3.4 people for Christians, 3.2 for people of no faith and 3.0 for Jews. Muslims across the globe live in the biggest households, with the average Muslim residing in a home of 6.4 people.

The study acknowledges that religion is not the only cause at play here. Many factors affect household sizes, including cultural norms, income and education. (RNS)

### *Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor, active volunteer dies at 73*



Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor Ronald Gordon Hicks died Dec. 6. He was 73.

In his more than 40 years of ministry he served in a number of capacities, including as senior pastor of Pioneer Baptist Church, Cullman. He also served as family ministry director for East Cullman Baptist Association, as brotherhood director for West Cullman Baptist Association and as an active disaster relief volunteer.

Hicks is survived by his wife of 25 years, Vickie; daughter, Kimberly; stepdaughters, Melissa and Laura; and six grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)



HICKS

# Philippians 4:6 most popular verse of 2019 for app users

YouVersion Bible app's most popular verse of 2019 is Philippians 4:6: "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done."

Another prominent verse shared consistently in 2019 was Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

The popularity of these verses shows that though cultural situations may be vastly different, the inclination to share verses that call individuals to point their minds to God is a commonality, said Trevin Wax, senior vice president of theology and communications at LifeWay Christian Resources. "People that are sharing Bible verses in YouVersion look like they gravitate toward action verses where it's something of a daily jolt or a reminder of what it is that we're all to be about," Wax said.

Philippians 4:6 is a command to be God oriented, to take whatever it is we encounter in our lives to the Lord; and Matthew 6:33 is a command from Jesus to seek the Kingdom.

## Looking above

"What's interesting to me is how many of these number one verses, regardless of what country they come from, are pointing upward ... to things that are above, not things on the earth."

In 2019 app users:

- ▶ listened to 5.6 billion chapters of the Bible
- ▶ read 35.6 billion

chapters of the Bible

- ▶ spent 1.1 billion days in Bible plans

- ▶ made 2 billion highlights, bookmarks and notes
- ▶ shared more than 478 million Bible verses.

Since its release 11 years ago the YouVersion app has been downloaded more than 400 million times.

The global YouVersion community engaged in the Bible 30% more in 2019 than in 2018, according to YouVersion data.

Outreach outside the United States has

grown tremendously with the app now offering more than 2,000 Bible versions in more than 1,350 languages. The app has been downloaded in every country on earth.

"What we are seeing in global engagement is exciting to us because with ev-

ery verse highlighted, plan day completed or audio chapter listened to, that's a person who is being transformed by knowing God more intimately through spending time in the Bible," said YouVersion founder Bobby Greunewald.

## Increasing access

More than a billion people globally don't have access to a complete Bible in their "heart" language. Together with illuminaTions, a movement of 10 Bible translation agencies, YouVersion is working to decrease that number.

The group's goal is that by 2033, 95% of the world's population will have a complete Bible, 99.9% will have a complete New Testament and 100% will have at least some portion of Scripture.

YouVersion's goal for future Bible translations should be a reminder of the power of God's word, Wax said. (BP, YouVersion)

**"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything."**

Philippians 4:6

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word.  
For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org).

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Vincent, is searching for a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: First Baptist Church Vincent, P.O. Box 43, Vincent, AL 35178, or email to: [beckygreene15@yahoo.com](mailto:beckygreene15@yahoo.com).

#### PASTOR

Southside Baptist Church in Opp, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking God's lead for a full-time senior pastor. All applicants should have previous experience. Resumés with photo may be mailed to: SBC, P.O. Box 790, Opp, AL 36467, ATTN: Search Committee or emailed to: [pastorsearchcommittee@southsideopp.com](mailto:pastorsearchcommittee@southsideopp.com).

### SEEKING STAFF POSITIONS

Fern Creek Baptist Church is seeking full-time and part-time ministerial staff in the following areas: music, youth, children and preschool. According to the applicant's gifts and skills, two of these areas will be combined for a full-time position. Applicants must exemplify a growing relationship with God, spiritual maturity, responsible authority, fervent evangelism, sound theology and effective communication skills with all age groups. Applicants should have experience and education in ministry. Anyone seeking the music position must be an excellent musician, worship leader and educator. Send resumés to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 5920 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291, or email to: [linda@ferncreekbaptist.org](mailto:linda@ferncreekbaptist.org). Resumés will be received through Jan. 20. Have questions? Call 502-239-0316, ext. 103 (Personnel Committee).

#### YOUTH PASTOR

Seeking a youth pastor with God's calling to love and disciple students. Send resumé to: River Road Baptist Church, 3352 Warrior River Road, Hueytown, AL 35023, or [notifHim@bellsouth.net](mailto:notifHim@bellsouth.net).

### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

The focus is loving and discipling our youth. Dogwood Grove Baptist, Adger, Alabama. Email queries to: [pasator@bobfitz1.pcc@gmail.com](mailto:pasator@bobfitz1.pcc@gmail.com).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY

FBC Enterprise seeking full-time staff with experience in media, content creation and high volume printing. Experience preferred in Photoshop, InDesign and video editing. Send resumé and cover letter to: [search@fbcenterprise.com](mailto:search@fbcenterprise.com) or mail to: FBC Search, 302 N Main St., Enterprise, AL 36330.

### BUSINESS

#### FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS

Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in-tubs for sale. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

### SIGNS

#### NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Signs Services, a full-service sign company located in Alabama for 25 years, is ready to help you grow your church sign ministry. From digital message signs to traditional signs. Reliable Signs handles the design, fabrication and installation statewide. [www.reliablesigns.com](http://www.reliablesigns.com). 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

### TRAVEL/VACATION

#### LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville-area log cabin with beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to [www.paradisevista.net](http://www.paradisevista.net) to see pictures of the cabin. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

### FOR SALE

#### CHURCH BUS

24-passenger church bus Ford Eldorado for sale. \$10,500. 256-318-7833 or 256-531-5229.

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### SCHOLARSHIPS

FBC Foundation provides scholarships to students studying for a church vocation at a Baptist seminary. Interested students should complete an application by Feb. 1. Email [foundation@fbchsv.org](mailto:foundation@fbchsv.org) for application information.

# Engage in the Word this year

(continued from page 1)  
single daily blessing that God has planned for me and my family," Anderson said. "As I stand at the doorway of another new year I stand earnestly, purposefully and resolutely on the promise of His abundant provision and never-ceasing forgiveness."

Anderson said he finds encouragement in Lamentations 3:21-23 that God is always faithful and will never fail us, even when we sin and fall away.

"What if I break my resolution with Him? No worries. God never breaks His

for me," Anderson said.

Scripture provides not only encouragement but also a reason for resolutions, according to Tom Richter, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman.

## 'Fulfill every resolve'

"In 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, God's word gives Christians a proper perspective on resolutions," Richter said. "Paul prays for Christians that they may 'fulfill every resolve for good.' We fulfill resolutions by His power."

Though guilt may motivate a lot of resolutions, Scripture

reminds us that we are already called, Richter said.

"The best resolutions are not for our glory — looking thinner, making more money, etc.," he said. "We make resolutions, according to this passage, so that the name of Jesus may be glorified."

To that end church congregations also can set goals, said Keith Smyser, pastor of education and administration at First Baptist Church, Athens.

Church members are encouraged to grow in their commitment to giving and going, Smyser said.

"We want our people to grow in the grace of missions. We ask our people to share the gospel with at least two people this year," he said.

Church leaders also want people of all ages to be engaged in God's word, Smyser said.

"At First, Athens, we encourage our members to be regular readers of the Bible," Smyser said. "We want them to read daily, make communing with God and His word a practice and not allow other

# Spiritual growth resolutions

- ▶ Attend church weekly.
- ▶ Pray at least 15 minutes each day.
- ▶ Read your Bible daily.
- ▶ Join a Bible study — or start one of your own.
- ▶ Learn about fasting.
- ▶ Invite a non-Christian friend or a new neighbor to church.
- ▶ Start volunteering.
- ▶ Tithe.
- ▶ Memorize Scripture.
- ▶ Read Christian books and listen to Christian music.
- ▶ Commit to random acts of kindness.

Compiled by Carolyn Tomlin

things to get in the way."

A 2017 LifeWay Research study found that just 32% of Americans have read most or all of the Bible. Often people start reading and become overwhelmed by the number of chapters (1,189) and the verses (31,102). However, many people do not realize they can read the Bible in a year by reading fewer than four chapters a day.

## Reading programs

To help people follow through, First, Athens, suggests several programs that encourage people to read the Bible daily, including:

▶ **71 Days in Isaiah** — Work your way through

Isaiah in 71 days to experience the full impact of the prophet's word. Plan length: 71 days

▶ **Book Order** — Read straight through from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Plan length: 365 days

▶ **Chronological New Testament** — Read the New Testament in three months in the order the events happened. Plan length: 92 days

▶ **Classic** — Read 3 passages each day, starting with Genesis, Psalms and Luke. Plan length: 365 days

▶ **Daily Gospel** — The plan focuses on the record of the life of Christ. Read through all four gospels in 45 days.✝



**Pastor Charles Lewis recommends Jimmy Dixon**



---

**The Benefits of a Reverse Mortgage**

- Get cash
- Erase mortgage payments
- Start a growing line of credit
- Purchase a home

**Contact Jimmy Dixon**  
**205-567-4800**  
**jdixon@mcgowinking.com**



NMLS #207518

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

# Christian Crossword

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13				14			
15			16				17			
18					19		20		21	
		22		23		24		25		
26	27	28		29		30		31		32 33
34			35		36		37		38	
39				40		41		42		43
		44			45		46		47	
48	49			50		51		52		53 54 55
56			57		58		59			
60					61				62	
63					64				65	

## Across

1. A son of Jacob. (Gen. 30:11)
4. King or emperor.
8. Opened slightly.
12. 52 in Roman numerals.
13. Southern vegetable.
14. Thy will be \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 6:10)
15. \_\_\_\_ him as a brother. (2 Thes. 3:15)
17. A son of Seth. (Gen. 4:26)
18. Wonders and mighty \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Cor. 12:12)
19. Take, \_\_\_\_: this is my body. (1 Cor. 11:24)
21. Go to the \_\_\_\_, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
22. If a man \_\_\_\_ a pit. (Ex. 21:33)
24. Pants' support.
26. Because Judas had the \_\_\_\_\_. (John 13:29)
29. Abraham's nephew. (Gen. 11:27)
31. A prophet of Judah.
34. My God. (Mark 15:34)
36. Daniel was in one. (Dan. 6:16)
38. Foundation.

39. That which I do I \_\_\_\_ not. (Rom. 7:15)
41. Cain lived here. (Gen. 4:16)
43. Peter and John used one in their work.
44. Combat between twopersons.
46. A brother offended is harder to be \_\_\_\_ than a strong city. (Prov. 18:19)
48. Kind of tree.
50. Paper sack.
52. She answered the door when Peter knocked. (Acts 12:13)
56. Red and Dead.
58. To bind up the brokenhearted, to \_\_\_\_ liberty. (Isa. 61:1)
60. Cover. (a road)
61. Abraham's wife, \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Pet. 3:6)
62. Hot or cold drink.
63. Simmer or boil slowly.
64. Falls away or declines.
65. Standard. (abbr.)

## Down

1. We will rejoice and be \_\_\_\_ in it. (Ps. 118:24)
2. Assistant.
3. Ten cent coin.
4. A common childhood illness, \_\_\_\_itis.
5. Slide on snow.
6. Funeral vehicle, he \_\_\_\_.
7. She hid the spies sent out by Joshua. (Josh. 2:1)
8. A sweetened beverage.
9. A son of king Saul. (1 Sam. 13:16)
10. He that heareth the word, and \_\_\_\_ with joy receiveth it. (Matt. 13:20)
11. I will give you \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 11:28)
16. Unusual.
20. The \_\_\_\_ Commandments.
23. The Supreme Being.
25. Experiment room. (abbr.)
26. Nickname for Beatrice.
27. Come unto Me, \_\_\_\_ ye that labor. (Matt. 11:28)
28. Silver and \_\_\_\_ I none. (Acts 3:6)
30. \_\_\_\_ little Indians.
32. \_\_\_\_ not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. (Gal. 5:13)
33. His servants \_\_\_\_ him and told him. (John 4:51)
35. Debt note. (abbr.)
37. \_\_\_\_ I know in part. (1 Cor. 13:12)
40. Spider's home.
42. A seamstress who was brought back to life. (Acts 9)
45. Slip gradually, drift into.
47. National Hockey League. (abbr.)
48. The poison of \_\_\_\_ is under their lips. (Rom. 3:13)
49. Make a mercy \_\_\_\_ of pure gold. (Ex. 25:17)
51. Snatch.
53. Grain. (plural)
54. Eating plan.
55. Will \_\_\_\_ rob God? (Mal. 3:8)
57. Stitch.
59. Sphere.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 5

## Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.  
Dean of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### GOD COMMISSIONS Numbers 27:12–23

Throughout the revelation of Scripture passing on responsibility to the next generation has been a recurring theme. Fathers received the charge to train their sons (Deut. 6:7, 20–25). Aaron modeled the role of high priest for Eleazar through the years of wilderness wanderings. David prepared Solomon to be his heir to the throne. Elijah passed on his mantle to Elisha. Jesus trained His disciples. Barnabas invested in Paul and later in John Mark. Paul entrusted Timothy and Titus with leadership responsibility.

In our focal passage for this lesson we will see Moses identify his successor, a man chosen by God and tested by trial. We will also observe the shepherd heart of Moses, which informs our understanding of the purpose for his sermons in Deuteronomy to the next generation as they prepared to enter the promised land.

Before that, however, we will read of Moses' glimpse of the land he would never enter.

#### Facing Death (12–14)

Moses and Aaron received a death sentence in Numbers 20 and Aaron died soon thereafter. According to God's judgment, neither man would enter the promised land. God reminded Moses that he would die because of his disobedience.

These highlighted verses also demonstrate God's grace as He granted Moses the privilege to see the land promised in the Abrahamic covenant.

We are all facing death. "It is appointed for people to die once" (Heb. 9:27). As we anticipate our inevitable end, what are we doing with the time remaining? Moses continued to lead until he had finished his course (Deut. 34).

As Paul wrote a letter of encouragement to his disciple Timothy, he wrote that he had fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). May God grant us grace to finish well even in the face of death.

### Looking to the Future (15–17)

Though the Lord reminded Moses that he would be "gathered to [his] people," Moses was concerned about the people of Israel. They would need someone to lead them. Moses had already seen one generation lost.

They witnessed the mighty hand of God at work delivering them from Egypt, from natural barriers, from hunger and thirst and from adversaries. Still they wanted to go back to Egypt or die in the wilderness. So God granted their request.

Moses did not want another generation to be lost. God's people needed a shepherd to guide them.

This passage reminds us of another one, when Jesus looked on the people of His day and had compassion on them (Matt. 9:36–38). He instructed His disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers. Then Jesus sent them to be laborers (Matt. 10:1–5).

One of the greatest responsibilities granted a pastor-teacher or a missionary is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:11–12). Paul took this calling seriously and he charged Timothy to look toward the future, preparing others behind him. In fact in a single verse (2 Tim. 2:2) Paul addressed four generations of believers (Paul, Timothy, reliable men, others). May we be found faithful to equip the coming generations to carry out the Great Commission.

#### God Provides (18–23)

God prepared Joshua in a number of ways for his upcoming role. Joshua had led the Israelite army into battle. He stood by Moses when one generation turned its back on him. He heard all the complaints and all the accusations. Through it all Joshua endured. He remained steadfast and God prepared him.

The Holy Spirit of God was in him. Moses publicly placed his hand on Joshua to invest him with authority and Eleazar the high priest would inquire before the Lord on his behalf. Moses did as God commanded and Moses commissioned Joshua for service.✠

## Bible Studies for Life

By Dr. Jim Barnette, Professor, Samford University  
Senior Pastor, Brookwood Baptist Church



### WHAT PROOF DOES MY TESTIMONY OFFER? Acts 26:2–5, 12–18, 24–26

#### Point to your life before Christ. (2–5)

In the introduction of Paul's speech the apostle expresses his good fortune that he makes his defense before Agrippa, not because of his royal rank but because Agrippa is an expert "with all the customs and controversies of the Jews."

Paul does not compliment Agrippa for flattery but for rhetorical effect. Paul addresses Agrippa personally, as though in a conversation between just the two of them. As in his earlier speech in the temple square, Paul began his testimony by referring to his upbringing in strict Judaism. He had been a Pharisee and had lived according to the strictest observances of the Jewish religion. Paul goes on to link his Pharisaic background to his faith in the resurrection.

Paul had been born a Jew, reared as a Jew and trained as a Pharisee. It was precisely his faith in the resurrection of Jesus that most pointed to his fidelity to Judaism because through the resurrection, Israel's hope in God's promises had been fulfilled. The Jews believed fervently in this hope. Paul notes that this hope was shared by all "12 tribes" of Israel.

Why then, asks Paul, can the Jews not consider his conviction that their hope has been realized in Jesus Christ? At first addressing the king, he now turns to the whole crowd in the audience chamber and raises the question why any of them would find it unbelievable that God could or should raise the dead.

#### Point to your changed life in Christ. (12–18)

Paul recounts his Damascus Road experience. It is basically the same as the two previous accounts in chapters 9 and 22, though there are some significant differences. Only in this account does Paul mention that his traveling companions also fell to the ground at the appearance of the brilliant

light. This detail emphasizes the objective reality of the event.

Also, only in this account are the further words of Jesus added: "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." The picture is that of an ox kicking out against the stick that guides it and only causing itself more trouble by doing so. The goads are the pressure now compelling Paul to turn around in his tracks and travel in the opposite direction from where he was heading.

Paul's task is described with two words. He is first to be a "steward." The word highlights his relationship to his Lord. He is the one commissioned to serve his Master and be faithful to Him in all things.

The second word is "witness." As a witness Paul is to bear testimony to what he has seen and experienced. Paul had seen and experienced the Lord, and he had heard his Lord's commission.

Paul is being sent "to open the eyes" of the Gentiles. The phrase here recalls Isaiah 42:7 where opening the eyes of the blind is part of the commission of the servant of the Lord. The call of Paul here is shaped by the Isaiah passage as Paul is called to be a servant who will bring God's justice to the nations and who will bring light to the Gentiles.

#### Others may question your story, but they can't easily dismiss the reality of a transformed life. (24–26)

The Gentile governor takes Paul's talk of the resurrection and his interpretations of the Jewish Scriptures to be insane, the product of too much study.

As Peter had responded to the charge of drunkenness at Pentecost by giving a direct response in terms of Scripture (see Acts 2:13, 15), so Paul responds to the charge of madness with an appeal to both Bible and history. And none of this was "done in a corner." It happened in the world of Caesar, Pilate and Herod. The mighty acts of God are in the real world of history.✠



# Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

## Animated tales, faith-based dramas among top family films of 2019

By Michael Foust  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's not easy these days to find a film the whole family can watch, but 2019 gave us several movies that fit in that unique category.

Some, like "The Pilgrim's Progress," should be viewed by every Christian kid on the planet. Others, like "A Hidden Life," are more appropriate for tweens, teens and above. Here are my 10 favorite family-friendly films of 2019.

### For all ages:

► **"The Pilgrim's Progress"** — It's a marvelous animated retelling of the famous story by John Bunyan, and follows a man named Christian who journeys from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Just like the 1678 novel, it is filled with allegory about the believer's daily walk. It stars John Rhys-Davies ("Raiders of the Lost Ark," the "Lord of the Rings" series).

► **"The Lion King"** — Disney released four live-action remakes in 2019. This one was my favorite.

"The Lion King" is a visual masterpiece and includes positive messages about second chances and family. Rated PG for sequences of violence and peril and some thematic elements.

► **"Toy Story 4"** — Sheriff Woody and a new friend,

Forky, go on an RV road trip with their owner, Bonnie, and her family. But nothing goes as planned. Woody and Forky become separated from Bonnie and then they get stuck in an antique shop. And then Woody runs into a long-lost friend: Bo Peep. Will Woody ever see Bonnie again? I didn't like the film's ending, but that doesn't mean it isn't family-friendly. It is. Rated G.

► **"Overcomer"** — It was the sixth movie from faith-based filmmakers Alex and Stephen Kendrick and it received a rare A+ CinemaScore from moviegoers. The film follows a career-centric high school basketball coach who grows discouraged when his best players move out of town and he is forced to coach cross country — a sport he hates. He then encounters an ailing blind man who — despite being near death — is filled with joy. It's rated PG for some thematic elements and contains no coarse language.

► **"Secret Life of Pets 2"** — Big city canines Max, Duke and their friends try to survive life in the country. That's not the only change in their lives: Katie, Max and Duke's owner has a new baby. "The Secret Life of Pets 2" celebrates the unique bond between pets and children. It's 99% family-friendly and contains only one or two scenes that sensitive children would find disturbing. I liked it better than its predecessor. Rated



Pixar photo

'Toy Story 4'

PG for some action and rude humor.

### For older audiences

► **"Breakthrough"** — It's the true faith-based story of a Missouri teenage boy who falls through an icy pond and is under water for 15 minutes before he is pulled to the surface. He is presumed dead after being rushed to the hospital but regains a pulse when his mother starts praying over his body — 45 minutes after he stopped breathing. It stars Chrissy Metz ("This Is Us") as the mother. Rated PG for thematic content including peril. It includes minor language.

► **"Little Women"** — It's the famous story about four sisters growing up and finding their way in life. This well-done 2019 adaptation stays true to Louisa May Alcott's 1868 novel and is set in the 19th century (unlike the also-enjoyable 2018 version). Thankfully, "Little Women" stays in family-

friendly territory. Rated PG for thematic elements and brief smoking. It contains no coarse language or sexuality.

► **"A Hidden Life"** — A Catholic farmer in Austria refuses to fight for the Nazis — believing Hitler is evil — and is executed. The film is based on the true story of Franz Jägerstätter, a family man who withstood pressure from his village and his country to stand up for what was right. The three-hour film is as inspiring as it is gut-wrenching. Rated PG-13 for thematic material including violent images. It contains no coarse language.

► **"Run the Race"** — A high school quarterback named Zach views football as his ticket out of his small town but is devastated when an injury sidelines him. His girlfriend (Ginger) and his brother (Dave) — both Christians — encourage him but also help him gain an eternal perspective. Tim and Robby Tebow served as

executive producers. Rated PG, it contains no coarse language or sexuality.

► **"Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood"** — A hard-nosed magazine reporter sees his outlook on life and family change after interviewing Fred Rogers of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." Tom Hanks masterfully plays Rogers as a man who is the same type of person in private as he is in public. The movie also depicts Rogers as a man driven by his Christian faith. The PG film includes minor language but none of it is spoken by Rogers.✝



### 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.

# Delayed harvest

## Decade-long friendship in Central Asia finally leads to gospel conversion

**M**ore than a decade ago Liam Remington, an International Mission Board (IMB) representative new to the missions field, found himself in a riverside town in the mountains. That same day a young nomad named L.T. came to the same town. Remington, a trained linguist, was hoping to conduct language surveys in the area. L.T. happened to be from the people group Remington was hoping to meet.

Remington and L.T. met on a street corner. It was a divine encounter. Remington was a willing witness and L.T. was a seeking soul. Remington didn't immediately share the gospel and L.T. didn't immediately believe once he did, but an authentic friendship started that day.

Remington and L.T. shared meals together, climbed mountains to-

gether, herded yak together, went on hospital visits together, chopped fodder together and looked for mushrooms together. That initial divine encounter turned into a tight friendship.

Throughout their relationship Remington was not only faithful to share the gospel but he also was faithful to fast and pray for L.T. However, even though L.T. was seeking to know more about the gospel, he never seemed able or willing to fully put his faith in Jesus.

### 'That is how it is'

One year during a local holiday, Remington and his family spent nine days celebrating the holiday with L.T. and his family. While aspects of their nine days together were encouraging, 10-plus years of weariness set in, and Remington began to lose



IMB photo

In a riverside town in the mountains of Central Asia, missionary Liam Remington met a young nomad. More than a decade later Remington saw his many prayers answered as that young nomad decided to follow Jesus.

hope that L.T. would ever believe.

A year ago L.T. went to Remington's house to help the family pack for a season in the U.S. In the car on the way to the airport, L.T. told Remington he would pray to Jesus for their safe travel. Remington didn't think much about it until he got on the plane. Then somewhere over the Pacific Ocean he thought, "Wait a second, was that L.T.'s way of telling me he's a believer?"

That is exactly what L.T. was saying. Through texts and emails with another IMB worker, L.T.'s faith in Jesus was confirmed. Remington had spent more than 10 years sharing, praying and fasting for his friend and he wasn't even in the same country

with L.T. to celebrate his decision to follow Jesus.

Remington returned after his time in the U.S. and was reunited with his friend who was now his brother in Christ. L.T. was baptized and the ceremony was conducted in his heart language. L.T. has already shared openly about Jesus with his family and friends. He has already been challenged by friends and the local religious community about his decision to follow Christ. His resolute answer thus far has been, "I'm a follower of Jesus. That is how it is."

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (BP)*



Bazaar in Shiraz, Iran

IMB photo