



# The Alabama Baptist

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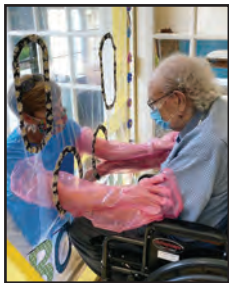
Vol. 185, No. 38  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



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Interpreter looks, finds 'clear' ministry opportunity

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Photo by Sam Evans

Robert Whittle watches from his porch in Leesville, Louisiana, as a disaster relief crew made up of mostly Alabama Baptists removes a tree from his house. He and his wife, Elsie, were without insurance and without much help until the cleanup crew showed up.

## Responding TO NEEDS

### ABDR volunteers deploy to Louisiana after Hurricane Laura

When Robert and Elsie Whittle heard Hurricane Laura was headed right for them, they couldn't believe it.

A tree had already fallen on the back of their home earlier this summer when high

winds and tornadoes had torn through their hometown of Leesville, Louisiana. They'd lost their kitchen, and since they didn't have homeowner's insurance, Elsie had been cooking on the porch. Now they might lose everything.

But they couldn't think about that — right then, they just knew they couldn't lose power.

"Robert has to have electricity because he's on oxygen, so we couldn't stay here," Elsie Whittle said.

So they headed to stay with

family in East Texas. And when they came back, they'd lost their second "kitchen" — a tree had fallen on their porch.

#### Different kind

But that's when a storm of a different kind showed up — a team of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers mostly from North Jefferson Baptist Association, plus two from South Carolina.

They pulled a tree off the front of the house using a  
(See 'Working,' page 8)

### Alabama coast cleaning up after Sally

Romar Beach Baptist Church in Orange Beach and Camp Baldwin in Elberta each sustained significant damage as Hurricane Sally made landfall at Gulf Shores in the predawn hours of Sept. 16.

Romar Beach Baptist Church suffered extensive damage, inside and out, according to pastor Chris Fowler in a Sept. 17 Facebook post. Windows built to withstand 160+ mph winds were shattered, likely by flying debris, Fowler said, and floor tiles and light poles were damaged.

#### Still standing

The church's boardwalk also was destroyed, but Fowler noted in his post that the "cross right next to the boardwalk took the full force of estimated 125 mph winds too — but STILL STANDS!"

(See 'Flooding,' page 8)



Facebook photo

A beachside cross at Romar Beach Baptist Church withstood winds from Hurricane Laura.



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Photo by Sam Evans

Maggie Evans (right) talks with Barbara Molde as a disaster relief crew including some Alabama Baptists removes trees from Molde's yard in Leesville, Louisiana.

## TAB staffers inspired by SBDR volunteers

Eye opening and encouraging" — that's how Jessica Ingram, event coordinator for TAB Media, described getting to see the work of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers helping families and communities devastated by Hurricane Laura.

Ingram — along with Susan Stevens, a sales representative for TAB Media — spent a week in mid-September visiting with SBDR teams around Lake Charles, Louisiana. At the same time, Maggie Evans, special assistant to the editor at TAB Media, and her husband, Sam, were doing the same thing just north of there in the DeRidder and Leesville areas.

All of them went to collect stories, photos and videos to come back and share with TAB readers and Baptists in other states. Along the way, they also occasionally jumped in and helped.

Many of the volunteers "have



Photo by Susan Stevens

Jessica Ingram takes notes while interviewing a Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteer from Arkansas who had been clearing debris in Sulphur, Louisiana.

chosen to dedicate their retirement to disaster relief — passionately serving largely without recognition," Ingram said.

Maggie Evans said she and Sam were touched by the same thing — that volunteers had a "ferocious endurance" to keep doing tough work at house after house in order to share the love of Jesus with the hurting, marginalized and those without help or homeowner's insurance. (TAB)

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

## TAB Media

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

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# MY RASHIONALE

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

[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
@RashionalThts



## Sometimes well-oiled machines are taken for granted

**N**early 20 years ago in January 2001, an earthquake registering 7.6 on the Richter scale devastated El Salvador's city of Santiago de Maria.

More than 4,500 families lost homes in the then-city of 36,000 and developed makeshift shelters out of cardboard, tents and blankets.

Aftershocks followed and a month to the day later, a second earthquake (registering 6.6) shook the city and nation again — while Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers were cleaning up from the first quake.

That was my first experience with an earthquake. It also was my first time to wear an N95 mask and serve as an embedded reporter. Lots of firsts on that assignment but the opportunity to dig in deep with volunteers from Disaster Relief's "Yellow Shirt Army" helped me truly understand the difference made through this ministry.

The late Tommy Puckett, then head of DR for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, encouraged me to learn everything I could about DR and sent me to the state training one year to make sure I did.

He put me in every course — even chainsaw, but only to observe (whew!) — so I could gain insight into each role. He also spent time explaining concepts, strategies and protocols.

Before long, I understood each part of the whole and the connection between volunteers, churches, associations, state conventions, and at that time the North American Mission Board.

A few aspects have adapted through the years, but the heart and soul of "giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name" has remained the same.

And TAB's commitment to and partnership in telling the DR story continues.

Mark Wakefield, who currently leads Alabama's DR efforts, works diligently to keep our coverage teams educated and informed about DR deployments such as what you will read about on pages 1, 8 and 9.

Mel Johnson, who led Alabama's DR efforts before be-

coming lead mission strategist for Autauga Association, also helped TAB staff members covering DR learn the terminology and the difference of trained and untrained volunteers.

DR volunteers don't just show up and figure out what to do on the spot. They are well trained for specific assignments, and deployments are made through an orderly system. Each volunteer knows exactly what he or she will do — it's an incredibly efficient system.

Along with the mentorship and partnership from our state's DR leaders, it was the guidance

of TAB editor emeritus Bob Terry that grew us into a team able to consistently and thoroughly share the DR story.

Dr. Terry led our young team through coverage of the April 1998 tornado outbreak, taught us how to cover cleanup efforts as well as capture the emotions attached to such loss, and how to do it all in a timely fashion.

The 2001 assignment in El Salvador resulted in a six-page feature in the next issue of TAB showcasing a variety of interviews and photos telling the story of Santiago de Maria, its people and the DR effort. 🙏

## RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

### Personal note about Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

**W**hile September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, it's one particular day during the month — Sept. 24, the date of this week's issue — that brings the full scope of childhood cancer into focus for our family.

A few minutes before midnight on Sept. 24, 2009, doctors confirmed a mass on the brain of our 2-year-old niece Belle — and from that moment, life changed forever for her and all of us.

Those who have known me a while know the joy she brought to so many and why I contend my heart is forever streaked in hot pink (her favorite color).

We are nearing six years without her now, but the mark she left will never fade.

Belle taught me how to love like Jesus (consistently showing grace, mercy and forgiveness),

live life to its fullest (despite the obstacles that undoubtedly will appear in our path) and laugh as much as possible (even amid the pain and fear). She knew how to celebrate life — and I want to be like Belle when I grow up.

To read more about Belle, visit [caringbridge.org/visit/bellemitchell](http://caringbridge.org/visit/bellemitchell) or check the "Snapshots of Belle" category at [rashionalthoughts.com](http://rashionalthoughts.com).

So many of you have walked a similar path and understand all that is involved in the battle against childhood cancer.

Our family and friends continue supporting efforts to fund research and assist families currently in the heat of the battle.

If you are one of those families, then I hope you are letting your church family surround you with

love, prayers and various forms of assistance. They want to help.

If you are a church family or small group with a family on the childhood cancer journey, then know there are multiple ways to help even if the family is too overwhelmed to know what they need at the moment.

I'm happy to share suggestions if you want to contact me, but the main thing to remember is that

the journey will be a long one, no matter the end result. And it will always be part of who they are from here on out.

Finding steady, consistent ways to relieve some of the pressures of everyday life truly makes a difference and definitely shines some Jesus on them.

—Jennifer Davis Rash



BELLE & HER BROTHER

# Your Voice



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

## Six reasons your pastor may consider leaving

By Thom Rainer  
Churchanswers.com

It's a trend I have not seen in my lifetime. Some [pastors] are just weeks away from making an announcement. ... They are leaving or getting ready to leave. There are many reasons why, but allow me to share the top six reasons, understanding that they are not mutually exclusive.

**1. Pastors are weary from the pandemic, just like everyone else.** Pastors are not super humans. They miss their routines. They miss seeing people as they used to do so. They would like the world to return to normal, but they realize the old normal will not return.

**2. Pastors are greatly discouraged about the fighting taking**

**place among church members about the post-quarantine church.**

Gather in person or wait? Masks or no masks? Social distancing or not? Too many church members have adopted the mindset of culture and made these issues political fights. Pastors deal daily with complaints about the decisions the church makes.

**3. Pastors are discouraged about losing members and attendance.**

For sure, it's not all about the numbers. But imagine your own mindset if one-half or more of your friends stopped engaging with you. And pastors have already heard directly or indirectly from around one-fourth of the members that they do not plan to return at all.

**4. Pastors don't know if their**

**churches will be able to support ministries financially in the future.**

In the early stages of the pandemic, giving was largely healthy. Church members stepped up. Government infusion of funds for businesses and consumers helped as well. Now, the financial future is cloudy. Can the church continue to support the ministries they need to do? Will the church need to eliminate positions? These issues weigh heavily on pastors.

**5. Criticisms against pastors have increased significantly.** One pastor recently shared with me the number of criticisms he receives are five times greater than the pre-pandemic era. Church members are worried. Church members are weary. And the most convenient target for their angst is their pastor.

**6. The workload for pastors has increased greatly.** Almost every pastor with whom we communicate expresses surprise at their level of work since the pandemic began. It really makes sense. They are trying to serve the congregation the way they have in the past, but now they have the added responsibilities that have come with the digital world. And as expected, pastoral care needs among members have increased during the pandemic as well.

Pastors are burned out, beaten up and downtrodden.

Many are about to quit.

You may be surprised to discover your pastor is among them.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, we face extreme challenges that requires each church to reexamine itself concerning what God is going to do in this challenging time.

The question we have to address is: What can we do as a pastor and staff to make a difference in the community as we minister to a lot of hurting people?

I thank you in advance for the bold ministry that you are already doing. God has His hand upon your congregation. Thank you for sharing the heart of God, along with your compassion and love.

**Barry Cospier**  
Associational mission  
strategist  
Bessemer Baptist  
Association

Believers are to be people of the truth as the Jesus we follow literally calls Himself "truth" (John 14:6).

**Ed Stetzer**

A godly person — one who serves Christ and exhibits purity and integrity in his life — is not necessarily welcomed or admired by those who live differently.

**Billy Graham**

## Letters to the Editor

As a graduate of Gordon College and former professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (and a current faculty member at Samford University in Alabama), I'm very happy to see the recent piece about A.J. Gordon in *The Alabama Baptist*. What a wonderful legacy!

**Roy Ciampa**  
Birmingham, Ala.

I read and re-read the article, "violence in Nigeria," in the Sept. 3 issue. As a Christian, I

pray for loved ones, the physical needs of others, our country and military, etc. I asked myself, "how often do I pray fervently or with a great intensity for missionaries?"

Acts 12:5 tells us that while Peter was in prison, he was prayed for fervently. It is my prayer that I will pray without ceasing, not only for the missionaries in Nigeria but for all missionaries around the world.

**Sue Rash**  
Cairo, Georgia

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# “Learning to live faithfully in a fallen world requires the development of spiritual maturity.”

JOSH WESTER

*Chair of research in Christian ethics, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission*

Periodically, we need to get away. In Mark 6:31, Jesus said to the disciples, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” In this great big beautiful but busy world, sometimes we need a good porch, a patch of woods or some quiet place where we can come apart ... before we come apart.

**Director of Missions Bill King  
Tuskegee Lee Association**

We [as Black pastors] are very well aware of the SBC’s past, but we are also well aware of their repentance and how they are trying to right the wrongs of their ancestors by strategically hiring African Americans to bring about unity and restoration on state and regional levels. We also know that some still

have the mindset of their ancestors, but that’s not all of the leaders.

So with the ones who have the mindset of “there’s no way we will function like the ways of old,” we lock arms and become emotionally involved with each other, as well as spiritually connected.

We are not tokens, passive, nor do we tone down our blackness because God made us that way and He adores us (Rev. 7:9). Believe me, our perspectives are heard. In the midst of all this that’s going on, God’s Word will win ... [has] already won. Love covers a multitude of sins.

**Pastor Dewayne Rembert  
Montgomery, Ala.**

We can release and promote all of

the best moral, ethical and theological statements we want, but when the world sees us grasping for power for ourselves instead of clinging to the cross and sacrificially loving others, it’s a clanging cymbal that contradicts our message.

**Pastor Alan Cross  
Petaluma, Calif.**

On intercessory prayer: Believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand. Use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and you shall surely be a benefactor to thy brethren.

**Charles Spurgeon**

Love is evidence of a transformed heart. Let’s take it seriously.

**Trillia Newbell**



Photo by Susan Stevens

David Williams of Grace Baptist Church in Virgilina, Virginia, serves in Louisiana in mid-September.

## ‘Get back out there’

It was a disaster relief trip in 2018 to Dawson, Georgia. Ryland Davis came down there with us, and I had planned on him being one of our main chainsaw guys. We were in the back at a house cutting on a tree and one of the other guys was cutting. I could see that we could use a second guy safely, so I turned around and said, “Ryland go get your chaps and hard hat and bring a saw.”

He said, “Alright!”

So he’s out, and I get back focused on my job and figure he’ll be back in a few minutes. After a while, I realize he’s not back yet. I look and he’s standing in the middle of the street with his chaps on, saw in hand talking to somebody. And I’m like, “Okay, he’s checking to see if they know how to get to heaven.” I go back to my work.

I get a little task focused, so after about 5 minutes, I’m really getting frustrated that he’s not there. I look, and he’s still talking. Finally, he comes back, and it looks like he’s walking about a foot off the ground. He said, “That guy just accepted Jesus.” I told Ryland, “Take your chaps off, put your saw down and go back into the street and see if you can find anybody else.”

That week we saw seven people saved, just because Ryland stopped being the chainsaw guy and started being an evangelist.

—David Williams

(Transcribed from interview)

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @RMattBoyd

It’s His power and His ministry, and I cannot save the world but carry the responsibility to point to the One that can. #churchplanting

### @PastorJFC

Not everyone who begins with you finishes with you. Attitude: Be thankful for the season you had with them and wish them well as they move forward.

### @timkellernyc

If I have the smile of God, all other frowns are inconsequential.

### @sygarte

I was living under water for decades, holding my breath, seeing poorly, lost and confused. Then a hand entered the water from above. I grasped it, and Jesus pulled me up into the air and light — a world of

beauty and joy! I took a deep breath and shouted “hallelujah.”

### @john316marshall

We like long-term planning, but God gives us only day-by-day, often second-by-second, leadership. We live in a spotlight, not a floodlight. I struggle in this. If I depicted an image of me trying to wait on Jesus, I would be squirming in a chair and constantly checking my watch.

### @jrwilliams740

Rare is the person who will do what is right no matter what it might cost them.

### @jaredwilson

2020 is the mineral spirits to the varnish of our ideal churches and dream ministries. This is a harsh good. As it shatters our idealism and

strangles our self-sufficiency, 2020 is showing us what we’re really working with ... and for.

### @TinaBoesch

The most unforgettable people, the best colleagues and leaders, are the ones who open doors for others, the ones who see potential and call it out, the ones who aren’t threatened by creativity but cultivate and encourage it, the ones who lift up other voices.

### @EdLitton

Prayer is not God’s suggestion box. He needs not my instructions or ideas. I need to submit to His infinite wisdom, power and might.

### @DustinBenge

Every sermon of every faithful man should be preached with only one audience member in mind: God.

## SECOND IN A SERIES

# The Church can help

## 'See Jesus' in the faces of those with mental health issues

By Tracy Riggs  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**S**uicide. Bipolar disorder. Addiction. Churches tend to shy away from such topics, but the issues affect people in the pews every Sunday across Alabama and the nation.

Kay Warren, wife of Saddleback Church Pastor Rick Warren, has dealt with some of these issues personally, losing her 27-year-old son, Matthew, to suicide in 2013. Warren spoke about him at the 2019 Not Alone Conference.

Diagnosed with depression at age 7, Matthew

could have been diagnosed earlier if she had realized children could have depression, Warren said. He battled depression and a borderline personality disorder the majority of his life.

When Matthew was 12, he asked his mother to kill him and put him out of his misery.

The Warrens sought advice from doctors, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals, and numerous Christians prayed for Matthew.

He was a Christian who led others to Christ, Warren said, and didn't really want

to die — he just wanted the pain to stop.

Warren said she “kept on believing, kept on hoping, kept on asking for a miracle, kept praying Scripture, kept begging others to pray as fervently as we were,” all along knowing Matthew might die.

“For years we lived with the knowledge that any given day could be the day he couldn't fight any longer,” she said.

### Mistaken ideas

“I wasn't stupidly naïve or ridiculously convinced God would deliver,” Warren added. “I just knew He could, and I would ask Him to do it until either He delivered Matthew here on this Earth or welcomed him home sooner than we expected.

“Many people in the church have the wrong idea that mental illness is only a spiritual problem and can be ‘fixed’ with prayer,” Warren said.

Those outside often think the church is ignoring the problem, and they're not necessarily wrong, said Jeremiah Johnston, author and president of the Christian Thinkers Society.

“Too often difficult questions aren't addressed in the church, though Jesus asked more than 300 questions and there are more than 3,200

questions in the Bible,” Johnson said.

Steve Marshall, Alabama Attorney General and mental health advocate, lost his wife to suicide in 2018. He told Not Alone Conference participants that his wife, Bridgette, had a lifelong battle with mental illness, beginning in childhood with migraine headaches. This led to an addiction to opioids and a cascade of other issues.

Marshall said that just prior to her suicide Bridgette seemed “as happy as I had seen her in a long time.”

Soon afterward, she went downhill, complaining of various physical ailments, he said, noting she said she would go to the hospital but instead committed suicide the next afternoon.

Bridgette told Marshall on the morning of her death, “I don't have any purpose, and I'm tired. My body's failing me, and I don't know why. I've had pain for a long time, and I don't want to endure it anymore. I'm just a burden.”

### Advocates needed

Warren believes the church is uniquely positioned to help fill the gaps where the mental health system hasn't been able to keep up.

Research suggests 25% of those experiencing a mental health emergency go to a pastor before they seek a mental health professional.

There is a great tradition of caring for the physically sick, with the church the entity that invented the idea of hospitals — but not a great tradition of caring for those with mental illness, Warren lamented.



She noted the message of Isaiah 61, which says the Messiah came to bring good news to the poor and to release the captives.

So often the “captives” described in this verse are thought to be in physical captivity, Warren said, but the captivity can also be emotional.

Some of the poorest people are those living with mental illness, she said, and they also are “captive” — both physically and emotionally.

Emphasizing that mental illnesses are real, common and treatable, Warren shared some powerful statistics:

- ▶ One in five will live with a mental illness in the next year.
- ▶ There are not enough psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers or other mental health professionals to keep up with the need.
- ▶ A shortage of inpatient beds exists, which means those who need help often are unable to get it in time.
- ▶ The prison system has become the No. 1 provider for mental health care.
- ▶ In 2018 there were twice as many suicides as murders.

Warren said the church needs to see Jesus in the faces of those in need. Her prayer, she said, is that believers have eyes to see those with issues of mental illness.

### ‘The least of these’

“Remember that Jesus said, ‘What you have done for the least of these, you have done for Me.’”

Warren devised an acronym, CHURCH, which spells out practical ways the church can help:

**C — Care for people living with mental illness and their families**



123rf.com

Many think mental illnesses require professional help so there’s nothing they can do.

A better way to think about it is simply as an illness. Caring doesn’t cost a penny, but it requires an investment of time.

People who deal with mental illness often burn bridges with friends and family. When they turn to the church, they find they aren’t accepted there either. God loved us when we were still sinners and He expects us to do the same with others.

One simple thing anyone can do — notice the one sitting by himself at church. Sit with that person; listen; invite him for coffee or a movie. If everyone did this, there would be much less loneliness in the world.

### **H — Help with the basic needs of people living with mental illness and their families**

Mental illness is a “no casserole” illness. If there is a death or physical issue, we are quick to jump in and help with food or other physical needs.

However, we whisper about those with mental illness. We withdraw. If someone has been diagnosed with a mental illness, it’s similar to being diagnosed with a physical illness and can be overwhelming.

### **Help with practical needs**

Having someone help with practical needs can allow the newly diagnosed person time to sort out the new reality.

#### **U — Utilize volunteers**

In every congregation there are people who are able and willing to help. They can pray, coordinate meals, help a newly diagnosed person navigate the mental health system, do home visits or be trained as a short-term counselor until a professional is available.

Churches can open their doors to support groups.

### **R — Remove the stigma surrounding mental illness**

The church has an amazing ability to validate or invalidate people. No one should have to whisper about his or her life while at church.

Church should be a safe place and a powerful way to help remove the stigma. Remember, it’s not a sin to be sick.

### **C — Collaborate with the community**

Team up with mental health professionals to receive training on the signs of suicide and other mental health topics.

Build a resource list of mental health and other needed services.

### **H — Offer hope**

We are hope dispensers. People need to know we won’t give up on them; won’t walk away.

There is a “forever family” with stronger bonds than human families and relationships.

Many times when people get a diagnosis and cooperate with a treatment plan they are healed.

But there are some who have the best care who aren’t healed in this life. This is true for both physical and mental illnesses.

The message of the church should be, “Whether you are healed or ill we are here for you.” Connection is extremely important.✝

## Practical ways the church can help

**C — Care for people living with mental illness and their families.**

**H — Help with the basic needs of people living with mental illness and their families.**

**U — Utilize volunteers.**

**R — Remove the stigma surrounding mental illness.**

**C — Collaborate with the community.**

**H — Offer hope.**

# Working TOGETHER

## SBDR volunteers serve thousands of hours, meals, gospel conversations in Louisiana

(continued from page 1)  
skid steer loader and chainsaws, and the Whittles cheered.

They were one family of many who had help show up in their yard in recent days.

On Aug. 27 — a few weeks before Hurricane Sally pounded Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (see story, page 1) — Hurricane Laura, a category 4 storm, plowed through the Whittles' state as well as parts of Texas. It caused major damage, killed 14 people and left more than half a million without power.

But Southern Baptists responded, including many Alabama Baptists. So far, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers have collectively served more than 93,700 hours, prepared more than 315,000 meals and helped with cleanup at more than 1,100 homes that had significant storm damage from Laura. They've also made nearly 1,200 gospel presentations and seen 263 people make professions of faith in Christ.

And even as other crews got ready to help in places where Sally might

cause damage, teams in Louisiana kept going.

"Flexibility is the key to this work," said Tim Folds, the blue hat crew leader of Geneva Baptist Association Disaster Relief, which was also serving in Leesville. "You never know during storm season what's going to happen."

### Divided attention

It was a personal statement for Folds, who serves as pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Slocomb. As Hurricane Sally made landfall on the Alabama coast in the wee hours of Sept. 16, Folds found his attention divided. While he cut up trees in Louisiana, he was thinking of his church back home, as well as his daughter who lives in Bonifay, Florida, just about an hour from the Gulf Coast.

Phil Merritt, a member of Watermark Church, Ashford, also felt torn between two disasters. His son lives in Fairhope, just northeast of Mobile.

"We've been texting back and



For more disaster relief photos, visit [tabonline.org/DR2020](http://tabonline.org/DR2020).

Photo by Sam Evans

William Edwards of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan, cuts up a tree that fell outside Barbara Molde's house in Leesville, Louisiana, when Hurricane Laura hit Aug. 27.

forth all day, and he seems to be doing well," Merritt said Sept. 16, adding that he was right where he needed to be for the moment.

"People are in misery when we come to them, and we can bring a

smile to their face," Merritt said of the disaster relief work.

Just down the road from the crew that was working on the Whittles' home, Folds and Merritt worked to help homeowners like Barbara

## Flooding, downed trees cause most damage in Alabama

(continued from page 1)

In Elberta, Camp Baldwin took a direct hit from Sally, losing more than 100 large trees and sustaining severe damage to its pier and zipline, along with water damage to some buildings.

Camp director Gil Johnson said a kitchen generator provided temporary power to run the freezer, cooler and well, enabling camp staff to take care of families, volunteers and neighbors during cleanup.

"[We] already have three volunteers from Ex-

treme Ministries (Pell City) cutting and cleaning up our RV park and main campus area. Hopefully we will be able to host more volunteers to help here and also in our community around us, which is also in bad shape."

Hurricane Sally made landfall near Gulf Shores as a Category 2 storm, the first hurricane to hit Alabama since Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The storm's slow movement brought torrential rainfall,

along with strong winds, to most of coastal Alabama, then trekked north across central Alabama.

The National Weather Service measured more than 8 inches of rainfall in some parts of southeastern Alabama on Sept. 16,

bringing the threat of river flooding across the region.

In Elba, the Pea River crested at 2 feet above flood stage, with localized flooding forcing school closures.

Many school systems in

Mobile and Baldwin counties remained closed through Sept. 18 as well.

Sally's winds brought down power lines and trees, leaving nearly a half million people without power in Alabama and Florida.

By Sept. 18 at 7 a.m., Alabama Power reported that power had been restored to all but 75,000 customers in the Mobile area.

### ABDR at work

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief set up incident management sites in Mobile and Baldwin Baptist Associa-

tions to begin receiving and assessing requests for assistance.

"This is a developing situation," said Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"The leadership will be constantly evaluating and adjusting the plan. I am grateful for all the encouragement and support that has been offered.

Other states are standing by to assist us. We will ask for their help when appropriate." (TAB)

To donate to hurricane disaster relief efforts, go to [sbdr.org/connect/donate/](http://sbdr.org/connect/donate/).

Molde, who came back to Leesville after the storm to find trees down all around her house.

She was thankful for the Sept. 16 arrival of a yellow-shirted Southern Baptist Disaster Relief chainsaw crew consisting of volunteers from Alabama, Florida and South Carolina.

It's "truly amazing" to be on the receiving end of disaster relief efforts, she said.

A crew also helped with cleanup at First Baptist Church, DeRidder, Louisiana, which was one of the state's seven Incident Command Centers, hubs where Southern Baptist teams from across the country converge to serve the areas in need.

The church had 17 pecan trees down around it when a trailer full of volunteers from Alabama showed up, cleared the church property and left, said Dan Batchelor, pastor of administration at the church.

"We don't know who they were, but we said, 'Roll Tide,'" he joked.

But Batchelor is serious when it comes to ministering to the community.

He's been through storms before — prior to coming to First, DeRidder, he served in a similar role at Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles, an area about an hour south that was hit particularly hard by Hurricane Laura.

### Grieving with others

He grieves with the people around him who face significant losses.

"I try to ease them toward looking to what they do have. They still have their life. They still have their family," he said — and they still have a Father who loves them.

By coming alongside Batchelor, Alabama crews and volunteers from other states help the Incident Command Center keep rolling to help the hurting people in the community.

Crews have been serving between 2,000 and 3,000 meals a day from First, DeRidder, working in conjunction with the American Red Cross.

And from the most experienced workers to the first-time volunteers like David Branham, a member of Calcedonia Baptist Church, Gardendale, all say they see clearly the purpose that keeps them going even when they're weary.

"It's been great," Branham said. "We've got to pace ourselves, but everybody is really great at checking on one another and taking care of one another." (TAB)

# Pointing to Jesus

## Jackson County couple spends retirement chasing storms, loving people

**D**ebbie Reese has met a lot of people over the past 13 years that she says she'll never forget — people who have lost homes, friends, family members and in some cases, everything.

But there's one memory in particular that moves her to tears — the day she saw a 10-year-old girl in Moore, Oklahoma, standing and staring at the spot where her school used to be. A tornado had ripped through the building a couple of weeks before.

"I went and put my hand on her shoulder and just started talking with her," Debbie said. "It ended up she was suffering from survivor's guilt because her friend was killed and she was not — she was not at school that day."

That simple gesture led the young girl to write the idea on the back of a t-shirt for the sake of everyone around her, to possibly help someone else — "If you're hurting, or if you're sad, just put your hand on my shoulder and I'll talk to you."

Debbie said the opportunity to help the young girl — Lauren — through her healing process in that way made an impact on her too. And every year since, Debbie has put her hand on the shoulder of person after person, asking them what they need, showing them love and pointing them toward the hope of Jesus.

### 'It's a mission'

"It's a mission," she said. "It's our mission that God has placed us in to be able to share His love with others who are hurting."

It was through God's guidance that she and her husband,



To view disaster relief videos, visit [youtube.com/tabmediagroup](https://youtube.com/tabmediagroup).

Photo by Sam Evans

Al and Debbie Reese — experienced white hat leaders for disaster relief — spent a week serving at the Incident Command Center for Hurricane Laura relief at East Leesville Baptist Church in Louisiana starting Sept. 17. The Reeses are members of South Sauty Baptist Church, Langston.

Al, got into disaster relief work in 2007, she said. They'd both retired from a career as special agents with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and they "knew when we retired we needed ministry, and

this is the one He led us to," Debbie said.

They ended up at South Sauty Baptist Church, Langston, whose pastor, Jerry Butler, did chainsaw training for disaster relief volunteers.

"He got us involved at that time, and it was such a great opportunity," Al said.

The Reeses went to training together and haven't stopped since. They've traveled all over the Southeast and to other parts of the country ministering to people in the aftermath of hurricanes, floods and other disasters.

They're both trained as white hats for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, which means either one of them can be called out as the lead disaster relief director for a command post when needed.

For their most recent assign-

ment — the Incident Command Center at East Leesville Baptist Church in Louisiana — Al gets to wear the white as they work to help those with damage from Hurricane Laura.

But Debbie is still his white hat — the real boss, he joked.

Al said when he and Debbie start out toward a disaster relief assignment, they always "say a prayer that God would go before us and prepare safe passage for us and that He would touch the people that He has already intended for us to reach."

### Answered prayers

He remembers one specific time that happened in St. Augustine, Florida — he knocked on the door of a woman who cried and said she'd been praying for someone to come help her.

"I said, 'Well your prayers have been answered, and our prayers have too because He coordinated this meeting between both of us,'" Al said. "That's one of the things I love about this mission — being able to show and share the love of Christ." (TAB)

# Alabama Baptist leaders offer advice for new church year

By **Michael J. Brooks**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

An “ever-changing situation” is how Mike Jackson of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions describes the current situation in church life due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The situation is ... almost most changing hour by hour in public school and even in football,” Jackson said. “It’s a time our church leaders face great strain.”

Director of the SBOM’s office of LeaderCare and church health, Jackson served as host for the SBOM webinar “Forecasting the Future.”

## Returning to church

He referenced a recent post by former LifeWay Christian Resources CEO Thom Rainer who speculated that some church members won’t return after the quarantine.

“Those Rainer calls ‘cul-

tural Christians’ may find it easier to not attend the church since it might not be as convenient as it once was,” Jackson explained.

George Yates, SBOM church health strategist, said every church must seek what works in its context.

“It may take us a few months or even years to get

over the virus and social unrest in America, but going back to the way things were is unwise,” Yates said. “We must focus on sending, more than on gathering, for the work of discipleship.”

**“We must focus on sending, more than on gathering, for the work of discipleship.”**

**George Yates  
SBOM church health strategist**

“I don’t call it ‘the new normal,’ but I call it ‘the new reality,’” he said. “We must listen to multiple voices in making decisions these next months, not just to those ‘squeaky wheels’ at the moment. We have spiritually mature members to whom we must listen for counsel.”

Yates noted one church that recently prepared and delivered a special meal to its seniors. Now the church

is talking about others they can serve.

“Service projects help us connect,” Yates explained.

Webinar co-host Ken Allen, also an SBOM church health strategist, noted that just as people can become disoriented after an injury, the church has received blow after blow and is experiencing “disorientation.”

“We’ll be inviting people to regather, and we need to help with their anxiety and explain the personal benefits,” he said. “We should explain how meeting together is God’s design for believers and benefits us in an emotional and spiritual way.”

Jackson noted some research suggests that an increased number of pastors could leave active ministry in the coming months.

“This could be the result of many post-pandemic factors including church closures, burnout/depression and conflict,” he said. “Pastors must network and connect in some way,” he noted. “Scripture commands us to bear one another’s burdens.”

Jackson also spoke about deaconship in the church in the face of a pandemic.

“It might be difficult to



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elect new deacons now, but churches can suggest extending the terms of their current deacons,” he said. “And [they] are important. They’re taking the lead in this time and helping our churches through their contributions.”

Yates noted another aspect of church administration, the nominating committee, which normally presents recommendations in September, but might be off schedule this year. He said there might be “a better way” to pursue the process.

“We sometimes ‘pick and choose’ from among those rotating off another committee, or someone who will always say ‘yes,’” Yates ex-

plained. “A better way is to ask church leaders to help. For example, a preschool leader can recommend to the nominating committee those he or she knows who have a heart for this work. Thus the nominating committee becomes a ‘clearing house’ of sorts.”

Allen noted budgeting is another difficult issue facing the church. “Maybe the church can have a ‘dream and hope’ meeting and identify between two and five priorities for budgeting,” he suggested. “It’s a good time to refocus on ... how much the church can do for missional impact.”

Watch the full webinar at [vimeo.com/452665927](https://vimeo.com/452665927).





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## COVID-19 and its impact on

# ALZHEIMER'S

### Pandemic-forced separation exacerbates memory-related care concerns

By **Laura Lee Leathers**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, those living in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and memory care units have been greatly affected by the pandemic. Those with dementia and their families have suffered the grief of separation as these facilities closed to outside visitors.

Social media has given us many photographs and stories about the disease and its impact on people's lives during this time.

#### Window visits

One photo depicts an elderly woman sitting in a wheelchair, reaching out to touch an individual standing outside her window. Studying the photo, you see tears on the wrinkled woman's face. Words seem

inadequate to describe the loneliness, anxiety, pain and heartbreak of this experience. This instance is a snapshot of the isolation COVID-19 has created and gives us a realistic view of what is happening today — the growing isolation and holding on to hope.

Lanell Smith has found herself caught up in this new dilemma. Her mother, Vernice Downs, was diagnosed in 2016 with Alzheimer's. Downs is now in the advanced stages of the disease and living in a facility in Montgomery. Her last unrestricted visit was during the final week of March.

Since then, Smith has tried Facetime and window visits, but "nothing compares to being able to hug Mother and say, 'I love you' in person," she said.

These days, Downs

mostly sleeps through their visits. On the days she does try to communicate, it isn't easy to understand what she is saying.

#### Relying on caregivers

"Mom has declined quite a lot since March, due to the advanced care required because of her disease," Smith said. "Our family feels that her decline may have been exacerbated by the lack of visits with those she knows and loves."

Care is not the problem, Smith said.

"Mom receives wonderful care at the nursing home, but it's difficult not to be able to monitor her health personally. It's hard to know whether we're just catching her on a bad day or if the apparent decline is her new normal. It's harder to watch for those subtle physical or cognitive changes that can indicate sickness. We must rely more heavily on her caregivers than ever before, and while we trust them to give her great care, it hasn't been easy."

Anyone who is currently

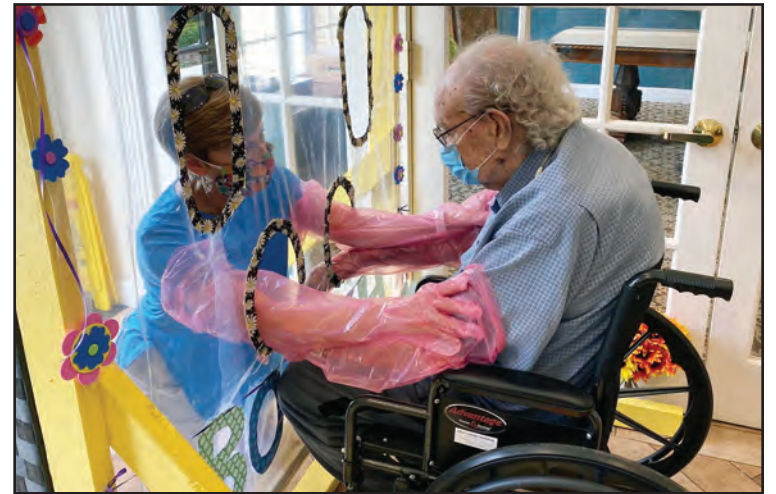


Photo courtesy of Jennifer Smith Whitaker

Byron Smith, 91, a retired Alabama prison chaplain and pastor, hugs his daughter, Jennifer Whitaker, through a plastic window at his memory care community in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

walking this road will tell you there are moments of frustration, sadness, anger and hopelessness. Meanwhile, the disease doesn't

stop its progression because of COVID-19. The memory-making moments which could have been are gone.

Smith said she has gotten through by relying on her faith.

"My faith in God and His goodness has helped me navigate the challenges and uncertainty," she said. "In a way, it has been easier to leave her in His hands

because there was little we could do for her. The staff at the nursing home are a great blessing. I know she is well cared for, and that means the world to us. We hope that she doesn't worry and wonder why we haven't been able to visit her. We are trusting God to be her comfort."

#### No easy answers

There are no easy or pat answers to this growing debilitating disease and COVID-19's impact. But support groups, articles and organizations providing information and tools to help in small and large ways are available.✝

For a list of resources on Alzheimer's disease and dementia, visit [tabonline.org/dementia-care](http://tabonline.org/dementia-care).



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“WAIT ON THE LORD: BE OF GOOD COURAGE, AND HE SHALL STRENGTHEN THINE HEART: WAIT, I SAY, ON THE LORD.”

# 3 stories you should know



Screenshot/SBC graphic (right)

SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Ronnie Floyd hosted an online event Sept. 15 to talk about the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting to be held in Nashville June 15–16. SBC President J.D. Greear announced Sept. 14 the 2021 theme, “We Are Great Commission Baptists.” The theme connects to a movement around the SBC to use the unofficial name, which was approved by SBC messengers in 2012 and reflects what we should be known for, Greear said. More information can be found at [sbcannualmeeting.net](http://sbcannualmeeting.net) and at [tabonline.org/2021-theme](http://tabonline.org/2021-theme). (BP)

## Stanley shifts to pastor emeritus at FBC Atlanta

In a video announcement following the online service at First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Sept. 13, longtime pastor Charles Stanley announced his transition to pastor emeritus.

“As much as I love being your pastor, I know in my heart this season has come to an end,” Stanley said in a prerecorded message.

Stanley, who recently turned 88, will become pastor emeritus. He said he will focus his energies on In Touch Ministries, which he founded in 1977.

Stanley served two years as associate pastor at FBC Atlanta before being named pastor in 1971. The church has more than 12,000 members and millions of online viewers.

Anthony George will transition from his position of associate pastor, which he accepted in 2012, to senior pastor. (TAB)

## Chick-fil-A pulls plans for San Antonio airport

Chick-fil-A said Sept. 14 that it no longer plans to open a restaurant in the San Antonio airport, even though the Texas city relented after more than a year of legal wrangling.

The dispute between the restaurant chain and the city began in March 2019 when some city council members opposed Chick-fil-A getting a spot at the airport, citing donations made by company owners to anti-LGBTQ causes.

“While we are not pursuing a location in the San Antonio airport at this time, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve San Antonians in our 32 existing restaurants,” Chick-fil-A said in a statement.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton praised the agreement. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott signed a bill in 2019 in defense of Chick-fil-A and religious freedom. (AP)

## Headline news from around the Southeast

### Georgia

The Georgia Baptist Conference Center in Toccoa, operating at a loss for the past 20 years, will be offered for sale on the real estate market, *The Christian Index* reported. Purchased in 1963 by the Georgia Baptist Convention, the camp is projected to lose \$1.1 million this year, partially due to the pandemic lockdown, and currently needs a projected \$8.31 million in repairs. Operations at the camp will be suspended Sept. 30.

### Florida

Three Florida Baptist churches recently partnered to provide essential items, such as diapers, shampoo and detergent, to hundreds of families coping with financial setbacks caused by the pandemic. Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, Florida, hosted the event, along with Chinese Baptist Church of Coral Springs, Florida, and Cross United Church in Lighthouse Point, Florida. Lo-

cal ministries “Food for the Poor” and “Matthew 25: Ministries” also participated in the distribution, the *Florida Baptist Witness* reported.

### Louisiana

Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, Louisiana, has become a hub for community outreach after Hurricane Laura cut a swath of destruction through the city of 78,000 on Aug. 27. The church is reaching into the community with clean-up efforts, provision of 20,000 meals a day and distribution of food and other necessities donated by church members and the community. As of Sept. 10, the site had registered 115 professions of faith, Louisiana’s *Baptist Message* reported.

### Mississippi

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief teams are preparing for their second mobilization of the

season as Hurricane Sally made landfall Sept. 16 in Gulf Shores, Alabama. At the same time, Mississippi Baptists still are responding with relief efforts in Louisiana, following Hurricane Laura’s landfall on Aug. 27, Mississippi’s *Baptist Record* reported. “God is at work, even in the destruction of the storm,” said Hubert Yates, interim disaster relief coordinator for Mississippi Baptists.

### Tennessee

Pro-life advocate Abby Johnson spoke recently in the chapel on Union University’s campus in Jackson, Tennessee, the *Baptist and Reflector* (Tennessee) reported. During the evening event, hosted by the Union University Auxiliary, Johnson stated that almost a million abortions are performed annually in America. “[God] put you here for one reason and one reason alone, and that was to evangelize His gospel, and part of His gospel is the gospel of life,” she said.

# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

► **Billy Austin**, longtime leader of Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers and interim director of missions of Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, died Sept. 12. He was in his 59th year of ministry.

Austin served as manager of Clara Verner Tower — an Alabama Baptist facility until 2007 — from 1988 until becoming president of ABRC in 1991. He retired from ABRC Jan. 31, 2013.

During his ministry, Austin served as pastor of several churches including First Baptist Church, Tuscumbia; Hopewell Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa; East Tallassee Baptist Church, Tallassee; and First Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Florida.



AUSTIN

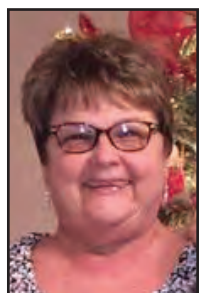
He served two terms on the State Board of Missions, one term on the State Board's executive committee and 30 years as registration secretary for the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Austin was a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Austin is survived by Linda, his wife of 53 years; a son, Mark Elliott Austin; and one granddaughter. (TAB)

## CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Gail Cates** says it would take a lot to get her off the piano bench. But it didn't take much to totally surprise her — she had no idea Antioch Baptist Church, Oxford, was planning a special service Aug. 30 to honor her for 50 years as their pianist. Her brother preached the sermon that



CATES

morning, and her grandson sang the special music.

"The whole thing was very touching," she said. "I was completely surprised."

Cates got started as a church pianist 63 years ago at nearby Grace Baptist Church. Then when she joined Antioch Baptist in 1970, she had barely walked in the door when someone who had heard her play at a revival asked if she would play for them that day.

"I've been doing it ever since," Cates said. "I've gotten to play with a lot of music ministers and a lot of other people over the years. It's been a great experience. God's been good." (Grace Thornton)

## CONECUH ASSOCIATION

► **Brooklyn Baptist Church** will not hold its homecoming service scheduled for Oct. 11. The church will celebrate its 200th anniversary next year.

## ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

► **Jarman Leatherwood** is the association's

new part-time congregational wellness strategist/catalyst. He will assist in the areas of church planting, revitalization and partnerships with African American churches. Leatherwood is pastor of House of Hope and Restoration in Huntsville. **Craig Carlisle** is director of missions.

## HALE ASSOCIATION

► Back in 1840, 11 people decided there needed to be a church on Five Mile Creek. Now 180 years later, **New Hope Baptist Church, Moundville**, still meets. The congregation celebrated that milestone anniversary Aug. 23 with a special service.

New Hope Baptist built its current building more than 130 years ago after the original log building burned, and by God's grace they're still meeting there today, said church member Faye Colburn.

"We had a great day," said Colburn, whose husband, Eugene, has kept up with the church's history and sketched its buildings for the church records.



Photo courtesy of New Hope Baptist

She was saved at the church in 1960 and finds her life's story intertwined with that of New Hope Baptist.

"The church was our life," Colburn said. "In the 1950s, Sundays were set aside for worship and study of God's word. The highlight of the year was the revival."

The week before the revival, the men of the church would gather under a brush arbor and pray, she said. "I live up the road from the church, and we could hear them praying for hours." (Grace Thornton)

## Giving improves as pandemic continues

Giving to congregations has shifted upward after churches closed their buildings earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to a new State of the Plate survey.

Research conducted in August finds that 64% of churches across the country reported in August that giving is either up (22%) or steady (42%). By contrast, in April, a similar share of churches (65%) said they had seen a drop in giving.



Pixabay photo

"This is encouraging news for churches across America," said Brian Kluth, a former pastor who is now national spokesperson for the National Association of Evangelicals' Financial Health initiative. "These new findings show that most churches and their families are figuring out ways to survive and even thrive in the midst of all the challenges that the pandemic has thrown their way."

The findings are based on responses from 1,076 mainline, evangelical and independent Protestant churches. Seven in 10 of them had less than 200 attenders before the pandemic.

A third of the responding churches were in cities or suburbs, almost another third were from towns, about a quarter were from rural areas or small towns and 9% were from large cities.

The majority of respondents — 87% — said their congregations are currently meeting for in-person worship services. But 58% said attendance in person is half or less compared with pre-pandemic times. Six percent said they had seen an increase in attendance. (RNS)

## Persecuted church

### Mother of four killed in India while protecting daughter from attack

NEW DELHI, India — A Christian mother of four was killed in July for refusing to let her daughter be raped by Hindu men.

Two masked Hindus slit the throat of 26-year-old Sunita Devi (name changed) in Regadi village.

Assailants then dragged Devi's body to the jungle, placed it in a sack and dropped it in a river.

Police arrested four suspects. Two suspects were released; the other two confessed and were charged with rape.

Assailants had previously raped Devi's

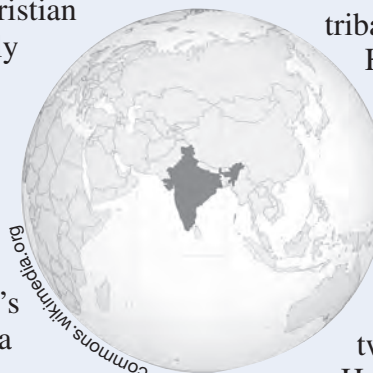
daughter three times and assaulted three other Christian girls.

Christian sources say followers of the tribal Sarna religion, influenced by Hindus, persecute Christians. Police officials discount that such incidents constitute persecution.

Devi's was one of eight Christian households in the village of 25 families. She was the fifth Christian killed in India in a two-month period.

Her husband has relocated the family due to ongoing threats against his family.

India is No. 10 on Open Doors' 2020 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



commons.wikimedia.org

# IMB, Barna partner to examine future of missions

By Margaret Colson  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hat is the future of missions?  
To answer that question, the International Mission Board commissioned Barna Group this year to conduct a survey and prepare a report on younger Christians' perspective of missions.

"As the largest missionary-sending agency of our kind, we're compelled to search for solutions to the challenges of a declining missionary candidate pipeline and a plateaued giving stream," IMB President Paul Chitwood said in the report.

"We're obliged to ask the hard questions: How do we bridge the gap between shrinking church attendance and a burgeoning world population that doesn't have access to the gospel? How does the next generation contribute to fulfilling this spectacular vision so beautifully revealed in Revelation? In essence: What is the future of missions?"

On Sept. 2, representatives from Barna Group and IMB conducted a webinar to discuss findings with an international group of close to 1,000 people, including Brian Gay, minister of missions at First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

## Research notes

"The presenters on the webinar did an excellent job of breaking down the research and sharing their findings. Some information they shared was very encouraging. For example, one presenter emphasized that 'half of young Christians 18 to 34 (52%) qualify as potential missionaries.' While I wish that number was closer to 100%, it is exciting to see that many young people are qualifying and identifying themselves as candidates for missions work," said Gay.

Much of the information shared, Gay believes, con-



Unsplash.com

firms what many Christians already know intuitively, such as the finding that young Christians who know a missionary are more likely to say they will give to missions, pray for missionaries and go on a short-term or long-term missions trip.

At First, Montgomery, he said, "We recognized that truth a long time ago, and for this reason we are constantly looking for ways to introduce our congregation to missionaries from the field."

The church maintains a mission house to host in-residence missionaries and conducts a tri-annual global missions celebration, inviting enough missionaries to join every Sunday morning Bible study class in the church, including youth and young adult classes.

During the webinar, Ja-

son Thomas, IMB's African American church mobilizer, spoke to the hopeful statistic that Black churchgoers are eager to engage in missions.

When speaking to churches, Thomas says he wants to "unearth the rich history of African Americans in missions so they actually see themselves there."

## Global missions

"We need to dispel the myth that all generations and all ethnic groups aren't called to global missions," Thomas said.

Oscar Tortolero, IMB's Hispanic church mobilizer, mentioned the unique giftedness of Hispanics growing up in the U.S. who are often multilingual and culturally prepared to reach others in the U.S. and take the gospel overseas.

"We have a huge potential to take Hispanics to the

nations. Let us not miss it, because now is the time. We are ready to go."

Sarah Farley from IMB's student team said that young adults have much to offer to the spread of the gospel, but they may hesitate to be involved in long-term missions because of financial, educational and lifestyle concerns.

## Missions education

She encouraged churches, leaders and parents to "engage them with accountability when it comes to investing in missions, engage them with relationships with missionaries and equip them and disciple them so they can go."

Gay agrees, saying that Alabama Baptists should be encouraged that church members are willing to participate in missions through praying, giving and going. "It is up to us as church

leaders to spark that willingness into action by doing all we can to engage our congregants with real life missions experiences.

In today's context, that might be facilitating your members to participate in a virtual prayer walk. Or perhaps you can invite missionaries to join a special conference call with your congregation to share about their work and pray for them from long distance.

"We will have to be creative, but God is still at work, and we have a special opportunity to join Him in making His gospel known from the neighborhoods to the nations."

IMB and Barna Group will continue the discussion of the future of missions as part of IMB's Every Church, Every Nation Summit, Oct. 29, at 7 p.m. Learn more and register at [imb.org/future-ofmissions](http://imb.org/future-ofmissions).

*The full report, The Future of Missions, is available at [barna.com/missions](http://barna.com/missions).*

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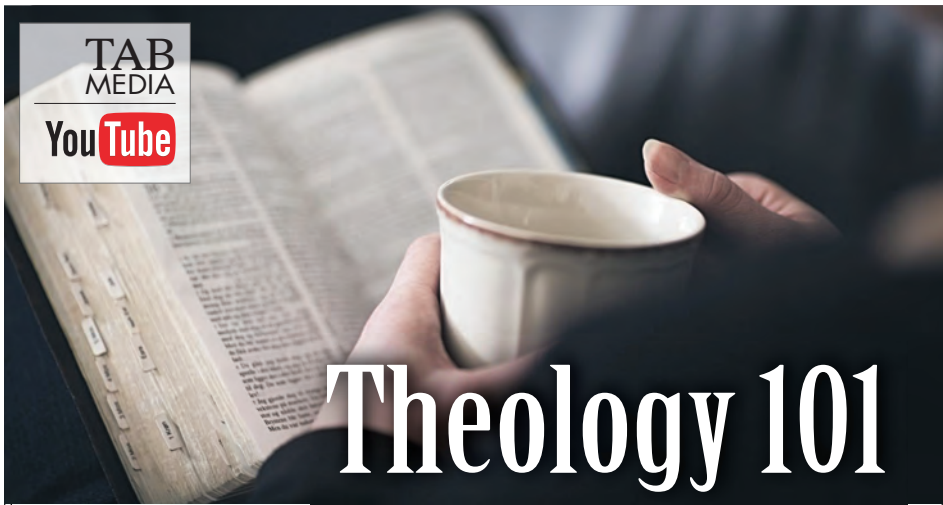
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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Biblical Mysteries

### God's Will

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

This week Theology 101 draws our attention to what the Bible calls the mystery of God's will. In Ephesians 1, after speaking of "the good pleasure of His will" (v. 5), the passage later speaks of "the mystery of His will" (v. 9). As we have been emphasizing the past two weeks, a biblical mystery is something God has disclosed or made known, which we mortals would never have known or understood apart from that divine disclosure.

#### Redemption

In this passage from Ephesians, God's will is that people experience redemption, which God has made known and available through Christ's atoning blood. At the heart of this revealed truth of redemption is God's "forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (v. 7). Who would have ever dreamed for a moment that a Holy God would choose the shed blood of His incarnate Son as the basis for offering repentant sinners an eternity of forgiveness? What we would have never discovered, God has freely disclosed in the gospel.

Furthermore, God's provision of and disclosure about sin's forgiveness is not based on human goodness but His own "good pleasure which He purposed in Himself" (v. 9). When we ponder the greatness of God's love in that He gave His only begotten Son because He does not desire that anyone should perish but

have eternal life, it is a disclosure we could never have imagined or discovered. We can only conclude that His action is to the praise of His own glory and not called forth by our deserving it. It is one of God's most blessed mysteries.

#### Gracious plan

From all eternity, God had in mind this gracious plan He would carry out in Christ. In the fullness of time, He unwrapped this mystery when His only-begotten Son was wrapped in swaddling clothes at His birth and in a loin-cloth at His death. The realization of God's revealed plan awaits its full achievement in the "fullness of the times" when He gathers together "in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (v. 10).

God will achieve the fullness of His will, including a miraculous conception and virgin birth, an incarnation of Himself, a sinless life and a sin-bearing death, a bodily resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand.

The fullness of God's will still awaits Christ's return for the redeemed and their endless fellowship in the beauty and purity of new heavens and a new earth.✠

*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.*



# Interpreter looks, finds 'clear' ministry opportunity

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

When COVID-19 hit, Vickie Brown knew sewing wasn't her gift. But she wanted to help people in any way she could, so she reached out to Jean Caldwell, a friend who was making masks by the dozens for people in the community.

"I'd never sewn before, but she got me going," Brown said.

And it wasn't long before that seemingly unrelated ministry circled back around to something she was gifted in — Deaf ministry. She made some masks for the employees at Alabama Sunshine, a sauce company in Fayette.

"David Smith, the co-owner, is deaf, and he's a member of our Deaf ministry at church," said Brown, a member of Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

And after that first round of homemade masks, Smith's sister Julie Madison, the other co-owner of Alabama Sunshine, sent Brown a suggestion and a pattern to go with it.

She'd heard of someone in Kentucky who had found a way to make masks with a clear panel so that the Deaf and hard of hearing would be able to read the wearer's lips.

People in different parts of the country had started replicating the masks, but as far as Brown knew, no one was doing it in their part of the state.

So she tried making some for Alabama Sunshine, and from there, "it just mushroomed," she said. An article about the masks ran in the *Tuscaloosa News*, and she started getting "orders" for the masks from individuals, school systems who wanted them for their students in speech therapy, even a wedding in North Alabama.

"We don't charge for it; it's our ministry," Brown said. "I think God gives you ministry and things to do and opportunities to serve. That's

been our way of serving the community during COVID-19."

For much of her life, Brown has looked for where God might be providing opportunities. When she was a student at Troy University, she remembers wondering where God might have gifted her for his purposes. Then while working at a summer camp, she saw deaf campers speaking in sign language and wondered if that might be something she could learn.

Soon after, she moved to Tuscaloosa for graduate school at the University of Alabama, and on her first Sunday visiting Calvary Baptist, she looked down from the balcony and saw someone in the front interpreting the service through sign language for the deaf members of the congregation.

"I called the next day and got involved," Brown said. That was in 1976.

She's now been involved in Deaf ministry for more than 40 years. In 1977, she and her husband moved to Pell City, where she started a Deaf ministry at First Baptist Church. Then they moved to Brent, and she was the sign language interpreter at Brent Baptist Church from 1979 until 2007, when they moved back to the Tuscaloosa area and Calvary Baptist.

#### Watching a little seed grow

On Sundays now, she's back at the church where she first started learning, doing sign language interpreting with her homemade mask with the clear panel.

"When COVID-19 first started, I thought to myself how hard it was going to be for the Deaf community to read lips, but I had no idea that through her sending us that pattern that it was going to become such a big project for us and such an area of focus," Brown said. "It's amazing how God has a plan and orchestrates things. Sometimes a little seed is planted and it's amazing what grows out of that little seed."✠



Photo courtesy of Vickie Brown

Vickie Brown, a sign language interpreter, serves the Deaf community during the pandemic by sewing masks with clear panels.

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**The 2020 Annual Meeting of the  
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Montgomery, **will not be held this year.**  
Watch *The Alabama Baptist*, email, social  
media and [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention) for details  
about an online one-hour State Missions  
Celebration, Tuesday, November 17 at 2 p.m.,  
and a virtual IMB Sending Celebration that  
same evening. Also, visit [albaptistpc.com](http://albaptistpc.com) for  
information about the virtual Alabama Baptist  
Pastors Conference taking place all  
day Monday, November 16.

# Important to implement, review children's ministry area policies

By Michael J. Brooks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Danielle Bell, minister to children at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, said her congregation practiced an intruder alert a few months ago and discovered “we weren’t as prepared as we thought we were.”

“One of the doors we thought was locked wasn’t and the walkie-talkies in the sanctuary were on a different channel from ours,” she said. “This is a major reason we need to practice the ‘big’ things like fire, weather and intruder drills.”

## ‘Safety First’ tips

Bell was presenter for the recent “Safety First” webinar coordinated by the office of Sunday School and discipleship of the State Board of Missions.

Bell noted three major areas to consider.

**1. Policies.** “We’re people-centered, but policies help us deal with people better,” she said. “Policies

demonstrate that we care for people. This is where we all quite literally ‘get on the same page.’”

Bell said in one church a volunteer offered to serve in both morning Sunday Schools.

“Whereas I appreciated his spirit, I referred him

to the written policy that said our workers needed also to demonstrate their faithfulness to worship, so he couldn’t miss worship by working another hour. The policy in place helped me with this matter.”

Bell listed several policy topics, including job descriptions, discipline, social media, child protection and incident reporting.

**2. Procedure.** “We have our policies available in the classrooms,” Bell said, noting the policies, or how-tos, should be reviewed periodically. “I found an idea from

another ministry of hanging a backpack on the wall with items like flashlights but also with laminated copies of policies, most of them in bullet points for ease of reference.”

**3. Practice.** “We try to practice the ‘small’ things and the ‘big’ things.”

In the former category she mentioned her church’s use of security labels and writing incident reports.

“We note any cuts or scrapes and get the teacher to write

what happened (for incident reports). We also report our contacts with the parents.”

Bell addressed the standard policy of “two unrelated adults” in a room with children.

“Maybe in smaller churches, cameras in the room might substitute, but I think you should talk with your attorney or your insurance carrier,” she said. ☪

For more children's ministry ideas, visit [dandibell.com](http://dandibell.com).

To reach the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship, call 800-264-1225.

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## Christian Crossword

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### Across

- In \_\_\_\_ was there a voice heard. (Matt. 2:18)
- And so forth.
- Cut them with \_\_\_\_, and with harrows. (1 Chron. 20:3)
- They called his name \_\_\_\_; he is the father of Jesse. (Ruth 4:17)
- Standing room only. (abbr.)
- Equal.
- Freezing point centigrade.
- Greek “T.”
- House. (Spanish)
- Value of 15 across.
- To break camp.
- To be. (Spanish)
- Then I will be an \_\_\_\_ unto thine enemies. (Ex. 23:22)
- Matthew, sitting at the \_\_\_\_ of custom. (Matt. 9:9)
- One. (Scottish)
- My \_\_\_\_ Sal.
- Chinese Communist Party chairman
- Found in \_\_\_\_ as a

- man, he humbled himself. (Phil. 2:8)
  - Summer TV fare.
  - By faith \_\_\_\_ ch was translated. (Heb. 11:5)
  - Then I will set my face against that man and his \_\_\_\_\_. (Lev. 20:5)
  - I will \_\_\_\_ of thee. (Job 38:3)
  - Grain.
  - Tel \_\_\_\_.
  - Miss Farrow.
  - We stumble at \_\_\_\_ day. (Isa. 59:10)
  - Anger.
  - Put on strength, O \_\_\_\_ of the Lord. (Isa. 51:9)
  - \_\_\_\_ Timnah. (Gen. 36:40)
  - Ardor.
  - No. (Scottish)
  - I am ... the bright and morning \_\_\_\_\_. (Rev. 22:16)
- ### Down
- Woman’s nickname.
  - Lincoln’s nickname.
  - Mal de \_\_\_\_.
  - And \_\_\_\_ was over

- the tribute. (2 Sam. 20:24)
- To bar legally.
- \_\_\_\_ la la.
- Pharisees and lawyers rejected the \_\_\_\_ of God. (Luke 7:30)
- And thou shalt be \_\_\_\_, because there is hope. (Job 11:18)
- His king shall be higher than \_\_\_\_\_. (Num. 24:7)
- \_\_\_\_ me thoroughly from mine iniquity. (Ps. 51:2)
- Thin strip of wood.
- Atomic Energy Commission.
- And the \_\_\_\_ hear. (Matt. 11:5)
- Sicilian resort.
- After “bees” and before “dees.”
- Belonging to me.
- His father saw him, ... and \_\_\_\_ and fell on his neck. (Luke 15:20)
- The son of Omri, the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 9:4)

- \_\_\_\_, a servant of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:1)
- Short for Anthony.
- For a \_\_\_\_ some would die. (Rom. 5:7)
- Joy shall be in a \_\_\_\_ over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:7)
- There was no room for them in the \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 2:7)
- Sunbeam.
- Improves.
- Picture holder.
- For a good man some would even \_\_\_\_ to die. (Rom. 5:7)
- Not rendering \_\_\_\_ for evil. (1 Pet. 3:9)
- Polish distance measure.
- \_\_\_\_ and Ithrite. (2 Sam. 23:28)
- Though our \_\_\_\_ ward man perish. (2 Chron. 4:16)
- Central European river.
- Abner, the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Sam. 14:50)

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 27

## Explore the Bible

By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### GOD REIGNS Isaiah 23:8–18

Chapters 13–23 of Isaiah focus on the judgments of the surrounding nations of Israel. Israel lies on the path between Egypt and the rest of Asia Minor, an area where empires often came to power.

The Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks all held part of Asia Minor at some point and had to contend with Egypt. Therefore, Israel was often forced to defend herself against invading troops or form alliances with various nations for protection. This often caused the people of Israel to trust in these alliances instead of trusting in God.

Through the prophets, God would send warnings to the people of Judah and Israel to turn to Him for their salvation, not the surrounding nations. When Israel refused to do this, God would use the surrounding nations to chastise Israel in order to bring them back to God.

However, God did not consider these foreign nations innocent. They faced God's wrath for their actions.

### God is just. (8–12)

Chapter 23 of Isaiah deals with the Phoenicians, specifically the city of Tyre. Tyre was a rich and prosperous city due to its port and interactions with the rest of the Mediterranean world. However, this wealth led to pride, a sin which God detests.

Tyre was built partly on an island, making it a difficult city to capture. The Assyrians would exact tribute from Tyre but the city on the island was not able to be subdued. Despite being on an island, the city of Tyre was still not out of the reach of God.

When Alexander and the Greeks invaded the area centuries later, the Macedonian ruler took rubble from the part of Tyre on the mainland and used it to create a bridge out to the island, where he then captured the city and enslaved its populace.

What we can glean from these verses is that God will carry out His promises, and nothing can stop Him from carrying them out. This is valuable for us today. As we live with so much uncertainty around us, we can be assured God knows our situ-

ation, and He will provide for us, ultimately in the form of salvation through Christ.

We can trust God despite our circumstances and know He is more powerful than any situation we face. We are called by Scripture to trust in the Lord not our circumstances (Matt. 6:25–34).

### God is active. (13–14)

To show how Tyre would not remain safe, Isaiah pointed to the Chaldeans in Babylon. The leader of the Assyrians, Sennacherib, defeated the Chaldeans earlier, and this showed that Assyria had the power to carry out the attack on Tyre.

Just as God gave an assurance He would fulfill His plan, God gives us assurances of His promises. One of the greatest episodes of this comes in Romans 8:18–39.

In this section, Paul gives us assurance that our salvation is secure in Christ and nothing can separate us from God. In trying times, this section is a bulwark against doubt and fear. Because Christ has risen from the dead and intercedes for us, we can see Christ's love for us and the assurance that we cannot lose our salvation.

### God is honored. (15–18)

Isaiah prophesies that God will restore Tyre and this restoration will involve the profits from Tyre's business as dedicated to the Lord.

One of the key themes throughout the Old Testament is the nations will come to know God. Even though the nations continually attack and harass Israel, in the end, all nations will come to a true knowledge of the Lord.

We see this in part today, as missionaries go throughout the world telling people about Christ, bringing redemption to the people of all nations.

It also helps us look at the surrounding nations not as enemies of the United States, but as people who are in need of the gospel.

This should refocus our perspective so that we see people as creatures made in the image of God, not foreigners who are strange to us. 🌍

## Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



### HONOR LIFE Exodus 20:13; 1 Samuel 26:7–11, 22–25

Some biblical commands are elegant in their simplicity. Consider, for example, the Decalogue's command, "Thou shalt not steal." What could be clearer? And yet, a moment's reflection tells us that behind this apparent simplicity lies a web of complexities that requires a great deal of explanation and clarification.

Although stealing might seem to be something as simple as breaking into a person's home and taking that person's property, the Torah tells us that lots of other actions can be thought of as stealing too.

Taking another person's ox is stealing (Ex. 22:1), but so is letting your grazing livestock wander over and eat in a neighbor's field (22:5), carelessly letting a fire get out of control and burning up a neighbor's grain (22:6) or leaving an open hole and letting a neighbor's animal fall in and get hurt (21:33–34). All of these actions are stealing in a sense.

On the other hand, there are times when taking property is not seen as stealing. Reasonable taxes, for example, are not treated as stealing in the Bible, even though they involve taking away someone's property.

Stealing is a more complicated matter than it might first appear.

### Human life is precious to God — and should be precious to us. (Ex. 20:13)

What is true for stealing is certainly true for another of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill."

As masterful as the King James Version can be, its rendering "kill" has generated a great deal of confusion. After all, the Bible condones and even commands killing of various sorts. Key here is that the command is directed not against killing per se but against murder.

Here, Numbers 35:15–21 provides a helpful clarification as it outlines the difference between a person who kills someone unintentionally and the person who does so on purpose. It is the latter person who is described using the same term as the Decalogue (Hebrew *ratsakh*). But

even the added element of killing a person on purpose does not entirely square things away. After all, Numbers 35 also commands that the murderer be killed, and this imposition of the death penalty is certainly done on purpose. One additional clarification is needed: murder involves intentionally killing a person without divine permission.

### We respect life by acknowledging God's authority over it. (1 Sam. 26:7–11)

An illustration of this last element of murder is vividly played out in David's interactions with Saul. On one occasion when Saul was pursuing David through the wilderness, David and two of his men daringly snuck right into Saul's camp.

David's companion Abishai begged him to let him kill Saul and rid David of his enemy. But David refused. David was certainly not without his flaws, but on this occasion his actions were exactly right.

David insisted, "The Lord himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed."

### We respect life by treating every life as equally valuable. (1 Sam. 26:22–25)

David recognized that even though Saul was his enemy, he did not have God's permission to harm the one God had anointed as king. To do so would have been murder. David took the king's spear and water jug to show Saul that though he could have killed him, he did not. Clearly moved by David's having spared his life, Saul himself called off the pursuit of his young rival.

The effect that David's act of mercy toward Saul produced taps into a much deeper aspect of the sixth commandment. What God ultimately desires for humanity is an ethic of life and mercy rather than violence and revenge. This ethic of mercy only begins with the command not to murder; it does not stop there. 🌍



# Media reviews

TV/MOVIES

## Disney's 'Mulan' is an entertaining remake, but price, ethics at play

By Michael Foust  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A trip to the theater for a family of four costs around \$40 — and that's without the popcorn and soda.

What if you could save a few bucks and watch the same movie at home on the comfort of your couch?

That's the proposal Disney presented to families this month when it skipped the typical theatrical launch amid the pandemic and debuted "Mulan" (PG-13) on Disney Plus for the eye-opening "Premier Access" price of \$29.99.

The movie is Disney's latest live-action remake and tells the story of a courageous Chinese woman who disguises herself as a man in order to fight in the army and defend her country from invasion.

But is it worth \$29.99, especially when it reportedly will be free to subscribers on Dec. 4? The answer to that question will vary with each family, although I can offer one opinion: "Mulan" is one of Disney's best live-action remakes yet.

The movie is a retelling of the 1998 animated film, which itself was based on a poem/folk song, the "Ballad of Mulan," set in China around the 6th century A.D.

### Plot involves sacrifice

The film follows an active young girl whose sense of adventure collides with her society's belief that women should be quiet and serve their husbands. The plot thickens when China faces invasion, and Mulan's aging father — who has no sons — is drafted into the army, even though he is partially disabled and walks with a leg brace.

Knowing her father will face certain death, Mulan steals his sword and armor and escapes on horseback

in the middle of the night, entering the army disguised as a man.

The gravity-defying battle action is jaw-dropping, and the colorful scenery makes you wish you could hop on a flight and visit China in person. The 2020 version also contains enough surprises to keep fans of the 1998 movie guessing.

### Mostly family friendly

The film contains no coarse language or sexuality, although we do see Mulan's clothes-less body from behind, blurred by the camera and obscured by foliage, when she bathes in a pond.

"Mulan" earned its PG-13 rating for sequences of violence that include bow-and-arrow and sword battles and multiple bodies lying on the ground. (The violence remains bloodless, but we see arrows kill soldiers dozens of times.)

The film offers positive messages about loyalty, bravery, telling the truth and devotion to family. Some have argued that the movie also promotes women in combat, but the film's real message is for parents to celebrate their daughter's talents. (Mulan's father had urged her to "hide" her gifts — gifts that could have been used in ways that didn't involve a battlefield if he had encouraged her.)

Of course, "Mulan" also presents moviegoers with an unbiblical worldview. Her family has a shrine, presumably to their ancestors. Her father asks the ancestors to protect her in battle. When she has success, he tells her they're celebrating. Finally, a bird-like phoenix — which we learn is the "emissary" to the ancestors — flies high over her, apparently protecting her.

Meanwhile, Disney has been criticized for filming "Mulan" in



Disney photo

### 'Mulan'

the same province, Xinjiang, where it has forced 1 million individuals (mostly Uighers) into concentration/labor camps. That's an issue that's far more problematic than the \$29.99 price tag.

Also streaming this month:

### Adults/teens

► **"Social Dilemma" (Netflix)** — Former employees for Facebook, Instagram and other Internet giants reveal how social media is changing society for the worse. Rated PG-13 for some thematic elements, disturbing/violent images and suggestive material.

► **"Away" (Netflix)** — American astronaut Emma Green leaves her husband and daughter behind to join an international crew to Mars. "Away" is a 10-part dramatic series that is entertaining but also includes some sensuality, a little language (but not over the top) and an LGBT angle. If you want a filtered version, then monitor VidAngel and ClearPlay. (Neither had released filters as of mid-September.) Rated TV-14.

► **"Challenger: The Final Flight" (Netflix)** — This four-part docuseries examines the 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger explosion, a disaster that could have been avoided

but resulted in the death of seven astronauts.

### Children

► **"Red Shoes and the Seven Dwarfs" (VOD, DVD)** — It's a modern retelling of the Snow White story — only this time, the princess must save seven princes who are turned into dwarves. It has a surprising ending that teaches the true meaning of beauty. Rated PG for some action/peril.

► **"Spirit Riding Free: Riding Academy: Part 2" (Netflix)** — Lucky and her friends continue their adventures at the prestigious Palomino Bluffs Riding Academy. The "Spirit" series is a favorite of horse-loving children, including my young daughter. Rated TV-Y7.

## 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.

# God is 'my biggest SUPPORTER'

## Former Phillies infielder Travis Mattair hopes to shed God's light over the world

By **Bill Sorrell**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**W**hile listening to Kari Jobe's "Revelation Song," Travis Mattair had a revelation of his own.

"I wasn't really happy with baseball at the time," said Mattair, who had been drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies in the second round of the 2007 Major League June amateur draft but had left the Phillies' spring training in 2010.

Always wanting to play college basketball, Mattair, then 21, knew he was at a point in his life that this would be his last opportunity, so he walked on at Boise State. About two weeks into fall practice, he got a call from the Phillies asking if he had any interest in returning to the team.

"It was kinda like God [saying], 'I think you need to give this a second chance,'" said Mattair who was going to his job as a barista at a coffee shop when he heard "Revelation."

A third and first baseman, Mattair played seven seasons in professional baseball, the last three with the Cincinnati Reds organization and with the Pensacola Blue Wahoos in the Double-A Southern League in 2013 and 2014.

In his 788-game career, he hit 63 home runs, had 364 RBIs and ended with a .246 batting average.

### Mattair's faith journey

But throughout baseball and beyond, his faith has been the lead-off hitter. Through Young Life, Mattair, a native of Kennewick, Washington, became a Christian when he was a freshman in high school and continued to grow from there.

"It completely changed my life," he said. "God gave me something to look up to and somebody bigger than myself that I can always turn to. I know He is always there for me,



**TRAVIS MATAIR**

Photo courtesy of Daniel Venn/Pensacola Blue Wahoos

in the good times, in the bad times. He is my biggest supporter, especially in this game. It's very calming and reassuring that He is always there with me.

"He is always a rock to stand on when you feel like you are falling," he said. "He is everything. There is not a day that goes by that He is not leading me. I am so thankful He is on my side, and I found Him. Hopefully I can shed His light over the world."

Mattair's former teammates saw the light through his actions and example.

Former Pensacola teammate Bryan Anderson, a catcher who played for St. Louis, the Chicago White Sox and Oakland, said Mattair always set a good example "by being a good Christian, by being a good person, a great teammate" with "good leadership."

"He cares about everybody. He's funny. He is always joking, keeping the mood and spirits up in the clubhouse," Anderson said.

Cincinnati Reds pitcher Michael Lorenzen, who played with Mattair in Pensacola, described Mattair as a servant. "He is always there to uplift other people. He is less worried about himself and more focused on others."

Drew Hayes, who pitched for Cincinnati after Pensacola, called

Mattair's example "positive."

"The way he treats people, the way he handles fans. He's somebody you can look to every day to be a positive light in the clubhouse," Hayes said. "He's nice to everybody... He's a gentle giant."

Mattair, who is 6'5" and 210 pounds, received the nickname "Moose" the day he was born. He weighed 10 pounds, 2 ounces.

"I had the biggest head the nurse had ever measured and big ol' ears," Mattair said. "The first time my dad saw me he said, 'He's a moose' and it stuck."

His parents, Steve and Carol Mattair, are his role models.

"They are incredible. They have always taken me to church. I didn't know why they took me early on in my life. It all made sense when I found out who Jesus was," said Mattair, a member of South Hills, a Baptist church in Kennewick.

Through Baseball Chapel, which he enjoyed during seasons, he also grew spiritually.

However, baseball threw its share of temptations at him.

"It's a test every day. You've really got to check yourself through prayer," Mattair noted. "Your mind goes places it shouldn't. It's a moral choice. When [choices] are thrown at you, you have to take a look at yourself and say, 'What would Jesus do?' and ask, 'Is this what I really need to be doing right now or should I be doing something else?'"

Mattair depends on his favorite Bible verse, Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

When Mattair returned to the Phillies in 2011 he tore his oblique, missing two months. "I never did get right," he said.

He was traded the next year and eventually retired from pro baseball in 2015, shifting to coaching.

Mattair coached at Pensacola Training Academy and RBI Pensacola (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities). He is founder of Unlimited Training Academy in Pensacola.

In July 2019, he was hired as head baseball coach at Gulf Breeze (Florida) High School, coaching his first season in 2020.✠

*Life is so much  
brighter when He  
is on your side.*

**Travis Mattair**

To read Travis Mattair's story in its entirety, visit [tabonline.org/TravisMattair](http://tabonline.org/TravisMattair).