



The Alabama Baptist

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

December 24, 2020

Vol. 185, No. 51
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Merry Christmas

From Editor-in-Chief
Jennifer Davis Rash
and staff at TAB Media

When they saw the star, they
rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

MATTHEW 2:10



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The Alabama Baptist
will not publish a Dec. 31 issue.
The next issue will be Jan. 7.



The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 13.



Photo courtesy of Janet Erwin

Disaster relief work is one of many ways Janet Erwin has been involved in statewide ministry during her time at *The Alabama Baptist*.

Erwin to retire Dec. 31, leaves legacy in Baptist publications

Janet Erwin says if she had stepped straight out of her role at national Woman's Missionary Union and into retirement, she doesn't think she would've handled that very well at all.

"I'm a Type A person, and that had been my life for 12 1/2 years," Erwin said of her busy role as editor of WMU's *Missions Mosaic* magazine and various other publications.

So what she stepped into instead of retirement became a big blessing for Alabama Baptists — for the past two years, she has served on the TAB staff, first in an executive editor role assisting Editor-in-Chief Jennifer Davis Rash, then as copy editor helping with TAB's weekly print edition.

"Janet was so kind to join our team just as I was stepping into the editor role," Rash said. "She and I worked together on the missions field as I was starting out in editorial work right out of college. She became a great mentor and friend, and we kept up with each other through the years."

The two met while Rash was serving a two-year IMB missions term at the Caribbean Christian Communications hub in Hollywood, Florida.

Erwin and her husband, Monte, served a total of 19 years with the

IMB in the Caribbean and in Latvia. Erwin says she enjoyed serving the Caribbean and that working with Latvian women was one of the "sweetest times" of her life.

But when she got to WMU, she found a new way to work out her missions call.

"I will always have my missionary call," she said. "There at WMU, I was able to tell the story of the missionaries. And we do that at TAB too — we tell their stories."

When she retires Dec. 31, she's looking forward to a new season of "missionary life" in which she can invest in a variety of community ministries.

"I never would've imagined all the twists and turns the journey would take," Erwin said. "But I've been blessed."

Rash said the staff and readers at TAB are the blessed ones.

'A blessing'

"Janet's willingness to come alongside our team and help me transition while also in her own transitional season headed toward retirement was a blessing to me personally and a great benefit to the overall TAB team," she said. "She has contributed greatly to the work produced by TAB and will be missed, but we are excited for her in this next season." (Grace Thornton)



ERWIN

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

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

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Includes print, digital, app and full web access

Group Rate per subscriber per year — \$16.25
(Check with your church or group to find out if it has a TAB group account)

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

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MY RASHIONALE

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

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Celebrating Janet and her dedicated service to TAB, missions

EDITOR'S NOTE — As part of our send-off to TAB Media team member Janet Erwin, I wanted you to hear from her. She has been a mentor and friend to me for more than 25 years, and we both have loved how God connected our paths. Janet helped raise me during my first role out of college and for the past two years, she's helped me transition into my new role here at TAB while preparing for her own transition to retirement.

By **Janet Erwin**
Executive Editor/Copy Editor, The Alabama Baptist

Repeatedly, I've heard others say you'll know when it is time to retire, and they were right. My time is the end of 2020.

Looking back, I am amazed at the opportunities God has showed on me along the way.

Serving as a staffer at Shocco

Springs Baptist Assembly (now Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center) the summer before my high school senior year became my first job and entrance into the ministry world.

I entered the official working world the day after high school graduation and have pretty much been going ever since either part time or full time.

Along this journey, a multitude of people have shaped my life and given me a variety of opportunities.

One is Mrs. Fitzgerald who taught me typing and accounting in high school — two skills I have used at some level throughout my working days.

Missionary service

I also will always be beholden to Stan Nelson who selected me

for the missionary journeyman program to serve two years in the Bahamas.

I credit Morris Wright, a missionary, for recognizing my editorial/writing potential and sending me on an editorial path writing the first Vacation Bible School curriculum for the English-speaking Caribbean churches.

Upon leaving the missions field, Mr. Reynolds really took a risk when he hired me as a 5th grade teacher with an alternative teaching certification (from passing four state tests) but not holding an elementary education degree.

Missions Mosaic editor

Joyce Mitchell opened the door for me to work out my missions calling stateside by hiring me in an editorial position at National Woman's Missionary Union.

I spent 12 1/2 years there among some of the most creative, committed people, telling the stories of our missionaries, garnering support for them in many ways and pouring into the lives of interns.

I retired from National WMU in December 2018, but my working days were not finished.

Jennifer Rash invited me to be a part of the TAB team when she became the new president

and editor-in-chief. She and I had met while serving on the missions field with Caribbean Christian Publications in the early 90s.

What a joy it has been to serve with her and the others at TAB these two years.

I've watched all the transformations take place, from physical changes to the building to internal work policy and practice changes brought about by Jennifer's leadership.

Plus, I have had the opportunity to experience a varied job description, learn new things, enjoy flexibility and be affirmed and encouraged in the last two years of my working career.

Finally, I'm thankful to my parents who instilled into my brothers and me a strong work ethic. I'm also appreciative of my husband and sons' support throughout the years.

But mostly, I'm thankful God bestowed on me gifts and abilities I've tried to faithfully use in His kingdom work.

I look forward to my next chapter when I am free to volunteer in a variety of ways.

God is already showing me a ministry possibility with some widowed women in my neighborhood.

His work is never done! 🙌



Jennifer Davis Rash (center) met and served alongside the Erwins on the missions field working with Caribbean Christian Publications through the International Mission Board in the early 1990s. Janet (left) and Monte (right) were curriculum editors. Along with assisting the Erwins in editorial work, Jennifer also helped entertain Trey (front, right) and Trent (front, left) from time to time.

Photo taken during Jennifer's goodbye dinner from the missions field in 1995/courtesy of Jennifer Rash

Your Voice



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

Christmas carols remind us of God's grace

By James Hammack
theropetab.com

I love Christmas — a lot. It's one of my favorite times of the year. And I like singing as well. What does that mean? Christmas music. I'm a "year-round-Christmas-music-should-be-played" kind of guy.

Given my history in the church, Christmas carols are always associated with this time of year. "Away in a Manger," "Joy to the World" and "O Come, All Ye Faithful" are classics I grew up singing.

And in many ways, there was a serenity and clean-cut picture that began to form in my head around that first Christmas night.

It wasn't necessarily the carols or the pristine nativities or really anything else other than my own assumptions of how the Savior came into the world. Fast forward to my

30s and my understanding of the particulars of Christ's birth have changed quite a bit.

The clean manger of straw and stark white swaddling clothes have been exchanged with a small ditch dug into the ground containing an unknown number of bacteria in the remaining saliva of the animal food trough and stained clothes from use in the cleaning of a newborn baby.

'Glorious condescension'

But more than that, Jesus, the Son of God, condescended — came down, humbled Himself to become ... a man. And He did this to save His people. His people. It's a glorious condescension.

"She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

It's been a year full of crazy and hardship and depression. Take these difficult times and misconceptions of the first Christmas and you might be in the same position as many others: "Christmas is good, but I'm still pretty broken and beaten. I'm not good enough for Christ."

Enter a new Christmas album in 2020: "Heaven Has Come" by Sovereign Grace Music.

You aren't good enough, and neither am I. But you are exactly the kind of person Christ came for.

"O Come, All You Unfaithful" is a particular song on that album that highlights the kind of people Christ was born for: the broken, the beaten, the imperfect, those with checkered pasts, the workaholics, the perfectionists, the self-made but also self-focused ... in other words: the sinner.

God sent Jesus to come down here because we couldn't possibly make it up there to Him. Christ is born for you. So come to Him because He has come to you first.

"He's the Lamb who was given, slain for our pardon./ His promise is peace, For those who believe./ So come, though you have nothing.

Come, He is the offering./ Come, see what your God has done .../ Christ is born for you."

It's OK to weep at the news of this gift of Jesus. See this love on display, be affected by it and live out this love as a follower of Jesus.

So come, even you who are unfaithful because Christ is faithful in our place.

O come, Thou Dayspring,
come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine Advent
here;

Disperse the gloomy clouds
of night

And death's dark shadows
put to flight!

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
"O Come, O Come,
Emmanuel"

Come, thou long expected
Jesus;

Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins
release us;

Let us find our rest in thee.
"Come, Thou Long
Expected Jesus"

Joy has dawned upon the
world,

Promised from creation —
God's salvation now
unfurled,

Hope for ev'ry nation.
Not with fanfares from
above,

Not with scenes of glory,
But a humble gift of love —
Jesus born of Mary.
"Joy Has Dawned"

With the angels let us sing
Alleluia! to our King;
Christ the Savior is born.
"Silent Night"

Letters to the Editor

TAB is an outstanding gem for Alabama Baptists and beyond. Thanks for a most informative tool.

Darryl Wood
Vincent, Ala.

I enjoyed seeing the "Find a Word" puzzle included in the Nov. 26 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*. After opening TAB to the page, I had to stay with the puzzle until I finished.

I still read the Sunday School lessons each week, as well as much of the paper. The puzzle was an extra treat for me. Thank you for your work.

Colleen Davis
Jackson's Gap, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Be sure to check out the Christmas word search on page 13 of this week's issue and let us know what you think.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“I will honour Christmas in my heart,
and try to keep it all the year.”

CHARLES DICKENS

“A Christmas Carol”

Rescuing a climber trapped on the face of a towering cliff. Descending to a diver in trouble on the floor of the ocean. Digging out a child covered in the rubble of an earthquake.

Stories of heroic rescues rivet our attention because deep in our souls all of us sense we are trapped and helpless, caught in the chaos around us and the rubble inside us.

Christmas is the ultimate rescue. We were caught in the grip of unbreakable darkness with no power to bring ourselves to the light. But God, right on time, came to our rescue!

He did the unbelievable, the unthinkable. He sent Himself in the form of His Son out of the glory of heaven and into the pit of our dark-

ness. Through His own death and resurrection, the Son tore a gaping, forever hole in the darkness, vaporized the darkness with the light of His glory. He then invited us to fall into His arms and allow Him to carry us through that great opening in the darkness into life and light in the Father’s love and presence.

This is the true Christmas story. Let us worship with joy and reverence.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

In sharp contrast to the angelic announcement, the simplicity of the nativity scene would have been unremarkable. In some ways, He appeared to be like any other newborn of the time.

And yet, this baby was different. What other baby received such angelic fanfare? What other child was proclaimed by prophets, angels and shepherds?

Once the shepherds found the baby, they proclaimed to everyone what they had seen and heard about this child. They were, in fact, the first witnesses to testify of the newborn Christ.

Douglas Wilson
Sunday School lesson
commentary

Evangelism is not just sharing a recitation of the old, old story; it is sharing the reality of the old, old story.

Franklin L. Kirksey
Robertsdale, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@Blackwell_Kevin

In light of the Advent, John Stott reminds of why we are called to evangelism, “And now He calls us to enter other people’s worlds, as He entered ours. All authentic mission is incarnational mission.”

@PaulTripp

The gospel will require you to look at what in yourself you would like to deny, so that you will seek what you didn’t know you needed.

@drtonyevans

In order to live by a biblical standard, you have to know what the biblical standard is. That’s where so much of our society has gone wrong. We have gotten too far away from God’s word.

@SamAllberry

Come all ye faithless, joyless

and defeated! Christmas is for the weary, for the messed-up and for the broken. If your life isn’t Instagrammable, Christmas is for you. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

@timkellernyc

Christian faith is not a negotiation but a surrender. It means to take your hands off your life. — from “Hidden Christmas”

@macbrunson

If I am distressed, it is because of a concern for pastors who are struggling, distressed and depressed themselves. Many teeter on walking away — to what they do not know. My heart breaks for them. My plea is stay connected and stay at the task.

@challies

“Jesus is for life, not just for Christmas. He’s not just the rea-

son for the season; He’s the meaning of everything. He’s not just the point of Christmas; He’s the purpose of life.” — Tim Chester

@DL_Staples

What would the world look like if Christians looked like this: “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind” (1 Pet. 3:8).

@OfGlibal

What does the Great Commission look like?

A church that sends the gospel, Through a messenger of the gospel,

To a place without the gospel, So people can receive the gospel,

And gather in the name of the gospel,

To send out the gospel.
#fullcircle

Thanks for giving, pastor says

As many of you know, I turned 50 years old this summer. I decided to do something that expresses the heart of Expedition Church in Livingston, Montana, toward this community we love so much.

So I asked people to give \$50 for my 50th birthday to Expedition Church. We would take that money and put every dollar towards blessing individual families and organizations that we believe in.

The result was overwhelming. This past week we received our last (I guess) \$50. That check put our total at \$71,900.03!

B.A. Winans Elementary School, The Way Christian School, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch, Operation Christmas Caring, ASPEN (Abuse Support & Prevention Education Network), Livingston Food Resource Center, Kingdom Camp, the Gardiner Fire Relief Fund, Corrine Couch’s Crochet, local businesses, car repairs for a single mom, some funds for a support dog for a little girl with autism and individuals with various needs have been the recipients. I estimate that over 1,000 individual families were helped in some way through this effort.

We are so blessed to have so many friends and churches across the country that believe in our ministry here and want to bless this awesome community. I tell people all the time that no one loves Livingston like Jesus does, and the church should reflect that love.

Thanks to each person that made this birthday the best I’ve ever had. #50for50 #ExpeditionLiving #GospelLife

Pastor Darryl Brunson
Expedition Church

EDITOR’S NOTE — Read more about Expedition Church and other church planting efforts in Montana at tabonline.org/montana.

Christ's second coming

'The Lord Is Come': Which advent is in view in 'Joy to the World'?

By Scott Aniol
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

We are in the midst of a wonderful time in the year when we can reflect upon the advent of our Lord and the redemption that comes through faith in Him.

One of the most enjoyable ways to do this is through the singing of classic Advent and Christmas hymns. Songs like “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus” and “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” remind us of Christ’s incarnation and anticipate His soon coming again.

One of the most popular Advent/Christmas hymns, even among unbelievers, is “Joy to the World,” written by British pastor Isaac Watts (1674–1748).

An interesting question raised about this hymn, however, is whether it refers to the first or second advent of Christ. Read the hymn and consider which advent you think the hymn refers to:

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.*

*Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove*



BP photo

*The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love.*

Before we answer the question, a little context may help. Watts published this hymn in a collection he called, “The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and Applied to the Christian State and Worship.” As the title indicates, Watts published this collection as his attempt to “Christianize” the Psalms so that Christians could sing them with the full revelation of Jesus Christ in view.

‘The Messiah’s coming’

“Joy to the World” is part two of Watts’ paraphrase of Psalm 98. He titled the hymn, “The Messiah’s coming and kingdom.” Here is the psalm (ESV):

*Oh sing to the Lord a new song,
for He has done marvelous things!
His right hand and His holy arm
have worked salvation for Him.
The Lord has made known His
salvation; He has revealed His
righteousness in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered His steadfast*

*love and faithfulness to the house of
Israel.*

*All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.*

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord,
all the earth; break forth into joyous
song and sing praises!*

*Sing praises to the Lord with the
lyre, with the lyre and the sound of
melody!*

*With trumpets and the sound of
the horn make a joyful noise before
the King, the Lord!*

*Let the sea roar, and all that fills
it; the world and those who dwell
in it!*

*Let the rivers clap their hands; let
the hills sing for joy together before
the Lord, for He comes to judge the
earth.*

*He will judge the world with
righteousness, and the peoples with
equity.*

Most scholars view this psalm as Messianic (as Watts clearly did), noting the references to the coming of the Lord. This coming brings salvation and judgment, resulting

in joyous praise with singing and instruments, and even all creation rejoices.

Comparing Watts’ hymn with the psalm on which it is based raises several important clues as to which advent Watts had in view. The psalm itself does not necessarily give indication as to which advent it presents.

Important clues

Both salvation and judgment did come with Christ’s incarnation, although they will certainly come with finality when He comes again.

However, notice the phrases that Watts uses in his “imitation” that are not in the psalm text. For example, Watts says that when Christ comes in the manner of Psalm 98, “sins and sorrows” will no more “grow,” and “thorns” will no longer “infest the ground.” Likewise, Christ has not abolished the curse completely yet.

The fact that these kinds of universal blessings have not yet occurred seems to indicate that Watts sees them as future reality.

Thus, this popular Christmas hymn is actually a hymn that refers to Christ’s Second Coming.

It is not inappropriate, however, to sing the hymn during this time of year. The four weeks preceding Christmas not only remember Christ’s incarnation, they also anticipate His Second Coming to earth, at which time full salvation and judgment will come, all the earth will rejoice, and His many blessings will extend “far as the curse is found.”

Maranatha!

EDITOR’S NOTE — Scott Aniol is associate professor and director of Doctoral Worship Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He founded Religious Affections Ministries and has written several books, including “Draw Near: The Heart of Communion with God.” (Reprinted from Baptist Press)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christmas

A Time for Outward Testifying

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

For the past two weeks, Theology 101 has used actions of Mary, the mother of our Lord, as the basis for suggesting that the birth of Jesus is a good time for godward rejoicing (Luke 1:46–47) and inward pondering (Luke 2:19). This week we look back to the unnamed shepherds who showed up outside the inn to find the infant Jesus lying in a manger in the stall. The angel of the Lord had revealed to them in the fields the good news of great joy about the birth of a Savior in the city of David. The record states that the shepherds, upon seeing the infant Savior for themselves, “made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child” (Luke 2:17). Thus, some unnamed shepherds were among the earliest evangelists of God’s good news.

The example of the shepherds suggests that Christmas is a good time for outward testifying by sharing God’s good news about His Son and our Savior. Unlike those shepherds, we have not literally seen Jesus. Yet the truth of 1 Peter 1:8 can still be ours when it reads, “Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” Ours can be the joy of telling others of God’s love in that “He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We commonly and properly

think of testifying as a matter of words either spoken or written.

To be sure, the Christmas season affords an ideal time to explain by way of the witness of words the significance of Christ’s coming into the world, which the Bible puts simply: He came to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10).

This good news warrants telling again and again to people everywhere. A phone call or a timely tract enclosed in a Christmas card might also be ways of outward testifying at this most blessed season of the Christian calendar.

Christlike living

Our outward testifying during the Christmas season can be not only by the personal witness of our spoken or written word but also by our example in Christlike living during Christmas and New Year celebrations. Holiday behaviors and indulgences might negate our testimony if they are not consistently in line with what Christians should be doing.

Both by testimony and example, the holiday celebrations are an ideal time for outward testifying about the great salvation and new life available through Christ. 🌟

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.



Social media app Parler: What are the concerns?

A new social media platform, Parler, has recently gained popularity in light of controversies over content moderation and fact-checking on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook.

Launched in 2018, Parler has a smaller user base than most social platforms, but the app saw a surge following the November 2020 presidential election, according to tracking by Sensor Tower. It currently has more than 10 million accounts.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission recently posted a blog explaining Parler and its relevance to public discourse.

What is Parler?

Named after the French word meaning to speak, Parler is a micro-blogging social service where users are encouraged to share articles, thoughts, videos and more. TAB Media partner Dogwood Media Solutions in a blog post likened the platform to Twitter in its design.

Parler states that “people are entitled to security, privacy and freedom of expression.” Currently, the platform does not have advertisers on it, but they have plans to allow advertisers to target influencers instead of regular users.

Posts on the platform are called “parleys,” and the feed is broken up

into two sections, namely parleys and affiliate content, which functions like a news feed of content providers for the platforms.

To share content from someone else, a user can “echo” a certain post or piece of content. The company claims that it does not censor speech or content.

Too much freedom?

Relying on users to moderate or curate their own feeds, Parler seeks to abdicate itself of any responsibility of what is posted on the platform.

The Washington Post reports that Parler does not currently have a robust system for detecting child pornography before it is viewed or potentially flagged and reported by users. A company spokesman has said, “If somebody does something illegal, we’re relying on the reporting system. We’re not hunting.”

Parler originally banned pornography on the platform but in recent months changed its content moderation policies to allow for pornography on the platform, as does Twitter.

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube ban all pornographic imagery and videos from their platforms using automated screening tools and a reporting system.

Read more about Parler at tabonline.org/parler. (ERLC, TAB)

FBC Montgomery holds Living Christmas Tree



FBC Montgomery presented its 40th annual Living Christmas Tree program Dec. 10–13, with a few changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic — including masked musicians separated by plexiglass, fewer singers in the Christmas tree structure and limited sanctuary seating. But the event maintained its purpose, Pastor Mark Bethea said — ‘to lift high the name of Jesus and give you hope.’ Watch the 2020 production at montgomeryfbc.org. (TAB)

Bible engagement

Most popular Bible verse and top search terms tell a story of faith in 2020

In a year marked by uncertainty and turmoil, more people than ever turned to the Bible for hope.

In fact, the YouVersion community completed nearly 600 million searches within the app in 2020, an 80% increase over the previous year.

With record-breaking

levels of Bible engagement in the app this year, the 2020 YouVersion Verse of the Year is Isaiah 41:10: “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with My victorious right hand.”

The verse topped the

global list of verses shared, bookmarked and highlighted most in 2020, and was the top verse in several countries, including India, South Africa, the Netherlands and the United States.

‘Challenging year’

“This has been a challenging year with many people facing devastating loss, loneliness, and fear,” said YouVersion Founder Bobby Gruenewald. “While 2020 is a year so many say they’d like to forget, we see it as a year to remember how God used the Bible App to help so many people who are searching for answers. Through every hardship, people continue



Photo courtesy of Youversion.com

to seek God and turn to the Bible for strength, peace and hope.”

Early in the year, people most frequently searched the Bible App for phrases like “new year,” “bible in a

year,” “faith” and “fasting.”

In mid-March as COVID-19 accelerated, the number one search term was “fear.” Soon after, the fastest growing search terms week-over-week were words like “peace,” “hope” and “faith” as the pandemic continued.

The trending Bible App searches for this year also included “justice,” which rose to the top in late May, and again in late August and late September.

The search terms “healing,” “peace” and “love”

***“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you.
Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you. I will
hold you up with My victorious right hand.”***

Isaiah 41:10



The Bible App FOR KIDS

Photo courtesy of Youversion.com

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or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta, Alabama, is seeking the man God has been preparing to lead our church forward. Dr. Sid Nichols is currently our interim pastor and helping our church move forward after the sudden loss of our long-time pastor of 26.5 years, Bro. Bill Barnett. Please consider the possibility of moving this stable, strong congregation forward. Send resumés or questions to: 2919 County Highway 39, Oneonta, AL 35121, or email to: sparks@unionhillbaptist.org or call: 205-274-9232.

EXECUTIVE PASTOR

First Baptist Prattville is hiring an executive pastor. Interested in joining a healthy church and strong staff team? Find the job description and application at fbcprattville.org/apply.

TWO POSITIONS

Associate pastor of worship and students (full-time with housing). Also, church secretary/receptionist (part-time, 12-15 hours/week). Jerusalem Baptist Church, Hammond, La. (approximately 60 miles from NOBTS campus). Send resumés for either position to: Dr. Phil Weaver, dr.phillipweaver@gmail.com.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MINISTER

Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton, Alabama, is seeking

a full-time minister of children/youth family discipleship. Send resumés to: search@libertyhillonline.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, Alabama, seeking full-time administrative assistant. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 888, Hartselle, AL 35640.

SIGNS

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were consistently among the top results throughout the year.

“These top search terms really show what’s been weighing on the hearts and minds of people around the world at key points throughout the year,” said Gruenewald. “They reveal how people are seeking God as they wrestle with the difficult circumstances they’ve faced in 2020, and that’s something we can celebrate.”

As some churches temporarily paused physical services to stop the spread of COVID-19, many people used digital tools to connect with God, including the Bible App.

With 43.6 billion Bible chapters read, 7.5 billion audio chapters played and 1.4 billion Bible Plan days completed, the YouVersion Bible App saw its highest levels of global Bible engagement in app history.

YouVersion Prayer also was launched in 2020, allowing users to create and share prayer. Nearly 25 million prayers were created and 1.6 million shared in the app.

The Bible App also saw a significant increase in engagement in several countries on Open Doors’ 2020 World Watch List of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution for their faith.

Engagement jumps

Ethiopia, which is No. 39 on the World Watch List, saw the biggest jump, with a 61% increase in engagement with the Bible App. Other countries on both lists are Kenya (No. 44), which saw a 37% increase in engagement with the app; Nigeria (No. 12), which saw a 32% increase in engagement; and India (No. 10) and Egypt (No. 16), which saw a 23% and 20% increase in engage-



Photo courtesy of Youversion.com

ment with the app, respectively.

A YouVersion spokesperson told TAB Media in an email, “While we can’t be certain which factors have led to those specific countries showing such strong year over year growth, we are excited to see our ministry efforts being able to have an impact there.”

YouVersion also experienced record-breaking growth for the Bible

App for Kids, which was developed in partnership with OneHope.

In 2020 alone, the app

was installed on more than 22 million unique devices, now totaling installation on more than 60 million devices worldwide.

Games for kids

Kids from around the world have completed more than 170 million Bible App for Kids Stories this year, which is a 90% increase over the previous record set in 2019.

With eight languages added this year, children can now experience the animated Bible stories and interactive games in 60 languages.

For more information about YouVersion, visit youversion.com. (YouVersion/TAB)

See a progression of the top words and phrases searched within the Bible App throughout 2020 at app.bible.com/e/2020-search-trends.



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**With every passing morning,
2020 has presented
many challenges.**



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3 stories

you should know



Photo courtesy of Gary Fenton

South Roebuck Baptist Church, Birmingham, has given \$25,000 to endow the Herschel H. Hobbs Scholarship for students in the department of biblical and religious studies at Samford University. Above, South Roebuck deacons and Pastor Gary Fisher (left) present a check to Gary Fenton, Samford advancement officer. Hobbs, a native Alabamian, is remembered for his legacy of service in the Southern Baptist Convention. Read more at tabonline.org/hobbs. (TAB)

UMobile Christmas show to air, stream

The University of Mobile's "Christmas Spectacular" was canceled this year due to COVID-19, but TV viewers around the coast can watch the 2019 performance and a special 2020 online event also is available.

"Christmas Spectacular" tells the story of Christmas through choirs, orchestras and ensembles performing classical and contemporary music.

The 2020 "Best of Christmas Spectacular" program featuring favored moments captured from the last decade of performances can be streamed at umobile.edu/Christmas or on the Alabama School of the Arts' YouTube channel linked at tabonline.org/sota.

The 2019 show will air on WHBR, Pensacola, on Christmas Day. More details can be found at tabonline.org/um-christmas. (UM)

Judson College appeals for financial help

Acknowledging the school's financial challenges, Judson College President Mark Tew made an appeal for help on Dec. 15.

Amid enrollment challenges and the ongoing pandemic, Tew said Judson needs help to continue the 2020–2021 academic year. Specifically, the college must receive unrestricted cash donations of \$500,000 by Dec. 31 and an additional \$1 million in cash donations between Jan. 1 and May 31, 2021, Tew said in a letter to supporters.

Joan Newman, chair of the Judson College board of trustees, said the board welcomes "the financial and prayerful support" of all those who support Judson and Christian higher education.

Find giving links and more information about the current situation at tabonline.org/judson. (TAB)

Headline news

from around the Southeast

Florida

Westside Baptist Church in Wewahitchka, Florida, "has made a commitment to reaching our community, and food distribution is one vehicle that we use," said Pastor Derrick Gerber, the *Florida Baptist Witness* reported. The church, responding to a hunger need that has escalated since the pandemic outbreak, delivered 120 backpacks filled with food to children at a local elementary school over fall break and plans to do the same over winter break.

Georgia

Fleeing an abusive environment, Melissa and her two sons fled Florida, with no idea where they might go. After several nights of sleeping in their car and a temporary stay in a domestic violence shelter in Georgia, she and her sons were accepted into the Family Care program at the Georgia Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries,

the GBCH&FM *Messenger* reported. There, Melissa's life has turned around and her faith has been strengthened. "I'm just really blessed to be here," she said.

Louisiana

Paul Will, founding pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, was granted parole and released from prison Dec. 11. While serving his life sentence, Will earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's extension and was ordained. Grace Baptist is believed to be the first fully recognized Southern Baptist church inside prison walls, the *Baptist Message* reported.

Mississippi

Physician assistants like Mississippi College graduate Ryne Graham are spending many hours on the front lines at medical facilities as

COVID-19 cases soar nationwide. A Navy officer, the Clinton, Mississippi, native is practicing medicine at a U.S. Navy clinic in Everett, Washington. Earlier this year, he was among three physician assistants treating sailors with COVID-19 aboard the USNS Mercy. Mississippi College launched the state's only physician assistant program in 2011, MC University News reported.

Tennessee

Tennessee Baptists collected 5,826 Christmas backpacks this year, an increase from the approximate 5,500 collected in 2019 and approximate 3,500 collected in 2018 when Tennessee Baptists joined other state conventions in the effort. The backpacks are filled with school supplies, clothes, hygiene needs, food, toys and other items and are delivered to low-income families throughout the state as a tangible way to share Christ's love, the *Baptist and Reflector* reported.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Jack Campbell**, a former missionary and retired pastor, died Dec. 3. He was 79.

Campbell earned degrees in theology and missions from Toccoa Falls College in north Georgia. He and his wife, Gloria, served as missionaries in Hong Kong for 17 years and raised their children there. During their time there, Campbell planted churches and began a large prison ministry.



CAMPBELL

In 1984, the family moved from Hong Kong to Gadsden, where Campbell served as a pastor until 2018. He first became pastor of Gadsden Alliance Church (now Parkway Community Church), then in 2008 was called as pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Gadsden. He also served as a chaplain for local high school football teams.

Campbell is survived by his wife of 55 years; daughter, Angie; sons, Tommy and Stephen; and one grandchild.

► **Edsel Wayne Henderson** — retired pastor and director of missions for Central Baptist Association — died Dec. 3. He was 69.

A native of Langdale, Henderson earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

He served as pastor of churches including Zion Hill Baptist, Daviston; Kellyton Baptist; Airview Baptist, Opelika; Rockford Baptist; and Bethel Baptist, Jackson's Gap. He also served 10 years as DOM for Central Association for a total of 44 years in ministry. At the time of his death, he was a member of Comer Memorial Baptist Church, Alexander City.



HENDERSON

Henderson is survived by his wife of 50 years, Margaret; sons, Derrick and Jonathan; and six grandchildren.

► **Charles Sevard Worthy Sr.**, who served as a pastor in Alabama, Georgia and Alaska, died Dec. 8. He was 78.



WORTHY

An Alexander City native, Worthy served in the U.S. Army from 1960 to 1967. He answered the call to ministry in 1964 and studied at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and International Bible School and Seminary.

Worthy served as pastor of nine churches in Alabama and Georgia, including Jackson's Gap Baptist Church. In 2000, he moved to Alaska to become pastor of First Baptist Church, Willow,

where he served almost 20 years before he retired.

Over the years, he also served as president of pastors associations in Tallapoosa and Cullman counties and in various roles with the Alaska Baptist State Convention, including as its president. He also served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Worthy was preceded in death by his first wife of 41 years, Dannie Lou. He is survived by his wife of 18 years, Sherry; daughters, Patsy and Stacey; sons, Charles Jr., John, Jeffrey, James and Randall; 21 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren and two on the way.

► **Jere Wayne Patterson Sr.**, former director of missions for Morgan Baptist Association, died Dec. 12 after a battle with COVID-19. He was 84.



PATTERSON

A Sheffield native, Patterson studied architecture at Auburn University but left to enlist as a U.S. Army medic and photographer serving in Germany.

After his service, he earned a bachelor's degree in music from Samford University; a master's and doctorate in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and an MBA from the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

During his years of ministry, he served in multiple churches and community organizations and as a church consultant. He served as DOM for Morgan Association for more than 12 years.

Patterson is survived by his wife of 57 years, Jo Ann; son, Wayne; daughter, Jana; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Matthew Cole** is the new music minister at **Danville Baptist Church**. Joe David Bailey is pastor.

SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► When you ask **Jimmy Carson** what he hopes his legacy will be, his answer is simple. He hopes people will remember that he “consistently preached the Word and loved the people.”



CARSON

That's been his goal as he served the past 39 years at Union Grove Baptist Church, Dutton, before retiring in May. And it's because of that kind of loving dedication that Sand Mountain Baptist Association honored him with their first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award at the association's annual meeting in October. Before coming to Union Grove, he served seven years at nearby Five Points Baptist Church, Ider.

His son, Stephen, also serves as a pastor in the association at Hodge Baptist Church, Dutton.

Carson attended Snead State Community College, earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Jacksonville State College (now Jacksonville State University) and had a long career as an accountant while he served as a pastor.

He and his wife, Dianna, have two sons, Jimmy and Stephen, and four grandchildren.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Alabama News is compiled each week by TAB Media staff. Send your church news and staff announcements to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Persecuted church

Boy, 7, hospitalized after Muslim teens attack him for father's faith

DHOBLEY, Somalia — A 7-year-old boy was hospitalized for three days after male Muslim teenagers attacked him for his father's Christian faith.

The attack occurred after the father finished a Bible study Oct. 9 with other underground Christians in Dhobley.

The father has been targeted since leaving Islam eight years ago.

In 2012, he fled from another country to Kenya. There, a German missionary couple

told him about Jesus and the man later accepted Jesus. His wife accepted Christ in 2013. The couple have been attacked and persecuted repeatedly since then, often by the woman's father.

Her father beat her, causing a miscarriage; kidnapped her twice; kept her from her husband for three years; and plotted with other Muslims to kill her husband.

Islamic pressure caused the family of seven to move to Dhobley in July and then relocate twice more.

Somalia is No. 3 and Kenya is No. 44 on Open Doors' 2020

World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



Wikimedia

THE BIRTH OF *Christ*

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
Luke 2:7



May the peace, joy, and love of Christ remain with you throughout the coming year.



Barry



Jennifer



John



Rodney



Larry



Paula



Donna



Erin



Joey



Nathan



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Christmas Word Search

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 M D X D S A O W I S E M E N R T K A P N
 E O J R E I M N T H G I L A F L H R T D
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 M D H R R Y M S G N I K F O G N I K F K

- ADVENT
- ALLELUIA
- ALL PEOPLE
- ANGELS
- BABY
- BETHLEHEM
- CHRISTMAS
- DONKEY
- EVERLASTING FATHER
- EXALTED
- FEAR NOT
- FRANKINCENSE
- GIFTS
- GLORY
- GOLD
- GOOD TIDINGS
- GREAT JOY
- HEROD
- IMMANUEL
- INDESCRIBABLE GIFT
- ISRAEL
- JESUS
- JOSEPH
- KING OF KINGS
- LAMB OF GOD
- LIGHT
- MANGER
- MARY
- MERRY
- MIGHTY GOD
- MYRRH
- PRINCE OF PEACE
- REJOICED
- SAVIOR
- SHEPHERDS
- STAR
- VIRGIN
- WISE MEN

Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

Across

1. Lot sat in the ___ of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
5. Son of Shem. (Gen. 10:22)
9. Rehoboam sent ___ who was over the tribute. (1 Kings 12:18)
11. Where the altar is in an Eastern Church.
13. Person.
14. Sick people ... taken with ___ diseases. (Matt. 4:24)
16. Elder son of Zeus.
17. Sanballat the ___. (Neh. 2:10)
18. Name prefix. (Simon ___ Jonah)
19. Pertaining to an ecological sere.
20. Newspaper person. (abbr.)
21. British thanks.
22. False god.
24. Hide thyself by the brook ___. (1 Kings 17:3)

28. ___ in me, and I in you. (John 15:4)
29. By the ___ of Babylon, there we sat down. (Ps. 137:1)
30. Fairy queen.
31. He was. (Latin)
32. Civil Aeronautics Authority.
33. Put on strength, O ___ of the Lord. (Isa. 51:9)
36. Let his habitation be ___. (Acts 1:20)
39. Curved molding.
40. Neighbor of Iraq.
41. Snatches.
42. Vertical takeoff. (abbr.)
43. When Sanballat ... and ___ heard of it, it grieved them. (Neh. 2:10)
44. A curvy shape.
45. Norse god.

Down

1. Wife of Hosea. (Hos. 1:3)
2. Belonging to a son of Jether.

- (1 Chron. 7:38)
3. Sunbathe.
4. Printer's measure.
5. He laid the foundation thereof in ___ his firstborn. (1 Kings 16:34)
6. Edom ___ted from under the hand of Judah. (2 Kings 8:20)
7. So be it.
8. Seagoing prefix.
9. And ___ told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. (1 Kings 19:1)
10. He set it up in the plain of ___. (Dan. 3:1)
12. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a ___. (Matt. 19:24)
14. In the borders of ___ on the west. (Josh. 11:2)
15. Abraham ... offered him ... in the ___ of his son. (Gen. 22:13)

17. Warmths.
19. Mix.
22. Business watchdog.
23. The king of ___ they took alive. (Josh. 8:23)
24. Give recognition.
25. For the laborer is worthy of his ___. (Luke 10:7)
26. Avoiding.
27. Short answers.
28. Motorists' club.
30. Woman's name.
32. Court. (abbr.)
33. Once more.
34. Slew the kings of Midian ... Zur ... Hur and ___. (Num. 31:8)
35. Network.
37. Southeast Asian country.
38. Is there any taste in the white of ___ egg? (Job 6:6)
39. NASA prefix.
41. In him is the love of ___ perfected. (1 John 2:5)
43. ___ visit the fatherless and widows. (James 1:27)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 27

Explore the Bible

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



ANTICIPATED Luke 2:25–38

God has always had a plan to redeem a people for Himself from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. In Genesis, He promised as much to Abraham (22:18), Isaac (26:4) and Jacob (28:14). “Abraham looked forward to see My day,” Jesus said (John 8:56).

The writer of Hebrews explains this anticipation through special revelation: “Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways” (1:1). This we recognize to be the Old Testament. After approximately 400 years of prophetic silence on a national scale, “He has spoken to us by His Son” (Heb. 1:2).

While God gave no special revelation to the nation after Nehemiah and Malachi, God revealed Himself personally through angelic messengers and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Luke has already introduced readers to Gabriel’s visits to Zechariah and Mary. In this focal passage, one will note that God also spoke to Simeon and Anna by means of personal revelation.

Anticipated (25–27)

Luke carefully provides context to the encounters with senior saints at the temple. First, he mentions the naming ceremony, where Jesus is circumcised and officially given His name on His eighth day, in keeping with Levitical law (Lev. 12:3). Second, Luke writes, “when the days of their purification according to the Law of Moses were finished.” That means at least 33 days passed (Lev. 12:4). Third, he points out that Mary’s purification and Jesus’ redemption tax were reasons for their visit to Jerusalem. Fourth, Luke implies that Joseph and Mary were poor, having only enough money to buy two doves, which the law allowed for the poor (Lev. 12:8).

Luke introduces Simeon by his character and his faith. Simeon was righteous; he believed what God revealed in the Scriptures. He was also devout; he was careful to live in

covenant faithfulness to the law. Simeon was confident God would keep His promises regarding the Redeemer. The Holy Spirit guided him, and he received revelation that he would not die before seeing the Messiah. As he was led by the Spirit to enter the temple, he saw Jesus with Joseph and Mary, and he approached them.

Recognized (28–35)

Simeon recognized this infant as the Messiah. How did Simeon know? The Holy Spirit. Simeon thanked God for allowing him to see God’s promise fulfilled to him. Simeon also recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of His prophecies to Israel. Jesus is “your salvation” (Isa. 46:13). Jesus is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). Jesus is “the glory to your people Israel” (Isa. 46:13). Don’t miss this! The salvation of God is revealed to Jews and Gentiles through Jesus.

After his words of worship, Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary and then uttered words of prophecy and warning. His words of prophecy foretold of the “rise and fall of many in Israel.” Then, he warned Mary that “a sword will pierce your own soul.” Of this, Howard Marshall writes: “The exclusion of Joseph from his statement is motivated (as far as the narrator is concerned) by the fact of the virgin birth and/or by the likelihood that Joseph died before the crucifixion and so did not experience the same pangs of sorrow as Mary.”

Shared (36–38)

Anna, another devout saint, began “to speak about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.” She spoke up about God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. Regardless of her age, her marital status or her gender, she told people who were anticipating the Redeemer that He was there. May we learn from her boldness and tell the world that Jesus has come. ✝

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



REDIRECTING ANGER Psalm 35:1–3, 13–18

As John Calvin argued, the psalms are “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul,” which reflect “all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.” That includes anger. The imprecatory psalms, in which the psalmist calls for God to bring misfortune and disaster upon his enemies, are some of the most difficult to read and apply.

Didn’t Jesus command us to love our enemies and turn the other cheek (Luke 6:27–29)? And yet, anger was not a foreign emotion to Jesus. He was incensed at those who turned the temple into a marketplace (Matt. 21:12) and at the Pharisees, who distorted God’s law (Matt. 23).

When you face opposition, take your anger and desire for vindication to God. (1–3)

Imprecatory psalms, like Psalm 35, help us deal with our anger by encouraging us to bring it to God. The psalm does not oppose the psalmist’s anger or desire for vindication, but it does redirect them. The psalmist is so incensed at his enemies that he wants to grab his weapons and go to battle, but instead he trusts God to “draw the spear and javelin” and fight for him.

However, he doesn’t pretend that this is easy. He asks God to remind him, “I am your salvation.” The battle with his enemies that drove the psalmist to prayer has become an internal battle to trust God. Too often we allow our external altercations to prevent us from coming to God, when the internal struggle of praying with the Psalms would have saved us from them.

Treat others with love and grace, not anger. (13–16)

The enmity the psalmist is facing is all the more painful because when those who now oppose him were ill, the psalmist showed lov-

ing concern for them. He put on sackcloth, fasted and prayed and even grieved for them. His response is an example of the type of treatment Jesus commands of His followers: “Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27–28).

It’s also an example of how we should be prepared for our enemies to respond to our love. They repay his concern with slander and mocking in his day of distress. If we only love others for the love they may give us in return, we are not truly loving them at all.

Leave matters in God’s hands. (17–18)

Loving our enemies does not mean forsaking a longing for justice, but it does mean relinquishing the responsibility for determining that justice to God, who in His righteousness must judge wickedness. Paul addresses this in his letter to the Christians in Rome (Rom. 12:19–21), some of whom may have been forced to give up their homes when the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews in 49 A.D. and some who would likely suffer even more terribly during the emperor Nero’s brutal persecution of Christians in 64 A.D. Trusting God to bring ultimate justice, even if it may take time, enables believers to escape the cycle of violence without giving up their commitment to what is right.

As Martin Luther King Jr. declared in his 1957 sermon, “Loving Your Enemies”: “Why should we love our enemies? The first reason is fairly obvious. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.” ✝



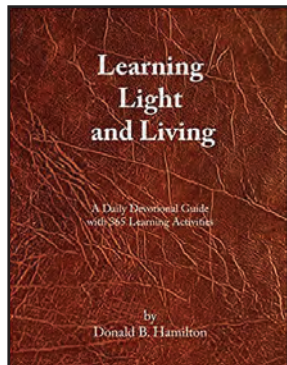
Media reviews

BOOKS

Learning, Light and Living: A Daily Devotional Guide with 365 Learning Activities

Donald B. Hamilton.
Sleepytown Press, 2019.

Donald B. Hamilton has gone to great lengths to lead readers into a daily time of study and prayer for every day of the year, and the result is a nearly 400-page workbook-style guide that is filled with simple teachings that point to eternal truths.



The three title phrases provide the structure for each day's message. The "learning" aspect begins with a Scripture verse followed by a brief lesson. The reader then moves on to the "light" part, which is a story, anecdote or cultural reference that illuminates the teaching. The "living" section is about application, as Hamilton offers guidance on applying the learning and light drawn from the verse. Each day's devotion wraps up with a prayer.

The book is written in a conversational style, with Scripture-based daily devotions presented in sequence from Genesis to Revelation. Hamilton is a resident of Annis-

EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.

ton, Alabama, and has retired from a career in law enforcement and full-time ministry. (Minnie Lamberth)

What Are You Going to Do with Your Life?

J.D. Greear.
B&H Books, 2020.

In May 2000, J.D. Greear was in the audience of a Passion Conference when a well-known pastor, John Piper, delivered a sermon before 40,000 college students. Today Greear is the lead pastor of The Summit Church, a multisite congregation in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Yet he still remembers the impact of Piper's fateful challenge from that day — "Don't waste your life." In "What Are You Going to Do with Your Life?" Greear revisits this challenge with an updated message for a new generation.

"We want our lives to count," Greear writes. "If we are asked, 'What are you going to do with your life?' we want to be able to answer in a way that shows our life has some significance." However, as Christians seek significance, he notes, "one cause should outweigh them all." That cause is sharing the gospel with the lost — whether in full-time ministry or any other career. God calls some to leave their careers; others are called to leverage them for the Great Commission, he explains. "The right question, you see, is not if God has called you to His mission, only where," Greear writes.

Importantly, the message of "giving your life away to the greatest cause of all" isn't just for college students. As he says in his concluding recommendations, retirees are the second most sendable group in his congregation, and he issues a challenge for them to give the first



two years to living on mission for God. (Minnie Lamberth)

A Bargainomics Lady Mystery: A Bargain to Die For

Judy Woodward Bates.
Bargainomics Publications, 2020.

The new mystery novel, "A Bargain to Die For," is a blend of fiction and reality. The story itself is the fiction part, as Judy Woodward Bates joins her cousin and sidekick Millie in a murder investigation. As the middle-aged ladies weave through their usual life transporting Millie's art to a gallery, conducting Bible studies and making lunch stops, they're brought into a mystery involving an unknown but highly valuable collector's item that is costing lives.

The reality part is that Bates is the author as well as the main character, and her local fame as The Bargainomics Lady figures into the story. Readers who know the Birmingham setting will also recognize routes the characters take to work through the plot.

Bates knows how to tell a story, and she does so with humor and speed while offering tender moments as well. There's a lot to enjoy.

Although this is her first work of fiction, Bates brings to the job her long experience as a speaker and writer, having authored three books on finance and appeared regularly on television to discuss money-saving tips. (Minnie Lamberth)



Whispers of Rest in the Storm

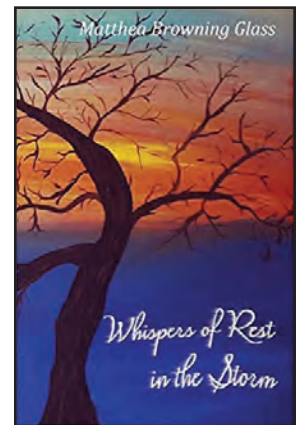
Matthea Browning Glass.
Energion Publications, 2019.

Matthea Browning Glass pours an honest heart and a dedicated faith, along with her experiences with sorrow and grief, into her 30-day devotional book, "Whispers of Rest in the Storm." This is a thoughtful book born of personal pain and a sensitivity for communicating truth to readers.

"Our nature protests rest, especially in times of upheaval," Glass writes in the introduction. Yet she offers an invitation to "Come along and take a deep breath with me. Each day for the next month, learn to rest in God's truth."

A mother of five, Glass experienced the loss of a son due to stillbirth in 2014. She writes, "As I walked through the valley of darkness after the death of my son, I found God's rest. Much of my sorrow in my storm flowed from unbelief or wrong beliefs. I found that God is more loving and compassionate than I can even comprehend."

The devotional book is well organized in that it begins with a "rest-related" theme — such as "Rest in God's Faithfulness" — and an applicable Scripture verse. Glass then digs deeper into the topic through a short piece that encourages a time of reflection. Glass is an artist as well, and the full-color book includes photography and artwork throughout. (Minnie Lamberth)



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Money for missions

New Orleans church supports missionaries with ‘Lottie on the Lawn’

This month, members of Lakeshore Church, New Orleans, might have awakened to find a shadowy figure in their front yard. There wasn't cause for alarm, though.

This is the second year the church has raised money for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering with “Lottie on the Lawn,” in which a life-sized cardboard cutout of the 4’3” Moon is placed on the lawn of an unsuspecting church member under cover of darkness.

Upon the cutout's discovery the next day, the member must donate to Southern Baptists' annual offering for international missions and choose Lottie's next destination. The church's goal for the 2020 offering is \$5,000, matching the amount raised last year.

The event's value has stretched beyond raising money for missions, said Milly Holder, who leads the church's greeting team and coordinates missionary care.

Opportunities to educate

“This has given us opportunities to educate our people [about Lottie] and Southern Baptist missions,” she said. “Even people who may have been familiar with her name didn't know a lot about her story.”

Holder and Katy Beith, Lakeshore's children's director, coordinate Lottie on the Lawn. They also have a firsthand knowledge on the offering's impact.

In her role at Lakeshore, Holder helps maintain a connection between the church and three families it has sent out as missionaries — one through the International



Children at Lakeshore Church pose with a life-size cutout of Lottie Moon. The church's ‘Lottie on the Lawn’ initiative has ‘given us opportunities to educate our people [about Lottie] and Southern Baptist missions,’ says Milly Holder.

Mission Board and two through the North American Mission Board.

The connection comes through a monthly Zoom call, care packages and weekly texts and emails.

The church's missions outreach also includes a residency program for would-be ministers and two church plants since its 2017 launch.

Holder and Beith also have a personal understanding of life on the missions field. Each served two years as an International Mission Board journeyman — Holder in Central Asia and Beith in the African country of Lesotho.

Like Moon, Beith was a school-teacher before entering the missions field. The path to missions began in earnest on Oct. 7, 2013,

when three of her students died in a tragic car wreck. “It rocked me,” she said. “It made me realize that eternity starts now. Don't put things off. Ever since I'd been a little girl, I felt like I was to do something, and the time had come.”

Inspired by tragedy

She finished the school year and signed up to go as an IMB missionary in the spring of 2014. In looking through the possible assignments, a teaching position in Lesotho seized her attention. More importantly, it was the date the assignment had been written: Oct. 7, 2013.

“I felt God calling me to that position,” she recalled.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering helped pay for many aspects of Holder's ministry in Central Asia too, she said.

Rock climbing, for instance, was a popular activity where she served. Those funds helped build a rock climbing gym and café at the place where their church met in the predominately Muslim country.

Those attractions served as loca-

tions for gospel conversations and evangelistic opportunities.

‘Nor alone’

“When people give, it reminds you you're not alone,” she said.

Last year “Lottie” made her way to as many as 15 lawns. There was also a Lottie's Nite Out where parents could donate to the offering in exchange for child care and a date night.

This year, the night out will be replaced Dec. 12 by an event designed to care for church planters.

“It will be kind of like a Christmas party,” Beith said. “Milly, myself and others will help watch their kids as well as some more from the neighborhood.”

George Ross, Lakeshore's lead teaching pastor, also serves as the New Orleans Send missionary and Send Relief Ministry Center director with the North American Mission Board.

“Lottie on the Lawn has been great for promotion, education and raising funds for international missions,” he said. “Our people love it. It's quickly become something everyone has latched onto and love participating in.”

Five years ago, Pontchartrain Baptist Church became Lakeshore Church as a replant effort and has around 90–100 attending on Sunday mornings now. Beith said the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is a good reminder that size bears little relativity to impact.

“It's encouraging for me to know that even if a church isn't big, if they're passionate about missions, they can give,” she said. “It's another reason I love Lakeshore so much. We believe people need to hear the gospel to be saved.”

“Lottie did something countercultural. The gospel calls us to do things that aren't expected and go against the flow.”

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**“Lottie did something countercultural.
The gospel calls us to do things that aren't
expected and go against the flow.”**

Katy Beith
children's director, Lakeshore Church, New Orleans



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