



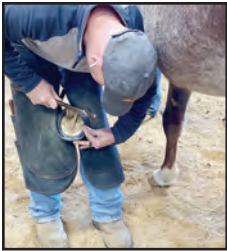
The Alabama Baptist

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

January 21, 2021

Vol. 186, No. 3
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Serving bivocationally — Encouragement comes through discipleship

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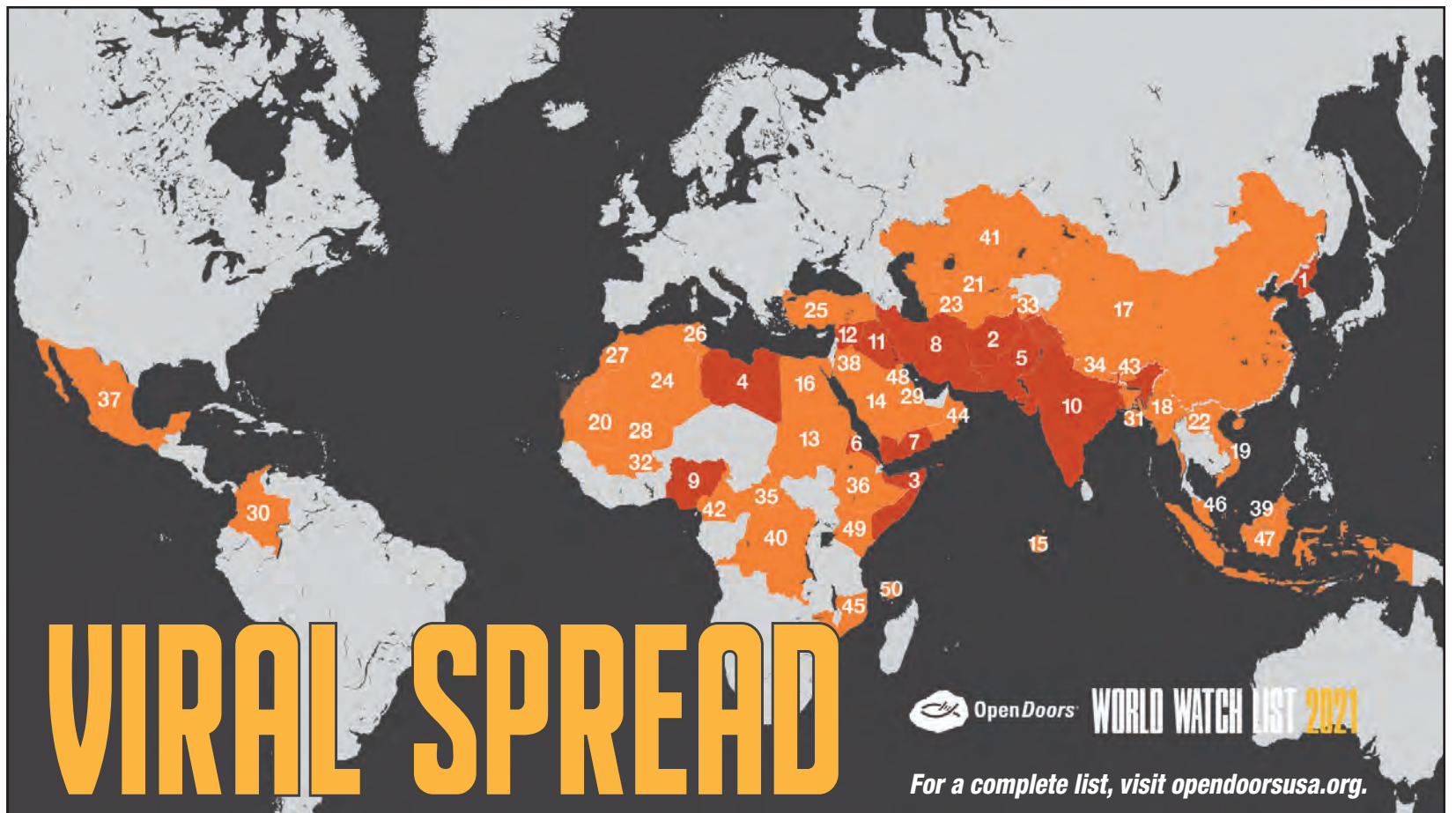
Montgomery ministry meets spiritual, physical needs

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Mitchell and Baldwin retire from State Board of Missions

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VIRAL SPREAD

OF PERSECUTION

For a complete list, visit opendoorsusa.org.

Extremists use COVID-19 to perpetrate persecution

By Dianna L. Cagle
TAB Media

Across the globe, extremists have used COVID-19 to expand their atrocities against Christians and other religious minorities, according to Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List highlighting the top 50 countries where Christians are most persecuted.

"This past year — 2020 — has been a year of uncertainty

and fear," said David Curry, CEO of Open Doors USA. "We have all been fighting a virus we cannot see with the naked eye.

"Less known, but equally as viral, is the discrimination, isolation and violence against Christians using COVID-19 as a leverage and as justification."

Top 10 countries

North Korea tops the list for the 20th year in a row, followed by Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, Yemen, Iran, Nigeria and India. The top 12 countries — adding No. 11 Iraq and No. 12 Syria — are considered to be the most difficult countries to

live as a Christian, but believers in all 50 countries experience "very high persecution."

"The World Watch List helps us to see the viral spread of persecution and those most in danger," Curry said. "A shocking number this year is that 340 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination. That's one in eight Christians worldwide."

Curry shared the story of a man from North Korea who was born into a broken home.

"Inside he was hurt, lonely and heartbroken," he said, but a Christian befriended him and soon he began to follow Jesus.

One day as this new believer was closing a prayer with

WORLD WATCH LIST 2021	
1	North Korea
2	Afghanistan
3	Somalia
4	Libya
5	Pakistan
6	Eritrea
7	Yemen
8	Iran
9	Nigeria
10	India

Graphics courtesy of Open Doors

"Amen," a gun was placed to his head, and he was taken to a concentration camp.

"Over 60,000 Christians are in labor camps for no more (See 'Surveillance,' page 9)

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Judy Woodward Bates (bottom) joins TAB Media Editor-in-Chief Jennifer Davis Rash (top, right) and Director of Communications Debbie Campbell on the Nov. 23 episode of the TAB Talks podcast. Bates offered advice about how to have a budget-friendly Christmas in the middle of a pandemic.

TAB feature on Bargainomics Lady leads to national audience

Judy Woodward Bates has been looking for bargains for a long time. When she got married at 17, she was determined to prove to her parents that she and her husband, Larry, could make it on their own. So she established some thrifty habits.

It was a strategy that worked. And when she was studying at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary several decades ago, she got a name for her habits — “Bargainomics.”

Bates’ class was studying the Proverbs 31 woman, and as she read the passage in different versions and paraphrases, a word in one of them jumped off the page at her.

“It said, ‘She is energetic, a hard worker and watches for bargains,’” Bates said.

Not too long after, she was able to trademark the word Bargainomics (exclusively, until a grocery store chain recently got rights to use it in their domain). She became the Bargainomics Lady, speaking and writing articles to help people know how to steward their resources well.

For going on two decades, she’s shared her wisdom through articles in TAB, and on the Nov. 23 episode of the TAB Talks podcast, she offered advice about how to have a budget-friendly Christmas in the middle of a pandemic.

People are even more interested in

how to find bargains this year, Bates said, “because people are having a tough time financially right now.” They’re looking for new ways to find deals because they aren’t getting out as much as they usually do, she said.

After the podcast was released, Kristen Rogers at CNN came across it and reached out to Bates for an interview. Then on Dec. 14, CNN posted an article including Bates — “Budget Christmas 101: Pandemic hardships don’t mean the holidays are canceled.”

It was picked up by more than a dozen other news outlets and websites from the *Albany Herald* (Georgia) to KITV Island News in Hawaii, which also ran a Spanish version.

In the article, Bates gave an array of ways to save money, but one of the biggest was simply to be honest with family members when times are tough financially.

“If you’re embarrassed about giving less this year, ‘Fess up,’” she told CNN. “You will see the relief on other people’s faces, because it just takes one to be willing to say, ‘I’m strapped this year.’ Because most of these other people, when you just say that, will admit, ‘Hey, I’m in the same boat you are. Thank goodness you had the courage to speak up because I wanted to say it, but I was just afraid of how people would react.’” (Grace Thornton)

For more information, visit bargainomics.com.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



“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

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(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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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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Jolt of renewed hope, potential alive within Judson nation

Students at Judson College in Marion returned to classes this week — and I’m guessing the young women breathed in the sights and sounds with a deeper level of appreciation than they knew they had.

Faculty and staff members at the 183-year-old institution and fifth-oldest women’s college in the United States likely worked through tender emotions of their own.

Getting a spring 2021 semester when the reality of one became uncertain in December, I have to believe everyone on campus will live life differently these next few months.

We all take so much in our lives for granted until those things are no longer there.

To be given a second chance — or renewed life as in Judson’s case — thrusts that original appreciation to the surface and awakens a powerful ability to share our enthusiasm.

While Judson’s future remains unsure, the current administration under the leadership of Mark Tew is working closely with the board of trustees to chart the possibilities.

At the same time, an army of alumnae and friends has organized to strategize ways it can assist as “Always a Judson.”

The fact that alumnae and friends raised \$500,000 in less than two weeks and secured another \$1 million in pledges a month later demonstrates their determination to find a way through the financial crisis at Judson.

But it’s more than beating the bushes for one-time donations to prop up the school a semester at a time.

To secure longevity for the historic campus and its unique student experience, those fighting for Judson must show how the school can not only survive but also thrive going forward.

Potential donors want to know they are investing in something

that will last and that the donation they make will truly make a difference.

We commend Tew’s transparency and openness to explain the reality of the situation.

Without his willingness to be open, the situation would have been confusing and the temptation would have been to pinpoint a person to blame.

I’m confident the question of how Judson found itself within a month of closing is being thoroughly analyzed by internal officials so processes and other aspects can be tweaked as needed and so those who give can be assured their investment will have lasting effect.

And while there are indeed specifics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic hitting following a 10-year enrollment decline that came on the heels of the 2008 recession, our attention should be focused on helping discover what’s next — in whatever form that might take.

Of course, we can give financially now or along the journey, but we also can pray for the leadership and trustees as they study the research and proposals coming from the consulting firm helping them figure all of this out.

And we can learn more about the school’s history and future potential as ways to help share why Judson should matter. 🌈

Judson College and *The Alabama Baptist* share same founders, so description of sister entity on target

Judson College is sometimes described as a sister entity to *The Alabama Baptist* and TAB Media — the same as how the University of Mobile and Samford University have traditionally been explained — regarding our connection in Baptist life.

The same goes for how we are connected to the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers,

Shocco Springs Conference Center and The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.

Still, our connection to Judson is a bit deeper than the others.

The founders of Judson were the same founders of TAB, and the paper’s original building sits on a corner of Judson’s campus today.

The building was moved from its original location a few blocks away in 1997 so it could be preserved.

When Judson became part of the Alabama Baptist State Convention

in 1843, it was debt-free and self-supporting.

I’m not sure our founders meant to time things the way they did, but it’s interesting to see how they established the school in 1838 and worked to push it out of the nest in 1843.

That was same year they launched TAB, which began their next journey of growing another needed ministry and resource for Alabama Baptists.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

McKeever: Two small articles that changed my life forever

By Joe McKeever
joemckeever.com

The *Commission* magazine, the monthly publication of the SBC International Mission Board, exists now only online but for many generations it arrived in the homes and churches of Southern Baptists all over the country.

Two things in that magazine changed my life forever. They were so tiny, I'm confident that the people who dropped them in had no idea how powerful they were and no inkling of how God would use them.

► We need a cartoonist!

The first was a tiny notice in the fall of 1976 announcing a cartoonist was needed by missionaries in Singapore. They wanted to produce an evangelistic comic book to distribute to teens all over that island nation.

They needed someone to draw it. I read that in my office and thought, "I could do that." The phone rang. Margaret was calling from home. "Did you see this little note in *The Commission* that they need a cartoonist to draw a comic book in Singapore? You could do this."

So in May of 1977, I traveled to Singapore and spent two weeks with missionaries Bob and Marge Wakefield. The urban strategists who had conceived the idea — Ralph and Ruthie Neighbour — had returned to Houston, but they continued working with us on this.

I worked with the Singaporean believers on developing a workable script and sketched people and places all over the city. Then, returning home to Mississippi, I set about

drawing the full-length comic book. Ralph Neighbour had the drawings transferred to acetate cels, which we — my family, my church members, my neighbors! — worked at coloring by hand over the next few weeks. It was a job!

My church members kicked in the money to print that comic in full color, and it was shipped to Singapore — 10,000 copies.

That was memorable and life-changing for me — I hope it was for some Singaporeans, but we'll have to wait for heaven to find out — and it began with a tiny announcement in our missions magazine.

► A church goes on a missions trip

The other thing was a small news item which I clipped and have used in sermon after sermon ever since.

The title of the article was "Volunteer learns to sing old song in a new way," and here is an excerpt:

Pastor Jack Hinton from New Bern, NC, was leading music for a worship service held in a leper colony on the island of Tobago. There was time for one more selection. He asked for a request, and a woman who had been facing away from the pulpit turned around.

"I saw the most hideous face I had ever seen," Jack says. "The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone. Most of her lips had rotted away.

"She lifted a fingerless hand in the air and asked, 'Can we sing Count Your Many Blessings?'"

Overcome with emotion, Jack left the service. He was followed by a team member who said, "Jack, I guess you'll never be able to sing that song again."

"Yes, I will," Jack replied, "but I'll never sing it the same way again."

That's the story — the finest story

I ever read or used in a sermon.

Anyone can rejoice when life is good, the kids are well-behaved, the news from the doctor is great, the company is thriving, your job is secure and your team is winning.

But let's see you count your blessings when you are at the bottom of life's pit. This leprous woman in Tobago had nothing but who she was on the inside. Far from having her beauty, she didn't even have her face. Far from having her nails done, she had no fingers.

And still she could sing.

Can you sing, "Count Your Many Blessings?"

If not, there is a leprous woman in the Caribbean who would like to know why.

This story and the last three verses of Habakkuk chapter 3 go together as though God in heaven intended it from the first.

If, at the end of my earthly life, they ask, "What was your best message?" this is the answer:

That story and that text.

It's as good as they come.

Thank you, International Mission Board, for *The Commission*. Thank you, Pastor Jack Hinton for going to Tobago and for telling us that story.

Thank you, Lord, for your countless blessings.

Help me to sing your praises today and to do it regardless.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Joe McKeever is a frequent contributor to TAB and other publications. Read more from him at his website, joemckeever.com. This post was edited for space and used with permission from the author.

“ Though the fig tree should not blossom,
And there be no fruit on the vines.
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food;
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
Yet, I will exult in the Lord.
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength.
He has made my feet like hinds feet;
He causes me to walk upon my high places. ”

H A B A K K U K 3 : 1 7 - 1 9

Strength in working together

The heart of those who founded this nation and led us to our independence as the United States of America believed with great conviction, “out of many, one.” They knew their strength was working together and acting as one people. ...

As followers of Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches us that the moment Christ transforms our lives, we become part of God’s family, the Church.

We are reminded that even though we are uniquely created in God’s image, we do not function as individuals, but we function as one. 1 Corinthians 12:27 states, “Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.” The Church is the body of Christ.

Each of us has unique spiritual gifts and serves the Lord, not independently from one another, but depending on each other. 1 Corinthians 12:26 reminds us, “So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” When we believe God and His word, we live this way.

However, when we choose our independence and autonomy away from our identity in Christ, we strut in pride, which always leads to destruction. This is when division and dishonoring one another happens even among the people of God.

I appeal to all of us who are followers of Jesus Christ: A divided Church cannot call a divided nation to unity.

Let’s determine to come together as one, cease the rhetoric, stop the finger-pointing, refuse the grandstanding and come together in Christian unity. In brokenness over our nation, the Church needs to lead the way repenting and returning to God.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

“Most Christians pray to be blessed.
Few pray to be broken.”

LEONARD RAVENHILL
English Christian evangelist and author (1907–1994)

Nothing given generously for God’s kingdom will be lost, and no life poured out freely for the gospel will be wasted.

J.D. Greear
jdgreear.com

Lamentations 3:23 proclaims to us that His mercies are new each and every morning. And as we move into this new season, we have to look up and look out to see these steady reminders, reflecting on the truth that His goodness doesn’t look the way we oftentimes expect it to. But He is there, and He is good.

If His mercies are new each

morning, then how much mercy awaits us in this new year?

While we must continue to make space for the pains and grievances of the last year that did not end on Dec. 31, 2020, we still have room to celebrate the new while so much of the old may still remain with us.

Collectively, as a people, we have experienced so much sorrow and grief within the last 365 days. However, our hope is eternal and tangible, and everlasting life is still ours for the taking.

So in this new year — as with each and every new day of any month of any year — we are new

creations experiencing new mercies by the grace of our God who never, ever changes.

Sarah Caskey
brentwoodbaptist.com/blog

I never dreamed that on Christmas Day, I would get to share the reason Christ came with a student on another continent (after sending a simple “Merry Christmas” text). Just because we can’t meet in person doesn’t mean we stop sharing the gospel.

Beth Gardner
Baptist campus minister
University of South Alabama

From the *Twitterverse*

@MattSmethurst

Do you know why there are a thousand fresh self-help books every year? It’s because they don’t work. — @jaredcwilson

@LutherQuots

Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection, not in books alone but in every leaf in springtime.

@EdLitton

The seduction of political power cannot compare to the power of God, of which His people can experience every day. Isaiah 40:17: All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness.

@PaulTripp

Start the new year by reminding yourself that you haven’t outgrown

your need for the rescue, protection and transformation of God’s grace.

@brocraigc

“Patience is the companion of wisdom.” — Augustine

@jenniferwilkin

“We are not saved *by* obedience. We are saved *for* obedience.” — @michaeljkruger

@JackieHillPerry

It’s the dead authors that I’ve learned from the most.

@tedtraylor

A hurried life damages relationships. — Lance Witt

@JoshuaCook1

God has a plan to reach our world. Our homes and workplaces are strategic assignments given to us by a God who longs to be glorified

in the eyes of those who need His grace. Our churches are strategically placed by a God who has a heart for our communities. #dontwasteit

@kferg16

God created my soul to be entirely satisfied in Him and never fully satisfied elsewhere. (Big idea from Psalm 33)

@Jeff_Iorg

Boldness means clarity about our message and conviction about its efficacy, not mean-spirited attacks demeaning other people.

@timkellernyc

Most leading urbanologists estimate that by 2050 the number of people living in cities will exceed 75% worldwide. The Church has not moved into cities at the same rate. How should we respond to this mission challenge?

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

'Our purpose is to make disciples,' Edmonds says

By Michael J. Brooks
TAB Media

When the pastor asked every class to study a series on the church's purpose for eight weeks instead of the traditional Sunday School lesson, one man was upset. He asked the pastor, "When can I have my church back?"

Such are the roadblocks when churches try to fulfill their mission in new and creative ways, according to panelists in a recent webinar hosted by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Daniel Edmonds, director of the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship, moderated the discussion, "Connect with the Core: Disciple Making," about small group Bible study ministry and discipleship in times of change, including COVID-19.

Edmonds noted it is possible for people to reside in community but not live in community.

"I think that's what we've seen in COVID-19," he explained. "We live in neighborhoods but don't know one another."

'Delay of game' concern

Fellowship is often mentioned as one goal for small group Bible study, whether its called Sunday School, LIFE groups or whatever, Edmonds said.

"The fellowship time can be a 'delay of game' while we wait for

late-comers to arrive, and consist of sports talk (or other discussions)."

Edmonds also said prayer can become a time of sharing details and family relationships rather than asking, "How we can help this family?"

Edmonds said the "why" of small groups often gets lost in the "what."

"If you ask a Baptist the purpose of Sunday School, they might talk about prayer, fellowship and Bible study — the 'what' — without getting around to the 'why' we do it," Edmonds continued. "We must always be on purpose, and our purpose is to make disciples."

Edmonds added that churches also may struggle for leaders if there is no clear purpose.

"We're called to make disciples, and leadership grows from this," he said.

Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, agreed the "traditional approach"

to new groups and leadership is inadequate.

"We go to a group and tell them we're making two groups, send one to another space and people get mad," he said with a laugh. "It's better

to ask leaders to multiply themselves as they grow disciples."

Mullins noted Crossroads has struggled with space issues as other churches have during the pandemic and has had to place on-campus

groups in larger rooms so they can better spread out.

"There's an urgency in what we're called to do, and we have to find a way to do it," he said.

"Many times, we use space in the church for one hour each week, and this isn't good stewardship. We need to have 'blue sky' sessions and dream with our people about new ways to do our work."

Mark Gainey, pastor of Fulton-dale First Baptist Church, said he tried to help his congregation make a "map" rather than a "menu."

Offer fewer choices

"We came through the 'seeker' and consumer era, and many of us believed we had to offer multiple choices," he explained. "So someone comes into the church and we say, 'Here's 35 things you can do.'"

"This is overwhelming, and some people think they have to be in 30 of them," he said. "But research shows committed people will give us up to three hours each week, so we need to guide them into the priorities."

"Less is more," he explained. "Having multiple Bible studies can be almost an addiction."

"I think we have to sponsor a recovery program of sorts and focus on making disciples. The best way to do this may not be sponsoring

every new Bible study program that comes along."

Andy Frazier, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Sumiton, said his church uses The Gospel Project series from LifeWay Christian Resources, so "every age is on the same page," and he preaches on the same themes.

"By the time our members get into small groups, the question they ask is, 'OK, now what are we going to do about this truth we've learned?' This is 'unpacking' in the classroom."

Frazier said his church also has a churchwide Bible reading plan so members are growing together.

Intensive focus on a small group of people can be very effective, Mullins noted.

"My wife and I have four couples who meet with us one hour each week," he said.

"We've been going verse-by-verse through the book

of Acts. I tell them [that] when we're done, I want them to do the same thing with other couples."

For more information about discipleship training resources, contact Edmonds at 800-264-1225.

View this and other videos in the "Pathways that Lead to Connection" series at vimeo.com/alsbom.

A guide to the series is available for download at tabonline.org/connect-handout.



EDMONDS



GAINNEY



MULLINS



FRAZIER

Disciple-making boot camp set for January in central Alabama

Does your church have a true disciple-making culture?

Bill Wilks says his burden is to help every church equip its members to be disciple makers.

That's why Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, has been investing his time in leading D-Life Boot Camps

across the Southeast over the past several years.

D-Life isn't a program; it's a lifestyle, he said. Any follower of Christ can use it anywhere to begin discipling

friends, coworkers, neighbors or family members through studying the Bible together as a small group.

"Our goal is that you walk out of a D-Life Boot Camp believing that you can make

disciples and that you are trained to live a lifestyle of making and multiplying disciples for the rest of your life," Wilks said. "D-Life is a simple, biblical, missional and reproducible process of disciple making. It's a proven plan for making disciples who make disciples."

Upcoming boot camp:

► **Central Alabama**
NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, Jan. 23, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Bill Wilks

Bill Wilks speaks at a recent D-Life Boot Camp. D-Life trains people to live a disciple-making lifestyle.

To register, visit livedthelife.com/bama.

Serving bivocationally

FIRST IN A SERIES — ANDY FRAZIER, PASTOR OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, SUMITON, SINCE 2015

Encouragement comes from discipling members who become disciplers

EDITOR'S NOTE — An estimated 55% of Alabama Baptist pastors serve bivocationally or covocationally. Many more serve as bivocational ministers in other church roles. In this series, TAB will share some of their stories, adapted from information provided by the Alabama Baptist Fellowship of Bivocational Ministers.

Q: How long have you been bivocational?

A: I have served bivocationally 17 of my 23 years in ministry.

Q: Describe your work outside the church.

A: I am a self-employed farrier (horseshoer) and ministry consultant.

Q: How many people helped you start your ministry?

A: We had 27 people to begin our church revitalization in 2015.

Q: What type of facilities did you have for gathering as a church?

A: I am serving at an established church, more than 40 years old, in a wonderful location with a large, yet poorly maintained, facility.

Q: How long did it take before you started seeing growth?

A: We started growing around 4 to 6 months into our ministry at Grace, but the church experienced significant growth after a year.

Q: What percentage would you estimate is transfer growth and evangelistic growth?

A: Sixty percent of our growth is new believers, and 40% is transfer of members.

Q: What type of outreach has been the most effective for your ministry?

A: Making disciples who share their faith and invite others to church has been the most effective means of outreach.

Q: What has been your greatest discouragement?

A: My greatest discouragement

over the years has come from divisive members stirring up trouble.

Q: What has been your greatest encouragement?

A: I absolutely love to see someone being discipled and then see that same person go and disciple others.

Q: What are the most important lessons or suggestions you would offer bivocational pastors today who also want to reach the lost and grow a local church?

- A: ▶ Be patient.
▶ Love and lead your family well.
▶ Trust in the power of the word of God, the Spirit of God and the plan of God to make disciples.
▶ Find other pastors to do life with.
▶ Never ask your people to do anything you're not willing to do or are not already doing yourself. 🌈



FRAZIER

Bivocational pastors conference set for Feb. 20

The Alabama Baptist Fellowship of Bivocational Ministers will hold its first Bivocational Ministers Online Conference on Feb. 20 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Speakers for this year's event will be Tim Henning, pastor of New Beginnings Fellowship, Trussville, and president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Ministers Fellowship; Bill Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville; Jacky Connell, pastor of Eden Westside Baptist Church, Pell City; and Kevin Blackwell, executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University and associate pastor for disciple making and teaching, The Station Church, Birmingham.

Registration for the conference is free. The first 75 participants to register will receive a copy of the book "Turning Everyday Conversation into Gospel Conversations" by Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright.

All bivocational pastors are invited to participate. For registration and information, go to tabonline.org/bivo-conference-21.

To register for the Bivocational Ministers Online Conference, go to tabonline.org/bivo-conference-21.

The fellowship also has a Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/bivoministries, a private online space where pastors

can share concerns, needs and resources.

For additional information, contact Tim Henning, president of the Bivocational Ministers Fellowship, at 205-613-7235. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Andy Frazier

Andy Frazier, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Sumiton, is also a self-employed farrier (horseshoer) and ministry consultant.

Montgomery ministry meets spiritual, physical needs

By Lanell Downs Smith
TAB Media

LaDonna Brendle was working as an accountant and teaching Sunday School at Frazer United Methodist Church in 2006 when she felt the call to full-time ministry, and then two things happened.

In a New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary extension class, Brendle said she gained a focus on personal evangelism. And later, on a tour of Israel, she realized the call to serve the homeless, both in Israel and at home in Montgomery.

What began with sharing sandwiches with the homeless who gathered behind a dumpster in a vacant Montgomery lot has now grown into a full-fledged outreach effort — Reality & Truth Ministries, which serves up Bible truths and home-cooked meals to the hungry in downtown Montgomery.

“I learned so much,” said Brendle, president of Reality & Truth. “There were so many stumbling blocks for people to get things they needed. I had a heart’s desire to make a difference, so I started bringing them dinners and [the ministry] grew from there.”

The people who come for help have all kinds of stories, Brendle noted. Some were sold into prostitution by their parents; many suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment.

Serving the broken

But others lived normal, productive lives until tragedy struck and they lost the ability to cope.

“We serve very broken people, and whether they are homeless or incarcerated, God has called us to them,” Brendle said. “These adults are orphans. They need someone to walk alongside them and guide them to what’s next for them, which for some may be mental health counseling, addictions treatment or help getting a job. Others just need someone

to disciple them or listen to them share their story.”

The ministry’s mission is based on Isaiah 61:1–3 — serving and glorifying God “according to the work of Christ by promoting the one source of Truth amidst everyday realities, through encouraging, teaching, loving and gifting others.”

Recognizing humanity

One man Brendle encountered wanted to get a job but had no way to prepare for an interview. His plight helped her see the need for a place where the homeless could clean up and perhaps feel a little more human.

“They needed to be able to shower, wash their clothes and get a haircut,” Brendle explained. “They needed a place where people could love on them, where they could see the love of Jesus.”

Ministry volunteers also serve women at Julia Tutwiler Prison in Wetumpka through Bible teaching, prayer and discipleship.

Brendle also leads a semi-annual mission trip to Tel Aviv under the ministry arm, Israel

Love Mission, ministering to the homeless and women involved in sex trafficking.

The ministry’s humanitarian arm, One Church Mission, is operating in a temporary location while renovating what will be a permanent location on Montgomery Street.

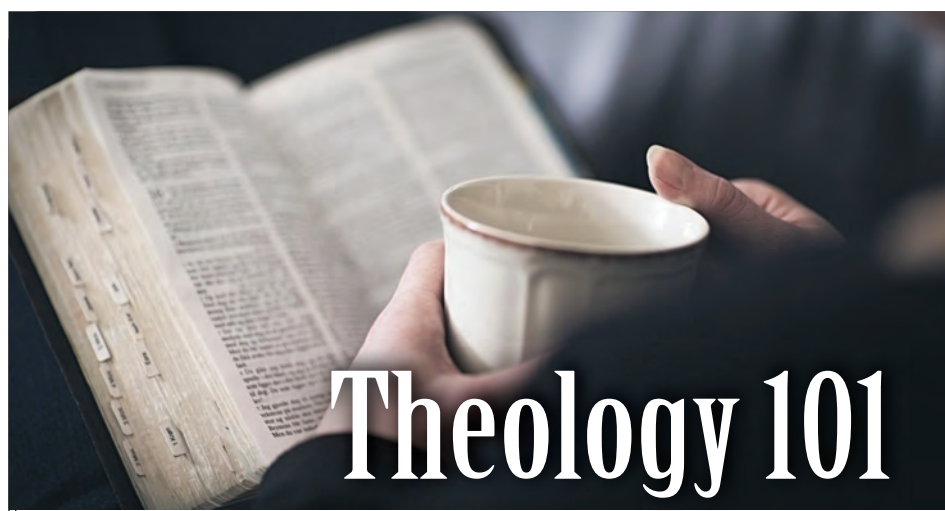
Once completed, the ministry site will offer showers, a laundry room, computer stations, a hair salon, a game area, plus a living room and dining space.

It’s all part of reaching “the least of these,” Brendle said.

“We serve broken people who need the touch of Jesus. The stories are endless, but these are souls that need to be delivered, to be healed, to be redeemed or nurtured and equipped. They are the ones He came for.” 🌈



Photo by Lanell Downs Smith
Volunteer Yvette sorts clothing in the One Church Mission clothes closet.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

New Year's Reflections

Be It Further Resolved

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

From the Old Testament example of Daniel last week, we turn to some New Testament examples of individuals who made significant resolutions.

The Apostle Paul was in many ways a premier example of one whose life was tightly tied to some important resolutions.

Among his firm decisions and fixed purposes, we turn to 1 Corinthians 2:2, in which he wrote in words of serious resolve, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Like Paul, we might well aspire in the new year to get to know Christ better and speak of Him to others.

God's purpose for our lives

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul voiced yet another determination that guided his life: “I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ has also laid hold of me” (3:12). We might express that resolution as his intention of pleasing Christ by living out the purpose for which He called him.

Using Paul as our example, we too would do well to resolve to please Christ in this new year by seeking to know and pursue seriously His purpose for our lives.

The premier New Testament example of a purpose-driven life is Jesus. For one of His most significant resolves, we might look at His determination to accomplish the purpose for which He came. In doing this, we consider

not only what He said, but also His body language as described in Luke 9:51: “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

Jesus set the example

Jesus’ deepest resolve as the incarnate Son of God was to fulfill the purpose for which He had come into the world. To this end, His face was set as He determined to enter Jerusalem and subsequently fall on His face in Gethsemane and add words to His resolve: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39).

With Jesus as our example, we cannot do better than to resolve anew in a new year to do God’s will at all costs.

Carefully conceived and clearly expressed, our spiritual resolutions can be like frontlets before our eyes that help us avoid aimless existence. We can choose to drift rather thoughtlessly through the months ahead, or we can choose to live purposefully by setting significant spiritual goals as guiding resolutions for the year. 🌈

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.



Average of 10 Christians per day killed for faith in Nigeria

By **Dianna L. Cagle**
TAB Media

Nigeria has moved into the top 10 on Open Doors' World Watch List due to the number of Christians there who are being killed for their faith.

"More Christians are murdered for their faith in Nigeria than in any other country," said Open Door's latest fact sheet for the country.

Nigeria was No. 12 on the 2020 World Watch List. It ranks No. 9 on the 2021 list.

On average, about 10 Christians are killed for their faith every single day in Nigeria, said David Curry, CEO of Open Doors USA.

Several extremist groups (Boko Haram, Hausa-Fulani, Muslim militant herds-men and ISWAP) operate in north and central Nigeria and are becoming more common farther south, where they are driving believers who survive.

Forced marriages

"The women and children they leave behind are often displaced to informal camps, face sexual violence and are even at risk of abduction and forced marriage," according to the report.

Just over 46.3% of Nigeria's 206 million people are Christian, but the Islamic militants maintain a powerful stronghold.

Curry said extremists are using COVID-19

restrictions to perpetrate crimes on believers and other religious minorities.

In Northeast Nigeria, only 15% of emergency rations have been distributed properly, he said.

Genocide

A December Intersociety report estimates that at least 2,200 Christians were killed in Nigeria in 2020.

Curry called the murders in Nigeria genocide, reminiscent of Iraq when ISIS attacked Christians on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 2010.

"Boko Haram and Hausa-Fulani have been

attacking and gaining ground," Curry said, driving Christians to the south or out of the country.

Open Doors releases its annual watch list to help believers know how to pray for their brothers and

sisters scattered around the globe facing persecution.

"I would like the Americans to pray for us, for God to deliver us from such cruel killings, and then for God to strengthen our faith and heal our heart from the traumas that we have gone through," said Afordia Inuwa, a Nigerian Christian whose husband was killed by Boko Haram militants.

To read more of Inuwa's story and find more prayer points for Nigeria, go to tabonline.org/wwl-21-nigeria.



Open Doors photo

Women and children in Nigeria are especially vulnerable to attacks by Muslim extremists.

SURVEILLANCE SPREADS

Technology enables persecution in many countries

(continued from page 1)
than having a Bible or being suspected of being a Christian," Curry said. "He's living proof [of] the cruelty of North Korea toward Christians and religious minorities."

The pandemic has exacerbated existing issues, Curry said.

"COVID has clearly affected all of us around the world, yet for some, their faith has made them more vulnerable, less able to get food, less able to get the assistance they need to support their families," Curry said. "Government and extremists are using COVID-19 as a way to justify an increase in the persecution of Christians."

For example, in Burkina Faso, which entered the World Watch List three years ago, "Boko Haram extremists are taking advantage of weak central government, taking advantage of the COVID crisis, to make it difficult or impossible for aid to get to Christian communities," Curry said.

In Colombia (No. 30) and Mexico (No. 37), drug cartels have made it difficult for believers who stand against the cartels.

Those who oppose the drug cartels have been extorted, ambushed, robbed, shot and even killed.

One of the concerning trends Open Doors tracks is the rise of surveillance, what Curry called the "greatest threat to human rights today." Surveillance is one



Open Doors photo

China has installed 415 million facial recognition surveillance cameras to track people's whereabouts, according to Open Doors' 2021 report on global persecution of Christians.

reason China has re-entered the top 20 (No. 17 this year).

Curry gave an example of a recent case in China where people were arrested for attending a Bible study in a private home.

In another example, armed Chinese guards raided the homes of Christians last Easter and detained believers

for watching church via an online streaming service.

Open Doors reports that China has installed 415 million facial

recognition surveillance cameras that track people's whereabouts.

Tracking phones

Chris Meserole, director of research and policy at the Brookings Institution, expressed his concern over the spread of this surveillance technology to foreign governments beyond China.

"It's not a problem that's going to stay in China," Meserole said. The technology

"enables a regime to ban private forms of religion."

Searches on cell phones are being tracked, as well as locations of individuals suspected of having Christian connections.

Curry noted an incident in Iran where believers were targeted through cell phone technology recording private meetings among believers.

'Days are numbered'

Ambassador Sam Brownback, the U.S. ambassador at large for international religious freedom, had strong words for top offenders:

"Your days are numbered as persecutors."

Curry encourages Americans, and especially believers, to share these stories of freedom violations.

"Churches, places of worship, even worship itself it must remain sacred," Curry said, "free from discrimination, so that everyone has the freedom to think, to study and to practice the faith of their choosing — even if they choose not to have any faith at all." ✝

To receive prayer requests, download Open Doors' prayer app for smartphones at OpenDoorsUSA.org/prayerapp.

1 IN 4 ALABAMA CHILDREN STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER.*



* feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/alabama

HUNGER OFFERING February 21

For more information and promotional resources to assist you with collecting a hunger offering in your church, contact Ministry Assistant Lori Lockett at (334) 613-2304, llockett@alsbom.org, or visit alsbom.org/hunger.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

ONLINE CHURCH TAX CONFERENCES

Led by State Missionary Lee Wright
Monday, January 25, 10 am to noon. Special emphasis: Special Tax Rules for Ministers and Housing Allowance
Tuesday, January 26, 10 am to noon. Special emphasis: Contribution Rules
Visit pinnaclealabama.org for more information or to register.

CONNECT WITH THE COMMISSION: GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS WEBINAR

Tuesday, January 26, 10-11 am
Led by State Missionaries Daniel Wilson, Ken Allen and Terry Long and Church Health Specialist George Yates
Visit pinnaclealabama.org for more information or to register.

DISCIPLESHIP NETWORK OF ALABAMA VIRTUAL GATHERING

Thursday, January 28, 1-4 pm
Featuring Scott Sullivan, Discipleship Catalyst, Georgia Baptist Mission Board
Visit disciplealabama.org for more information or to register.

The in-person Bible Drill Retreat on January 29-30 has been cancelled, but virtual tools are being offered for you to use with your students.

Visit kidzlinkal.org/bible-drill-retreat for information.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTERS RETREAT Saturday, February 20, 9:30 am-3:30 pm ONLINE

Featuring Tim Henning, Bill Wilks, Jacky Connell and Kevin Blackwell
Visit alsbom.org/bivo for more information or to register.

SHARING HOPE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

Sunday, February 21, 5:30 pm
In person at Valleydale Baptist, Birmingham (registration required) or livestreamed at live.alsbom.org.
Details at evangelizeal.org/sharinghope.

SBOM's Eileen Mitchell retires

Eileen Mitchell was the youngest of all the grandchildren in her family, and she used to love to sit with her granddaddy on the porch and listen to his stories while he shelled peas. She also loved to sit and talk with her grandmother, who lived to be 100.

"I love history," she said — and early in her career, Mitchell was a history teacher for a while.

But it wasn't too long before she ended up in a role that fit exactly what she'd always loved, even though she didn't have a name for it back then — senior adult ministry.

"I've been blessed to use what I love as a platform for ministry," she said.

Mitchell — a state missionary who serves in senior adult, singles and family ministry for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — retired Jan. 15 after more than 30 years with the SBOM.

The move to SBOM

In 1990, she moved from working with Colorado Woman's Missionary Union to start work with Alabama WMU. Five and a half years later, she felt led to work in ministry to singles and senior adults in the SBOM office directed by Henry Lyon.

Over the years, as offices changed and merged, Mitchell served under several other directors before ending up where she is now — an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship

led by Daniel Edmonds.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, says in all the ways Mitchell has served, she's had a "vivacious spirit and a second-mile attitude toward meeting the needs of people."

"Eileen is well beloved, especially among senior adults to whom she has related in a healthy and wholesome way," Lance said, adding that she's also one of the finest soloists he's ever heard.

"We at the State Board of Missions will miss her as an active part of the SBOM family, but we know that the Lord will continue to use her in ministry to meet

the needs of people in the name of Christ."

Over the years, Mitchell's job has led her to Alaska for backyard Bible clubs, Spain for single adult ministry and in churches of all sizes all over the state of Alabama for different kinds of ministry, including On Mission Celebrations.

"I loved when we did church visits," she said. "You develop some great relationships by being a part of those different opportunities."

Mitchell has made friends along the way that have lasted over the decades, and she says her biggest struggle in retiring during the COVID-19 pandemic is that she hasn't gotten to see many of them in person in the months leading up to her leaving.

"It's not goodbye, though," she said. "This is just an 'I'll see you later.'" (Grace Thornton)



MITCHELL

Jamie Baldwin retires after more than 23 years at SBOM

When Jamie Baldwin was a teenager, his world fell apart. His parents divorced, his sister and brother-in-law divorced and his girlfriend broke up with him.

"It was a very tough time for me," he said. "I would sit on my bed at night thinking about committing suicide."

'She saved my life'

But one thought kept him from it, and it wasn't what his parents, his friends or even his pastor might think.

It was what Mrs. Betty Stowe might think — she was his Sunday School teacher at Tates Chapel Baptist Church, Centre.

"I couldn't do it because I knew there was a faithful Sunday School teacher who loved me and cared about me," Baldwin said. "She didn't realize what she was doing at that time; she was just doing her job. But she saved my life."

That's been the driving force behind his ministry as an adult — the personal knowledge that a Sunday School teacher can make a difference. He's carried that

with him as he's served as a minister of education and youth at several churches, as an associational Vacation Bible School director and as a state missionary in the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

During his more than 23 years, Baldwin — who retired Jan. 15 — went all over the state making leader training accessible for churches of all sizes and locations.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, called him a "beyond-the-call-of-duty type of state missionary" who "embodies the servant-minded attitude in an exemplary way."

Work of excellence

"He is a godly man who relates to pastors well and other church leaders, as well as church members across our state," Lance said. "He has carried out his ministry assignments with excellence."

Baldwin said he believes that there are "Jamies of all ages" all over the state

who need to know someone loves them, and Sunday School teachers can step into that gap.

Making a difference

"We have got to have faithful Sunday School teachers, teachers who love people and love what they're doing," he said.

"A Sunday School teacher helped me as a teenager, and I've had senior adults tell me that they come to Sunday School because of the hugs. Whether you're 9 or 99, Sunday School is vital. Teachers

make a difference. Mrs. Stowe gave me that passion."

Baldwin said he's retiring so that someone with "fresh eyes, a fresh heart and fresh ideas" can step into his role. But he says he will continue to do ministry — he's planning to spend his first six months as a retiree serving at a church in Alaska.

"It's been a tremendous honor for me to serve at the State Board," he said. (Grace Thornton)



BALDWIN

ALABAMA STATEWIDE

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3 stories you should know



WMU photo

National WMU executive board members met online Jan. 8–9 to discuss a wide range of topics, including the potential sale of the WMU building in Birmingham. WMU personnel have been effectively working from home since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, making WMU a more agile organization, the board noted. The meeting also featured ministry updates and workshops. Read the full story at tabonline.org/wmu-board-meeting. (WMU)

SBC leaders have ‘honest conversation’ about race

A multiethnic group of Southern Baptist leaders described a Jan. 6 meeting as productive and trust-building, confirming they were committed to fighting racism and honoring the gospel.

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, called the meeting, which included officers of the National African American Fellowship of the SBC, presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries and SBC President J.D. Greear, to address turmoil resulting from recent statements about Critical Race Theory and race relations.

In a joint statement afterward, they called it “an honest and open conversation,” adding: “[W]e spoke ... about our perspectives and concerns related to” CRT and Intersectionality.

Read the full story at tabonline.org/naaf-meeting. (BP)

Number of abortion clinics drops in 2020

A total of 45 abortion facilities in the U.S. closed or halted abortions in 2020, resulting in a net loss of four clinics and leaving one state — Missouri — without an active abortion facility, according to a survey conducted by Operation Rescue.

The Reproductive Health Services Planned Parenthood in St. Louis was the last abortion facility in Missouri. It remains open, but Operation Rescue reports no abortion appointments have been available there for months, and none are currently available anytime in the foreseeable future. All abortion appointments are now being referred to the Fairview Heights Planned Parenthood facility across the Mississippi River in Illinois.

Operation Rescue reports there are currently 706 active abortion facilities in the U.S. (TAB)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Florida

Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida, has become the site of COVID-19 vaccinations for senior adults in the Sunshine State. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis visited the vaccination site, commending the church for its partnership in the community. A local hospital provides the shots, and the church provides volunteers to help organize the site, the *Florida Baptist Witness* reported.

Kentucky

The *Western Recorder*, the second-oldest Baptist newspaper in America, will cease publication March 31. Paid subscriptions to the paper, published through the Kentucky Baptist Convention, no longer support publication costs, said Todd Gray, KBC executive director-treasurer. A magazine produced for the KBC annual meeting will continue to bear the *Western Recorder* name. Kentucky Today, an online KBC publication, will

carry denominational, state, national and world news for the Southern Baptists in Kentucky.

North Carolina

When 17-year-old Kelsey found herself facing an unintended pregnancy, she had to make some choices. She considered abortion but knew it wasn't the right decision. Kelsey found Christian Adoption Services, a ministry of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. She moved into a family-style maternity home and through that program, she chose adoption for her daughter. “Abortion and parenting shouldn't be the only options that come to your mind,” Kelsey told BCH's Blake Ragsdale. “Adoption is a beautiful thing.”

South Carolina

First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina, is making big plans to build tiny houses for women in need. A village of about 20 tiny houses

is planned on about an acre of property adjacent to the church's ministry center. The single-bedroom homes will range from 190- to 230-square feet, and a few two-bedroom homes also will be built. Women who live temporarily in the homes will participate in a mentoring program offered by the church, the *Baptist Courier* reported.

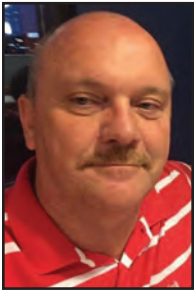
Tennessee

After a bomb exploded on Christmas morning in downtown Nashville, Tennessee, nearby First Baptist Church opened its kitchen facilities for volunteers with special security clearance to prepare meals for the many first responders investigating the scene. Approximately 1,000 meals a day were served to first responders as the investigation unfolded. The church, four blocks from the blast site, is also helping displaced residents and business owners by participating in a recovery fund for that purpose.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Charles “Chip” Freeman Jr.**, pastor of Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Brookwood, died Dec. 5. He was 51.



FREEMAN

Freeman previously served as pastor of Covenant Chapel, Cottondale, and as minister of youth at New Hope Baptist Church, Buhl. A bivocational pastor, he also worked at Park Supply of Tuscaloosa. He was also the founder of Small Steps Ministries, a Facebook devotional page he had run since 2014.

He is survived by his son, Josh, and three grandchildren.

► **Carl P. Wells**, who served on staff at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, for nearly 40 years, died Dec. 23. He was 86.

Wells served at churches in Mississippi and Kentucky before answering the call to First, Tuscaloosa, as associate pastor of education in 1963. He served in that role for 33 years before retiring for the first time and taking on interim ministry at a number of churches. In 2002, he returned to First, Tuscaloosa, and served as minister to senior adults until retiring a second time in 2008. The church named him associate pastor emeritus.



WELLS

During his time at the church, he began ministries for those with special needs, international students, seniors and prisoners.

Wells earned a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in Clinton and a master of religious education degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

He is survived by his wife, Eleanor; daughter, Carla Lyn; son, Steven Ray; five grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Gary Furr**, pastor of **Vestavia Hills Baptist Church** for more than 27 years, announced his retirement Jan. 10.



FURR

Furr told the congregation that “with a great deal of gratitude and thanks” he would serve his last day as their pastor Feb. 28.

Before coming to Birmingham, Furr served as pastor of churches in Georgia and Texas. His total pastoral ministry has spanned 41 years.

► **Danny Wood** — pastor of **Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham**, for the past 24 years — announced to his congregation Jan. 10 that he plans to retire in August.

Wood told the Shades congregation that he had been working on this for more than three years,



WOOD

trying to get issues with the facilities and outstanding debt dealt with so the new pastor could have a clean slate — 2020 provided that clean slate, he said.

BUTLER ASSOCIATION

► **Nathan Skipper** is the new pastor of **Antioch West Baptist Church, Georgiana**.

► **Carl Watson Wasden** had a career in construction that he loved, but God made it very clear to him that he was supposed to be in ministry.

“That was something I didn’t want to do,” Wasden said in a 2015 TAB article. “I fought it and ended up in the hospital for three days. I fought it a long time. I loved construction — I still do. Eventually, I ended up in the hospital with almost a nervous breakdown until I surrendered to the ministry.”

Fast forward 54 years, and on Jan. 3 he retired after serving that long as pastor of **Antioch West Baptist Church, Georgiana**.

It’s the only church he’s ever attended, and before he served as its pastor, he served as a deacon and as music director. He also served as clerk-treasurer for Butler Baptist Association from 1975 to 2000.

A Korean War veteran, Wasden studied at the Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville.

His wife, Grace, served alongside him in ministry all those years.



WASDEN

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **John Pendleton** is the new college and discipleship pastor at **First Baptist Church, Jacksonville**.

CHEROKEE ASSOCIATION

► **Kevin Daniel** is the new student and education minister for **Pine Grove Baptist Church, Centre**. He and his wife, Leanna, have two children.



DANIEL

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **Richard Martindale** is the new pastor of **Bashan Baptist Church, Thomasville**.

► **Kyle Routzahn** is the new pastor of **Grove Hill Baptist Church**.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Greater Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, Sheffield**, was welcomed as a full member of **Colbert-Lauderdale Association** at its annual meeting in October. The growing congregation had moved into the buildings vacated by York Terrace Baptist Church when it merged with First Baptist Church, Sheffield, to become York Bluff Baptist Church earlier in 2020. Dowand Malone is pastor of Greater Fellowship Missionary Baptist.

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

► **Jackson White** is the new pastor of **New Prospect Baptist Church, Hartford**.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Alabama news compiled by TAB Media staff. Read more news from Alabama Baptist churches at tabonline.org.

Persecuted church

Christian receives death sentence for blasphemy charge in Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan — A Christian sentenced to death for a blasphemy conviction was acquitted Oct. 5 by a Pakistani high court.

Sawan Masih, 40-year-old Catholic father of three, was sentenced in 2014 after a Muslim friend accused him in 2013 of blaspheming Islam’s prophet Muhammad. Blasphemy is punishable by imprisonment or death.

The friend’s initial report against Masih included no words of blasphemy, but a supplement filed eight days later did.

In 2013 after a mosque broadcast by loudspeakers the friend’s accusation, more than 3,000 Muslims attacked Joseph Colony, a predominately Christian area in Lahore. More

than 150 shops, homes and church buildings were burned; Christians fled. In Lahore High Court, Masih’s defense presented concerns



Morning Star News

about the police investigation, initial report, supplement, and Masih’s death sentence on testimony of only one witness.

In the Oct. 5 acquittal, the court stated the prosecution failed to prove Masih blasphemed.

Pakistan remains No. 5 on Open Doors’ World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (See story, page 1.) (MS)

Cease-fire holds but Armenian refugees feel effects of conflict

Since the Azerbaijani military launched air raids and artillery attacks Sept. 27 on the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, more than 150,000 Armenian refugees still find themselves seeking food, shelter and life's necessities.

"The people of Armenia are still suffering because much land was lost," said Don Parsons, ministry director to unreached people groups for Mission Eurasia. "In many cases people can't go back to their homes. They have nothing to go back to."

Some who are returning to Nagorno-Karabakh, the long-disputed territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan, are discovering towns and cities with few resources.

Tentative peace

"In some of the worst cases, people have lost their lives," Parsons said. More than 5,000 soldiers and at least 143 civilians were killed in the conflict, he noted, citing a recent BBC report.

In November, following six weeks of hostilities, Russia brokered a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The November cease-fire split Nagorno-Karabakh into two territories: one controlled by Azerbaijan, where the population is largely Muslim; the other controlled by ethnic Armenians where the population is largely Christian, *Christianity Today* reported.

"The cease-fire agreement is holding right now, but many are concerned it won't be a long-lasting agreement," Parsons said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sat down for talks in the Kremlin Jan. 11 with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Associated Press reported.

Many Armenians opposed the peace deal, which bro-



Photo courtesy of Mission Eurasia
Mission Eurasia volunteers provide care packages and food to Armenian refugees.

Armenian Christians fear destruction of the ancient symbols of their Christian heritage, such as churches and monasteries, particularly in the area of Nagorno-Karabakh controlled by Azerbaijan, CT reported.

Lives devastated

Parsons, who recently spent time in Armenia helping with relief efforts, has heard stories of missing family members, disrupted businesses and other troubles caused by the conflict.

"Ethnic Armenians lost a lot of territory. Huge swaths of land, including homes and livelihoods, were taken away, and right now there appears to be little hope for them of getting it back," Parsons said.

Mission Eurasia is working with churches and ministry partners to provide refugees hope through food, shelter and the gospel.

Read more about efforts to help Armenian refugees at tabonline.org/me-armenia. (Margaret Colson)

kered about 2,000 Russian peacekeepers to the region, but the Armenian prime minister has defended the deal as a painful but necessary move to prevent Azerbaijan from overrunning the entire Nagorno-Karabakh region, according to AP reports.

The Armenians were the first to declare Christianity as their national religion in the year 301. Alongside the devastating toll of human life and personal loss, many

Hacoda donates to wounded warriors



Photo courtesy of Hacoda Baptist Church

Hacoda Baptist Church, Samson, collected \$11,775 for Wounded Warrior Outdoor Adventures, an organization offering combat wounded veterans and their families opportunities to find healing while enjoying the outdoors. Pictured (l to r) are Steve Simmons, deacon; Bobby Dove, special forces retired staff sergeant; Jeep Sullivan of Wounded Warrior Outdoor Adventures; and Patrick Dyess, pastor.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor to lead and shepherd our congregation. Under the Lord's leading, please send resumes to: fbcloxleypastorsearch@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Cross Baptist Church, Eufaula, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Interested candidates may email resumes or questions to: crossbaptistpastorsearch@gmail.com or send to: 33 Early Street, Eufaula, AL 36027.

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 resumes or questions to: 2919 County Highway 39, Oneonta, AL 35121, or email to: sparks@unionhillbaptist.org or call: 205-274-9232.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MINISTER

Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister of children/youth family discipleship. Send resumes to: search@libertyhillonline.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

York Bluff Baptist Church in Sheffield, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational children's minister. This person should be a creative, organized, self motivated/disciplined young adult. This person should be team oriented and good with children. Resumes may be emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com. The deadline to receive resumes is Feb. 28.

OTHER POSITIONS

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Shelby Baptist Association, Columbiana, Alabama, is searching for the next associational missionary to lead the association. For more information, please go to <https://shelbybaptist.org/job-opportunities/>.

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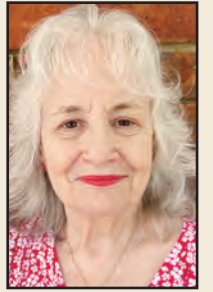
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Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M—Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



2021 marks 175 years since birth of leprosy ministry founder

Wellesley Bailey (1846–1937) founded the international charity, The Leprosy Mission, in 1874 in India.

This year marks the 175th anniversary of his birth.

Bailey was born on April 28, 1846, in Abbeyleix, Ireland. His father earned enough as an estate manager to send Wellesley and his three brothers to a boarding school at Kilkenny College.

God's presence

One day Bailey remembered his childhood girlfriend's request that he attend church.

While in Gravesend, Ireland, he went to the Gravesend Parish church, where he said he had a sense of God's presence in a way he'd never known before. He there committed his life to Christ.

One of Bailey's brothers, who served in the police force in Faizabad, India, suggested that he join him there. In 1869, Bailey arrived and found that his brother had been transferred to another area.

Missionary calling

Bailey stayed in Faizabad and found lodging with a German Lutheran missionary who taught him the local language.

He felt God was calling him to be a missionary, and through the American Presbyterian Mission, Bailey traveled to the state of Punjab to be a teacher.

He was shocked when he saw there the devastating effects of leprosy — blindness, clawed hands and disfigured faces. He wrote later that if there was ever

a Christlike work in the world, it was to go among the lepers and bring them the gospel.

In 1870, Bailey and his childhood girlfriend, Alice Grahame, were married in the Bombay Cathedral. They had three children; one son was killed in World War I.

The Baileys returned to Ireland in 1873 to raise awareness about leprosy.

The next year they started

The Mission to Lepers (later renamed The Leprosy Mission). Many in Ireland supported it financially and through prayer.

Addressing concerns

By the late 1870s, the group ministered to 100 people affected by leprosy.

Bailey toured the United States

and Canada in 1892, addressing concerns about the disease, and preached at the World Congress of Missions in Chicago in 1893.

Legacy lives on

The couple toured India several times, visiting leprosy centers and preaching the gospel.

In 1913, they made their last voyage to observe leprosy work in China, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Japan, Korea and Malaysia.

In 1917, Bailey retired after nearly 50 years working with The Mission to Lepers, which had 87 projects in 12 countries. He died in 1937.

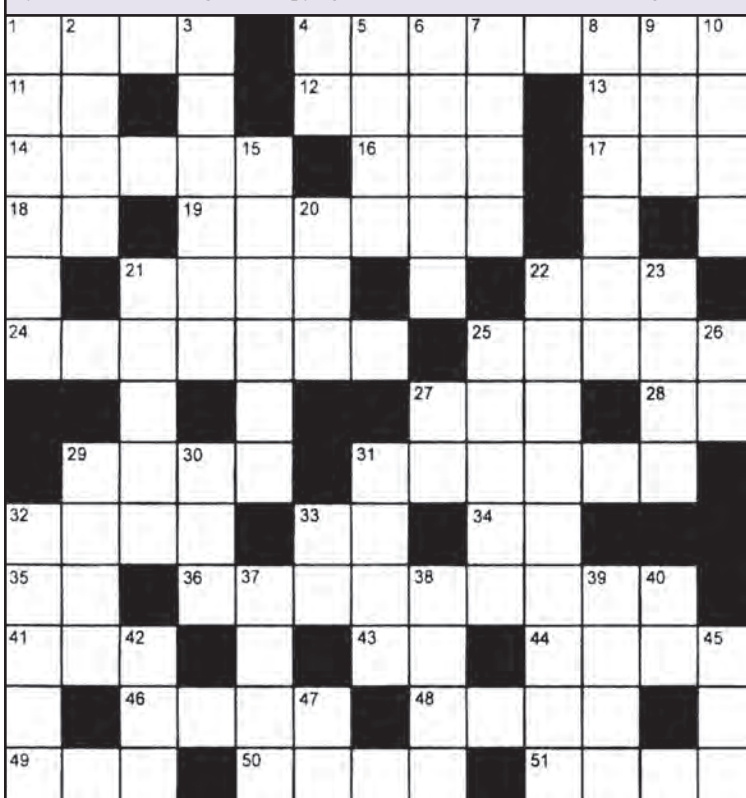
Today his legacy lives on in Leprosy Mission International, which works in 18 countries. Their vision is, "Leprosy defeated, Lives transformed." 🌈



BAILEY

Christian Crossword

By Jennifer Breeding Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Mary's relation to Joseph.
4. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name _____. (Ps. 34:3)
11. Trust _____ the Lord, and do good. (Ps. 37:3)
12. Appliance used for baking bread.
13. Nickname for Sarah's husband.
14. Thy rod and thy _____ they comfort me. (Ps. 23:4)
16. Ask, _____ it shall be given you. (Matt. 7:7)
17. Small Business Administration. (abbr.)
18. They toil not, neither _____ they spin. (Matt. 6:28)
19. They shall mount up with the wings as _____. (Isa. 40:31)
21. Wile E. Coyote's mail order company.
22. What Jesus did for the 5,000 followers.

24. To refer to briefly or incidentally.
25. Shades of color.
27. _____ we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7)
28. Mr. _____.
29. Depend.
31. The glory of this _____ house shall be greater. (Hag. 2:9)
32. "O _____ Night."
33. Southeast. (abbr.)
34. I will be _____ enemy unto thine enemies. (Ex. 23:22)
35. Receive the kingdom of God _____ a little child. (Mark 10:15)
36. He taketh away the first, that he may _____ the second. (Heb. 10:9)
41. Pollen-loving insect.
43. _____, fi, fo, fum.
44. Be _____ in the Lord. (Ps. 32:11)
46. The one and _____.
48. Is to hearing as a mirror is to seeing.
49. Parable of the _____ Talents.

50. For the Son of man is come to save that which was _____. (Matt. 18:11)
 51. One Bobbsey sibling.
- ### Down
1. For the Lord giveth _____. (Prov. 2:6)
 2. "Come _____ My Heart, Lord Jesus."
 3. Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without _____? (Rom. 3:3)
 4. Glory _____ God in the highest. (Luke 2:14)
 5. Egg shaped.
 6. Parts of a chromosome that influence characteristics.
 7. From the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the _____ of it. (Ps. 19:6)
 8. Let him make speed, and _____ his work. (Isa. 5:19)
 9. _____ and flow.

10. Harvest.
15. Of whom the whole _____ in heaven and earth is named. (Eph. 3:15)
20. Geography. (abbr.)
21. Heavenly being.
22. Two weeks.
23. Buck or doe.
25. Complete.
26. South Dakota. (abbr.)
27. Do, re, mi, _____.
29. Cain _____ up against Abel his brother. (Gen. 4:8)
30. Granny Clampett's homemade _____ soap.
31. Removable piece of a table top.
32. Convent attire.
33. Street. (abbr.)
37. What Jacob's sons did to Joseph. (Gen. 37:27)
38. Edible red root.
39. Snail's pace.
40. Laughter.
42. Long period of time.
45. Daniel's temporary dwelling.
47. _____-yo.

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries



A vibrant poster for the 2021 Sharing Hope event. The background is dark blue with stylized fireworks in red, white, and blue. At the top center, the year "2021" is written in large, white, outlined numbers. Above the "2021", a red pennant flag with the word "FREE" in white is on the left, and a white baseball with "STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE" in blue and red is on the right. Below the year, two portrait photos of speakers are shown in blue-bordered frames. The first photo is of Darryl Strawberry, a Black man with a beard, wearing a striped shirt; his name is written vertically in white on a blue banner to his left. The second photo is of Mac Brunson, a white man with glasses and a beard, wearing a suit; his name is written vertically in white on a blue banner to his right. To the right of Mac Brunson's photo is a small inset photo of a church building. Below the speakers' photos, the words "Sharing Hope" are written in a large, red, cursive font with a white outline. Underneath this, a blue banner contains the text "VALLEYDALE BAPTIST CHURCH" in white. At the bottom center is a circular logo with a red background, a white "Ev" in a square, and the words "Evangelism Everybody." in white. To the left of this logo is the word "BIRMINGHAM" and to the right is "ALABAMA". At the bottom of the poster, white text reads: "SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 21, 5:30 PM, IN PERSON OR LIVESTREAMED AT LIVE.ALSBOM.ORG." Below this, smaller white text says: "Because seating is limited due to social distancing, registration is required. For complete schedule, COVID guidelines and to register, visit evangelizeAL.org/sharinghope."

FREE

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

2021

DARRYL STRAWBERRY

MAC BRUNSON

Sharing Hope

VALLEYDALE BAPTIST CHURCH

BIRMINGHAM

ALABAMA

Evangelism Everybody.

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NAMB 2021 Prayer Calendar highlights missionaries, chaplains

Missionaries across North America continue to move the mission forward during a turbulent time.

In 2020, hundreds of church planting and compassion ministry missionaries met needs in their communities and shared the gospel with those looking for hope.

Rafael Valter, Billy Judge and Dustin Conner either recently launched a new church or are on the precipice of starting new churches in Atlanta, Pittsburgh and Calgary, respectively.

Prayer resource

Each is also represented in the North American Mission Board's 2021 desktop Prayer Calendar, a 109-page resource designed by NAMB to help Southern Baptists pray for their missionaries and chaplains.

Valter leads Iglesia Bautista Ágape (Agape Baptist Church), a congregation focused on reaching Spanish speaking peoples in a growing Atlanta suburb.

Church plants

While the pandemic has generated challenges, Valter has still been going door to door to meet people in his community.

Judge moved with his family — wife Sarah, a toddler and a newborn — to Pittsburgh in July 2020 after going through NAMB's Send Network assessment process.

"We didn't know what COVID-19 would be for church planting, but looking back, we would not have chosen another time to do it," Judge said. "We have seen God work in incredible ways."

Conner, originally from

North Carolina, moved to Calgary in January 2017 after serving as a pastor for several years. He and his wife Jill had sensed the call to start a church, but they initially did not know when or where.

They did know, however, that they wanted to serve a place that did not have many churches, and Calgary fit the bill. The city is 95% unchurched, Conner said.

Orders limited

Printed copies of NAMB's 2021 Prayer Calendar are available for free (plus the cost of shipping). Go to namb.net/resource/missionary-prayer-calendar for details. Orders of physical copies are limited to 25 through the end of January.

A free digital download is also available at the same website. (BP)



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Johnny Hunt, National Strategist for Evangelism
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 24

Explore the Bible

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



REJECTED Luke 4:16–30

True Identity (16–21)

Joseph taught Jesus well. From every indication in Luke's account, Joseph was careful to follow the teachings of the law (Luke 2:22–24, 27, 39). He set the pattern for Jesus. Joseph had been entrusted with the welfare and safekeeping of the Son of God. With this in mind, it makes perfect sense that Jesus followed the custom to attend Sabbath service in the Nazareth synagogue.

Jesus came to fulfill prophecy. When invited to participate in the reading of Scripture, Jesus opened the scroll to Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me ..."

This was a Messianic prophecy, for the Hebrew verb from Isaiah (mashach, root of the word Messiah) means that the one described was "anointed" by the Spirit. Jesus then made the remarkable statement that the prophet's Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in their hearing. In essence, Jesus was announcing Himself to be the Messiah.

False Understanding (22–27)

To His listeners, this was false teaching. Jesus was Joseph's adopted son who grew up in the sawdust of a carpenter's shop, the little boy they watched grow into manhood. People knew Jesus, His parents and His brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:55–56a). Where did He gain understanding of the Scriptures? When did He go to "seminary school" (as some people like to call it)?

At this point in the narrative, Jesus referred to events which occurred previously in Capernaum. (Readers must keep in mind that Luke acknowledged other accounts of Jesus' ministry (1:1–4), so his own account was not intended to be exhaustive.)

Jesus anticipated rejection by His neighbors, and His passionate words which first fascinated them eventually incited anger.

The people of Nazareth were blind to the reality that Mary's boy was God incarnate. Though the tempter acknowledged Jesus as the "Son of God" (4:3, 9), folks in His home-

town could not grasp or accept His teaching. This was John's point when he wrote: "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11).

Misguided Response (28–30)

If the men of Nazareth perceived that Jesus was a false prophet, then their response was understandable, though misguided. Mosaic law, especially in Deuteronomy, made it clear that false prophets were to be executed (Deut. 13:5; 18:20). John recorded two similar incidents, times when Jesus was nearly stoned publicly for His teachings (John 8:59; 10:31–33).

Nazareth contains considerable contrasts in elevation. The synagogue, town well and businesses were located in the lower portion of town. The men intended to hike to the top of the hill and execute this false prophet by throwing Him off the summit. That walk would have taken considerable physical exertion. During their trek up the hill, they lost Jesus in the crowd.

Throughout history, there have been many misguided responses to Jesus. Jews deny the deity of Jesus. Gnostics denied His humanity, believing that Jesus simply appeared to live and die and rise again. Muslims claim Jesus as a prophet but not the crucified and risen Savior. Modernists are conflicted, with some characterizing Jesus as a free-thinking rebel and others seeing Him as a "good moral teacher."

As C.S. Lewis pointed out, Jesus' own teachings make it impossible for Him to be described as the latter. If the claims of Jesus were not true, then He was either insane or demonic — neither good nor moral. But since His self-revelation is true, He is much more than just a good teacher of ethics and morality. Jesus is Lord.

Our appropriate response is to take Jesus at His word and follow Him as our Lord. "But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Bible Studies for Life

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



THE BENEFIT OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES 1 Timothy 4:1–10

According to Jim Wilson, author of "Soul Shaping," spiritual disciplines are the "small things Christians intentionally do to open themselves to God's work of conforming them to the image of Christ." However, there is nothing small about the mindset behind these disciplines.

Jesus compares the Kingdom of heaven to a treasure hidden in a field. The man who found it "in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matt. 13:44). The spiritual disciplines are the process of selling all one has to purchase the more rewarding treasure of the kingdom of God.

The world seeks to distort the good things of God. (1–3)

Discipline may be difficult, but the order it provides to life is something all desire. Few, in fact, live without any discipline at all. Despite their lives' apparent disarray, drug addicts can be remarkably regimented in their habit, sacrificing everything dear to pursue it. Anarchy quickly becomes tyranny of another sort.

Thus, in 1 Timothy 4, those who forsake the Spirit's leading do not find freedom, but the control of "deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." This distortion of God's good guidance leads to greater restrictions: marriage forbidden and foods prohibited. God's gracious gifts, created to be received with thanksgiving, are instead renounced in a hypocritical piety for false gods.

Focus on and lift up the truth of God. (4–7a)

Notice the rhetorical contrast Paul sets up in this passage. Those who "abandon" the faith follow the teaching of demonic deceptive spirits taught by hypocritical liars who will force them to forego marriage and abstain from certain foods. The rejection of God's will leads to a life that is twisted and empty, shaped by "godless myths and old

wives' tales." Faith in God, however, frees one up to enjoy God's "good" gifts in creation and the nourishing "truths of the faith" and "good teaching."

This same contrast is evident in Moses's final charge to the Israelites: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deut. 30:19).

Discipline and train yourself in godliness. (7b–10)

Choosing life requires discipline, whether training one's body or soul. But the sacrifices made in training oneself in godliness are far outweighed by the value it has for this life and the next.

Only a firm hope in God's saving work on behalf of all who believe can provide a foundation solid enough to ground those sacrifices.

As athletes train to win a prize, so we exercise the spiritual disciplines for the treasure that is greater than all we could pay. Paul returns to this image again and again. He speaks of how all runners run, but only one gets the prize, and so encourages us to run with the determination to receive "a crown that will last forever" (1 Cor. 9:24). His example encourages us, like the man who sells everything to gain the hidden treasure, to forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead: "the prize for which God has called [us] heavenward" (Phil. 3:13–14).

This effort does not replace faith, but is built upon it. Without belief that the treasure is worth more than all he could sacrifice, the man in Jesus's parable could not sell all he has with "joy." Similarly, the spiritual disciplines, though they may cost us time and energy, should be sources of great joy as we anticipate the prize of everlasting joy.

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Media reviews

MOVIES

In case you missed them: 10 best family-friendly movies of 2020

By Michael Foust
TAB Media

Even if 2020 was the strangest year in recent history, it still produced dozens of inspiring and entertaining documentaries, dramas and comedies families can enjoy. Here are 10 of the best in case you missed them.

1. “I Still Believe” — A young couple, fresh off their honeymoon, sees their faith tested when one of them is diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. Based on the true story of Christian singer Jeremy Camp and his first wife, Melissa, it’s one of the best faith-based movies ever and has powerful lessons on love, prayer and faith in the midst of tragedy. The film is rated PG.

2. “Clouds” — A teenage boy, given only months to live because of cancer, begins writing songs about life. One of his tunes, “Clouds,” becomes a worldwide hit. The film is based on the true story of Zach Sobiech, whose mom prayed, “Okay, Lord, you can have him. But if he must die, I want it to be for something big. I want someone’s life to be changed forever.” Rated PG-13 for some brief strong language, but I didn’t hear it when I watched.

3. “Red Sea Miracle” I and II — Christian filmmaker Tim Mahoney interviews scholars and tours biblical sites as he explores two questions: 1. What route did the Hebrew people take out of Egypt? 2. Was the crossing of the Red Sea a mi-



‘I Still Believe’

Photo by Jason LaVeris/Lionsgate

raculous event? The films are plain-language biblical scholarship for the layperson. Don’t worry: Mahoney takes an inerrantist approach. Unrated; treat it as a G-rated film.

4. “Dude Perfect: Backstage Pass” — If you’ve never heard of Dude Perfect, then your children — or the kids in your neighborhood — definitely have. This quintet of trick artists and comedy show hosts has 54 million YouTube subscribers, and all of their videos are clean enough for the entire family. In “Backstage Pass” — which is free on YouTube — the group takes the viewer along on their 2019 tour. They also discuss their faith. Unrated; treat it as a G-rated film.

5. “Free Burma Rangers” — It’s the most hair-raising Christian documentary ever made and follows missionaries Dave and Karen Eubank as they take humanitarian assistance — and the gospel — to some of the world’s most dangerous war-torn countries. The film includes gripping footage from their adventures, including a gunfight in the streets of Mosul, Iraq. Unrated;

treat it as PG-13 for thematic elements and violence.

6. “The Last Champion” — A disgraced Olympian who was stripped of his gold medal returns to the small town that never forgave him. The town’s pastor — and his daughter — reach out to him when

few are willing to forgive. The film stars Cole Hauser (“Yellowstone”) and includes powerful lessons about second chances, forgiveness, and finding purpose after tragedy. Rated PG-13 for thematic elements, a brief scene of violence and minor language.

7. “Switched” — A bullied high school girl prays that her nemesis will learn what it’s like to walk a day in her shoes. The next morning, the two girls wake up having switched bodies. It’s a hilarious film that uses comedy to convey serious messages about bullying, kindness and the true meaning of beauty. It’s aimed at children, tweens and teens and contains no coarse language. Rated PG for thematic elements.

8. “JESUS” — It’s a Broadway-style musical production by Sight

and Sound that follows the ministry of Christ, from the streets of Jerusalem to His resurrection and ascension. “JESUS” was filmed before a live audience and features massive sets, special effects and live animals. Unrated; treat it as a PG-rated film.

9. “Soul” — A talented musician learns valuable lessons about life after dying unexpectedly at a young age. Christian audiences will have differing opinions on the film, but it nevertheless contains solid messages rarely seen in a mainstream title: death could occur any day; each of us has a soul; work isn’t the purpose of life; and blessings are all around us — if we’ll only open our eyes. That said, parents may want to screen this one first. Rated PG for thematic elements and language (children saying “hell” in reference to the actual place).

10. “Farmer and the Belle” — An aging model discovers the true meaning of beauty when she returns to the small town of her childhood. There she meets an old friend (who becomes her romantic interest). She also helps save the town’s famous Santaland festival. This Hallmark-like, faith-based film is a must-watch for today’s young girls, who constantly are bombarded with unbiblical messages about beauty.

A devotional, a children’s book and a bracelet (the one seen in the film) also can be purchased. Unrated; treat it as a G-rated movie. 🌈

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.

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.

Men of courage

'Courageous' plans updates, new ending for 10th anniversary of film's release

After they ceremoniously took an oath to be men of courage, the lead cast of fathers in the 2011 movie "Courageous" ended with the fathers in various stages of fulfilling their new vow to God and their families.

Officer Adam Mitchell was becoming a more present father for his 15-year-old son Dylan. Officer Nathan Hayes had instilled in his teenage daughter Jade her worth and had begun to mentor the fatherless boy Jade wanted to date. Rookie cop David Thomson acknowledged and began to care for his out-of-wedlock daughter, officer Shane Fuller's greed landed him in prison and the officers' comical friend Javier Martinez was enjoying a promotion at work.

Moviegoers will see the fathers' progress in "Courageous the Legacy Edition," the film's 10th anniversary update the Kendrick Brothers and Sherwood Pictures will release in September 2021.

"We had a conversation about the fact that the principles in 'Courageous,' especially for fatherhood, were just as applicable today as when the movie was released a decade ago," director and actor Alex Kendrick said Dec. 8. "And in many circumstances, you had a new generation of fathers that did not have children 10 years ago."

"Then we began talking about how interesting it would be to see where the characters were 10 years later. When you begin applying new principles to your role as father or parenting, what would that look like over a decade? What would the result of that be?"

New ending planned

With Sony Pictures on board, the Kendrick Brothers wrote new scenes, filmed them in October and are in the post-production phase of the updated film. The original "Courageous" has been re-edited to



kendrickbrotherscatalogue.com/courageous

The 10th anniversary update of the Kendrick Brothers and Sherwood Pictures movie 'Courageous,' including the Mitchell family seen here, promises fans updated content, new edits, deleted scenes and more in its 2021 planned release.

flow more quickly, new cinematic shots have been added, deleted scenes have been reborn and new technology has been utilized.

"If you loved the original movie, it's still there. But now, you'll see new shots ... and then an entirely new ending," Kendrick said.

"The original movie ends with the climactic scene, and then it will literally say '10 years later' on the screen, and we'll fade in on the city 10 years later."

"I love the result of it. I love seeing how these characters grow over the course of the film, and where you get to catch up to them 10 years later. I'm not sure how many movies have done that. I know movies will age their actors with makeup ... but actually seeing the same people in the same movie 10 years later is very interesting."

Addressing concerns

The new movie will address some of the current law enforcement struggles and societal crises, Kendrick said, but will primarily address

timeless concerns of fatherhood and discipleship.

The Kendrick Brothers will present as a complement to the movie the documentary "Show Me the Father," presenting true stories of people's relationships with their earthly father and the heavenly Father. "Show Me the Father" will be a separate theatrical release in 2021, Kendrick said.

Church connection

Sherwood Pictures, a ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Georgia, under the leadership of Pastor Michael Catt, will own the new film. Catt produced "Courageous" and other Sherwood Pictures offerings produced before the Kendrick Brothers expanded their filmmaking ministry beyond the church, with their pastor's blessing.

Their latest movies, including 2015's "War Room" and 2019's "Overcomer," were produced independently of Sherwood Church, although brothers Alex, Stephen and Shannon Kendrick are still active members of the congregation.

Courageous earned more than \$35 million at box offices worldwide, according to TheNumbers.com movie earnings tracking site.

The trailer for "Courageous the Legacy Edition" is set to release in the spring with details available at Courageousthemovie.com. (Reprinted with permission from Baptist Press, baptistpress.com.)

For more information, visit Courageousthemovie.com.

