



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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123rf.com

Human trafficking enslaves image-bearers of God

By Margaret Colson
TAB Media

Dewi had lived for decades as a victim of sexual exploitation in the red-light district of the Asia Rim.

Her introduction to modern-day slavery began when she fled an abusive marriage to find a job in the city. There, she was lured unknowingly into a life of prostitution. Trying to escape that life, she met a man who claimed to care about her.

Again, the vulnerable wom-

an was forced to sell herself to earn money for him. Finally, after becoming pregnant, she found the courage to flee, without turning back.

Helping the vulnerable

She discovered a Southern Baptist Send Relief center that helped her leave the sex trade and equipped her to earn a sustainable income to support herself and her child.

Tess, a single woman desperate to care for her daughter, posted online about her vulnerable situation. A predator

saw the post and lured Tess with the promise of a job. She discovered it was an escort service.

The only way Tess would see her little girl alive again, the predator told her, was to do what he told her. She was trafficked through five states until she found someone she could trust who encouraged her to call a human trafficking hotline number.

Through that call, Tess connected with the Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans, where she was able to reclaim

her life and ultimately reunite with her family.

Each year throughout the world, from Asia to Alabama, men, women and children are victimized by human traffickers. The U.S. Department of Defense defines human trafficking as "a crime in which force, fraud or coercion is used to compel a person to perform labor, services or commercial sex." It is the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world because humans can be sold repeatedly every day.

(See 'Exploited,' page 6)



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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 15.



Photo courtesy of Barbara Wiginton

Barbara Wiginton (left) and Renee Dobbins have been friends since the 1970s. After Dobbins moved to Georgia, Wiginton saved her copy of TAB for her friend to read whenever she visited. This year, Wiginton gave the gift of TAB to Dobbins for Christmas.

Longtime friends bond
over adventures, TAB

Renee Dobbins says when she opened the gift, she burst into tears. “My friend, Barbara, had always held on to her issues of *The Alabama Baptist* for me,” she said. “It was my touch of home, my link to Alabama.”

And this Christmas, Barbara Wiginton gave Dobbins her very own subscription. “It was definitely a highlight of Christmas for me,” Dobbins said.

The two have been good friends since they and their families joined Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Warrior, back in the 1970s when their kids were young. Through the years, they stayed close, even as they moved churches and Dobbins and her husband, Bill, moved to Foley, then to the Georgia mountains after their home in Foley flooded.

“When they would come over, Renee would see *The Alabama Baptist* and read it,” Wiginton said. “I kind of picked up on that and would put several issues aside, and she would say, ‘Oh yay! I’m going to read this on the way home.’” But then Dobbins would some-

times read them before she ever left, Wiginton joked. Dobbins said she loved reconnecting with Alabama stories. “I was reading about places and things I was familiar with,” she said. “It was just a welcome chance to read about things happening in my home state.”

The couples — four fast friends — have visited each other as often as they could through the years. They’ve also traveled together many times, and the wives took a 52-day trip out West after they retired.

At every stop, they took what Wiginton calls their “headshot” — a photo of the two of them in front of something to document the moment.

“We’ve done it at the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, any place we went,” she said.

‘I’m so excited’

They did the same thing with a copy of *The Alabama Baptist* this year at Christmas to document the gift Dobbins loved so much.

“We received it for years and years, and I’m so excited to get it again,” Dobbins said. (Grace Thornton)

“It was just a
welcome chance to
read about things
happening in my
home state.”

Renee Dobbins
former Alabama Baptist

TAB Media

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

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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Working to understand the opposite point of view always helps

When Jason and I are both home at the same time, I adjust one of the chairs beside the piano constantly. I prefer it angled, while Jason likes it flush against the wall.

The chair is in constant motion based on who is walking by at the moment.

Of course, you and I know angled is the better choice — just teasing, sort of — but to be fair, both options are acceptable. It truly comes down to preference.

Jason looks strictly at the chair and the wall and how he perceives it to be positioned best. I'm looking at the entire wall with the piano and chair on the opposite side (which also happens to be angled, by the way).

The span of our view and the point of what we are trying to achieve influences how we each determine a different position for the chair.

One is more specific and focused; the other is more broad and encompassing. In this case, neither are wrong, but they are different.

Adjusting the chair for the 17,000th time, I stopped, stepped back and looked at it from Jason's point of view. That's when I realized I had not

attempted to understand Jason's reasoning and was only thinking about what I preferred.

Taking time to better grasp what Jason saw as the best option doesn't mean I changed my mind about the chair's position. In fact, I still think it should be angled, and I plan to continue lobbying for it to be so.

However, I'm not nearly as aggravated any longer when I find it shifted because I know Jason is merely lobbying for his preference, and I can understand and respect how he came to the conclusion he did.

While chairs likely won't come up often in TAB, we are going to be chatting about sev-

eral denominational issues soon, and I'd like for all of us to be willing to listen to each other and be kind and respectful, even as we work to convince each other about how to position the various topics that surface.

It will be important to separate the emotions tied to the 2020 presidential election from the upcoming denominational discussions and especially the annual meeting of Southern Baptists coming up in June in Nashville.

As we near the one-year mark of COVID-19 concerns, confusion and restrictions, we are seeing some relief ahead. And while Alabama's mask mandate has been extended to March,

hospitals seem to be managing OK right now and health officials are settling into a rhythm for distributing vaccines.

The past 12 months have certainly taken us to the brink of despair on so many levels and in too many ways, but we can hold on to each other and to Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:8–12 reminds us: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ... So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you." 🌈

Thinking about attending the SBC annual meeting in June? Let us know what information would be helpful as you plan.

Southern Baptist Convention officers and Executive Committee officials are narrowing their focus toward the June 13–16 annual meeting in Nashville.

New resources such as a weekly video series — The Road to Nashville — are being made available to help Southern Baptists prepare for the meeting, which will be held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center.

And four names have already

been announced to be on the ticket for president:

▶ R. Albert Mohler Jr., longtime president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

▶ Mike Stone, immediate past chairman of the Executive Committee and pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Blackshear, Georgia.

▶ Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland (previously North Mobile Baptist Church).

▶ Randy Adams, executive direc-

tor/treasurer of Northwest Baptist Convention.

Rumor is there may be more names surfacing soon, so to help messengers with their research, Baptist Press is conducting and publishing indepth interviews with each candidate. Those can be found at baptistpress.com as they become available.

We at TAB Media will provide a summary bio for each candidate closer to June.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Conspiring against conspiracy: Continuing fight against human trafficking

By Reagan Keith

Special opinion to The Alabama Baptist

Efforts to combat human trafficking have recently experienced a new hurdle from a group seemingly on the same side.

The conspiracy theory group known as QAnon, which gained popularity during the 2020 presidential election, claims there is a secret satanic group of pedophiles among Democratic elites who are stealing children for cult purposes.

With this accusation, QAnon has tied one of its main conspiracies to the reality of child trafficking.

For years the organization Save the Children used a Twitter hashtag (created to reflect their

name — #savethechildren) to fight for the dignity and rights of children. Their hashtag has been taken over by those spreading the QAnon conspiracy theories.

Sowing confusion

So now there is confusion about the original source of the hashtag and the latest conspiracy theories, and longtime efforts to fight human trafficking are collateral damage.

Organizations that exist to work to end human trafficking are expressing concern about the claims of QAnon.

To understand what is actually happening, consider two aspects.

First, child trafficking does hap-

pen in the U.S. The demographic most targeted is not in the suburbs, but in the overlooked of society, particularly those in the welfare system.

Second, the U.S. is not the only perpetrator nor the largest in the crime of child trafficking. In other parts of the world, both young and old are trafficked — and in a variety of ways.

Forced labor and forced marriage enslaved some 40 million people in 2016, according to the International Labor Organization. Out of this number, which has likely increased, 1 in 4 victims are children.

Widespread evil

Child trafficking is an evil that is widespread around the globe and has been for many years.

We must not disregard the suffering taking place globally. In the rankings of places where human trafficking is the worst, the U.S. does not break the top 10.

How can we come together to combat evil and fight this injustice against human dignity?

The phrase “Do your own research” pops up again and again when looking at interviews with QAnon followers.

The caveat added is that the research needs to be “the right research” and not “untrustworthy sources” of information, like the mainstream news or even those organizations who are deeply committed to fighting child trafficking.

The conspiracy built upon Save

the Children preys upon the good emotions of Christian men and women and perverts them to depend on emotions rather than facts as the ultimate source of authority over what one should do.

We in the church are not immune to conspiracy, but we fight conspiracy with more than feelings for just causes. We fight it with our rootedness in the faith that Jesus’ kingdom has been inaugurated and continues to break through day by day.

When we confess the authority of God’s word over our lives, we confess that the story of Scripture is marked first by the fallenness of God’s creation. After the fall, the dignity intrinsic to being God’s image bearers is subject to abuse.

Some of those created in His image ironically (and tragically) no longer see creation as a means to glorify God but instead an opportunity to take others created in His image to be used for sex and labor.

The fallenness of the world, not a proposed secret satanic group of pedophiles, is sufficient to explain this horrible global practice.

Describing the problem in a way that is biblical and accurate helps us to be a part of the solution instead of being a hindrance to those involved in the excruciating everyday work of fighting this modern-day slavery.

I pray new awareness of an old evil will lead our churches to faithful action not reflective of the culture but of the gospel.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Reagan Keith is a student at Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama.

Where to go for help

Churches have a real opportunity to partner with local and state officials in tackling the evil of child trafficking.

There are groups working and willing to help (see pages 1 and 7 for more information).

A starting point is the National Human Trafficking Hotline, which provides a national list of resources already fighting human trafficking.

The Polaris Project, which runs the national hotline said it and other organizations are dedicated to “the very real, very important work of helping fami-

lies to protect children and working to change the conditions in which trafficking thrives — poverty, abuse, addiction, hopelessness, discrimination, to name but a few.”

Hotline access

The National Human Trafficking Hotline (U.S.) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in the following ways:

► **Phone:** 888-373-7888

► **Text:** 233733 (Text “HELP” or “INFO”)

► **Website:** humantrafficking-hotline.org. (Reagan Keith)

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters.”

J. H. JOWETT

British Protestant preacher (1864–1923)

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.

President Abraham Lincoln
Second inaugural address
March 4, 1865

People have agendas and biases, but the Lord is always just and perfect in every way and detail He chooses.

James Hammack
theropetab.com

My prayer is that all of my friends and all of us who make up this nation will be good neighbors, responsible citizens, and do our own part to make this a better country and a bet-

ter world. I continue to pray for our leaders, and as always, I give thanks to God that He is sovereign over all, that He directs the hearts of rulers and gives light and life to us.

Clay Owens
via Facebook

Discipline may be difficult, but the order it provides to life is something all desire.

Will Kynes
Jan. 24 Bible Studies for Life
commentary, TAB

Regardless of who the president or vice president, the speaker of the house or majority leader of the Senate may be, we need to pray for our nation's leaders. Regardless of the political party in power, they

are subject to God's power and we need to pray for them.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

I am quite convinced of this, that God knows better what is best for me and for the world than I can possibly know.

Dwight L. Moody
American evangelist (1837–1899)

Showing compassion to those who are suffering and avoiding the temptation to judge others ... not only serves the other person better, but it also keeps our hearts focused in the right direction.

Jennifer Davis Rash
TAB Editor-in-Chief

From the *Twitterverse*

@brocraige

“Why is real Christian love so scarce? It is because its cultivation requires nothing less than the reversal of every instinct in our fallen nature.” — Maurice Roberts

@JackieHillPerry

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal ... But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. —C.S. Lewis

@ChrisCrain4

When I get up in the mornings, I've learned to leave my phone on the nightstand and go to the kitchen with my Bible, pen, & a copy of “The Valley of Vision” — & spend time w/ God. When morning time is gone — it's gone!

@ronniefloyd

There is nothing in this world more valuable than a human life. This means that regardless of race, gender, place of birth or socioeconomic status, every human life has intrinsic, unalienable value. From the womb all the way to the tomb, life is precious.

@Pastor_Cory

“Lay all your loads and your weights by faith upon Christ. Ease yourself, and let Him bear all. He can, He does, He will bear you.” —Samuel Rutherford

@ErikReed

The local church is the hope of the world. There's nothing like her when she's healthy and strong.

@JohnPiper

“You, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of

my head.” Psalm 3:3 Lifted from shame. Shielded from destruction. Satisfied with glory.

@sPeytonHill

“Christ was never more lovely to his church than when he was most deformed for his church.” —Richard Sibbes

@Rgallaty

Instead of asking people if they are saved (everyone in the South would say yes) ask: “Is Christ living in you?” “How do you know?”

@revandyfrazier

In tough times, we think we have to choose between a good God who is not totally powerful or a powerful God who is not totally good. No matter what our emotions or circumstances tempt us to believe, Scripture teaches that God is in control, and He is good.

Finding rest in a restless world

It is obvious to me and likely you that this world is becoming increasingly unsettled. A global pandemic, racial tensions, unprecedented political division and an attack on the U.S. Capitol along with soaring unemployment numbers have millions of people rattled and unsure. Anxiety, confusion and frustration are at the highest levels in decades.

Where are we to find rest for our weary souls? Rest is found in only one name — Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28–29). His invitation is simple, “Come to me.” His promise is profoundly alluring, “I will give you rest.” Let us not neglect the invitation of Christ to enter into His rest.

Many of us are striving, painfully so, to plow the difficult soil of a hardened world. Imagine Jesus literally entering into your labors, giving you His strength. He says to you today, “Give Me your burdens, your weariness, your worries, grief and sadness; and in exchange I will yoke Myself to you.”

In exchange for our weariness, He promises rest for our soul through His humble and gentle heart.

You should rest today. Take a much needed break from your labors, anxieties, worries and fears. In Jesus we find perfect rest. In Him we have sins forgiven, mistakes redeemed and righteousness which has placed us in right standing with God.

Rest in that today. Take a spiritual rest from fear, loneliness, worldly pursuits and from the need to be understood and accepted by others.

There is a Savior whose name is Jesus, and His arms are opened wide, ready to take your burdens, cares, fears and worries and exchange them for His presence.

Kevin Blackwell
(Adapted from “Finding Rest in a Restless World,” originally posted at drkevinblackwell.com)

EXPLOITED

Government, social, religious organizations work together to end human trafficking

(continued from page 1)

“Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery,” said Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall. “It is a truly heinous crime, committed in the shadows — and in plain sight.”

The Department of Defense estimates more than 4.5 million people worldwide are victims of forced sexual exploitation, bringing in \$99 billion annually. Some 21 million worldwide are victims of forced labor, bringing in \$51 billion annually.

Sex trafficking is the most prevalent form of human trafficking in the United States, and Alabama is no stranger to this scourge.

‘Merely a commodity’

“It is reported that I-20 is a human trafficking super highway leading from Atlanta through Birmingham, and the majority of the trafficking that happens in the nation takes place in the Southeast,” said Holly Bunn, development officer for The WellHouse, a faith-based organization in Birmingham that works to rescue and restore human trafficking victims. A focus group study revealed there are more than 600 victims at any given time in Alabama, she added.

“It has been estimated that as often as every two minutes around the world a life is being bought and sold



123rf.com

as if it were merely a commodity to be traded. Human beings — image bearers of God — are being captured, exploited and bound as modern-day slaves,” reports the website for the Tim Tebow Foundation, which is engaged in the global fight against human trafficking. “The exact numbers are hard to track, often inconsistent and presumably underreported, yet they are a global reality steadily trending higher at an alarming pace.”

Even the pandemic did not stop the blight. Just as much of the country has found ways to use technology for good in lieu of in-person gatherings, Kay Bennett, executive director of New Orleans’ Baptist Friendship House, believes traffickers have been doing the same to carry on their business.

In a statement on Jan. 11, Marshall announced an alliance of state, federal and nongovernmental partners to combat human trafficking in Alabama. Funded by a grant of \$2.9 million from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Alabama Human Trafficking Alliance (AHTA) will share investigative resources to prosecute human traffickers and provide support and assistance to victims. Marshall’s promise to human traffickers in Alabama: “We are coming after

you — and we will only become more relentless until the day we end human trafficking in Alabama.”

Alabama has had a human trafficking law since 2010. In 2014, through a resolution passed by the legislature, the Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force was established. In 2016, the Safe Harbor Act was passed during Alabama’s legislative session to ensure that children caught up in human trafficking are recognized as victims, not criminals.

‘Joint collaboration’

Once considered a big-city issue, human trafficking is spilling over into smaller cities and towns, with cases reported not only in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, Dothan and Montgomery, but also Fort Payne, Albertville, Guntersville and Madison County.

“The joint collaboration will allow for better data collection and service delivery to victims of human trafficking,” said David Pinkleton, who serves with END IT Alabama, a project of the Alabama Human Trafficking Task Force.

Nongovernmental partners in AHTA include numerous members of the faith-based community, such as Trafficking Hope (trafficking-

hope.com), which developed the CARES (Coalition, Awareness, Rescue, Education, Services) initiative as well as organizations that directly serve human trafficking victims, including The WellHouse in Birmingham, Safe Harbor Youth in Huntsville and Hope Haven in Baldwin County.

‘God’s love’

Later this year, The WellHouse plans to open a home that will offer emergency accommodations, a safe house and recovery programming for trafficking victims under the age of 18.

A similar home, Camille Place, is under construction in the Monroeville area to help girls ages 6 to 19 who are victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Once rescued, survivors have few options for rehabilitation programs, which is one reason “the faith-based community is so important in the fight against human trafficking,” Pinkleton said.

Carolyn Potter, CEO of The WellHouse, agreed.

“There is no greater community able to advocate for the eradication of human trafficking and the healing of its victims than the faith community, whose foundation is based on God’s love. Such love will speak out for justice and protest harm to others.”

Rescue and rehabilitation are the twin focus areas for those victimized by human trafficking, Pinkleton explained.

“In the short-term, human trafficking victims need delivery out of trafficking situations, a safe place to live and drug detox in many cases. In the long term, trauma-informed care is a must, along with life skills, education and workforce training. A holistic approach will allow these victims to reach a place of healing and productivity in society. This is a multiyear process and does not happen overnight,” he said.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed.

If you suspect something, say something

If you suspect human trafficking, contact your local law enforcement agency, the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations Tip Line at 866-347-2423, the Department of Defense Inspector General Hotline at 800-424-9098 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of WorldCrafts

WorldCrafts offers items made by artisans, like the one pictured here from India, from all over the world with the goal of providing sustainable work so poverty does not force them into bonded labor or sexual exploitation.

JOIN THE FIGHT

Baptist organizations assist victims of human trafficking, educate those who want to help

By Margaret Colson
TAB Media

The battle continues. One day at a time. One person at a time. With a dual focus on rescue and rehabilitation, Southern Baptists are addressing human trafficking in the United States and around the world.

Send Relief

The issue is one of seven focus areas for Send Relief, a worldwide Southern Baptist compassion ministry collaboration between the International and North American Mission Boards.

“Send Relief is seeking to battle human trafficking in the USA and around the world,” said Bryant Wright, Send Relief president. “We hope you will join us in battling this great evil and saving young lives physically and spiritually.”

Send Relief Centers in New Orleans and Las Vegas minister directly to victims of human trafficking. When meeting someone who has been rescued, volunteers from the ministry centers take backpacks with a Bible, hygiene items, snacks, socks, clothing, a blanket and other commonly needed items, said Kay Bennett, executive director of the Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans.

Providing victims with those things “shows concern and builds

trust,” she said, which encourages victims to share their stories and often provides opportunities for believers to share the gospel.

The centers also provide or help find housing for at-risk women and children, and assist victims with treatment programs or by providing transportation to find care closer to their home community.

Internationally, Send Relief seeks to minister directly to those rescued from human trafficking. An employ-

ment center in the Asia Rim, provided through Send Relief, celebrated 10 graduates last year, women who left the sex trade and were equipped to earn a long-term, sustainable income.

Send Relief also seeks to mobilize the local church to serve alongside missionaries ministering to human trafficking victims as well as to develop their own local ministries to victims or those at risk of being traf-

ficked. Send Relief (sendrelief.org) provides several resources related to human trafficking, including a downloadable resource, “Four Ways You Can Be a Freedom Fighter,” and prayer guides.

Although the numbers of those involved in and rescued from human trafficking are daunting, Bennett encourages a “one-at-a-time” approach.

“We can all make a difference in helping those ensnared in human trafficking. We have the mindset of helping others one at a time; otherwise we can get overwhelmed with the stories and statistics of those in need.

“You can join the fight against human trafficking and help others find ... a new beginning, one life at a time,” Bennett said.

Woman’s Missionary Union

Victories in the human trafficking battle also are won through WMU Compassion Ministries. Christian Women’s Job Corps and Christian Men’s Job Corps help free men and women from trafficking in the United States and globally by providing job training and education in a Christian context.

Additionally, WorldCrafts provides artisans a living wage so poverty does not force them into bonded labor or sexual exploitation. The WorldCrafts Support Freedom Campaign (worldcrafts.org/support-freedom-campaign) highlights WorldCrafts artisan groups working to free individuals involved in or at risk of human exploitation.

WMU offers numerous resources on human trafficking, including:

► **Trafficked: Fighting to Be Free** (wmustore.com/trafficked-fighting-to-be-free), an hour-long simulation that teaches students the realities surrounding human trafficking and how to help rescued victims.

► **Human Trafficking: The Church’s Response**, (tabonline.org/courses), a self-guided, online mini-course that explains how WMU Compassion Ministries is addressing the issue. This resource provides

supplemental materials for training conferences.

WMU Foundation

The WMU Foundation offers the Judith and David Hayes Endowment to Combat Human Trafficking (wmufoundation.com), which supports ministries to victims.

A Hayes Endowment grant from the WMU Foundation was recently sent to the Baptist Friendship House, which allowed them to provide food, clothing and transportation for two human trafficking survivors; help another survivor get out of an abusive situation with food, shelter, clothing, identification, important documents and access to legal assistance; and help another survivor gain documents and access health care.

Additionally, the funds purchased items to complete 6,000 backpacks for survivors and purchase supplies for WorldCrafts so survivors can learn a trade, become artisans and gain a fair wage. 🌈

An ounce of prevention

Many Christians worldwide are working tirelessly to help eliminate conditions that make human trafficking possible. The focus is to strengthen families and communities as well as to fight poverty, discrimination and injustice. Will you do your part? (TAB)

Cecelia Walker finds 'deep joy' amid 'resident sadness'

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Cecelia Walker said she knows what it feels like to get up in the morning, believe it's going to be a normal day and believe you'll see your loved ones again at the end of it.

And she knows what it feels like for that not to happen.

Some years ago, her dad died. A few years later, her husband died, leaving her to raise their son. She remarried and had a daughter — who then died in a car accident at age 14. Then two years ago, Walker's son died suddenly too.

"There's this resident sadness that is in my life, but at the same time there's this deep joy," she said. "I know that being able to put one foot in front of the other is due to Him."

That's what drives Walker's ministry these days as she serves as executive director of Brookwood Baptist Health's pastoral care program for all five of their Baptist medical centers — Brookwood and Princeton in Birmingham; Shelby in Alabaster; Walker in Jasper; and Citizens in Talladega.

She also heads up the system's Clinical Pastoral Education program at Princeton.

"I love being with people, and I want to be whatever support I can be," Walker said.

Her faith has been important to her since she was a little girl.

Heart for serving

"My grandfathers both were Baptist pastors, as were uncles on both sides of my family," said Walker, who grew up at First Missionary Baptist Church of East Thomas in Birmingham. "I have always loved God and being in church and everything I could to serve. I would sit at my grandfather's feet and he would read the Bible to me. He said I was going to do great things for God."

For years, she didn't know exactly what that calling might look like. She got her undergraduate degree at Birmingham-Southern College and earned a master's of divinity at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

Experience led the way

As she was nearing the end of her program there, she didn't know what area of ministry she would serve. She remembered her father's death in a local hospital.

"There was nobody there to support me and my mom," Walker said. "To this day, it was traumatic." So when her husband died a few years

later in a different hospital, she was hesitant to go in and see him — she remembered how painful the experience had been.

"A chaplain came to be with me, and it was a really sacred time for me and my mother," she said.

That's when God's call began to get clearer. So now Walker — who is also an associate minister at Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Birmingham and a member of the board

of trustees at Samford — wants to provide similar care to others going through what she went through.

She went on to earn her doctorate of ministry from the ITC Morehouse School of Religion and CPE certification through the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education.

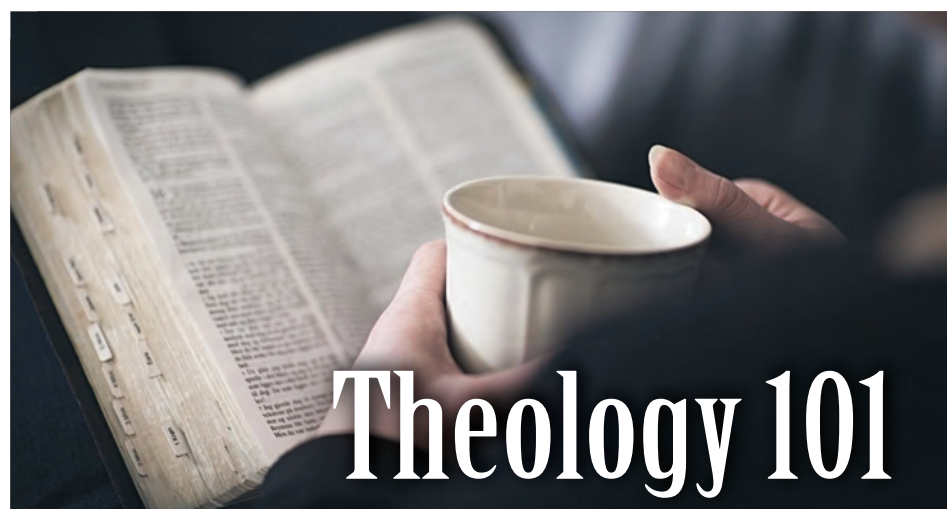
"I want to be there for people — if they want to pray, if they are angry and want to scream, to be able to be present and not judgmental and offer a safe place for them to do what they need to do," she said.

Walker provides a vital ministry said Amy S. Allen, BHS president and CEO.

"Dr. Walker is an amazing Christian witness in our community," she said. "She is an inspiration to me and to all those who have the opportunity to work with her." 🌸



Photo courtesy of Cecelia Walker
Cecelia Walker is executive director of Brookwood Baptist Health's pastoral care program.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

New Year's Reflections

How Then Should We Give?

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

The beginning of a new year is a time when many individuals and most churches will have formulated and adopted a budget as their plan for monetary gathering and spending. A basic question sincere believers should ask in light of God's graciousness and generosity is: "How then should we give?"

The Bible does not leave us groping for mere human answers to this basic question. In particular, this week Theology 101 seeks to respond to individual church members.

As a beginning point, the Bible addresses our attitude toward giving. It advises that we give cheerfully. In fact, 2 Corinthians 9:7 declares, "God loves a cheerful giver."

At the risk of a dash of cynicism, we might try to recall how often we have seen people break out in broad smiles or quiet laughter when the offering plates are passed during Sunday worship services. But faithful financial stewardship is one channel through which all of us can serve God at some level. That being so, we do well to recall that Psalm 100:2 admonishes, "Serve the Lord with gladness."

Systematic giving

Not only with cheer and gladness ought we to give, but also Christians should give regularly or as is often expressed, "systematically." The Bible instructs, "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside,

storing up as he may prosper" (1 Cor. 16:2). Since every week has a "first day," this plan for giving, if followed, furnishes a way for believers to practice regular giving.

Many receive their income on a biweekly or monthly basis, and the principle of systematic giving can flex to a biweekly or monthly regularity — which preserves the spirit of giving in obedience to the Bible's call.

Give as God prospers us

That same verse from 1 Corinthians 16 also teaches us that our giving should be proportionate.

To give as God prospers us means not everyone will give the same amount. The people of God from ancient times have practiced making the tithe the determiner of the proportion.

One might be inclined to protest that giving a tenth was the expectation under the Old Testament law, under which Christians do not live since Christ came. The question Christians must answer is: "Should not the principle of grace under the New Covenant of grace at least match, if not exceed, the expectation under the Old Covenant of Law?" 🌸

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.



Serving bivocationally

SECOND IN A SERIES — JOSEPH HILL, PASTOR OF MOUNT HILLARD BAPTIST CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM, SINCE 2010

Faith, humility, mentorship needed to reach lost and grow local church

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 shares 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 for 11 years.

Q: Describe your work outside the church.

A: I worked 35 years as a UPS employee, 25 of those as a driver.

Q: How many people did you have to start your ministry?

A: We began with 25 people.

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

A: I am blessed to serve as pastor at a church that has been established over 120 years. The new church building was built in 1997.

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

A: Six years.

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

A: Personal witness by the members of the church, and those outside the church seeing changed lives.

Q: What has been your greatest discouragement?

A: My greatest discouragement has been not being there for my congregation when they needed me and not being able to do Bible study and attend different activities as much as full-time pastors might be able to.

Q: What has been your greatest encouragement?

A: My greatest encouragement has been seeing how God can take unfavorable circumstances and make them favorable. He has many times met the needs of the church through various means.

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: ▶ Find a senior pastor who has been down the road you must travel and learn everything you can from him. Learn through his experiences.

▶ Don't be too hard on yourself. You will make mistakes in ministry, but remember you are on the job to learn. Mistakes are stepping stones for growth.

▶ Never be too big to say you were wrong.

▶ Trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us He will lead and guide you in all truth. Pray to Him because He's there for us. Depending on the Holy Spirit is pivotal for surviving the many perils of ministry. 🙏



HILL

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, president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Ministers Fellowship and pastor of New Beginnings Fellowship, Trussville; 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 at

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 Conversations into Gospel Conversations" by Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright.

All bivocational pastors are invited to participate. For registration and more information, go to

tabonline.org/bivo-conference-21. The fellowship also has a Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/bivoministries, a private space where pastors can share concerns, needs and resources.

For additional information, contact Tim Henning at 205-613-7235. (TAB)

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

FBC Winfield holds noteburning ceremony



Photo courtesy of Bob Robertson

FBC Winfield celebrated the retirement of its sanctuary building debt with a note burning ceremony Dec. 20. Pastor Paul Murphy called the milestone "a day we have been looking forward to for a long time." Bob Hawkins, finance chairman, had the honor of burning the note. The sanctuary was completed in 2009. (TAB)



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2021

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Extra precautions

DNow planners face difficult questions, gathering challenges during pandemic

Like everybody else, Seth King and youth ministers all across the state have had to do a lot of thinking, pivoting and canceling plans this past year.

And this month, the biggest question mark has been what to do about DNow.

DNow — or DiscipleNow — weekends have long been a staple of youth ministry, with small groups of teens spending the night in host homes for Bible studies and meeting back up at the church for large-group worship and activities.

But King and others wondered — can we pull that off in a pandemic? And if so — how?

In his area, the first thing to think about was whether or not they could keep with

their large-scale tradition.

For more than 20 years, churches around Decatur and out into the rural areas of Morgan County had banded together to have one big DNow weekend.

Location questions

This year, they thought about renting out a local theater, but even if they required masks, they wouldn't be able to distance like they should.

Then they considered holding it at Westmeade Baptist Church or at First Baptist Church, Decatur, where King serves as minister to students.

But even that was “difficult to navigate,” he said. “Depending on the context of your church, what we were finding was that churches were having to make different decisions for



Photo by Stephanie Benzaia Photography
Sean Curran of Passion City Church in Atlanta leads worship during FBC Trussville's recent DNow weekend. Churches have had to get creative to find ways to hold DNow events in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

the different churches.”

For example, the median age of Westmeade Baptist's congregation is older, so they wanted to take extra precautions to make sure their church was a safe place

for their people to attend.

“To make accommodations to meet the needs of close to 12 churches was just impossible,” he said. “At that point, we decided to split for this year.”

So King decided to try to have a DNow for just his youth group, with worship times held in the sanctuary where they could spread out.

But as he talked with other church staff and leaders, and as COVID-19 cases continued to rise in their area, they decided their priority was to make sure their Sunday morning crowd felt safe to continue attending.

“Within the past three weeks, we've had three congregational members pass

away due to COVID,” King said. “It's sensitive to us; it's hitting hard right now. So we want to prioritize keeping people safe on Sunday mornings.”

At First Baptist Church, Trussville, Spencer Jones said they also spent a lot of energy figuring out whether or not it would be safe for them to hold DNow this year.

In the end, they decided if they nixed the host homes, tried to keep students with their same small groups and spread everyone out across the sanctuary, they could pull it off.

“We passed out customized ‘Jesus Wins’ masks to go with our theme, and we chose not to hold activities at the church like we usually do — we didn't feel like we had a space large enough to do that safely,” said Jones, minister to high school students.

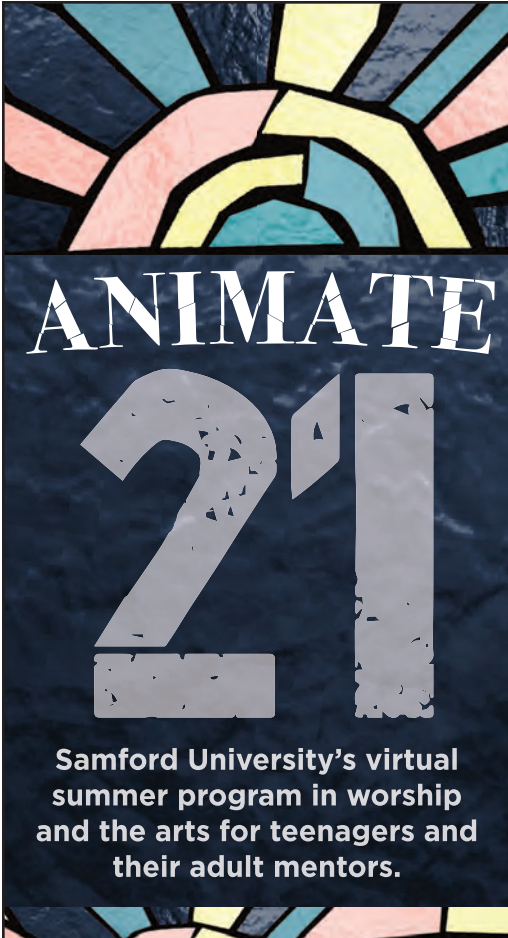
Salvations reported

They did everything they could to ensure they weren't a “superspreader event,” and in the end, he said he felt it went pretty well — they topped 400 students, their largest crowd ever, and spread them out using taped-off areas around the worship center.

“We saw 13 kids come to know the Lord,” Jones said. (Grace Thornton)

“Within the past three weeks, we've had three congregational members pass away due to COVID. It's sensitive to us; it's hitting hard right now.”

Seth King
minister to students, FBC Decatur



ANIMATE 21 LIVE:
June 7-11

ANIMATE 21 FLEX:
June 15-July 31

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

This summer, Samford University's Center for Worship and the Arts is excited to offer two options for participating in Animate: Animate LIVE & Animate FLEX. Both will be virtual experiences, with Animate LIVE happening synchronously in real time and Animate FLEX available on your own time and schedule.

Register now at:
samford.edu/worship-arts/animate
 Email: cwa@samford.edu with questions.

 **Samford University**
Center for Worship and the Arts

Samford University's virtual summer program in worship and the arts for teenagers and their adult mentors.

3 stories

you should know



AP Photo/Sandra Sebastian

As many as 9,000 Honduran migrants formed a caravan and departed San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on Jan. 15, headed north toward the U.S. At the Guatemalan border, the migrants faced off with Guatemalan soldiers. By Jan. 19, the caravan has largely dissolved, with many migrants agreeing to go back to Honduras. Faith groups and religious leaders say the refugee crisis at the border will be one of the first tests of the Biden presidential administration. (RNS)

Jan. 29 March for Life events shift to virtual

Citing safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic and security concerns following a Jan. 6 protest at the U.S. Capitol, organizers of the 2021 March for Life have moved the Jan. 29 event to a virtual format.

A statement posted at the site marchforlife.org asks participants to stay home and join the 48th annual march virtually.

A small group of pro-life leaders will gather to march in Washington, according to organizers. Scheduled speakers include SBC President J.D. Greear and former NFL players Tim Tebow and Benjamin Watson. March for Life also will air the Virtual Rose Dinner Gala featuring Tebow at 7 p.m. on Jan. 29.

Participants can RSVP for the virtual events at marchforlife.org/2021-virtual-events. (TAB)

Singing in church safer by fall, Fauci says

Safely singing in church should resume by fall if the U.S. vaccination program stays on track, said Dr. Anthony Fauci in Jan. 18 remarks at the Choose Healthy Life Black Clergy Conclave, an online gathering of church leaders, public health officials and others involved in the COVID-19 response.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, corporate singing and choirs have been linked to several COVID-19 outbreaks.

When asked when churches could sing freely again, Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said if the vaccination rollout is successful, “in the mid-fall, we’ll be able to get back to that type of worship which we all are longing for right now,” Premier Christian News reported. (TAB)

Headline news

from around the Southeast

Arkansas

A small church in Arkansas has a big heart for missions. Little Rock’s Hebron Baptist Church, averaging 41 in Sunday morning worship services, gave \$18,684 to the 2020 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, up from giving \$883 in 2011, Arkansas Baptist News reported. “Our congregation is mostly retired people who don’t have a set income, but they love giving for missions. Here are people being involved in doing the work of God by giving,” said Pastor Ed Hinkson.

Georgia

The Georgia Baptist Conference Center in Toccoa was sold in late December 2020 to Pine Cove Christian Camps, based in Texas. The sale came after a 20-year study revealed the Georgia Baptist Mission Board subsidized operations at the center at a total cost of \$10 million over the two

decades. The property will be closed for approximately 18 months for renovations, the Christian Index reported.

Louisiana

The 10 active members of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Cotton Valley, Louisiana, knew it was time to disband but wanted the church property to be used for ministry. Property ownership was transferred to Webster-Claiborne Baptist Association, and Unity Baptist Church suggested creating a community ministry hub there. Since its launch in September of 2020, the ministry center has been the site of a prayer gathering, food distribution events and an African-American church on Sundays, the *Baptist Message* reported.

Mississippi

When Mississippi raised its new state flag in mid-January, the banner did not bear the Con-

federate battle emblem. A Mississippi legislator said the SBC helped influence the change. A resolution at the 2016 SBC Annual Meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, called on Christians “to discontinue the display of the Confederate flag as a sign of solidarity of the whole Body of Christ.” In June legislators voted to adopt a new flag, a move encouraged by Mississippi Baptist leaders.

Tennessee

The gospel has taken flight in more than 80 countries worldwide through Slip Disc Ministries, a company producing flying discs (Frisbees) featuring a gospel message. Mark and Dottie McSwain, who purchased the company in 2019, said the disc is a “fun way to engage people” with the gospel. The discs can be purchased at SlipDiscMinistries.com, and there are five different gospel messages, available in 11 languages, to choose from, the *Baptist and Reflector* reported.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Dwight Kizziah**, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, Brookwood, died Jan. 12. He was 73.

A Tuscaloosa native, Kizziah graduated from Brookwood High School and served with the U.S. Army in the 173rd Airborne Brigade during the Vietnam War.

After he returned, he started Southern Breeze Homebuilders, which he ran for 30 years before becoming Brookwood's chief building inspector. It was at this point in his life that he answered the call to become pastor of Antioch Baptist. He was ordained in 2011 — a month before the deadly April tornadoes — and served as a volunteer disaster relief chaplain. He also served as chaplain to the Brookwood Police Department.

He is survived by his wife, Judy; sons, Tim and Michael; and three grandchildren.

► **Larry Harkness**, pastor of Sand Springs Baptist Church, Fayette, died Jan. 12 from complications of COVID-19. He was 66.

A native of Winfield, Harkness served in the Alabama National Guard for 19 years and retired from NTN-Bower in Hamilton after 25 years. In 1995, he became a licensed minister and was ordained the following year. He was instrumental in starting Walker Baptist Association's disaster relief team and served at Ground Zero in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

Harkness served as camp director for the Walker Baptist Campground in Nauvoo for seven years and as community church minister for Walker Association for 16 years. He had served at Sand Springs Baptist for the past six years.

Harkness is survived by his high school sweetheart and wife of 48 years, Susan, and his two daughters, Stephanie and Tiffany.

► **E. Allen Brasher**, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Pell City, died Jan. 5 of complications from COVID-19. He was 74.

A graduate of Leeds High School, Brasher served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. Before serving at Second Baptist, he served as associate pastor of Pineview Baptist Church, Irondale. He also worked for Southern Natural Gas until he retired.

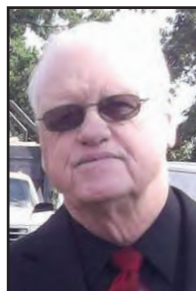
Brasher is survived by his wife, Loretta; daughters, Wendy, Denisha and April; son, Marty; bonus daughter, Loren; seven grandchildren; seven bonus grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.



KIZZIAH



HARKNESS



BRASHER

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Earl Harper** is new pastor at **Pleasant View Baptist Church, Holly Pond**. He previously served as pastor of Jones Chapel Baptist Church, Springville; Tait's Gap Baptist Church, Oneonta; Edgewood Baptist Church, Locust Fork; and Maple Street Baptist Church, Tarrant City. He and his wife, Shelley, have two daughters.



HARPER

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **James Waddell** had been serving for a while as a deacon in his home church, but in 1976, he felt like God was calling him to something else. "We had a revival, and I professed my call to the ministry during that time," Waddell said. "The visiting evangelist said, 'God called you to preach?' I said, 'Yes, sir.' And he said, 'I want you to fill the pulpit for me.'"



WADDELL

That started a pastoral ministry that lasted until Waddell's recent retirement from First Baptist Church, Anderson, where he's served for the past six years. Before that, he served at several other churches, including Springfield Baptist, Rogersville; Evergreen Baptist, Florence; and 21 years at New Hope Baptist, Rogersville.

"It's been a joy to be able to serve where I've served," Waddell said.

In retirement, he and his wife, Linda, will serve as members of First Baptist Church, Rogersville. He also plans to fill in as a supply preacher where needed.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Darryl Wood** is the new interim pastor of **Talladega Creek Baptist Church, Talladega**.

► **Randy Hagan** is the new interim pastor of **Eastaboga Baptist Church**.

NORTH JEFFERSON ASSOCIATION

► **Jacob Elliott** is the new pastor of **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Warrior**. He previously served as the associate/student minister at Mount Zion since 2019.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Hugh Richardson** says God blessed him "significantly" during his more than 15 years serving as associational missionary for Shelby Baptist Association.

"It has been a highlight of my ministry to serve the churches of Shelby County, Alabama, and to become involved in all the avenues of service the role provided," said Richardson, who retired Dec. 31. "My life has been significantly enriched."

Richardson preached his first sermon in July 1969, and in the more than 50 years that followed, he served as a student pastor, an adjunct seminary professor and in other ministry roles before coming to Shelby Association. Over the years, he's traveled on missions trips to places from Brazil to Wales.

He said he prefers to see the season he's in now as "redirected" and "repurposed" rather than retired, noting that he and his wife, Lu, "are looking forward to the opportunities the Lord brings our way in the future."

(Alabama news compiled by TAB Media staff)



RICHARDSON

Persecuted church

BUGIRI DISTRICT, Uganda — A Muslim husband beat his wife and forced her to ingest a toxic pesticide because she had become a Christian.

Zubeda Nabirye, 38, secretly became a Christian on Aug. 21. On Nov. 21, her husband, Umar Kyakulaga, found two Bibles in her possession and asked if she had converted to Christianity.

After reading verses in the Quran that a man can beat his wife for disobedience, Kyakulaga beat, strangled and forced Nabirye to drink Dithane M-45, Nabirye said.

Her three children — 9, 13 and 16 years old

— were not present in Matovu village at the time; they were still with Nabirye's mother-in-law in Kalivo district, from which Nabirye and Kyakulaga had moved earlier in the year.

Neighbors found Nabirye unconscious in a banana plant and arranged transport to a hospital.

Upon discharge Dec. 2, Nabirye went to stay with a Christian family in an undisclosed location.

Uganda's laws and constitution provide religious freedom, and the country has no state religion. Muslims make up about 12% of Uganda's population. (MS)



MS photo

Lookout Mountain Association focuses on community outreach

Lloyd Borden says the churches of Lookout Mountain Baptist Association aren't shy about hopping on a plane and crossing the Alabama line to share the gospel. They've been to Honduras, Alaska and a whole host of other places.

But one of his favorite things about partnering with the association's 15 congregations is the way they love to get involved in outreach right where they are.

"It is the needy person or family 'just down the road' that is given priority," said Borden, director of missions for Lookout Mountain Association. "They like for the question, 'Hey, who did this for you?' to be answered with, 'Oh, just some folks from down at the church.'"

Each year, they collect backpacks filled with school supplies for three local high schools. They also hold an annual food drive for the Friendship House in Oxford, the closest Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries facility. And on the third Saturday of October, every church is encouraged to go door to door in their community and make contact with at least 20 homes.

"These are doorstep visits, and the goal is to show everyone in the community they matter to the local church," Borden said.

Water of Life

Every year on the first weekend in August, people from the association's churches also come together to put on the Water of Life Outreach. As part of that effort, they pass out bottles of cold water and gospel tracts to thousands of people who come to the area for the World's Longest Yard Sale, a 690-mile yard sale route that starts in Alabama and ends in Michigan.



Photo courtesy of Lookout Mountain Baptist Association

Debra Borden, ministry assistant for Lookout Mountain Baptist Association, looks through donations brought in for the annual food drive for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

And all year round, they're strategic about reaching out to their neighbors in other ways.

'Mission efforts'

They have men's breakfast meetings for the purpose of planning projects, and they get out in the community and help with building ramps and doing home maintenance, as well as taking care of projects

for the Friendship House.

"Mission efforts carried out by the churches of the Lookout Mountain Baptist Association very much resemble the old adage, 'bloom where you are planted,'" Borden said. "This is the spirit of the 15 congregations that come together to participate in a variety of mission projects each year, most of them with a local impact." (Grace Thornton)



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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.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP LEADER

Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, Alabama, is seeking an individual to provide worship and music leadership. Send resumes to: southside@sbcandalusia.com or Southside Baptist Church, 1213 West Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420.

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

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Beulah Baptist Association located in Union City, Tenn., is currently seeking resumes for a DOM. Applicants must be a man called by God who is also called specifically to the NW Tennessee area. This individual must meet the biblical leadership qualifications outlined in 1 Tim. 3.1-7 and hold faithfully to the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. Resumes deadline: Feb. 28. Send resumes to: sheila@bbaol.org or Beulah Baptist Association, P.O. Box 366, Union City, TN 38281.

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Word Search

- ANTICIPATION
CALL OF GOD
CHALLENGE
CHEERFUL
COMMITMENT
DANIEL
DETERMINATION
DEVOTION
EAGERNESS
FORGETTING
GENEROSITY
GIVING
GLADNESS
GRACIOUSNESS
GRATITUDE
HOPE
INCOME
JANUARY
KNOW
LOOK AHEAD
- PAUL
PLEASING
PRAYER
PRESS
PRIZE
PROPORTION
PROSPER
PURPOSE
PURSUE
REACHING
RESOLUTIONS
RESOLVED
SCRIPTURE
STEADFAST
STRIVING
SYSTEMATICALLY
TEMPTATIONS
TRANSITIONS
UNCERTAINTY
UNDEFINED

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

Christian Crossword

By Jennifer Breeding Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

1. For ye are all the ____ of God. (Gal. 3:26)

6. Trust in the Lord, and do _____. (Ps. 37:3)

9. ____ no evil; hear no evil; speak no evil.

10. For the eyes of the Lord are ____ the righteous. (1 Pet. 3:12)

12. Pull threads.

15. Behold, I send an ____ Angel before thee. (Ex. 23:20)

16. Whosoever trusteth ____ the Lord, happy is he. (Prov. 16:20)

17. Flaming.

18. "Where He ____ Me I Will Follow."

19. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in _____. (Gen. 18:11)

21. He escaped the destruction of Sodom.

22. We.

23. Metal used to pave the streets

in heaven.

24. Two x four = ____.

27. Mentor to Samuel.

28. What shepherds do for the flock.

31. David did this to 20 Down.

32. A tingling that needs a scratch.

34. The foolish virgins forgot this. (Matt. 25:3)

36. Period of time between midnight and noon.

37. Language spoken by people of Ireland and Scotland.

39. The earth was without form, and _____. (Gen. 1:2)

42. The woman ____ the well.

43. So God created man in His own _____. (Gen. 1:27)

45. Tool for hitchhiking.

46. Homonym of "earn."

48. And ____ go and prepare a place for you. (John 14:3)

49. ____ are the pure in heart. (Matt. 5:8)

51. Sight, hearing, taste, smell or touch.

52. One of 51 Across.

Down

1. Be of good _____. (Ps. 31:24)

2. Person of ancient Israel.

3. Covering of a tree limb.

4. Being 40 days tempted of the _____. (Luke 4:2)

5. How is it that ye have ____ faith? (Mark 4:40)

6. First book of the Old Testament.

7. For better ____ worse.

8. Thickness, compactness.

11. Ye are of more ____ than many sparrows. (Matt. 10:31)

13. What running water does to soil.

14. ____ us therefore come boldly. (Heb. 4:16)

16. ____, ego, superego.

20. Bold Philistine.

25. It was meet that we should make merry, and be _____. (Luke 15:32)

26. Brother of Shem and Japheth. (Gen. 6:10)

28. Seamstress finger protector.

29. Sounds like "know."

30. Famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in ____ places. (Matt. 24:7)

33. What Zacchaeus does to the sycamore tree. (Luke 19:4)

35. ____, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)

37. The opening to heaven.

38. West coast state. (abbr.)

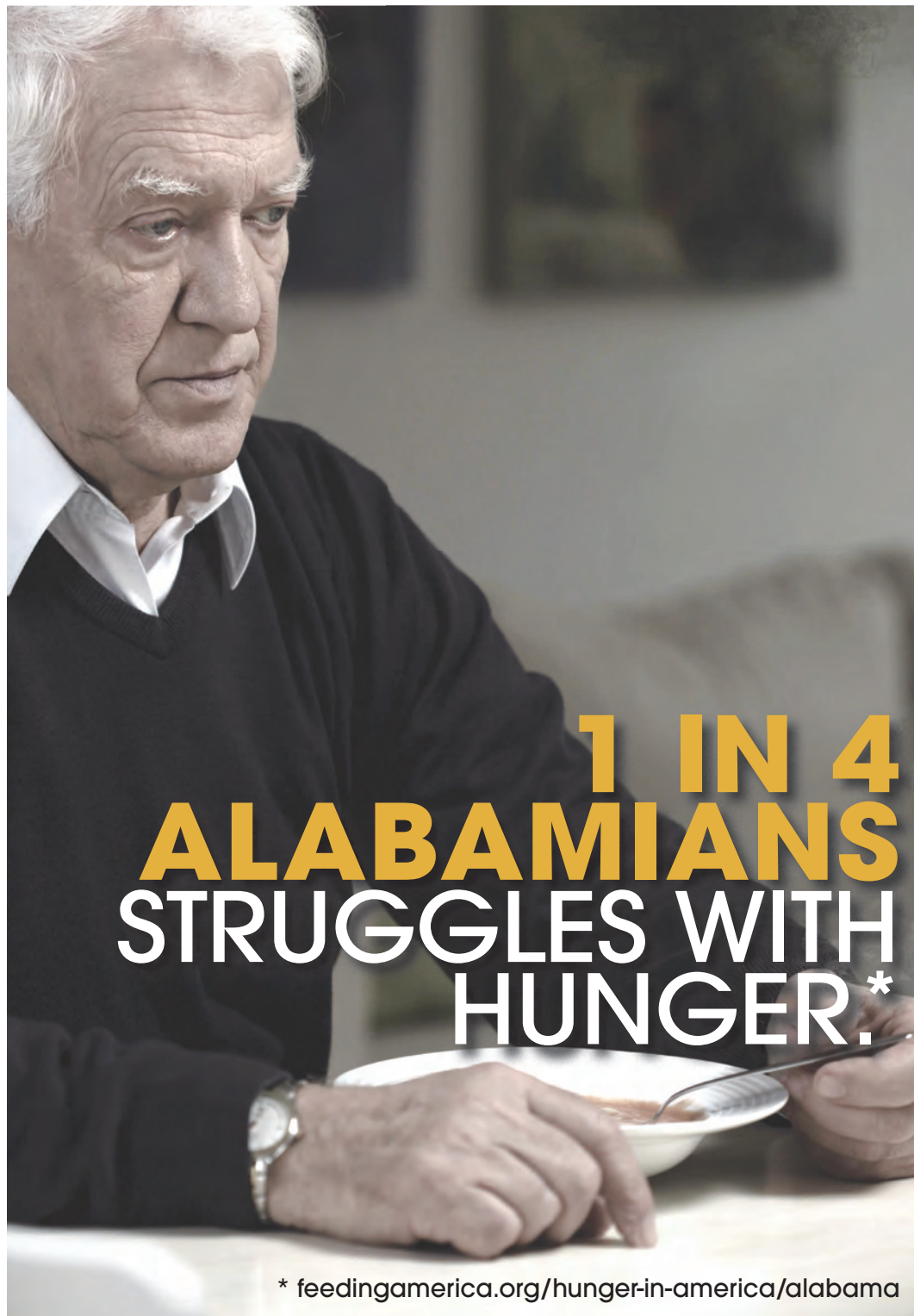
40. He ____ faithful and just. (1 John 1:9)

41. To determine the heaviness of.

44. Sudden, strong rush of air.

47. Device used by fishermen.

50. This ____ in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:19)



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FEBRUARY IS MINISTER TAX CONFERENCE MONTH!



Lee Wright
State Missionary

KELLY SIKKEMA, UNSPLASH

Three identical online tax conferences especially for ministers will be held on **February 8, 16 and 17**, from 10 am-noon each day. Just choose the one that is most convenient for you!

Each session will cover this information:

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- Housing allowance is not what it used to be
- Can I benefit from a home office?
- Don't fear the tax bracket!

To register for one of these online opportunities, visit pinnaclealabama.org. Questions? Contact State Missionary Lee Wright, lwright@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2241.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTERS AND SPOUSES RETREAT

The Bivocational Ministers and Spouses **ONE DAY** Retreat will be held **Saturday, February 20, 9:30-3:30**. The retreat is now an **ONLINE ONLY EVENT** and will offer a great time of encouragement and instruction. Speakers for the day are Tim Henning, pastor of New Beginnings Fellowship and president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Fellowship; Bill Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church and author of *D-Life*; Jacky Connell, pastor of Eden Westside Baptist Church; and Kevin Blackwell, Assistant to the President for Church Relations at Samford University. There is no cost for the retreat, and the first 75 who register will receive a free copy of the book, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations*, simply by requesting it. Visit alsbom.org/bivo for more information or to register.

'Southwood Chouse' provides home, ministry space

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Tommy Strickland had long wanted the ministry of Southwood Presbyterian Church to be able to stay open.

When he served as pastor of nearby Hepzibah Baptist Church, Talladega, he tried to help the small neighboring congregation with some things that could get them going again.

That effort — and that of others who tried over the years — never really took root.

But that didn't mean that Strickland's vision for continued ministry at the small white church wouldn't come to fruition.

When the building went up for sale several months ago, it intersected with another desire that he and his wife, Melba, had —

to own a home of their own.

"We've always lived in a church-owned house or rented a house, and retirement is nearing," said Strickland, who now serves as pastor of Ridgeview Baptist Church, Talladega, located about three blocks behind the old Southwood building.

Countless ways

So when the couple saw the "for sale" sign go up in the Southwood churchyard, they started to envision

another way for it to be used in ministry. They saw neighbors gathered around the table in their home, being introduced to Jesus over a meal. They saw small groups meeting there.

And they thought God might have countless other ways to use the building if it became their home — the South-



Photo courtesy of Tommy Strickland

Tommy and Melba Strickland recently moved into their new home, the old Southwood Presbyterian Church in Talladega. The 'chouse' is the first home the Stricklands have owned.

wood Chouse, as they call it.

So they made an offer. And after a few months of ironing out the details, the property was theirs, and Southwood's congregation was happy that it was going to continue to be a place of ministry, Strickland said.

"Part of our passion for having it, we feel like God put us in this building," he said. "Since He gave us this place, we will use it as a ministry tool for family and friends."

In recent weeks, with the help of family, friends and fellow church members, they've carefully preserved elements of the church's structure and history. They've sent pieces of it to be used in other area churches, like the pulpit and the offering plates. They've reworked the inside of the building to become a home. And they've dedicated the space for God's purposes.

"People in the community have been very supportive,"

Strickland said. "We were afraid people would think we were being disrespectful, but even long-term members of the (Southwood) church are saying they're glad it's being used for something good."

The work is coming along well — the couple moved into part of the "chouse" Jan. 3 while they continue to do renovations on the rest. They will still have a lot to do, both inside and outside. For one, the property comes with a softball field, pavilion and basketball court, and Strickland hasn't decided what to do with those yet.

But he isn't worried. All in all, he said he can see God's hand in the plans, and in a way, the whole thing seems fitting.

'A God thing'

"I grew up next to the church as a preacher's kid, and I've worked in a church all my life," Strickland said. "I've always said I basically lived at church."

And now he will.

"It's definitely a God thing," he said. 🌈

To see more photos from the Southwood Chouse project, visit facebook.com/tommyNmelba.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 31

Explore the Bible

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



FOLLOWED Luke 5:4-11, 27-32

This week's lesson focuses on adults who followed Jesus, both as His hand-picked disciples and as interested onlookers who wondered if Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

In this chapter, we see professional fishermen, a Levitical tax collector and unnamed associates who recognized their own need to follow Jesus. At the same time, we note that those who were experts in the Scriptures observed Jesus, yet they were blind to His purpose to save sinful people.

In Luke 4, Jesus announced His ministry at the hometown synagogue in Nazareth, reading from Isaiah 61. Messiah, the Anointed One, will minister to "the poor ... the blind ... the captives" and "the oppressed" (Luke 4:18-19).

Pride keeps some of us from acknowledging our own poverty, blindness, captivity and oppression. On the other hand, we may blame others for our economic, physical or social or political condition.

Peter, James and John (4-11)

Luke introduces the fishermen of Jesus' inner circle in this passage, though he makes no reference to Simon's brother Andrew. Matthew and Mark record that Andrew (Matt. 4:18, Mark 1:16) was with Simon during this encounter with Jesus.

Based on a harmony of the Gospel accounts, this incident resulted in Jonah's sons (Simon and Andrew) and Zebedee's sons (James and John) following Jesus and becoming fishers of men.

With a crowd gathering around Him at the Sea of Galilee, Jesus requested to use Simon's boat as a platform from which to speak. By taking the boat out a short distance from shore, Jesus would be able to speak to a wider audience than if He were standing on land.

Not only did Jesus request to use the boat, but He also gave fishing advice to a man who made his living catching fish. Simon submitted but with some hesitation. Afterward, Simon feared Jesus and asked Him to go away, acknowledging himself to be a sinful man.

Levi (27-28)

Our focal verses here provide a parallel account to those of Matthew 9 and Mark 2. Levi was likely a reference to his tribal ancestry, with Matthew being his personal name. Once again, we see a grown man working as a professional when he was invited to follow Jesus.

Tax collectors were not known to be generous and compassionate individuals. Levi became a generous man, inviting fellow tax collectors and others of questionable character to a banquet. Note that an encounter with Jesus transforms the lives of those who trust Him.

Luke points out here with Levi and later with Zacchaeus (Luke 19) that transformed tax collectors became generous after following Jesus.

Sinners (29-32)

In addition to inviting his fellow tax collectors, Levi hosted Jesus and others at his party. Jesus was keeping company with "tax collectors and sinners." His legalistic observers — the scribes and Pharisees — had a problem with Jesus and His disciples associating with people of questionable character. At some point after the party, the Pharisees asked the disciples: "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Note Jesus' response. He affirmed the individuals who attended the banquet were broken, hurting, sick people. He was the doctor to whom the sick would come for healing.

Jesus was also communicating indirectly that the Pharisees and scribes were unaware of their own brokenness. As commentator Howard Marshall writes in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Jesus was "challenging His listeners to self-examination regarding their own sickness."

Consider the discomfort you experienced in the year 2020. Now imagine that 2021 and the rest of your life was like that. How would you adjust your priorities? Who would you follow, on social media and in actual relationships? These men from Bethsaida and Capernaum dropped everything to follow Jesus. Will you? 🌈

Bible Studies for Life

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



KNOWING GOD Psalm 119:17-24

The recent documentary, "The Social Dilemma," presents a clear and frightening picture of how social media companies psychologically manipulate users through a constant deluge of likes, status updates and notifications that gradually transforms them into mindless receptors of advertising.

This barrage of distraction makes immersing ourselves in God's word more difficult, but also more necessary, so that we are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29) rather than that of Silicon Valley or Madison Avenue. Psalm 119 describes the enduring joy of knowing God through His word.

We grow spiritually as we encounter God through His word. (17-18)

The logic here seems backward. We are often tempted to think that our obedience to God's word earns us God's blessing, but the psalmist asks here for God to be good to him so that he may obey God's word. In Ephesians 2, Paul says something similar: though we are dead in sin, we are saved by the divine gift of faith, not by our works, but so that we may do the good works God prepared in advance for us to do.

Similarly, the psalmist expresses his dependence on God to open his eyes, so that he may see the wonders of God's law. The spiritual growth that comes through an encounter with God through His word is dependent on God's gracious gift of spiritual enlightenment.

Knowing God through His word helps us face opposition. (19-22)

The psalmist's feeling of being a "stranger" (NIV, KJV) or "resident alien" (CSB) on earth resonates with 1 Peter's description of Christians as "foreigners and exiles" scattered across the earth (1 Pet. 1:1, 2:11). Peter claims this exile status makes obedience to God all the more important. As exiles, he says, they should "abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your

soul" and "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us" (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

Similarly, because the psalmist is estranged from his community, his soul is constantly consumed with longing for God's law (vv. 19-20). Obeying God commands will protect the psalmist from the Lord's rebuke against those who arrogantly disregard them (v. 21). The Old Testament is full of examples of God's judgment against such arrogant disobedience, including even King Solomon, who violated God's instruction for kings and led the people into idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-4; also see Deut. 17:14-20).

The logical relation between the scorn heaped on the psalmist and his obedience of God's statutes in verse 22 is unclear. He may be scorned for his piety, which is something believers should be prepared for, or his piety may be a means to overcome this scorn.

The passage from 1 Peter above suggests both may be the case. Initial opposition to our distinct witness may be eventually transformed into approval through persistence in good deeds.

Knowing God through His word helps us have His perspective. (23-24)

The psalmist pictures here a royal court. The rulers may slander him, but he has greater counselors than those who surround the king — divine statutes. More than that, he may be a servant, but he is the servant of the King of kings. It's natural that the psalmist finds "delight" in God's law, which puts the world in proper perspective.

Knowing God through His word, like all true knowledge, is not merely an intellectual undertaking; it involves our emotions, our actions, as it thoroughly transforms our perception of the world. This is what the demons, who "believe" in God, lack (James 2:19), and what the spiritual disciplines shape within us. 🌈

BOOKS

TOP 10

best-selling Christian books

FICTION

- 1. The Harbinger II: The Return**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)
- 2. The Harbinger**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)
- 3. Redeeming Love**
By Francine Rivers (Multnomah)
- 4. The Stone Wall**
By Beverly Lewis (Bethany)
- 5. The Hideaway**
By Lauren K. Denton (Thomas Nelson)
- 6. The Shack**
By William Paul Young (Windblown)
- 7. The Book of Mysteries**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)
- 8. A Lineage of Grace**
By Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
- 9. The Blended Quilt**
By Jean Brunstetter and Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
- 10. Twice As Nice Amish Romance Collection**
By Jean Brunstetter and Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time

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.



Media reviews

By Minnie Lamberth

Things Your Pastor Would Never Tell You But You Really Need to Know

Wayne Honeycutt.

Spring Meadows Media, 2019.

Only 32 pages long, this work is more of a booklet than book, yet it sufficiently covers the subject at hand and provides useful insight for church members. “Things Your Pastor Would Never Tell You But You Really Need to Know” gives readers a peek into the life of a pastor that draws from Wayne Honeycutt’s decades as associate pastor or senior pastor. As Honeycutt writes in the introduction, “I desire to encourage and challenge you as a member of the body of Christ



to partner with your pastor in ministry, learn his heart, and discover ways you can make a difference in ministry with him.” From there, he tackles 22 brief sections that illuminate the pressures and struggles pastors face as they serve their congregations. Some of these relate to the pastor’s schedule — and the

24/7 nature of his calling — as well as the need to balance ministry with family time.

One section talks about the necessity of change, advising church members: “Trust your leaders, from the senior leader and down. If they make changes, trust their judgment.” Another recommends allowing pastors to keep their Sunday morning focus on the sermon they’re preparing to deliver. “When you see your pastor in the hallway before the service begins, speak words of encouragement and keep it brief. A simple ‘Praying for you today, Pastor!’ is all he needs to hear.”

It’s Still Possible: 100 Reminders that God Can Do All Things

Karen Moore.

Thomas Nelson, 2020.

Prolific author Karen Moore released three devotional books in 2020. Two of these — a pair of short companion books titled “Got 10 Minutes ... for God?” and “Got 10 Minutes? A Book of 30 Guided Devotions” — were published through her own company, Sand Hill House. In these works, she offers guidance for how God may wish to speak to readers, as well as words to ponder and Scriptures to reflect on. The emphasis is that even a short amount of time in Bible study and prayer each day can make a big difference.

“It’s Still Possible” is an extensive set of devotions from Moore that has been released by leading Christian publisher, Thomas Nelson. Moore writes in the introduction, “These devotional readings will remind you of all that’s possible, holding up the light so you can move forward and encouraging you to trust your Creator for everything you need.”

Each piece begins with a theme and Scripture, moves into Moore’s thoughtful prose and concludes with a prayer. Readers regrouping from the year 2020 will find much to encourage them spiritually in the 100 entries.

A Concise Guide to the Quran: Answering Thirty Critical Questions

Ayman S. Ibrahim.

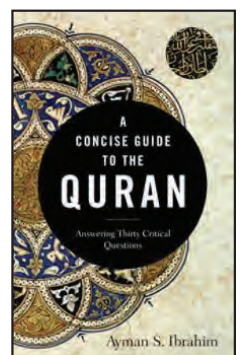
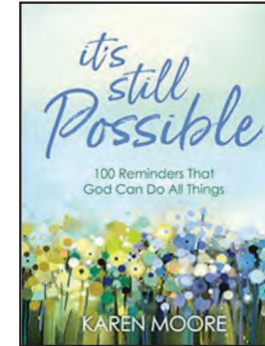
Baker Academic, 2020.

Ayman S. Ibrahim’s newly released guide to the sacred text of Islam is informative, illuminating and easy to read. Ibrahim knows his topic from both personal and professional experience. He grew up in a Coptic Christian family in Egypt, where he was surrounded by the reading of the Quran, and he is currently an associate professor of Islamic studies and director for the Jenkins Center of Christian Understanding of Islam at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

“A Concise Guide to the Quran” is divided into two sections, the first of which is about the history of the Quran. As Ibrahim describes Muslim belief about their holy book, “It came down from heaven as a verbal revelation from Allah to his prophet Muhammed, through the archangel Gabriel, over the course of 23 years.”

Muslims consider these scriptures infallible, and the book itself is treated with respect. Ibrahim explained, “Although Christians honor their copies of the Bible, for them its value is the content. Muslims relate to and treat the Quran differently.”

The second section deals with content within the Quran, including the teaching that “Allah is one.” This concept is the most important to Muslims, Ibrahim explains. He also notes that the Christian belief in the Trinity may be seen as polytheism or “unbelief.”



God's hand *at work*

Refugees in South Africa overcome fear to seek faith in Jesus Christ

In a pitch-black room, David and Julie Yngsdal sat down to study the Bible with David and Zawadi, a refugee couple. The Yngsdals serve with the IMB among refugee communities in Durban, South Africa.

"I know many, many [refugees] who want to become Christians, but they are too afraid," Zawadi told the Yngsdals.

Fear wasn't the motivator for the couples' studying the Bible in the dark. South Africa has a continued electricity generation crisis that results in daily planned power cuts.

"This temporary darkness wasn't going to stop us, as Zawadi, who was recently living in the spiritual darkness of Islam, has chosen for herself to seek the light of love, forgiveness and eternal hope," David and Julie shared in a newsletter.

'Miraculous story'

Zawadi's decision to follow Christ brought great joy to her husband, David, who prayed for his wife's salvation for 10 years.

"Their entire miraculous story is one of God's evident hand at work,

and it is a matter for prayer, even now, as she still faces immense persecution from the Muslim community who suspect her conversion," the Yngsdals said. "We praise the Lord because Zawadi is no longer afraid of the 'dark.'"

'Witnessing light'

David attends a refugee church in the city, but as the Yngsdals studied the Bible with him, they found he didn't understand what it means to repent and believe. The Yngsdals said David and Zawadi are eager for answers to their spiritual questions. Their church, like many in Durban, do not teach basic discipleship.

"Most churches are simply interested in 'kicking out' a good and entertaining weekly worship experience, yet their people leave each week spiritually starved, and therefore, without the supernatural strength vital to live a changed life and be a witnessing light to their communities," the Yngsdals said.

The Yngsdals said hearing Zawadi say many people were interested in becoming Christians confirmed that God is working in mighty ways



IMB photo

IMB missionaries David and Julie Yngsdal meet with their friends, David and Zawadi, to study the Bible.

among the Muslim refugee community in Durban.

Before COVID-19 lockdowns, the Yngsdals disciplined three refugees in the community. Since the lockdown, two widows asked David and Julie for Bibles and have started reading them to their children.

"The Quran actually teaches the Muslim people that they should read the Injil [the Gospels of Jesus] for 'therein you find life.' But the Quran also teaches them that Allah is pleased if one is killed who converts from Islam to Christianity," the Yngsdals wrote in their newsletters.

"Please pray as these Muslim widows read the Gospels, that God will so move in their hearts and give

them faith and courage to believe and look past their earthly fears," the Yngsdals said. "[Pray] they will desire to leave the hopeless darkness of unbelief to find the love, forgiveness and eternal hope that can only be found in the light of the world — Jesus Christ."

Pray for protection

The Yngsdals ask for prayer for Zawadi and David as they both need work to support their family. Pray for Zawadi as she prepares for baptism. Pray for protection against persecution. (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.



IMB photo

David and Julie Yngsdal (left) serve among refugee communities in Durban South Africa. There, they share Christ with refugees like Zawadi and David. Zawadi recently decided to follow Christ, which brought great joy to her husband, who had prayed for her salvation for 10 years.

"Their entire miraculous story is one of God's evident hand at work, and it is a matter for prayer, even now, as she still faces immense persecution from the Muslim community who suspect her conversion."

David and Julie Yngsdal
IMB missionaries