



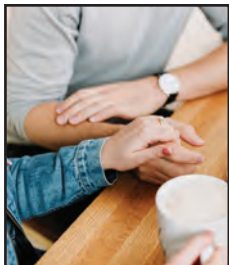
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INSIDE



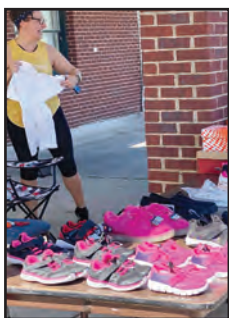
Stephen Ministry volunteers help the hurting

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Personality tests: Popular tools help people identify strengths for more effective ministry

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Huntsville churches merge to reach community

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Photo courtesy of Agape Baptist Church

Volunteers at Agape Baptist Church, Scottsboro, talk with special guests at their Shine-Thru event Feb. 12. Pastor Ryan Johnson said the event brought volunteers and guests a lot of joy.

STILL SHINING



Photo courtesy of Angela Washington

Zachary Stoker smiles in his car as a volunteer holds up a frame for a photo during Bethel Baptist's Shine-Thru event Feb. 12.

Annual 'Night to Shine' prom event adapts to pandemic concerns

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Beth Anderson, known affectionately as “Miss Beth,” had been ready for this year’s Night to Shine event for months. She had her dress picked out, and she wore her shawl around the house.

But God had other plans for

her, according to her mother, Deborah — Miss Beth died a couple of months before the event she usually attended at Valley View Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

But the church didn’t forget her and her mother, or the families of the seven other special guests of their Night to Shine events who had died since last year’s event. Night to Shine — an event sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation for people with special needs age 14 and up — is meant to lift up those who need it, and that’s exactly what Valley

View Baptist wanted to do, said Amanda Elmore, who organized this year’s event.

Memorial crowns

“We made eight memorial crowns, put them in boxes with the flowers they would normally get at the event, and then either delivered them ourselves to the parents or had one of their child’s peers deliver them for us,” she said.

Elmore knows Night to Shine is special to the guests who come every year.

When the COVID-19 pandemic happened, she couldn’t even entertain the thought of

not keeping the event going.

Valley View Baptist was one of nine churches — including Bethel Baptist, Dora, and Agape Baptist, Scottsboro — that participated in Alabama this year.

Night to Shine usually includes an in-person, prom-style party, but because of the pandemic, the event was shifted to a virtual party held Feb. 12 for special guests from all over the world.

The foundation also encouraged churches to make the event as personal as they could (See ‘Opportunity,’ page 9)



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TAB's new Stories podcast to offer audio adventures

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

I love stories — hearing people tell them, writing them, reading them. I'm pretty sure I always will.

But over the past couple of years, as I've been behind the wheel of my car more, I've fallen in love with hearing stories in a different format — the serial-style podcast where a story is told over multiple episodes. They reel me in and keep me there for hours. They're told in the subjects' own voices, with narration in between, along with audio that makes you feel like you're there, like you know the people.

You go along with the narrator on a ride — you discover things as they do, and there's suspense and a lot of twists and turns.

I love it. And now we'd like to invite you to experience a story that way with us.

Our new Stories podcast released its first episode this past Friday,

the first installment of the Sammy Gilbreath story. It unfolds the story of our beloved longtime state evangelism director, a man with tales so tall it's almost hard to believe they happened. The second episode comes out this Friday, Feb. 26, and the final one the following Friday.

In the months to come, we'll release more stories and let you know ahead of time when they're coming. But for this one, you'll journey through the twists and turns — and risks — of Sammy's life. I'll take you with me as I go to his house and talk to him and his wife, Carol, about his should-be-fatal medical condition, his could've-been-fatal skydive and the unbelievable things God has done in and around him over the years.

You'll have to hear them to believe them. And we hope you will. To find the Stories podcast, visit tabonline.org/stories or subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts.



Graphic by Sam Evans

The first episode of the new Stories podcast is available now and features the incredible life of Sammy Gilbreath.

To find the Stories podcast, visit tabonline.org/stories or subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts.

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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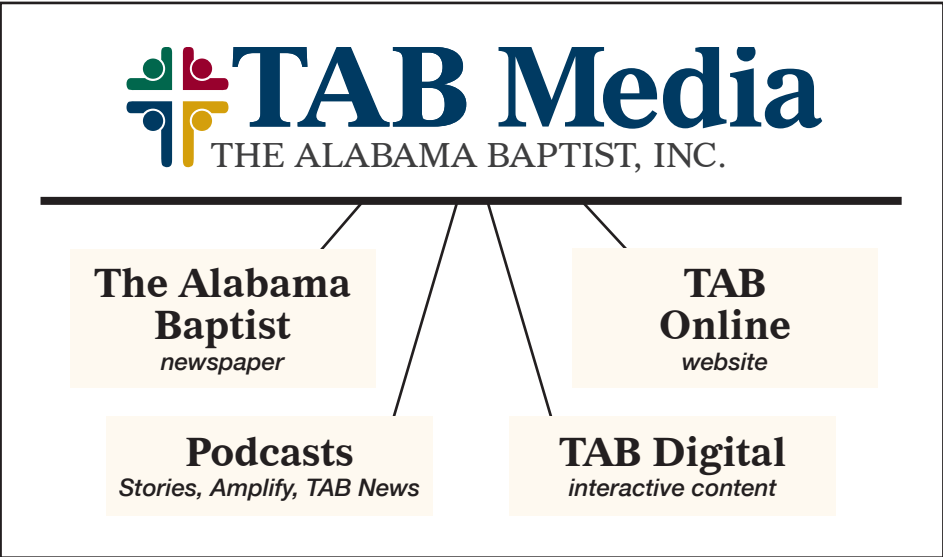


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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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@RashionalThts

The difference clear communication, unified effort can make

As temperatures dropped into the teens last week, I walked over to the thermostat and bumped it up from 68 to 72 without a second thought.

I wanted to take it up to 74, maybe even 76, to ensure our rooms were cozy and warm in case the power went out with the coming snow and ice. But I stopped at 72.

A news report caught my attention a few minutes prior to adjusting the temperature.

It explained how important it was for all members of a community to conserve energy while heating our homes, so we didn't overload the system.

Texas quickly became an unfortunate example of what happens when an energy grid is overwhelmed.

Discussions continue about how such an energy disaster happened in the Lonestar state.

I had never really thought too much about how an area's pro-

vider of heat and air could actually go down from too much use, but it makes sense.

Rolling blackouts are a common method used to prevent a complete shutdown, and while effective, they do bring their own level of difficulty.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Experts say setting your thermostat to 68 degrees when you're home is the ideal balance of comfort and energy efficiency.

A friend in Mississippi shared how the same night I heard that news report, her community received an announcement alerting everyone a rolling blackout was coming.

"Once they announced it, everyone started conserving energy like crazy, and they ended up not having to do it. I was so relieved," my friend noted.

I was relieved for my friend as well, and I couldn't help but visualize the instant bond formed between all the neighbors as they worked together to keep the lights and heat on.

Everyone sacrificed a little to help the greater good.

They all kept power throughout the week of bitter cold even though the temperature in indi-

vidual homes might have been lower than they liked or the laundry was piling up.

And it all worked because officials knew the limits of their system and communicated clearly with the people involved in advance.

Everyone understood what had happened and knew what to do to prevent a full breakdown of the system.

The people responded quickly and selflessly.

They worked together to solve the problem rather than ignore the situation and continue cranking the heat up in their individual homes because that's what they preferred.

While everyone involved definitely won by working together — no one had to lose power for any amount of time — I'm confident neighbors also thought of other neighbors who might suffer more with a loss of power.

One neighbor might use medical equipment that requires electricity, and he has no generator.

Another neighbor might not have any other source of heat without electricity, and she lives alone with no close family or friends nearby.

The Mississippi community's effort brought to mind another friend who contacted her neighbors last March during the infamous toilet paper shortage in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She happened to be well stocked with all the household products that had almost instantly become scarce, and was willing to share.

Thinking about others and contributing to an effort to lend a hand to make a positive difference always feeds our soul, even for the most self-absorbed among us.

Oh, and it happens to be biblical too — love God, love others.

Those are the two greatest commandments, according to Jesus, and it really does simplify every aspect of life if we make that our focus. 🌈



Photo by Lauren C. Grim

Hernando, Miss., received 9 inches of snow in last week's winter storms that brought record snowfalls to the area.

Your Voice



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

Embracing the act of confession during Lenten season

By Skye Jethani

Author, speaker and podcast host

The Christian discipline of confession — while common among Catholics, Anglicans, mainline Protestants and Orthodox believers — is largely absent in my own evangelical tradition.

If you attend an evangelical church in the United States, you are more likely to find cushioned theater seats than a liturgy of confession or hear a prayer of repentance.

While other churches use Lent to reflect on their sinfulness in preparation for Easter, few evangelical churches acknowledge Lent at all.

The 40 days of Lent have histori-

cally been a season for Christians to engage in confession and repentance. Lenten fasting (which has turned into giving up an indulgence like sweets or Netflix) was merely a way to facilitate self-examination by eliminating distractions and focusing on one's inner life rather than outward comforts.

Annual checkup

Lent is like an annual checkup for Christians; a time to take inventory of one's soul, clean out any accumulated muck and prepare to receive God's grace anew at Easter.

Of course, this healthy practice of self-reflection is not limited to

one season or one religion. And many Christian traditions rehearse the rhythm weekly with a corporate prayer to confess how "we have not loved (God) with our whole heart, and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves."

Evangelicals ignore Lent and avoid confession not because they don't believe in admitting their sins. Asking for forgiveness, after all, is part of putting one's faith in Jesus.

But for many white evangelicals, this is a one-time event at conversion. Some may confess in their private prayers, but the corporate practice of confession is often dismissed as an "empty ritual," "too Catholic"

or unnecessary because "God forgave all of my sins — past, present and future — on the cross."

This confuses confession as something we do for God's sake, instead of a commandment from God.

When self-examination isn't valued and cultivated, it's all too easy to see Christian faith as a battle between external agents of good and evil rather than an internal struggle against my own sin.

Without self-awareness, the great threat to the faith is always from those on the outside, never the existence of the transgressions of those on the inside.

Given the pandemic and political trauma of the last year — and the growing distrust citizens have toward one another — perhaps we need a national season of self-reflection and confession.

Soul need

Perhaps an American Lent — a time to fast from partisan media, from blaming others, would make us mindful of the words of Vaclav Havel: "The line between good and evil does not run clearly between us and them, but through each person."

I sense that need in my own soul, and perhaps such a season will cause all of us to take seriously Jesus' command to remove the log from our own eye rather than focus on the speck in our brother's.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Skye Jethani is a writer and speaker, co-host of the Holy Post podcast and author of "What If Jesus Was Serious?" This commentary is adapted for space and was originally published at Religion News Service.

On the Order of Corporate Worship

In the Old Testament, God established a structural pattern for corporate worship assemblies that continues also into the New Testament.

God often calls these assemblies of worship "memorials," meaning more than just a passive remembrance of something, but actually a reenactment of God's works in history for His people such that the worshippers are shaped over and over again by what God has done. Beginning at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19–24), God instituted a particular order of what the OT frequently calls

the "solemn assemblies" of Israel. This order reflects what I like to call a "theologic" in which in the assembly, God's people, reenact — through the order of what they do — God's atoning work on their behalf. In Old Testament worship,

▶ God reveals Himself and calls His people to worship.

▶ God's people acknowledge and confess their need for forgiveness.

▶ God provides atonement.

▶ God speaks His word.

▶ God's people respond with commitment.

▶ God hosts a celebratory feast.

While the particular rituals present in Hebrew worship pass away for the NT church, the book of Hebrews tells us that these OT rituals were "a copy and shadow of heavenly things" (8:5). Thus, while the shadows fade away, the theologic of corporate worship remains the same: we are reenacting God's atoning work on our behalf when we gather for corporate worship.

Scott Aniol

**Chair of the worship ministry department
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary**

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“You can’t cancel God’s love, His heart for humanity or the hope we have in Jesus.”

TIM TEBOW

Athlete and founder of Night to Shine prom event for those with special needs

This morning’s flip calendar reminded me that “kindness is the ability to love people more than they deserve.” This sounds like the definition of grace — getting what you don’t deserve.

I searched the word “kindness” on the the internet and found this excerpt from Wikipedia: “Kindness is a type of behavior marked by acts of generosity, consideration or concern for others, without expecting praise or reward in return.”

This seems stoic as if no emotion is involved at all. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are the fruit of the Holy Spirit from Galatians 5:22. “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor.

13:13). The greatest love is Agape! Let the Holy Spirit lead you to express it.

Sharon Swartz Kirksey
via Facebook

It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another.

Margaret Wheatley
“When Change Is Out of Control”

It would be a major misunderstanding of the Christian faith to conclude that Christian education is something that takes place in

Bible colleges, seminaries, Sunday Schools and other settings designed to promote growth and development in the Bible and religious ministries — if those educative efforts are isolated from and/or are divorced from the clear call from Christ to evangelize.

For if and when such occurs, we may readily conclude that Christian education without evangelism only makes us well-informed, modern-day Pharisees.

The merger of education and evangelism into a harmonious whole is the challenge which every Christian faces and toward which Spirit-led efforts to emulate Christ must be directed.

Morris Murray, Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

We are mercy junkies. If we truly take an honest assessment of our lives and how far short we fall from Christlikeness in word and deed, we recognize the massive truckload of mercy we need on a regular basis.

Friends, be very careful of the temptation not to grant mercy to others.

To withhold the very thing we depend on is like having an endless water supply in the desert and refusing to let others take a sip.

Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. He prayed to the Lord, “Please, Lord, isn’t this what I said while I was still in my own country? That’s why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster. And now, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live” (Jonah 4:1–3).

Jonah was tripping friends. And sometimes we be tripping too.

Pastor Terrence Jones
Strong Tower at
Washington Park
Montgomery, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@CSLewisDaily

“There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind.”

@brocraigc

“Keep your eye fixed on Jesus. Pray much for his Spirit and likeness; and be ready for his coming.” — Robert Murray M’Cheyne

@BenMandrell

Many pastors are winding down from a hard week of faithful ministry — and perhaps reeling from draining circumstances in their personal lives. If this is you, pastor, you are seen. Remember that God has called you and holds you in the palm of His hand.

@timkellernyc

Jesus smashed two of the rich young ruler’s assumptions: Christianity is something you can ADD and something you can DO.

@BillyGraham

“Scripture makes it clear that our first love is always to be for our Lord.” #BillyGraham

@MattMason3

John Newton, letter to a friend: “May God give you wisdom, faithfulness and patience. Take care that you do not catch an angry spirit yourself while you aim to suppress it in others.”// A prayer that Christ would be formed in us! I’m stealing this prayer for personal use!

@jt_english

You are never stronger than when you pray in weakness.

@trillianewbell

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ...” (Isa. 53:4). I can’t seem to move past this line. He carries every grief

and sorrow. All of it. He bears it. This is the Jesus that we proclaim. I hope you’ll run to Him with your sorrows today. He is available.

@joethorn

When Christians are infatuated with conspiracy theories, I tend to think they’ve grown bored with Jesus.

@griffingulledge

I just don’t know who I’d be if I didn’t have close friendships with people who disagree with me freely and often — many on major issues. When affection is limited by agreement, we are deprived of two of life’s greatest blessings: honesty and loving pushback.

@jobymartin

If you are not trying to kill your sin, your sin will kill you.

Personality tests list the strengths and weaknesses of each personality and encourage those types to work on their weaknesses.

But it’s easy to see the weaknesses, laugh at yourself a bit when you realize how true they are and then continue to set boundaries for yourself because of them.

Don’t use personality tests as a way to excuse the sin in your life. Use the tests to help you identify areas of sin and then work on them. Christians must never become stale.

Hannah Munoz
theropetab.com

Equipping lay people

Stephen Ministry ‘quiet but powerful’ tool for helping the hurting

By Caleb Yarbrough

TAB Media

Christians are never immune to difficult times, and the trials of 2020 underscore that many believers can benefit greatly from a caring smile, listening ear and encouraging reminder of the healing power of the Great Physician.

Stephen Ministry equips lay people to do just that.

Stephen Ministry was founded in 1974 by pastor and clinical psychologist Kenneth C. Haugk. Named for Stephen of the New Testament Book of Acts — the first layperson the apostles commissioned to minister to those in need of care and support — the not-for-profit organization trains individuals (called Stephen Ministers) to “provide one-to-one Christian care to hurting people in and around the congregation,” according to the ministry’s website.

‘Immediate needs’

That kind of support is needed in today’s churches, according to David Kinnaman, president of Barna Research.

Recent polling by Barna found that only 43% of pastors surveyed said they “definitely” know “the immediate needs of their people.” And only 30% of the same pastors said they feel “very well-equipped to help congregants deal with matters of mental or emotional health.”

Kinnaman believes the challenges



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pastors, churches and congregations have faced during the pandemic highlight the difference between casual interactions and meaningful relationships within bodies of believers.

“We’re beginning to understand that just because we saw someone at church over the weekend doesn’t mean there was a connection that gives a more holistic look at how they’re really doing,” Kinnaman said in an article last year. “I think this time is going to force us to have some new rhythms so we can check in on people better.”

Patsy Williams is director of the Stephen Ministry at Faith Promise

Church, a large nondenominational congregation based in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Williams first got involved in 2012 after Faith Promise sent three church members to a conference to be trained. One of the men who attended returned to church and told Williams the ministry had her “name all over it.”

Each Stephen Minister receives 50 hours of training in Christian caregiving on topics including listening, confidentiality and ministering to individuals going through specific situations like marital problems, terminal illness or grief.

Stephen Ministry uses the terms “care giver” and “care receiver” to define the roles of the Stephen Minister and the church or community member receiving the care.

Williams said often those who feel called to care for someone going

through difficult times want to “fix problems.”

However, Stephen Ministry training teaches ministers to differentiate the care giver (the Stephen Minister) from the cure giver (God).

‘Beautiful ministry’

“We are there to listen, to be with them, to ask questions, pray with them ... it’s amazing that almost everyone has the answer but needs someone to ask the right questions,” Williams explained. “It’s a beautiful ministry. Many people have been helped because of it.”

Some 75,000 pastors, church staff and laypeople from many denominations have been trained as Stephen Leaders and these have trained more than 600,000 laypeople to be Stephen Ministers.

After training, Stephen Ministers commit to two years of service, are commissioned by their local congregation and paired with a care receiver with whom they meet once

a week. They also meet together twice monthly for continuing education and supervision.

Stephen Ministers are not counselors, and an important aspect of their training

includes guidelines for recognizing when a care receiver’s needs go beyond the Stephen Minister’s scope of training.

They can then refer the care receiver to the proper counselor or medical professional.

Everything care receivers tell Stephen Ministers is confidential; they never share specific details from their meetings — even with their supervising Stephen Leader.

For more information, including resources for grief support, coping with cancer and other concerns, visit stephenministries.org.

“It’s a beautiful ministry.

Many people have been helped because of it.”

**Patsy Williams, director of Stephen Ministry
at Faith Promise Church in Knoxville, Tennessee**

When Ron Hughes was called as assistant pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Georgia, in 2005, he knew he wanted to start a Stephen Ministry.

Today, Johnson Ferry Baptist has trained more than 200 Stephen Ministers and more than 30 Stephen Leaders, with 48 currently active Stephen Ministers in the congregation.

“We have found Stephen Ministry to be a quiet but powerful presence in our church. ... The impact has been huge,” Hughes said. “Literally hundreds of people in our church and community have received distinctly Christian care through the ministry.”

Hughes added he believes every church could benefit from Stephen Ministry because every congregation includes people who are hurting or going through difficult times.

“I would definitely recommend the ministry to other churches for several reasons,” he said.

“First, there are people in the congregation that need what Stephen Ministry offers — a trained, Christ-centered, caring individual to walk with them through seasons of difficulty.

‘Disciple and train’

“Second, it is a great way to disciple and train people for ministry. [They] finish the training feeling equipped to work with those whom God matches them with.”

Charlotte Davis, a member of First Baptist Church, Huntsville, was trained about 13 years ago.

“I would love to see more Baptist churches start it,” Davis said. “Stephen Ministry is basically one-on-one care. We describe it as walking alongside someone during a season.”

Part of the training includes role-playing to act out different scenarios.

“It is a wonderful program,” Davis said. “The training teaches wonderful life skills.”

Listening and how to make phone calls are featured in the training, as are recognizing limitations such as mental health and dementia.

“We’re prayer partners and caregivers, and we just love you to pieces, but there are some things we can’t do,” Davis stressed.

But those who participate — care givers and care receivers alike — experience many positive results, Williams said, adding she would love to see every church have an active Stephen Ministry. 🌈

Stephen Ministers struggle to help during COVID-19 pandemic

By Dianna L. Cagle
TAB Media

When a ministry is called to be near people who are struggling or in pain, it can be more difficult during a pandemic.

“We are truly just someone to walk alongside and listen,” said Charlotte O’Barr, 78, a member and Stephen Ministry leader at Shades Crest Baptist Church, Birmingham. “Learning to listen is most important, to not be so quick to think that I have to give an answer.”

Leaders at Shades Crest Baptist; Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham; and First Baptist Church, Huntsville, say they have struggled with continuing their Stephen Ministry efforts during COVID-19.

Dawson Memorial has offered the ministry since 1993, and Bill Johnston, associate pastor, said it has “been beneficial here.”

Training — consisting of about 50 hours — and expectations are intense, Johnston noted, with leaders meeting twice a month to check in and remain accountable.

“It is not functioning at this time because of COVID-19,” he said.

The demands on families during the pandemic have taken their toll.

Church leaders also noted the difficulty in finding younger recruits to the ministry, as well as trying to find time to meet, even online.

“To be honest, our Stephen Ministry is not very active,” O’Barr lamented. “It involves a lot of commitment and time and investment in another person’s life.”

Shades Crest’s Stephen Ministry began in 2007, when O’Barr went to Orlando for intensive training.

“It was really an extremely in-



Unsplash.com

teresting week” with intense periods of study, she remembered. “I never got tired of being there. It could hold my attention and made me feel like I was accomplishing something.”

The main reason O’Barr was drawn to the ministry was the idea of “just being connected to people,” she said, as well as the priority of confidentiality.

“I believe in prayer — not prayer which exposes a person’s deepest hurts,” she stressed, discouraging gossip disguised as a prayer request.

O’Barr said she wishes she’d had the training before she taught school for about 30 years.

Stephen Ministry offered visualization of Matthew 11 for her. “We simply walk alongside to lessen the load,” she said. “I think a lot of people want to be there for someone else.”

Shades Crest stays active through Stephen Ministry’s “Journeying Through Grief” effort, four books sent out periodically throughout the first year after a person loses a loved one.

“It’s one way we can let people know we are still active,” O’Barr said.

Caregivers are not problem-solvers, but someone who walks

alongside people in the midst of deep hurt, listening and offering prayer and encouragement. O’Barr said it’s a “safe space” to share the deepest feelings.

Stephen Ministers rely on church leaders and members to refer people.

Charlotte Davis, 83, who has been a First, Huntsville, member for more than 40 years, was trained when she 70. Most of the Stephen Ministers in her church are in their 70s and older.

“We went in thinking we’re going to help the world, and actually, the world helped us,” Davis said. “We ministered to each other.”

Team approach

First, Huntsville, divides its ministry among three main leaders — one assigns care receivers to Stephen Leaders or care givers; another plans the programs; and the other runs the meetings. They rotate positions every few years. Davis regularly stays in touch with her leaders through email.

While First, Huntsville, mainly serves its members, they include tithing as part of their ministry, indicating they try to spend 15% of ministry outside the church.

With COVID-19, First, Huntsville, has paused its ministry, she said, although they are still encouraging leaders to write notes and call members. 🌈

“Stephen Ministry is basically one-on-one care. We describe it as walking alongside someone during a season.”

**Charlotte Davis
member, FBC Huntsville**

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Pennington: Strong proponent of abolitionist movement, gospel

James William Charles Pennington (ca. 1807–1870) was a minister, orator, writer and abolitionist.

He wrote the first history of African Americans in the United States 180 years ago this year.

Pennington was born in slavery on a plantation in eastern Maryland around 1807. When he was four, he and his mother were given to the master's son and taken to another plantation. He was trained as a carpenter and blacksmith, but he wasn't taught to read or write.

At 19, he escaped from the plantation. He was twice captured and twice escaped. After reaching Pennsylvania, a Quaker couple taught him to read and write. He adopted his name after his Quaker friend "William" and his surname after a famous Quaker named Pennington.

Finding faith

He moved to Brooklyn and studied at night school. He then taught black children on Long Island.

Pennington attended the first Ne-

gro National Convention in Philadelphia in 1829. He served as its presiding officer at its 1853 convention.

While living in Brooklyn, he became a Christian and a candidate for ordination. He was accepted as the first black student at Yale Divinity School, although not formally listed as a student. Required to sit on the back row, he couldn't ask questions. After completing his studies, he was ordained to the ministry of the Congregational Church.

In 1840 he became a minister in Hartford, Connecticut. While there, he wrote the first history of African Americans, "The Origin and History of the Colored People," consulting current works at the time.

A strong proponent of the abolitionist movement, he was selected as a delegate to the Second World Conference on Slavery in London.

While in England, he was invited as a visiting minister to preach and serve communion. After returning to Hartford, he persuaded white ministers to include him in their pulpit exchanges.

Pennington moved to Manhattan in 1848 to be minister of Shiloh Presbyterian Church. The next year, because of pressure to return fugitive slaves to the South, he traveled to Great Britain until his freedom could be purchased.

His memoir, "The Fugitive Blacksmith," was published in London in 1849. It condemned slavery and stressed education.

He left Manhattan in 1858 and traveled as an abolitionist.

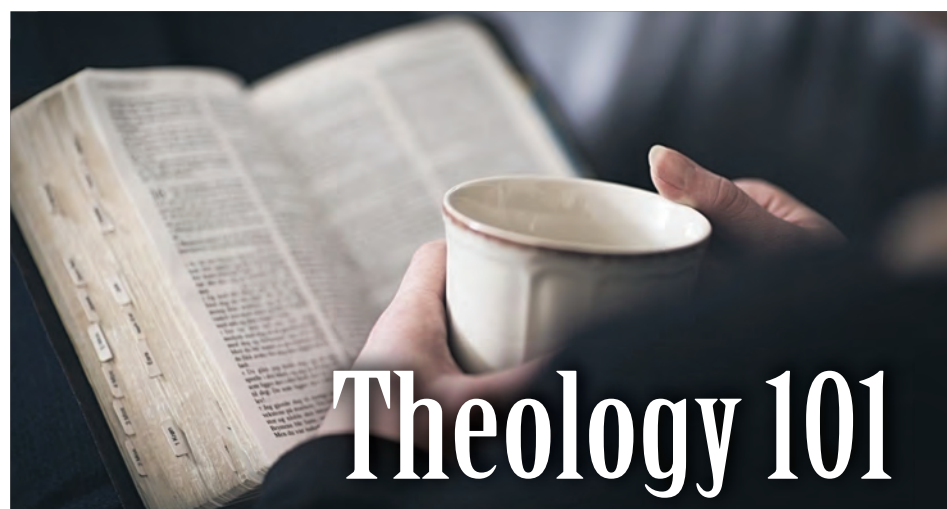
In the 1860s he became a minister in Natchez, Mississippi, and in Portland, Maine. He later moved to Jacksonville, Florida, to help freed slaves. He died there in 1870. 🌈



PENNINGTON

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of FBC 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).



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Love Does

Wholehearted Praise

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

Special to The Alabama Baptist

Last week Theology 101 looked at the varied meanings in the Bible concerning the heart, namely our inner capacities of thinking, choosing and feeling.

This week's starting point is the declaration of the psalmist in the opening words of Psalm 111: "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart" (v. 1). In light of the "heart" speaking variously of our cognitive, volitional and emotional capabilities, as noted last week, the question for this week is, "What should wholehearted praise look like?"

First, it should engage the mind, thus becoming praise that is thoughtfully framed and offered. This suggests the value of unhurried times of reflection on God's goodness to us and His provisions for us. The testimony of the psalmist was, "We have thought, O God, on Your loving-kindness" (Ps. 48:9).

Count your blessings

In the expression of the hymn writer, this calls for counting our many blessings, naming them one by one. It embraces both spiritual and material blessings. It includes people with whom God has surrounded us and events He has allowed to impact us.

Wholehearted praise also ought to exercise the will, being deliberately and intentionally offered.

A well-rounded prayer life includes the thoughtful recollection of God's blessings over the years, as well as those of the day just

ending. We do well to come to personal times of prayer with the predetermined goal of expressing gratitude to God and speaking words of praise to Him.

Thoughtful praise does not limit itself to the material benefits and provisions that flow from God's hands to our lives. It also includes the intentional naming of His spiritual blessings across the years and as recent as yesterday and today; as well as those His faithfulness will supply in our tomorrows.

Heartfelt and unrestrained

Finally, wholehearted praise is expressed emotionally in that it becomes heartfelt and unrestrained. Such praise can be inwardly real quite apart from outward expressions of emotion, such as might be heard in tremors of the voice, shown through tears or laughter or accompanied by bodily gestures such as raised hands.

While such physical responses may well occur, they are not essential to genuine, heartfelt praise. We must be careful that praising God does not become a performance or pretense either in context or content. 🌈

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

FIFTH IN A SERIES — KENNETH WELLS, PASTOR OF SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH, SCOTTSBORO, SINCE 2019

Church members play huge role in encouraging ministers, especially in hardship

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 the past two years.

Q: What type of work do you do?

A: I work for State Farm Insurance Company.

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

A: We began with a congregation of approximately 40 people.

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

A: Our main building includes the sanctuary, fellowship hall, classrooms and two offices. We have a separate building that has four classrooms.

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

A: One month.

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

A: It's about 50/50.

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

A: Personal contact by the membership with others in the community.

Q: What has been your greatest discouragement?

A: Attendance has not yet reached pre-COVID numbers.

Q: What has been your greatest encouragement?

A: Several things: The faithfulness of those that have been in attendance. The prayers, phone calls and text messages my wife and I have received from the membership. Church members have remained faithful in their giving. In spite of the pandemic, our church has started a new prayer ministry and the response has been great.

Q: What are the three or four most important lessons or suggestions you would offer bivocational

pastors today who also want to reach the lost and grow a local church?

A: ▶ Make sure your spouse is called to be a pastor's wife. Her ministry in the church is just as important as the pastor's.

▶ Get to know your congregation. After 2 years of being at Shiloh, I feel as though I "know" the people.

▶ Find out if the church has a prayer ministry. If not, find out if they know how to pray. This may involve teaching/educating the membership.

▶ Do not be discouraged when people leave. People do that. Do not take it personally.

▶ Find other pastors in your area that you can call to talk with and share your accomplishments, concerns and disappointments. Know your director of missions! 🌈



WELLS

Opportunity to show love, share joy of participants

(continued from page 1) with Shine-Thru, a drive-through event that special guests could attend before the virtual event.

Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, kicked theirs off Feb. 11.

"We did yard decorations and balloons for our guests, then on Friday night, we had nine stations they could drive through at the church," said Angela Washington,

who organized Bethel Baptist's event.

A big part of Night to Shine is when every guest is crowned a king or queen, so one of the stations offered an in-car crowning. Guests also got gift bags, flowers, T-shirts, photos, a meal box provided by Chick-Fil-A in Gardendale and most of all, lots of personal attention.

"We wanted God's love to still shine through and show them that they matter and

are worth it," Washington said.

At Agape Baptist, dozens of volunteers came with signs, glow sticks and pom poms to form a "paparazzi line" that guests could parade by in their cars before visiting the stations.

Pastor Ryan Johnson said he would encourage any church to consider participating next year.

"We had people who drove two hours to be a part because they didn't have a church hosting an event near them," he said. "This is another way we can fulfill

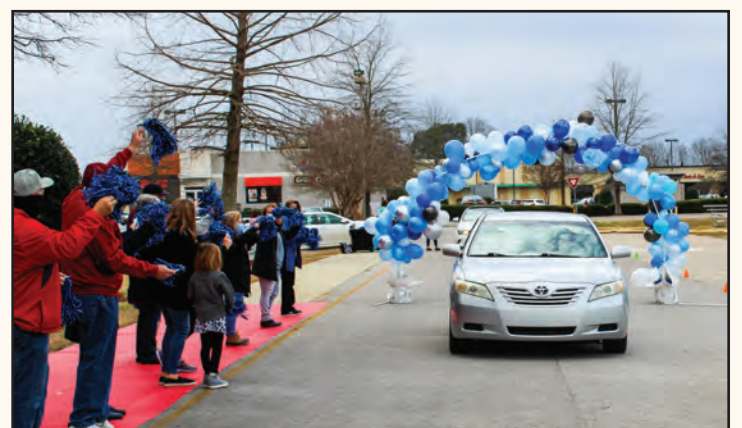


Photo courtesy of Valley View Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa
Volunteers greet a special guest at the Shine-Thru event at Valley View Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, on Feb. 6.

the call to be pro-life — the world needs to see the joy on these folks' faces, and we need the joy of express-

ing that agape love to these individuals as a testimony to our community." 🌈

For more information about Night to Shine visit timtebowfoundation.org.

A SURVEY OF



By Cole Shiflet
TAB Media

6 PERSONALITY TESTS

Popular tools help leaders, volunteers identify strengths for more effective ministry

In recent years, Christians have struggled to discern how they might best engage with and utilize personality tests. The volume of tests on the internet leaves many wondering about the differences and benefits.

In a recent survey of college students, 84% of respondents believe Christians should use personality test assessments, yet 85% said they have seen them misused in religious contexts.

When asked how Christians could use the tests properly, the overwhelming and nearly unanimous response was that they should be a tool rather than an identity.

Many personality tests exist. Here is an overview of six of the current most popular assessments.

Enneagram

Due to the influential yet controversial writings of Suzanne Stiles, Ian Morgan Cron and Richard Rohr, the Enneagram currently stands as the most popular personality test in both Christian and secular circles. In the study I conducted, 78% of college students had taken the Enneagram test and found it helpful. The Enneagram has nine dominant types numbered from 1 to 9 and grouped together based on emotional centers like anger, shame and fear that attempt to explain why people respond to stress in different ways.

Additionally, each type has two possible “wings,” which help explain the vast differences between people with the same type. A wing is a number on the scale to the left

or right of your main number, which explains secondary motivations and emotional centers.

The strongest part of the Enneagram is that it points out weaknesses and sin patterns within each person and helps Christians understand the motivations of fellow church members.

While the Enneagram points out weaknesses, we need to be careful not to allow it to define us or excuse sin patterns. When sinful motivations are revealed, we ought to turn to the Lord in repentance, rather than excusing it as a trait of a certain personality type.

Myers-Briggs

Unlike the Enneagram, the Myers-Briggs test is based on four key questions. To complete it, you must ask yourself if you are introverted or extroverted, take in information through intuition or sensing, make decisions based on thinking or feeling and live your outer life by judging or perceiving.

The Myers-Briggs identifies 16 different personality types, which allows for a wider variety of personalities and classifications than tests such as the Enneagram. While the latter may have nine dominant types, the Myers-Briggs test categorizes people according to only four criteria, which makes it less holistic.

Like the Enneagram, this test can be misused to assert that some people are exempt from certain sin or obeying certain commandments. While understanding that everyone’s role in ministry is different, there are particular practices like evangelism

that all Christians have been called to do. However, the way in which they practice faith may be different.

Kolbe

The Kolbe test is the only one that focuses not only on the affective mind, but on the cognitive mind. According to the Kolbe Corporation, the test “evaluates the instinctive talents you were born with and identifies the way you take action.” In short, it is more focused on what you do than how you feel. The Kolbe test analyzes people based on their skills, such as gathering information, organizing, dealing with uncertainty and handling space.

The Kolbe test adds to the plethora of well-known tests that analyze cognitive and affective aspects of the human mind and provides a helpful, yet limited, framework for understanding the conative mind. While it is helpful, its impact is limited since it only looks at four skills.

While most personality tests are based on how we feel, this conative-focused test is not. We need to be careful not to use the Kolbe test in the same way we might use the Big Five or the Enneagram.

Big Five

Most personality tests today are based on a type-model rather than a trait-model. This contrasts with The Big Five, which is the most prominent among the trait models. It assesses people based on five characteristics: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Most of the characteristics are self-explanatory, but according to Truity.com, neuroti-

cism “describes a person’s tendency to respond to stressors with negative emotions including fear, sadness, anxiety, guilt and shame.”

The biggest strength of the Big Five is that it assesses people across a spectrum rather than attempting to categorize them into types. Despite this, it still focuses on affective rather than cognitive or conative mind.

The Big Five should not be viewed as the end-all, be-all, but it does help Christians understand each other based on these five criteria across a spectrum.

DiSC

The DiSC test presents four core personalities based on dominance, influence, steadiness and conscientiousness. Like the wings of the Enneagram that add nuance to the results, this has different styles that include a primary and secondary personality. Examples range from Di, which are primarily dominance-oriented and secondarily influence-oriented, to SC, which are primarily steadiness-oriented and secondarily conscientiousness-oriented.

The DiSC test has styles that are sub-groupings of the main framework. This provides eight unique personality types, which strengthens the assessment. The weakness is that these are based on a combination of characteristics and produce a type rather than examining the strengths and weaknesses of different traits.

Christians should be skeptical of these four categories because they fail to provide an in-depth examination of different skills or shortcomings. Nonetheless, these qualities

can help Christians understand the personalities of others within their community.

Birkman

The Birkman test works differently than many of the others because it assesses people based on their interests, usual behavior and needs/stress behaviors along the “compass” of two qualities: introverted or extroverted, and task-focused or people-focused.

The Birkman test features four colors that make up the compass. In the top left quadrant, extroverted, task-focused people are categorized as red. The top right quadrant — the extroverted, people-focused — are categorized as green.

The bottom right quadrant, the introverted, people-focused, are categorized as blue. Lastly, the bottom left quadrant are those who are introverted and task-focused, on order and systems. They are categorized as yellow.

The strongest part of the Birkman test is that it uniquely views people on a compass with the vertical axis measuring extraversion and introversion, and the horizontal axis measuring orientation toward tasks or people. By doing this, the Birkman test is able to rightly assess the gifts and usual behavior of others.

The test does a good job of presenting the compass, but it should be used primarily in work contexts rather than relational. The Birkman test helps employers and ministry leaders assess employees and volunteers and place them where they can serve most effectively.🌈

What you should know:

AN OVERVIEW OF PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS

ENNEAGRAM

The **Enneagram** has nine dominant types, grouped together based on emotional centers like anger, shame and fear, in an attempt to explain why they respond to stress in different ways.

The strongest part of the Enneagram is that it points out weaknesses and sin patterns and helps Christians understand the motivations of fellow church members.

While the Enneagram shows weaknesses, we need to be careful not to allow it to define us or excuse sin patterns.

BIG FIVE

The **Big Five** assesses people based on five characteristics: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

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Christians should be skeptical of these four categories because they fail to provide an in-depth examination of different skills or shortcomings.

MYERS-BRIGGS

The **Myers-Briggs** test is based on four key questions: Are you introverted or extroverted? Do you take in information through intuition or sensing? Do you make decisions based on thinking or feeling? Do you live your outer life by judging or perceiving?

The Myers-Briggs identifies 16 personality types, which allows for a wide variety of personalities and classifications.

The test can be misused to assert that some people are exempt from certain sin or obeying certain commandments God has given.

KOLBE

The **Kolbe** test is the only one that focuses not only on the affective mind, but on the cognitive mind — what you do rather than how you feel. The Kolbe test analyzes people based on their skills such as gathering information, organizing, dealing with uncertainty and handling space.

While most personality tests are based on how we feel, this conative-focused test is not. We need to be careful not to use the Kolbe test in the same way we might use the Big Five or the Enneagram.

BIRKMAN

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The strongest part of the Birkman test is that it uniquely views people on a compass with the vertical axis measuring extraversion and introversion and the horizontal axis measuring orientation toward tasks or people.

3 stories you should know



AP Photo/Antonio Calanni

Visitors can once again view Leonardo da Vinci's painting "The Last Supper," housed inside the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy. The painting reopened to the public Feb. 9 after months of closure due to COVID-19 lockdown measures. The masterpiece dates back to 1494–1498. For now, residents of the region are the main beneficiaries. Italy's current virus restrictions ban travel between regions, except for necessary travel. (AP)

Court grants stay, says pastor must be present

The U.S. Supreme Court on Feb. 11 stayed the execution of an Alabama death row inmate, saying the state must allow the man's personal pastor in the death chamber.

The lethal injection of Willie B. Smith III was called off after justices maintained an injunction issued by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals saying Smith could not be executed without his pastor present.

In the past, Alabama put a Christian prison chaplain, who was employed by the state, in the execution chamber to pray with an inmate if requested. The practice ended after a Muslim inmate asked to have an imam present. The prison system did not have a Muslim cleric on staff.

The case is the latest in a series of legal fights over personal spiritual advisers at executions. Read more at tabonline.org/smith-execution. (AP)

Decline in divorce amid pandemic temporary?

Though comprehensive national statistics on divorce during the pandemic won't be compiled for many months, preliminary numbers suggest a notable decline in recent months.

However, Atlanta-based attorney Elizabeth Lindsey, president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, expects there will be pent-up demand for divorces once the COVID-19 threat eases.

In Oregon, divorces in March through December were down about 24% from those months in 2019. In Florida, for the same months, divorces were down 20%.

One reason for fewer divorces: In many states, access to courts for civil cases was severely curtailed during the pandemic's early stages.

Read more at tabonline.org/divorce. (AP)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

If you think Jess and Cassie Lothes' hands are full as the parents of nine children, you should see their hearts, Outlook Magazine reported. The Springdale, Arkansas, couple, with two biological children, adopted seven siblings in the summer of 2020. The Lothes first welcomed the siblings, who had been living at the Arkansas Baptist Ranch, into their home as foster children. A few months later, the adoption process began.

Florida

How can one pastor serve two congregations simultaneously? Just ask Eugene Gregory; he has been doing so for eight years, the Florida Baptist Witness reported. River of Life Church of Volusia in Deltona, Florida, is a non-traditional ministry where the congregation meets in an open-air pavilion originally a pole barn. First Baptist Church of Lake Monroe in Sanford, Florida, is a

104-year-old traditional congregation with about 20 in weekly worship. "The two churches partner together very well," Gregory said.

Georgia

Ghana native Emmanuel Ofori-Atta grew up the son of a king with 44 children among six wives. Today, as pastor of the traditional, aging and predominately white First Baptist Church in Stockbridge, Georgia, Ofori-Atta has come a long way. Church members are grateful for the thousands-of-miles journey that brought them their new pastor, who was ordained in January. "Our neighborhood, city and county are becoming more diverse," said deacon chairman Winford Smith. Ofori-Atta is "good for our church."

South Carolina

For the first time in history, African Americans are serving as the top two officers of the South

Carolina Baptist Convention. Alex Sands, pastor of Kingdom Life Church in Simpsonville, South Carolina, is serving as president, joined by vice president, Ron Henderson, senior pastor of Mt. Nebo Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina. "We are serious and intentional about taking steps toward racial reconciliation," Gary Hollingsworth, SCBC executive director-treasurer, said.

Tennessee

Amid the many hardships of 2020, Hilldale Baptist Church in Clarksville, Tennessee, experienced a financial miracle, the Baptist and Reflector reported. The church exceeded its \$3.1 million budget by \$73,000, paid off the approximate \$500,000 debt on its family life center and reached its goals for the Cooperative Program and Tennessee Baptist state missions offering. "It's easy to see that God did a miracle in our midst," said Pastor Larry Robertson.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Rick Hinkle**, pastor of Hughes Memorial Baptist Church, Pinson, died Feb. 5 after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 68.



HINKLE

A Samford University graduate, Hinkle also worked in technology services at Samford for 17 years and Bellsouth for 28 years. In addition to serving as pastor of Hughes Memorial Baptist, he served as pastor of New Lebanon Baptist Church, Springville, and Clay Baptist Church. He also served on staff at other churches including Pineywood Baptist Church, Gardendale, and Clearview Baptist Church, Pinson.

Hinkle was preceded in death by his daughter, Julie. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Karen; son, Jeremy; and one granddaughter.

► **Gene Raymond Hitchcock** — a longtime pastor, chaplain and Baptist worker in the state — died Feb. 9. He was 88.

Hitchcock retired as a major with the U.S. Marine Corps after 22 years of service to go into the gospel ministry. He first served as pastor of two churches in California, then came to Alabama in 1978 and served as pastor of Wilkes Baptist Church, Midfield, and Macedonia Baptist Church, Maplesville. He also served as interim pastor of several churches in Chilton Baptist Association and as the association's Sunday School director for several years. Sunday School was near and dear to his heart — he also did work in that area for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.



HITCHCOCK

Over the years, Hitchcock took missions trips to Nigeria, Alaska and Wyoming. He was also a chaplain and worked many years with Alabama Citizens Action Program's American Character Builders, speaking to students in schools about drugs, alcohol, bullying and other topics.

Hitchcock is survived by his wife of 69 years, Peggy, and son, Ray Jr.

► **Tom Fillinger**, founder and CEO of Cullman-based IgniteUS, Inc., and an active member of First Baptist Church, Cullman, died Feb. 10. He was 79.

A northern Ohio native, Fillinger joined the U.S. Navy after graduating from high school and served during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. He earned his doctorate at Denver Seminary in Colorado.



FILLINGER

Through IgniteUS, Inc., Fillinger served as a pastor and a pastor to pastors in several states and a number of countries. He also was pastor emeritus

of SouthEast Community Church in Columbia, South Carolina.

Fillinger is preceded in death by his grandson, Nicholas Lee. He is survived by his wife of more than 60 years, Peggy Jean; sons, Roderick H. and Eric B.; daughter, Dorinda Louise; and 12 grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Ryan Whitley** says he's heard it said that when it comes to parenting, the days are long, but the years are short. As an empty nester, he believes it.

And as Whitley celebrated his 25th anniversary as pastor of **CrossPoint Church, Trussville**, on Feb. 7, he said he feels the same way about serving the same church for that length of time.

"The same is true with loving and leading the same people for a quarter century," he said. "Some of the days have been long, but all of the years have been short."

Two years after coming to First Baptist Church, Centerpoint, as pastor in 1996, Whitley introduced the idea of starting a satellite campus. That campus, CrossPoint, began doing ministry in 2003, and in 2005, it became a mission church with Whitley as its pastor.

He said he's grateful for the people who had such committed "volition to love me unconditionally" and to "pray for me fervently."

It's about them, he said. "I only wish every pastor could experience what I have experienced. If so, we would see more men serving a church for two or three generations."



WHITLEY

Alabama WMU hosts monthly conversations

Wondering how to get a missions program started at your church, or how to take the one you already have to the next level? Or maybe you'd just like to be able to connect with more missionaries on the field and hear what God is doing there in real time.

Wherever you might find yourself, Alabama Woman's Missionary Union now has a variety of online webinars on their Missions Discipleship LeaderConnect webpage to fit your need.

The webinars are available for leaders or potential leaders of all age levels — preschool, children, students and adults. You can get a feel for what it might be like to lead a group just by watching one of the webinars. For instance, there's one from Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, that you could watch to hear her heart about what it's like to be a WMU director in a church.

Regularly scheduled Zoom calls are another resource that's available online to help you get connected with missions. Through the call, you can talk to missionaries on the field and pray with them.

"Everyone who is in those calls is on the edge of their seat," McIntosh said. "At the end of the call, you feel like you've gotten to know the missionary's heart and hear some pretty incredible things from closed areas of the world."

To access the webinars, visit alabamawmu.org/leaderconnect. And to be a part of the monthly Zoom prayer for missionaries, watch the Alabama WMU Facebook page to learn more about upcoming calls. (Grace Thornton)

great commission
conversations

Persecuted church

Uzbek authorities deny Protestant church applications, incite fear

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — The Uzbekistan government reportedly has denied Protestant churches' applications to exist, with some leaders saying police have demanded that members denounce their faith.

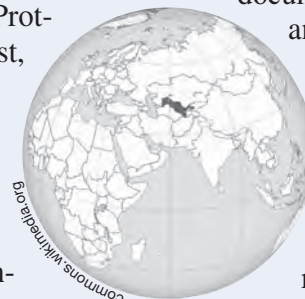
According to local sources, applying for permission to exist may result in fines, torture and other punishment. Some Protestant churches are afraid to apply or to give authorities information about members. Some have applied and been denied repeatedly. Others have delayed applying to see if churches will be punished for exercising freedom of religion and belief. A

source from one church stated the church had been fined.

The registration process requires multiple documents from different state agencies and is complex, arduous and expensive. The process also provides opportunities for officials to extort bribes.

The Uzbek parliament has promised a new religion law that would loosen registration requirements. However, a recent draft of the law retains almost all existing state controls. The law violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes freedom of religion and belief.

Uzbekistan is No. 21 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (Forum 18)



Pro-life efforts remain strong in nation, state

Some 45 abortion clinics across the U.S. ceased performing the procedure in 2020, according to a recent report published by Operation Rescue, a pro-life advocacy organization.

About half of these clinics provided surgical abortion, while the others were for abortion pills, which facilitate chemical abortions.

Nineteen of the 56 abortion facilities that closed, or indefinitely ceased operations, were in New York and California — states that enacted strict lockdowns in an effort to quell the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These lockdowns may have contributed to the inability of some facilities to perform abortions, according to Operation Rescue.

When factoring in states that added clinics, there was a net decrease of four nationwide in 2020.

Planned Parenthood operated 52% of U.S. abortion clinics, but 58% of abortions were conducted at independent clinics.

Prior to the pandemic, very few abortion facilities provided women the option to abort pregnancy through telemedicine programs. Operation Rescue found that in 2020, the number rose to 69.

Abortion drugs were available by mail because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration relaxed a 2000 federal law requiring women to visit a clinic, doctor's office or hospital before being eligible to receive drugs that induce abortion — a reaction to reduced abortion capacity in many areas from regulations aimed at slowing

the spread of COVID-19.

On Jan. 12, however, the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the requirement that women must be seen in person before being prescribed abortion-inducing drugs.

In Alabama, chemical abortion medications can only be prescribed by physicians, and only after the patient seeking the abortion completes an in-person doctor's appointment with the prescribing physician, noted Eric Johnston, an attorney with the Southeast Law Institute based in Birmingham.

Six states passed 17 "life-affirming laws" in 2020, while legislation expanding abortion was enacted in Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Alabama efforts

As of Feb. 16, four abortion-related bills have been introduced in the Alabama Legislature:

- ▶ A born-alive bill, requiring a physician to exercise reasonable care to preserve the life of a child born alive after an abortion or attempted abortion

- ▶ A bill to ban chemical abortions in the state

- ▶ A bill recognizing Jan. 22, 2022, as the Day of Tears in Alabama, to "mourn the innocents who lost their lives to abortion"

- ▶ A bill requiring medical professionals to dispense information about the effects of abortion-inducing drugs and the reversal of such.

Read more about pro-life measures across the U.S. and in Alabama at tabonline.org/abortion. (Caleb Yarbrough)



123rf.com

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Buhl Baptist Church is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Please email resumé to: pinetucky06@gmail.com and mhicks3390@charter.com or mail to: P.O. Box 128, Buhl, AL 35446. Feel free to send questions as well and we will respond ASAP.

PASTOR

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

PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Seeking bivocational pastor for Alabama Gulf Coast Southern Baptist church. Church has about 40 members and a lot of room in the sanctuary for growth. Seeking a pastor who has a heart for people and preaches the unchanging word of God. Church is in an area that has great potential for increasing attendance. Experience preferred but not required. Please send resumé to: Bayside Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastoral Search Committee, P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549, or email to: bsbclillian@gmail.com.

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Verben Baptist Church, Verbena, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please email resumé to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

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Tates Chapel Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Tates Chapel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 38, Centre, AL 35960. Email: tateschapelchurch@tds.net, ATTN: Janet.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP LEADER

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

ASSOCIATE PASTOR/ MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Alabama, is seeking a full-time candidate to lead our worship ministry. Please

submit resumé to: office@fbcwoodstock.org.

MUSIC MINISTER

York Bluff Baptist Church in Sheffield, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. This person should be mature in the faith, theologically sound, musically sound, organized and passionate about growing a multi-generational music ministry. Resumé and videos may be emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com. The deadline to receive resumé is Wednesday, March 31.

MINISTER OF MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama, is seeking a minister of missions and outreach to help lead our church in reaching our community and our world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Interested applicants may obtain more information about the position through our web page at Mount Zion Baptist Church (mzbc.net) and send resumé to: mountzion@mzbc.net, ATTN: Job Search.

YOUTH PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is seeking a full-time youth pastor. Please send a resumé to: youthpastorsearchfbcloxley@gmail.com.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Wanted: Children's ministry director who oversees a comprehensive birth to 5th grade program, leading paid staff and dedicated volunteers. This program currently consists (pre-COVID) of approximately 250 kids Sunday morning, Wednesday night and special programming. To receive a comprehensive position profile, email Dr. Tom Smiley, executive pastor, Lakewood Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga. at: tsmiley@lakewoodlife.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. Resumé may be emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com. The deadline to receive resumé is Feb. 28.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The churches of Winston Baptist Association, in Winston County, Alabama, are seeking a man called of God to serve as our next director of missions. This is a full-time position. SBC seminary training preferred. The

director of missions will lead the Winston Baptist Association to advance the gospel through the cooperative effort of her member churches. If interested, please send your resumé to: wbadom@centurytel.net.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

FBC Birmingham is seeking a full-time staff member, with experience in Shelby systems preferred. Duties include accounts payable, payroll, general ledger and processing contributions. Please send resumé and cover letter to: cjames@fbcbhm.org.

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- BLESSINGS

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CORINTHIANS

DISCIPLINE

EMOTIONS

EVEN-TEMPERED

EXPRESSION

FAITHFULNESS

FEELINGS

FLOWING

GENUINE

GOD IS LOVE

GOD’S CHARACTER

GRATITUDE

GREATNESS

HALLELUJAH

HEARTFELT

HEARTS

HUMAN NATURE

HUMBLE
- IN HIS HEAVEN

IN HIS HOUSE

INNER LIFE

INSTRUMENTS

KIND

LAUGHTER

MEEK

PRAISE

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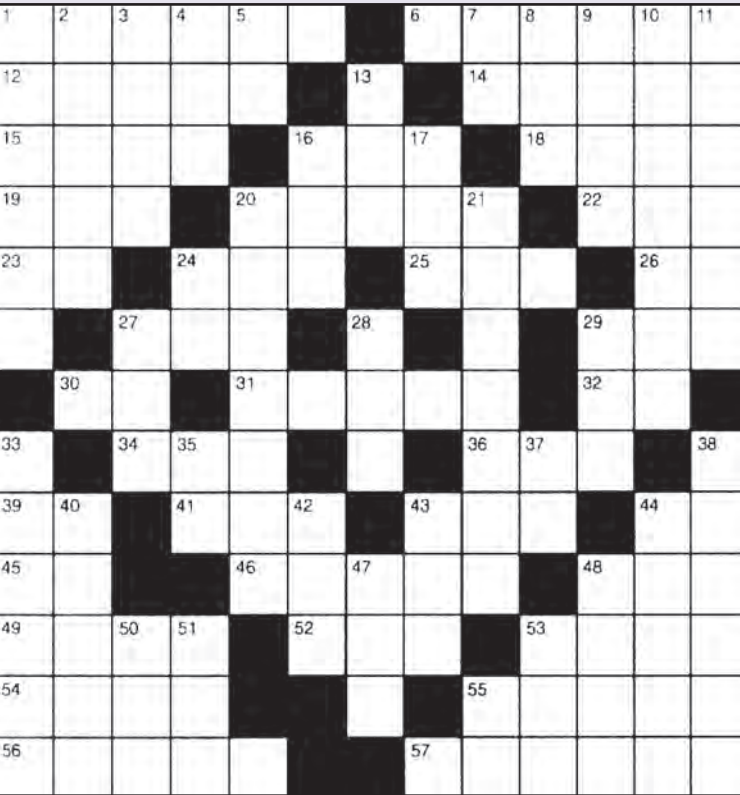
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Y P Y M L K X G B E P K Z K T T L A U G H T E R

Christian Crossword

By Martha Wall Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**

1. Compassionate. (James 5:11)

6. Pleasant and mild.

12. Musical saga.

14. Mount. (Esther 6:8)

15. Inquisitive.

16. Behold.

18. ___ weigh the path. (Isa. 26:7)

19. Taken in adultery in the very _____. (John 8:4)

20. Seat of affection. (Phil. 1:7)

22. Eccentric joker.

23. Left hand. (abbr.)

24. Introducing new angle. (Matt. 5:22)

25. Words of a talebearer ___ as wounds. (Prov. 26:22)

26. His banner over ___ was love. (Song of Sol. 2:4)

27. A memorial of _____. (Matt. 26:13)

29. For each.

30. Invitation to
- partake. (Isa. 55:1)

31. Herein is a marvelous _____. (John 9:30)

32. Hath translated ___ into the kingdom. (Col. 1:13)

34. High priest. (1 Sam. 1:9)

36. He that hath an _____. (Rev. 2:7)

39. Either.

41. This ___ thing I do. (Phil. 3:13)

43. Woman's name.

44. Any one of God's children. (abbr.)

45. In regard to.

46. Merrily.

48. There's more.

49. Goliath's hometown. (1 Sam. 17:4)

52. Part of clay, part of iron. (Dan. 2:41)

53. Pagan city. (Isa. 37:13)

54. Resound.

55. Friendly expression.
- Down**

1. Levels of intonation.

2. Period.

3. Snug habitat. (Ps. 84:3)

4. Root out of ___ ground. (Isa. 53:2)

5. Each. (abbr.)

7. Wordless question.

8. East of Eden. (Gen. 4:16)

9. Describing metal or mettle.

10. Takes for granted.

11. Often a treasured communication.

13. Satan's affirmative. (Gen. 3:1)

16. Place.

17. Historical time.

20. Feeling pain.
21. A great sadness.

24. Exist.

27. Gardening tool.

28. Reward: death. (Rom. 6:23)

29. To destroy them, and had cast _____. (Esther 9:24)

33. God does not _____. (Isa. 49:15)

35. Look.

37. Associate in Arts.

38. Scratches.

40. A measure to ___ even unto you. (2 Cor. 10:13)

42. If any man ___ of this bread. (John 6:51)

43. Beverage.

44. Not fresh.

47. A charged subatomic particle.

48. Their feet run to _____. (Prov. 1:16)

50. An article.

51. Aaron's resting place. (Num. 20:25)

53. An evil creature.

55. Spanish. (abbr.)



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MAKING MEMBERSHIP MEANINGFUL Tuesday, March 9, 10-11 a.m.

God has designed the Body of Christ to function together to fulfill the Great Commission. Now more than ever the Church must see membership that "works" and not membership with "perks." Every believer is designed by God to function through the Body with their gifts and abilities. Join State Missionary Ken Allen with special guest

Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, as they discuss this timely topic.

EVANGELISM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA Wednesday, March 10, 10-11 a.m.

During this informative hour, hear from a panel including Savannah Abney, CCO of Breezy Content, Chattanooga; Brian Harris and Lauren House, social media strategists at Dogwood Media Solutions, Montgomery; Johnny Ellison, pastor of Golden Acres Baptist Church, Phenix City; and state missionaries for evangelism Daniel Wilson and Matt Burford, as they discuss how to effectively use social media for evangelism.

MINISTERING OUT OF THE OVERFLOW: HOW TO BE ON FIRE FOR GOD WITHOUT BURNING OUT

Tuesday, March 23, 10-11 a.m.

This season of pastoral ministry has been challenging. Many pastors and church staff are facing emotional difficulties and burnout. If you are in need of a refreshing message then this webinar is for you. Join Richard Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International since 2006, as he presents an encouraging message in light of the times.

**Register for these webinars at
PinnacleAlabama.org.**

These training opportunities are free and made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Huntsville churches merge to reach community

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

Two years ago, Devins Jackson would have said things were going well for his church, but they were lacking one thing they needed — a family.

“Ministry was good, but we were just out there by ourselves, we had no fellowship, no covering,” he said.

Fasting and praying

Jackson was leading The Body of Christ Church in Huntsville, and he had gone into 2019 fasting and praying for two things — for God to give them a multi-cultural congregation and for the church to know what

God had for them next.

And then out of the blue, he got a call from Jarman Leatherwood.

Leatherwood, pastor of House of Hope and Restoration, Huntsville, had been in a similar boat a few years before.

He had reached out to Madison Baptist Association for some guidance, and they connected him with Lamar Duke, church planting catalyst at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Through Cooperative Program funds, the SBOM offered resources and eventually connected him with Highlands Baptist Church, a local church with a dwin-

dling membership struggling to maintain their large facilities.

After some time of planning and prayer, Highlands Baptist gave their buildings to HHR, and HHR now has a thriving ministry in the community there.

And Leatherwood, now also serving as a church planting catalyst with the SBOM in addition to his pastoral role, thought Jackson might be the right fit for a similar story.

Another local congregation, All Nations Church, was looking for a way to better reach its changing community.

“Larry Inman was about to retire (as All Nations’ pastor), and he felt God leading him to be instrumental in helping the church make the transition to bringing in an African American pastor,” Leatherwood said.

The church had already changed its name to All Nations Church from Hillsboro Heights Baptist Church in 2011 to reflect its desire to reach the diverse community around it.

The predominantly white congregation felt that calling an African American pastor would be the next step, Leatherwood said.

‘A God thing’

And when he, Inman and leaders of Madison Association sat down to talk about it, Jackson’s name came up. They brought him into the conversation, and “everybody in the room felt like this was supposed to happen,” Leatherwood said.



Photo courtesy of Devins Jackson

Courtney Cooper (left) and Chelsea Burton set up for The Body of Christ Church’s back-to-school drive. The church gave away more than 200 pairs of new shoes to disadvantaged kids in Huntsville.

“We thought it was a God thing.”

The All Nations congregation agreed wholeheartedly — everything moved forward quickly after those initial meetings.

Fast forward to today, and the merged church — which kept The Body of Christ Church as its name — is

functioning as the multicultural congregation Jackson had prayed for, worshipping and doing ministry in the former All Nations Church buildings.

“The idea behind the name ‘The Body of Christ’ is that what it looks like in heaven is what it should look like on earth,” Jackson said.

They work together, serving the community through avenues like their feeding

ministry — they provide about 200 food boxes a week to their neighbors, along with other needed items. They also have a partner from Puerto Rico helping them get a Spanish-speaking ministry started — a growing portion of the surrounding neighborhoods is Hispanic.

And with the resources and connections of Madison Association and the SBOM, they’re able to take the church’s ministry to the next level, Jackson said.

In a year where racial tensions have been high, they just want to be a light to the community and show what unity can look like, he said.

Leatherwood agreed. “We’re not divided,” he said. “There may be some differences in the way we express ourselves, but when you think about the heartbeat of who we are, at the foundation of it is Jesus Christ.”

For an existing church to decide to partner with another church in this way is “a statement to the world,” Leatherwood said. “God’s hand is all over this.”

For more information about The Body of Christ Church, visit tbccministries.org.

For information about church planting, replanting or revitalization, contact your local Baptist association or visit plantalabama.org.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 28

Explore the Bible

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



UNASHAMED Luke 9:18–27

Inhabitants of the Holy Land live at a crossroads of cultures.

Many in the region are motivated by honor and shame, where personal choices are measured by their implications upon the family and community at large. Others, influenced by Greco-Roman motivations, consider the legal implications of their behaviors from a guilt-innocence perspective. Tribal peoples in the region are generally motivated by fear, with access to spiritual power coming from obedience to their spiritual authorities.

In Scripture, believers are called to obey God, to fear God and to honor God. This week's passage points to the disciples as men who were not to be ashamed to follow Jesus.

Confess Him (18–20)

The other disciples answered Jesus' question, but Peter confessed his faith in Jesus. The crowds expressed their opinions, the religious leaders had concerns about His doctrine and witnesses who had seen Jesus perform miracles wondered if He might be Elijah, arriving before the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5; Luke 9:19). Peter simply stated, "You are God's Messiah." The Greek term here is "Christos," from which we get the term Christ. Both Messiah (from Hebrew) and Christ (from Greek) mean "Anointed One."

This passage has parallels in the other Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 16; Mark 8). Matthew records a lengthier interchange, where Simon Peter offers a fuller confession — "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" — and Jesus speaks blessing over him (16:16–20). Confessing faith in Christ leads to blessing and responsibility.

Accept His Resurrection (21–22)

Jesus foretells the suffering, death and resurrection He would experience. Luke also records two post-resurrection appearances in which Jesus took listeners back to Old Testament teachings to demonstrate that the Messiah's sufferings were

predicted (see 24:25–27 and 44–48).

Jesus testified of His resurrection both before His suffering (passion) and after He was raised from the dead. Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul pointed out that believing in the bodily resurrection of Jesus was an essential response to the gospel message (1 Cor. 15:3–4; Rom. 10:9).

Follow Him Unashamedly (23–27)

Jesus explained to His disciples that there is a cost to discipleship. Following Jesus comes as part of a package deal. Denying self is the first component. Solomon wrote: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end therein is death" (Prov. 14:12). Since the fall, humanity has been bent to pursue our own selfish desires. Our fallen inclination is to seek after evil continually (Gen. 6:5). Progressive cultural influencers argue for self-identification, self-awareness and self-indulgence. These pursuits are antithetical to self-denial. We must embrace Christ in order to deny self.

Taking up one's cross is the second component. This means we must consider ourselves dead to self. It takes self-denial to the next level. To use Paul's expressions: "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20) and "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31).

To carry one's cross was to take the slow march to crucifixion.

Although they were not yet dead, the men who made their way to Golgotha with Jesus were no longer enjoying worldly pursuits. Nothing would change a man's death sentence, other than a pardon from the governor. Food for thought: What did Barabbas do with his life after Jesus took his place on death row? What are we doing?

Then and now, Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him unashamedly. We must not be afraid to follow Christ (2 Tim. 1:7). May each one of us take on the attitude of Paul, who confessed: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). 🌿

Bible Studies for Life

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



JOINING GOD'S WORK John 15:1–8

What do you live for? The activities that dominate your time, the longings that tug at your heart and the anxieties that grip your mind all are strong indicators of the operative purpose of your life. Is it to abide in Christ and fruitfully contribute to His church?

As we consider the vine metaphor Jesus uses for the Church, we must keep in mind Paul's comparison of the Church to a body (1 Cor. 12:12–26). The two metaphors have different emphases. One without the other would distort our understanding of the Christian life.

Paul emphasizes how the diverse "members" of the Church are unified in a common body, in which each plays a part, and, therefore, the need to give special support to those parts that are "unpresentable" (v. 23).

Jesus, however, focuses on the fruit-bearing potential of each "branch."

Whereas the health of a body generally involves keeping its members, a vine's vitality requires regularly removing dead branches and pruning those that remain. Like the parts of a body, though, the vine's branches depend on their connection to the greater vine for life.

God expects believers to produce spiritual fruit. (1–3)

Repeatedly in the Old Testament, Israel is presented as a "vine" God has planted (e.g., Ps. 80:8–16; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 17:5–10; Hos. 10:1–6).

Most of these passages refer to Israel's failure to bear the fruit God expected of them. Instead, they disobeyed God and worshipped idols, forcing God to uproot them through conquest by foreign nations.

In claiming to be the "true vine," Jesus declares that He is the new Israel, fulfilling God's expectations for His people. Like Israel, the branches in Christ's vine are liable to be "cut off" if they do not bear the fruit of obedience.

As Jesus says elsewhere, a good tree will be recognized by its fruit; lip service apart from doing the will

of God will not protect one from being "cut down" (Matt. 7:15–21).

Believers produce spiritual fruit through their relationship with Jesus. (4–5)

But salvation is not thereby made dependent on works. No branch can bear fruit apart from the vine. Only through remaining in Christ can one bear the fruit God expects.

Our obedience is the fruit, not the root of our salvation. Therefore, it's no contradiction for Jesus to go on to claim that to remain in His love, one must keep His commandments just as He kept his Father's (v. 9).

Jesus summarizes those commandments in a simple imperative: "Love each other as I have loved you" (v. 12). Elsewhere He elaborates further, summarizing the entire law in two commands: first, love God with all your heart, soul and mind; and second, love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:35–40; see also Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18).

God is glorified as believers produce spiritual fruit. (6–8)

Everything rides on remaining in Christ, the true vine. Those who don't are "thrown into the fire and burned," while those who do will enjoy such intimacy with Jesus that, as His words shape their desires, they can expect to receive whatever they request.

By demonstrating that they are Christ's disciples through bearing the fruit of obedience, the branches who remain in Christ will bring God glory. God's glory will also be their joy (v. 11). As the Westminster Catechism states, the chief end of man is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." 🌿

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MEDIA REVIEWS

By Jane Rodgers
Southern Baptist Texan

Church's faith-based crime series 'Vindication' launching second season

If not for the COVID-19 pandemic, a second season of "Vindication" might never have been made.

The successful faith-based police series, an outreach of Retta Baptist Church in Burleson, Texas, began streaming for free on Amazon Prime in August 2019 after its first episode appeared as a stand-alone on the subscription service Pure Flix in March 2017 and on Prime the following March.

The first season, which follows the saga of Detective Gary Travis in the fictional city of East Bank, Texas, can still be rented on Amazon and is available on Pure Flix.

Post-production progress

Season 2 will air in two parts in 2021, with the first half of the 10-episode split season premiering later this spring, when filming is scheduled for the second half. The first five episodes were shot in June and November and are now being edited by Jarod O'Flaherty, the series' writer, director and producer, and musically scored by composer Connor Watkins.

The principal actors have returned for the second season, including Texans Todd Terry as Travis and Peggy Schott as his wife, Becky. Emma Elle Roberts returns



Actor Todd Terry, who plays Detective Gary Travis in the crime drama "Vindication," films a season 2 scene. Most shooting was done in and around Burleson, Texas.

as their daughter, Katie, while Venus Monique will reprise her role as Kris Tanner, Travis' protégé in the East Bank police department.

Some things have changed in East Bank. Without giving away any spoilers, Travis, who was a nominal Christian in season 1, has grown in his faith.

"We now get to see how Travis confronts his job as a believer," O'Flaherty said, adding that scripts concern current social issues and that increasing the tension is the rumor that the East Bank police chief will soon retire.

"There will be cliff hangers," O'Flaherty promised.

Pandemic precautions

One subject missing from much of season 2 will be COVID-19. The series continues in a post-pandemic world, O'Flaherty said. While the coronavirus may be missing as subject matter, it did affect filming.

O'Flaherty gauged the "COVID sensitivity level" of cast and crew

when hiring for season 2. During filming, crew members wore masks and, while actors removed them for the cameras, they wore them during rehearsals. Special rooms were provided for social distancing and prepackaged meals replaced buffet-style serving lines.

The full work schedule, which included nine days of filming in June and then a 12-day shoot in November, allowed for little opportunity to go anywhere else and become exposed to the coronavirus.

"Both times we got through the shooting without any outbreaks," O'Flaherty said.

And had it not been for the coronavirus, the second season might never have happened.

After season 1 aired in 2019, ending an "all-encompassing" project for O'Flaherty, he promised his wife and three daughters that he would step away from independent films. Within a few weeks, he land-

ed a job in corporate IT. Life projects — like building a new house closer to the church — had been put on hold. The girls, now teenagers, were ready for braces and cars.

Then COVID-19 hit and shutdowns began. O'Flaherty was furloughed from work. With the unexpected time off and a donor providing financing, O'Flaherty arranged for the June filming. From there, the opportunity arose to expand those two episodes to a full second season.

"The funding and partnerships came together," O'Flaherty said. "Had I not been furloughed, no way would I have walked away from my comfortable corporate job. But in the pandemic, it made sense."

The season 2 project employed more than 100 cast and crew.

Family and church affair

"Vindication" remains very much a family and a church family affair, O'Flaherty said. His wife provides meal service and Retta Baptist members help, not only supporting the filming efforts, but also acting as extras.

Retta facilities are "base camp" for filming, the administrative headquarters and the location of some shoots, most of which occurred in and around Burleson.

The show's success is unquestionable. Season 1 has aired in more than 30 countries in Europe and the Middle East and has been dubbed in at least six languages, O'Flaherty said. In addition to Pure Flix and Prime, the series can also be seen on Redeem TV and the Inspiration Network and is available on DVD.

"For a small Texas Baptist church that runs about 200 on a good Sunday to have a ministry that reaches that far and wide, can only be attributed to God," O'Flaherty said. (BP)



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.



IMB photo

An overlook view of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital and largest city. In 2020, 2.7 million of the world's registered refugees were from Afghanistan.

Afghan girl points other teens to Jesus after brother shares gospel with her

Amita looks around the room and sees seven other Afghan teenage girls watching as she talks. She joyfully shares how God broke through her fear and doubt and led her to His kingdom of light.

Amita knows deep within that God has changed her life through the saving knowledge of Jesus, and her face lights up as she talks about her faith. Addressing these teenagers, she longs for them to experience the same joy and peace she has found.

She tells her story: how her family's travels as refugees had been riddled with harrowing difficulties since leaving Afghanistan. Her father's declining health added to her daily burden.

Following Jesus

Amita's brother, a recent convert to Christianity, told her of a hope that went beyond this natural world. Struggling to understand, she found it difficult to believe. She was lonely, scared and tired.

Over the weeks, Amita thought about her brother's words. Little by little light broke into her darkness and she soon started to think this must be true. Jesus must be reaching out for her. She talked with her brother again and asked how she, too, could follow Jesus.

Upon arriving in Europe, after watching God deliver her father not only from earthly death, but also eternal death, Amita and her family sought out a believing community. They were introduced to a group of Persian believers organized by International Mission Board field workers

and their local partners and started attending gatherings regularly.

During this time Amita realized she wanted something more. She wanted to grow. Her younger

siblings needed to hear the truth, just as she had heard it from her brother.

As this desire grew in Amita's heart, an IMB worker and a national partner also began praying that God would gather a group of Afghan teen girls, an often overlooked demographic in circles of new believers. As God answered this prayer, Amita agreed to invite other girls and bring her 14-year-old sister along.

Today Amita passionately shares what God has done for her. Never missing a meeting, she encourages girls who have

not yet committed to follow Jesus to seek His word and trust Him with their lives.

Amita is the true picture of salt and light in a dark place. Her tes-

timony shows how Jesus pursues and personally cares for the lost. Eagerly she explains what she is learning in Scripture and challenges the other girls to follow.

Will you pray for Amita? Will you ask God to extend her influence among this young generation of Afghan girls, orchestrating a spread of the gospel and changed lives?

Hope for refugees

Currently about 2.7 million registered refugees in the world are from Afghanistan, according to Amnesty International. Of the total global refugee population — 26 million people — children total about 40%.

Amita's family's struggles are multiplied many times over. The difference is that Jesus has changed their lives and given them hope.

Please pray that other Afghan families like Amita's will embrace the gospel and be bold witnesses for Jesus. (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons.



IMB photo

Portrait of a Hazara woman in Kabul, Afghanistan.



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