



The Alabama Baptist

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

March 11, 2021

Vol. 186, No. 10
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



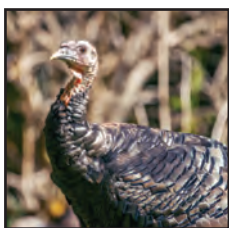
Avoiding pornography on social media platforms

◆ Pages 6-7



Alabamians relocate, plant church to reach homeless teens in Las Vegas

◆ Page 10



Turkey rodeos 'break barriers,' present gospel to those who might not be reached otherwise

◆ Page 11



Photos courtesy of Judson College

Founded in 1838 by members of Siloam Baptist Church, Judson College is the fifth-oldest women's college in the country and Alabama's only college specifically for women. Judson was named after Ann Hasseltine Judson, the first female foreign missionary from the U.S. to Burma.



'Lofty but worthy'

Judson board of trustees launches aggressive fundraising effort

Judson College officials launched an aggressive effort to save the school March 3.

During a special-called board of trustees meeting, Judson President W. Mark Tew proposed a 30-day commitment campaign to raise \$5 million in unrestricted funds by April 2. The motion to proceed with the campaign

passed unanimously by the 24 board members, eight in person and 16 joining virtually via Zoom.

Monumental challenge

"Today, the board demonstrated their commitment to sustaining a future for Judson," said Joan Newman, chair of the trustees and Class of '73 alumna. "The financial goal is lofty, but the future of Judson College is worthy," she said.

Tew shared with students, faculty and staff immediately following the board members' vote, "The board was unanimous in seeking to identify

donors to support the college in the coming academic year.

"While this is a monumental challenge, I would like to remind all of you that we serve a great God," he said.

"Prudent financial responsibility dictates that we have firm commitments from our donors before we can proceed into the next academic year. Accordingly, the trustees will meet on April 2 to review the college's progress and make a determination about its future."

Tew has been working to obtain a clear picture of the college's financial situation (See 'Unique,' page 9)

ALCAP's Joe Godfrey announces retirement plans

By Jennifer Davis Rash
TAB Media

Alabama's missionary to the state Legislature — Joe Godfrey — will wrap up his time serving as executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) in the spring of 2022. He made the announcement during the organization's March 1 board of directors meeting via Zoom.

"It's a good time for the organization as well as for me," the 66-year-old Godfrey shared with ALCAP's executive committee members prior to the full board meeting. "By the time this comes about, I will have completed 15 years at ALCAP and it will be the end of the current legislative quadrennium. It will be a good transition time."

Chris Crain, chairman of the ALCAP board and executive director of Birmingham Metro Baptist (See 'ALCAP,' page 15)



GODFREY



Follow us on
Twitter
@TABMediaGroup

CONNECT
with us!



facebook.com/
thealabamabaptist



@TABMediaGroup



instagram.com/
TABMediaGroup



youtube.com/
TABMediaGroup



tabonline.org/podcasts



The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 17.

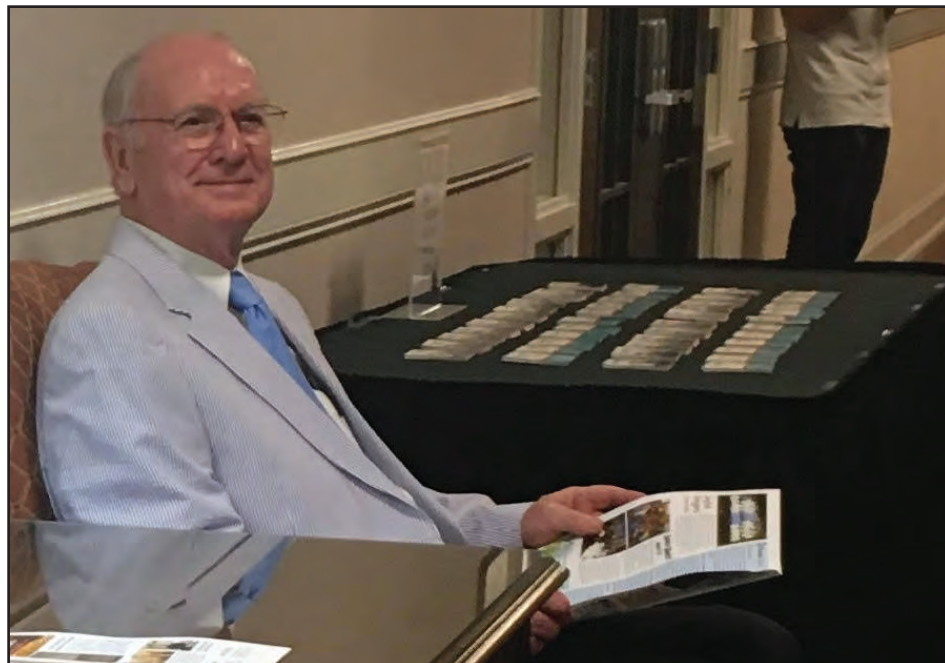


Photo courtesy of Gerry Colston

Over the course of his life, Bill Colston — an Alabama Baptist pastor and IMB missionary — looked forward to reading *The Alabama Baptist* whether he was stateside or overseas.

TAB ‘lifeline’ for late IMB missionary to Korea

Gerry Colston says she used to tease her husband, Bill, through the years because every time they got back from a trip, the first thing he’d do is go straight to the mailbox looking for his copy of *The Alabama Baptist*.

His love of the paper was a constant in their life no matter where they moved over the years. The couple served with the International Mission Board in South Korea from 1967 until 2001 when they transferred to a role as member care consultants for East Asia. When they retired in 2005, they had served more than 35 years.

“He was born in Mississippi, but Alabama is his home state,” said Gerry, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. “Somebody sent him *The Alabama Baptist* even when we were not living stateside. It would be a long time getting there, but that way he could keep up with friends and colleagues and churches and things like that. He was really interested in his state.”

Living legacy

Bill died back in August 2020, but his legacy lives on among those friends and colleagues and churches.

He transferred to Howard College (now Samford University) after realizing God was calling him to full-time ministry. He went on to study

at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Myong Do Korean Language Institute.

Before he and Gerry were appointed as missionaries with the IMB, he served as pastor of churches in Mississippi and Alabama, including helping start Southside Baptist Church, Fayette. His last pastorate before going to South Korea was Leighton Baptist Church.

Staying connected

In South Korea, the Colstons served in evangelism and church planting. Bill began apartment ministries in densely populated areas of Seoul, developed census materials for use in new church-start areas, mentored Korean pastors and preached often.

For many years he was director of a program that involved more than 50 missionaries working cooperatively with Korean Baptists. All that time, they stayed connected with friends back home.

After leaving South Korea, rather than retire, Bill and Gerry were asked to work in Asia as member care consultants and mentors of IMB personnel. They did this for two years, then returned to Birmingham where they served their church together until Bill’s passing.

“I still check the mailbox every Wednesday,” Gerry said. “*The Alabama Baptist* was a lifeline for Bill.” (TAB)

TAB Media

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

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

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

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

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

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

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

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts
Executive Assistant

Carrie B. McWhorter
Content Editor

Maggie Evans
Special Assistant

Grace Thornton
Special
Assignments Editor

Debbie Campbell
Director of
Communications

Margaret Colson
Special
Assignments Editor

Linda Harrison
Director of Human
Resources

Hannah Muñoz
Digital Editor

James Hammack
Digital Services
Manager

Lauren C. Grim
Creative Services
Manager

Sarah Gill
Digital Services
Associate

Amy Hacker
Creative Services
Associate

Jessica Ingram
Event Coordinator

Melanie McKinney
Advertising Manager

Annette Brown
Guest Services

Pam Holt
Outside Sales Rep

Haley Piersol
Client Coordinator

Susan Stevens
Outside Sales Rep

Deb Lowery
Financial Assistant

Charles Bradbary
Student Intern

Richard Maddox
Computer Services

Freelance and guest
contributors

NEWS SERVICES

Baptist Press (BP), Associated Press/Religion
News Service (AP/RNS), Morning Star
News (MS).

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE

Send old and new addresses,
and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge,
all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent
legitimate companies and offerings. However,
one should always exercise normal business
caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical
Council for Financial Accountability



‘Nation’s Top Regional Christian Newspaper’

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011,
2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019
as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist
Communicators Association, Evangelical Press
Association or Religion Communicators Council

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts

Forgiving ourselves hard but essential step in healing process

So many things we wish we would have said or done — and now it's too late. If only we could have one more conversation, then we would definitely share so much more than we did when we had the opportunity.

It's something most everyone has experienced at some level, but that fact doesn't make the gnawing pain of regret any easier.

For many, it doesn't prevent them from living a productive and fulfilled life. They understand what it is and find a way to compartmentalize it, even though the sadness associated with it surfaces from time to time.

For others, it paralyzes them a bit and they can't move past the rawness without something to dull the pain, which often leads to unhealthy behaviors.

And in some cases, an added notion of self-punishment lingers for years if something they did or didn't do caused harm or disappointment to another in some way.

Forgiving ourselves is one of the hardest steps in healing — and actually hurts more people in the process the longer we take to release the situation to God.

Jesus paid the ultimate price

for each of us in order to provide complete forgiveness and offer a clear path to heaven when we die.

Accepting His grace-filled gift of taking all the punishment on Himself doesn't mean we avoid the consequences for our actions nor moments of sadness or "wish we would have."

However, it does mean we don't have to carry the weight of the burden because Jesus will carry it for us. It means we can be whole despite ourselves.

My heart always breaks when I encounter someone tormented by past actions or inactions and unwilling to give Jesus a chance.

"I've done too much and been too bad a person to be forgiven," one man shared with me.

"Regret is the worst part," another shared. "Forgive myself? That will never happen. It's just what I have to live with."

Both conversations hung heavy in the air. Neither one wanted to hear what Jesus had to offer and both had conceded to walking through each day with tortured spirits, in sort of a self-imposed life behind bars.

These two men were from different areas with extremely different experiences, and yet they described a similar pain.

The hurt ran deep and I've

often wondered if some of their bitterness, anger and recklessness stemmed from the unwillingness to ask for and accept forgiveness.

My prayer is that they will find the Jesus who gives rest to the weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11:28–30), allow the situation to humble them and be better because of it.

Philippians 3:13–14 helps us understand one step in moving forward:

"... But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." ✝

A few quotables from Scripture and Christian leaders on the concept of forgiveness...

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:9

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

—Proverbs 28:13

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each

other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

—James 5:16

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

—Luke 6:37

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind

and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

—Ephesians 4:31–32

Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

—Lewis B. Smedes

Your Voice



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

Like David, finding purpose in our pause

By Pastor Morgan Bailey
Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne, Ala.

February marked the anniversary of the pandemic's official arrival to our shores — more than a year now on the COVID-19 roller coaster.

Families and churches have been forced to navigate the maze of hospital spikes, lockdowns, quarantines and mask mandates.

Finally, we see a light at the end of the tunnel, and it is not an oncoming train but the long awaited, record-breaking rollout of vaccines.

It seems as if our lives have been on hold or pause for most of 2020. Can we find purpose in all of this?

King David did not have to endure a pandemic. However, he knew much about a life put on hold.

Samuel, the kingmaker prophet,

anointed Jesse's shepherd son king. Unfortunately, David would not assume the throne until many years later.

He lived the life of a fugitive, on the run from King Saul. In one of the caves where he sought refuge, David may have found inspiration for the 37th psalm.

God gave the psalmist amazing insight into the "pauses" of life — "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (v. 7).

Some might lament that's easy preaching but hard living. Patience is hard for most of us. Impatience may be my unspiritual gift.

The fugitive David revealed divine insight for finding purpose in our pause.

1. Rediscover prayer. Many of the psalms flowed out of David's devotion.

2. Rest in His person. God delivered David from his peril. He will rescue us.

3. Rely on His provision. God met all of David's needs. He will meet ours.

4. Remember His people. David's mighty men encouraged him — find yours.

Your church family will be your refuge! Don't allow the enemy to use the pandemic to distract you from the discipline of gathering with and trusting in the Lord and His family.

Gather on campus or online. Take the initiative to call or message those that you miss. You will be the one who is encouraged.

Like David, we can employ these principles, patiently waiting on the Lord. Yes, there can be purpose in our pause.

But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:35, NKJV).

God treats people with equality and impartiality when it comes to their immutable or unchanging characteristics.

In other words, He treats us the same whether we were born male or female, tall or short, with skin that is lighter or darker. Specifically mentioned here are people from every ethnic group on earth.

Though God does not show partiality, He does identify a standard for acceptance, namely, "whoever fears Him and works righteousness."

God is not judging people, as Martin Luther King Jr., famously said, "by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

The virtues of equality and impartiality should not extend so far that they condone the sin of those who rebel against God.

Equality must never be hijacked to blur the line between good and evil.

Pastor Rick Patrick
theupliftingword.com

Here's what I want to encourage you to stir up in your heart all the days of your Christian life: adoration. Stir up in your heart a love for the beauty of Jesus, a gladness for the kindness of Jesus.

Pastor Matt Chandler
The Village Church,
Flower Mound, Texas

Pastors and the Benefits of Counseling

Scripture is overflowing with passages challenging believers to place their trust in Christ, to take on His yoke, to cast all cares upon Him.

It's easy to believe the underdeveloped, unspiritual people are in need of counseling, but surely not seminary-trained professionals like me.

While the Word certainly calls us to lean on the Lord in times of trouble, Scripture also reminds

us often that we are not an island, that we need to call upon the gifts of others to find healing.

This includes counseling.

Pastor, are you exhausted, stuck in a rut or bitter toward others?

Are you inexplicably sad, perpetually anxious or dreaming of an escape from your life?

If so, seek help and schedule some sessions with a solid biblical counselor.

When our tires are spinning, it

doesn't help to keep pressing the gas.

There are people gifted by God to help us get back on the road to mental, emotional and spiritual health.

NAMB, through a partnership with Focus on the Family, offers a free hotline for Southern Baptist pastors: 1-844-4PASTOR.

Ben Mandrell
President and CEO
Lifeway Christian Resources

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Beware of uniting what God divides and of dividing what God unites.”

FRANKLIN L. KIRKSEY

Robertsdale, Ala.

As Christians, we are called to be different than the world. If we are going to put our FAITH in something, let us make sure we put it in something that could never be taken away from us.

We can lose a lot of things ... keys, our minds, good looks, health, family, lives and even our way. God is never lost. There is nothing that we will ever need that He cannot supply!

Phillipians 4:19 says, “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

Tracey Smith
Killen, Alabama

You know the relief you feel when a friend, family member or coworker

takes a task or project that was weighing you down off your plate? Christ has done the same thing with our burdens and hardships. He isn’t *about* to take them off of you — He *already* took them off of you 2,000 years ago when He defeated death.

So choose joy and happiness because our God is King. He is loving and kind. He’s omniscient and sovereign. We are in good hands.

Jessica Ingram
theropetab.com

Nothing has built taller, deeper and thicker walls in people’s hearts like a spirit of unforgiveness. We see this in marriages, families, churches, denominations and all over America today. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness and division. Human relation-

ships fractured by unforgiveness are damaging.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

The goal of the Christian life is not to have things as we like them but to be transformed into the image of Jesus and bring Him joy — regardless of what life is like on the outside. What a beautiful and freeing truth.

Bob Adams
Retired pastor

Sin is the problem. Jesus is the answer. The church is the only hope of the world.

Pastor Bob Bender
Colorado Springs, Colo.

The pandemic does not negate the Great Commission. Believers and churches are responsible to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). With our charge to go and make disciples in a difficult time, we are challenged by 12 radical changes coming to the church.

1. Hugging will decline. Yes, this is a radical change for most normative sized churches.

2. Sharing the communion cup will still be meaningful but increasingly metaphorical.

3. Children’s ministry areas will be disinfected and cleaned regularly or people will not bring their children.

4. Student groups will continue to be hybrid meetings and challenging due to competition from other activities.

5. The offering plate will mostly disappear. Many regular givers are setting up reoccurring gifts or giving online.

6. Leaders, greeters, ushers, teachers and other church workers will use hand sanitizer more often.

7. Worship will move from entertainment to experience.

8. Concerns about congregational singing may persist.

9. Social distancing will continue. People will self-select out when they feel vulnerable.

10. Churches will look more favorably on outdoor activities.

11. A shorter time will be better than a longer one in worship services and other meetings.

12. Smaller groups will be more desirable than large groups.

We cannot be certain as to whether these 12 changes will take root after the pandemic.

Only God’s power can guide the church to growth and impact. God is sovereign, and Jesus will build his church; we can be sure about this!

Barry Cosper
Bessemer Regional Director
Birmingham Metro
Baptist Association

(Adapted from a column that originally appeared in the March 4 BMBA newsletter. Read the full article at tabonline.org/12-changes.)

From the *Twitterverse*

@JackieHillPerry

When someone you admire does something disgusting or evil, don’t admire what is disgusting or evil. At the same time, don’t let your rightful disgust turn you to despair. Many who come in Jesus’ name are frauds. Jesus is not. —@drmoore

@greggmatte

Humility is both an attitude and an action. Every day we have to choose it over our pride.

@PaulTripp

Don’t be afraid of coming to God spiritually poor; be afraid of the delusion of spiritual riches that will keep you from coming to Him.

@SamAllberry

If your thing is kindness and grace but you never stand for hard truths, it is not biblical grace you embody but something counterfeit.

If your thing is truth but you lack grace and kindness, it is not biblical truth you are driven by but more likely a love of being right.

@nathanrose33

Salvation is not the result of imitating Jesus, but imitating Jesus is the result of salvation.

@MattSmethurst

When Nathan confronted him, David didn’t say, “What about Saul?” Instead we got Psalm 51. —@DanDarling

@lecrac

I’d never have such an appreciation for healing if I had never been broken.

@BethMooreLPM

Reminding you this morning that Jesus is utterly trustworthy. He has no dark side. Nothing perverse lurks in Him. All that will be un-

covered about Him will be glorious & holy. He saved my broken life. He keeps saving it. Place every shred of your trust in Him. He will save yours.

@Blackwell_Kevin

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” —Genesis 1:27

@tedtraylor

Today people want the sermon short and snappy and the football match long. That mindset is the opposite of Acts and every period of revival and reformation. —Martyn Lloyd-Jones

@FLTBob

We crave certainty and a risk free life. But that’s not how life works. In the face of fear and danger, Jesus says “follow me.” Walk by faith.

AVOIDING

PORN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

How platforms attempt to protect viewers from sexual content

By Cole Shiflet
TAB Media

Since the advent of the first social media site — SixDegrees — in 1997, such sites have become a prominent part of most American lives.

According to the Pew Research Center, the percentage of Americans who use at least one social media platform rose from 5% in 2005 to 72% in 2019.

The widespread use has coincided with a global rise in the prevalence of online pornography, and the two frequently converge, according to research and watch groups.

Mainstream social media

Despite the rise and fall of various social media sites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (and their subsidiary companies) continue to be the most influential. They have dominated for the past decade and do not show any sign of slowing down.

Findings indicate most sites are making an effort to reduce pornographic content.

Here's a summary of current policies as of early 2020.

Facebook

Facebook is arguably the most influential social media company



Pixabay.com

because of its ownership of Instagram and WhatsApp. The latter provides an unclear stance on nudity; Facebook's official policy for WhatsApp reads:

"Our nudity policies have become more nuanced over time. We understand that nudity can be shared for a variety of reasons, including as a form of protest, to raise awareness about a cause or for educational or medical reasons. Where such intent is clear, we make allowances for the content."

Facebook's policy for itself is rather comprehensive, but for the

most part it restricts nearly all pornographic content.

At the end of the statement, Facebook makes it clear that it allows those who are 18 and older to post and view content that meets the definition of sexual content as long as the "sexual activity isn't directly visible."

If Facebook users see content that goes against the platform's community standards, they are encouraged to report it (choose "Find support or report post" from the drop-down list accessible through the three dots in the top right of the post).

Facebook Watch

While Facebook has a rather stringent policy overall on pornography, Facebook Watch is full of inappropriate content that has yet to be flagged and removed from the platform.

According to the platform, "in order for a video to appear in Watch, it must be published by either a page with 5,000 followers

or a verified Profile with 50,000+ followers."

However, a simple Google search provides several ways to find pornography on the Facebook Watch section. Parents should be hesitant to let their children use this feature without parental supervision.

Twitter

Twitter is more lenient when it comes to allowing pornographic content. The policy reads:

"Pornography and other forms of consensually produced adult content are allowed on Twitter, provided that this media is marked as sensitive."

Parents should be aware of preventive measures they can take to ensure their children don't stumble across pornography on social media sites.

An informal poll of students, however, shows many who were accidentally able to access pornography on Twitter even when parental restrictions were set on their devices.

Users should be wary of how they use the site and remember that pornography is pervasive.

YouTube

One of the world's most viewed websites, YouTube was founded in 2005 by former PayPal employees and now is owned by Google. YouTube describes itself as a video-sharing platform, but it operates similarly to other social media sites. In terms of actual content restrictions, YouTube's policy is more comparable to Facebook than Twitter.

While Facebook fails to outline the way the company will enforce its policies on pornography and nudity, YouTube clearly lays out a three-strike rule in the guidelines:

While social media can be used to share Christ-exalting content, Christians who use these platforms are wise to be familiar with how different platforms strive — or don't — to provide a safe experience for all users.

“If your content violates this policy, we’ll remove the content and send you an email to let you know. If this is your first time violating our Community Guidelines, you’ll get a warning with no penalty to your channel. If it’s not, we’ll issue a strike against your channel.”

“If you get 3 strikes, your channel will be terminated. You can learn more about our strikes system here. If your content contains pornography, we may terminate your channel.”

YouTube, like Twitter, has an option for age-restricted content, but claims that explicit content meant to be sexually gratifying is banned from the platform.

YouTube contains millions of videos, which should warrant careful monitoring for children and teenagers.

Alt-tech sites

In recent months, Americans have become more familiar with social media sites like Parler and MeWe.

In the weeks surrounding the U.S. presidential election, these sites gained popularity due to perceptions that they have less content moderation.

When it comes to pornographic content, Parler and MeWe’s restrictions seem looser than mainstream social media sites.

Parler

Following a one-month hiatus, Parler recently came back online after being removed from the Apple Store, Google Play and Amazon web-hosting services.

Many, including Jason Thacker of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, previously noted that in 2020 Parler eased its rules to allow for pornography.

As a result, pornographic images and spam proliferated on the site, according to Thacker.

Parler’s rules put it more in line with Twitter than other social media platforms regarding pornographic content.

MeWe

Another site that has grown tremendously is MeWe, which markets itself as the next generation of social networking sites and attracts users due to its unusually light approach to content moderation.

While mainstream social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube feature multiple pages of restrictions, MeWe’s statement on pornography is short.

MeWe users are prohibited from “post[ing] unlawful, harmful, obscene or pornographic content.” The policy states: “We may suspend or terminate your account or cease providing you with all or part of the Services at any time for any or no reason, including, but not limited to, if we reasonably believe you have violated these Terms.”

The statement leaves the definition of pornography to interpretation. While it may provide a

haven for those who are uncomfortable with heavier-handed content moderation and privacy issues, MeWe is filled with inappropriate content that is not being regulated.

Use caution

In the end, social media is an imperfect platform started by imperfect people that brings to-

gether imperfect people.

While these sites can and, in many ways, should be used to spread the gospel, share Christ-exalting content and share in the intended purpose of keeping up and fellowshiping with each other, users of all ages must be cautious.

Parents should determine appropriate levels of monitoring and supervision over their children’s use of social media.

Most sites are making an effort to reduce the amount of pornographic content, but Christians who use them are wise to be familiar with how different platforms strive — or don’t — to provide a safe experience for all users. 🌈

Parents should be aware of preventive measures they can take to ensure their children don’t stumble across pornography or other sexual content on social media sites.

Why arguing online rarely works

By Seth Brown

Biblical Recorder

Have you ever been tempted to jump into an online comment section and take someone to task?

Negative responses to social media posts are the most commonly cited reason people engage in online scuffles, according to Barna Group. Yet our attempts to set the record straight rarely feel successful.

Although not impossible, it is quite difficult to change someone’s mind about a topic by arguing about it online.

Here are three reasons why:

1. We’re flooded with provocative information.

The internet is considered one of humanity’s greatest inventions because it gives people access to seemingly endless amounts of information. But even the smallest fraction of what’s available online is far too much for any individual to take in.

We’re inundated with information, so we skim our way through the flood. People simply cannot thoroughly assess every news article or essay. Internet users tend to consume and share information based on the headlines and buzzwords that affirm their pre-existing beliefs. We enter most online conversations about big topics with biased and limited information.

In addition, the pieces of content that people are most likely to encounter about a controversial issue — viral posts — are also the most likely to provoke strong emotions.

A 2011 study in the Journal of Marketing Research showed that people are more likely to share content online if it arouses awe, anger or anxiety.

Taken together, these trends mean our online arguments often begin with fractured information and high emotions. That’s not a recipe for rational discussions.

2. Social media is tribal.

The basic networking principles that many social media platforms rely on — helping people find on-

line connections based on mutual friends, experiences and interests — are the driving force behind their widespread use.

People of all stripes are deeply motivated to seek out and associate with others like them — their tribe.

A study by The New York Times found that 68% of people share information online to give others a better sense of who they are and what they care about.

Additionally, 73% said they post online because it helps them connect with people who share their interests.

That makes it difficult to successfully argue online because your opponent often feels as if you’re calling into question their in-group, not merely the facts at hand.

3. Persuasion is relational before it’s factual.

In order to convince another person to change his or her mind, you have to consider the big picture. They are a human with emotions and relationships, not just an avatar for the position you want to defeat. A successful argument means you must win the person, not just the point.

Author James Clear says convincing someone to change their mind means you must convince them to change their tribe: “If they abandon their beliefs, they run the risk of losing social ties. You can’t expect someone to change their mind if you take away their community too.”

“The way to change people’s minds is to become friends with them, to integrate them into your tribe, to bring them into your circle. Now they can change their beliefs without the risk of being abandoned socially.”

The best way to navigate an online argument is usually to take it offline. Find ways to connect with people that help deepen your association or friendship with them.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This editorial first appeared at brnow.org. Used with permission. 🌈



Doctors, lawyers, educators, missionaries, artists, writers, veterinarians, and more — Judson women live for service wherever they are.

Equipping women to make an impact for God's Kingdom in their communities and the world — no matter their vocation — has been the mission of Judson College since 1838.

Now, this mission, and the unique ways Judson accomplishes it, is threatened.

Alumnae and friends, we need your help.

Donate today at judson.edu/donate or by mailing a check to 302 Bibb Street, Marion, AL 36756.



JUDSON
COLLEGE

'Unique and valuable'

Judson report notes strong alumnae support, financial realities of remaining open

(continued from page 1)

and opportunity to avoid a crisis since coming to the role in March 2019, but it wasn't until early December 2020 that he had to deliver an urgent appeal for help.

On Dec. 15, Tew explained that in order to open in January 2021, Judson would need \$500,000 in unrestricted cash donations and another \$1 million in unrestricted commitments of gifts to complete the spring semester.

Just 13 days after the announcement and five days before the Dec. 31 deadline, the Judson community, alumnae and friends mobilized quickly to provide the needed funds.

The school had secured \$500,000 in cash donations and was halfway to the commitment goal of an additional \$1 million.

The board convened Dec. 31, 2020, and approved moving forward with the spring 2021 semester.

Of the total \$1.5 million given or pledged, almost half was provided by alumnae.

Research report

Also approved by the board in December was the engagement of the services of Fuller Higher Ed Solutions to research the college's changing markets and to explore potential avenues.

The group conducted a review of the college's financial situation and met with focus groups of students, faculty, staff, alumnae and board members during the first few weeks of 2021.

Fuller's findings indicated two choices for Judson — to close "with dignity" or to "invest in turnaround." The board received the report Feb. 19 and then held meetings Feb. 22, Feb. 26 and March 3 to deliberate over the findings.

(The full report is available at tabonline.org/judson-report.)

While the school's fiscal year ends May 31, a budget for the 2021–2022 year has not yet been approved by the board.

In recent years, Judson has operated on a roughly \$9 million annual budget with 76 employees. Most expenses go to academics followed



Photo by Mary Amelia Taylor
Judson students distribute children's books and school supplies at a local nonprofit during the college's 16th annual Marion Matters event in August. Students, faculty and staff completed community service projects at 11 sites in Perry County.

closely by care of the campus for the 183-year-old institution.

Current enrollment stands at 145 students (designated as traditional full- or part-time), down from 253 in 2019 and 161 in 2020. School officials anticipate continued decline in 2021 because of restrictions on recruiting activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as concerns over the future of the school.

While Judson does have a board-operated endowment of \$9.8 million and another more than \$6 million in perpetual trusts held by others, including The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, almost all of these funds are donor-restricted for scholarships.

Judson uses earnings from the endowments as part of its annual income, along with students' tuition and fees, about \$1 million provided from gifts through the Cooperative Program, and \$500,000 to \$800,000 from donations.

Judson also received more than \$2.4 million through pandemic-related federal and state relief.

Without those funds, the school would have had to close in the fall of 2020, Tew reported.

According to the Fuller report, tuition brings in a little more than \$14,000 per student per year, but the cost to the college per student per year is roughly \$40,000 with current enrollment. That means the school has to make up a difference of more than \$25,000 per student per year.

These numbers don't include how room and board factors in, which brings in \$10,000 per student per year. Currently, 127 students live on campus.

Judson also is out of options regarding credit because it already owes more than \$15 million in unpaid debt.

Expenses were trimmed going into the spring semester by eliminating the associate in nursing program,

restructuring the summer term, reducing personnel and holding off on campus repairs/upgrades, but the \$8.5 million budget remains out of balance.

According to Fuller's estimates, Judson would need a windfall of \$40

million to truly turn things around, even if that amount came in at \$8 million a year for the next five years.

The breakdown of the money needed, as outlined by Fuller, is:

► \$5 million to close the operating deficit

► \$2 million to revive the buildings and infrastructure

► \$1 million for seed money for revamping and rebranding the school.

'All-in' support needed

"While the alumnae base and other supporters have responded generously to the financial challenges with their giving, and the focus group feedback reflected a deep level of 'all-in' support, the path to a turnaround is daunting and full of difficult decisions," the report reads.

"During this project, many voices of faithful, godly women were heard in support of the college," the Fuller report states. "These voices must continue to lift prayers for wisdom, courage and for the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills to sell a few on Judson's behalf so the turnaround can begin and succeed."

"We believe there is something unique and valuable at Judson, worth the investment, especially after nearly two centuries of educating Christian women as leaders and key contributors to their professions, physical and faith communities, and family situations," the report states. "Overcoming [the challenges outlined in the report] will require focus, discipline and an ongoing infusion of cash through donor support and other means to do the turnaround necessary for Judson to move from surviving to thriving."

Judson remains accredited at the present time. School officials self-reported the situation to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in December and a full report is due back to SACS by March 15.

From there, decisions will be made regarding the school's accreditation status.

(Story written by TAB Media's Jennifer Davis Rash and Judson College's Mary Amelia Taylor)

JUDSON BY THE NUMBERS

145 students enrolled

32 seniors who are candidates for graduation

76 employees

Joseph Gibbons (second from right) shares with Favor City Church's first small group, which met for several months in a local park because of COVID-19.

Spreading hope



Photo courtesy of Joseph Gibbons

Las Vegas' homeless teenagers burden Alabamians to relocate, plant church

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

Joseph Gibbons and his wife, Kristen, had been involved in youth ministry in Alabama for a while when God started tugging on their hearts about church planting.

"We just sensed that God was expanding our heart for the church and giving us a burden we didn't quite have a name for yet," Gibbons said.

They also had a heart for the next generation, and when they took a trip to Las Vegas to lead a youth weekend at a church there, the burden began to take shape.

"One of the things about Las Vegas — it's our nation's capital for teenage homelessness. That was very alarming to us," Gibbons said.

"Then when my wife had a young lady in her small group who was homeless, that stat became a story, and that made it real."

'Loving and gracious'

In August 2020, the couple and their two children, Canon and Riley Jo, touched down in the city with plans to plant a church.

They're among many Alabamians who have planted their lives in other places to start churches with the North American Mission Board's Send Network. Alabama Baptists are

scattered all over North America, though some places are definitely becoming frequent landing places for church planters from the state. Montana is one — several planters have moved there from Alabama in the past decade.

And Las Vegas is another. Ryan Ivy and his family — featured in the March 4 issue — moved there from Mobile in 2018 to plant Image Church.

And now the Gibbons family is there too, along with several other Alabamians who felt God leading them to help plant Favor City Church.

For Gibbons, his family's move to the city was a moment he felt God had been preparing him for his whole life. His dad, John, is Alabama state

director for Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Gibbons came to faith in Christ as a middle schooler in the FCA context.

As he grew in his faith, he served at his church — Thorington Road Baptist, Montgomery — and then went to the University of Mobile. That's where he met Kristen. They got married right after college, and he served at Dayspring Baptist Church, Mobile, as student pastor.

After a while, they moved to Tuscaloosa for Gibbons to serve in student ministry at Valley View Baptist Church, then back to Dayspring Baptist. Along the way, he crossed paths with a church planter from Las Vegas, and God used his story to clarify Gibbons' call.

Then after the visit where Gibbons and his wife met the homeless teenage girl, they knew where they were supposed to be.

"We wanted to be in a place where the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few," he said. "And we really sensed through relationships God had given us and through His word that He had confirmed this was our next step."

Dayspring Baptist came alongside the Gibbonses as they explored that call and supported them in every step, he said. "They've been so loving and gracious to us."

Another family who had served with the couple at Dayspring — Joseph and Cyndi Eades — also felt God calling them to help plant Favor City Church with the Gibbonses. They also moved in 2020 with their two daughters, Ansleigh and Cadyn.

And Julianne Patterson, who was disciplined by Kristen as a teen at Dayspring, also moved out to join the launch team.

"God has been gracious to grow our team," Gibbons said. "Our launch team is up to about 20 adults now, and we've got others engaging who don't know Jesus and who are

checking out our community to see what it's all about."

He asked for Alabama Baptists to pray for his team to have continued favor in the city and for them to have wisdom about where to meet and serve.

Missionary support

He also asked for prayer for God to protect the team and their families from spiritual warfare and for continued financial provision. Some of the Gibbonses' funding comes from support raising and some comes from funds given through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

Every year, 100% of the AAEO goes directly to fund missionary work like the Gibbonses' work in

Las Vegas. The national offering goal this year is \$70 million, and the Alabama goal is \$6,250,000.

This week — March 7–14 — is the Week of Prayer for North American Missions, which features the stories of seven church planters like the Gibbonses who are investing their lives to reach the lost with the hope of Jesus Christ.

Prayer guides and videos with these stories and more are available for free. For more information visit anniearmstrong.com.

For more information about Favor City Church, visit favorcitylv.com or find them on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter at [@favorcitylv](https://twitter.com/favorcitylv).



Photo courtesy of Joseph Gibbons

Joseph and Kristen Gibbons along with son, Canon, and daughter, Riley Jo, moved to Las Vegas in 2020 to plant Favor City Church.

The mission moves forward

Week of Prayer
for North American Missions:
March 7–14, 2021

Alabama goal: \$6.25 million
National goal: \$70 million

Unique gospel tool

Turkey rodeos 'break barriers,' present gospel to those who might not be reached otherwise

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Nobody got a turkey at the last turkey rodeo at Denny McClendon's church. The weather was terrible, and it just wasn't a good day to get a bird, he said.

But the day was a success anyway, said McClendon, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church, Selma.

"We had 11 hunters come back for the program after the hunt, and they heard Sammy Gilbreath share the gospel," he said. "There was a great response to his invitation."

That was in 2019. Last year, COVID-19 prevented the event from happening.

But this year, McClendon says he's hoping for better weather and another big turnout at the turkey rodeo, set for March 20. They



Unsplash.com

are following COVID-19 protocols and will move the lunch portion outside if the crowd size necessitates that.

Judging turkeys

So what is a turkey rodeo anyway?

Gilbreath, event evangelism strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said the first time

he heard of one, a horse and lasso were the first thing he thought of.

"I thought, 'I bet that's tough,'" he said with a laugh.

But then someone explained the details — hunters gather early in the morning and register, then go out and try to kill the biggest turkey of the day. They have to have their bird back

by 11 a.m., and it's judged based on its length, weight and the length of its spurs (the talons on the back of its legs) using National Wild Turkey Federation rules.

'Plant a seed'

The hunters get a free lunch, and the grand prize winner gets a noteworthy prize, like a new rifle.

But in the middle — before the winners are announced — the hunters hear a speaker who presents the gospel.

Gilbreath said using a turkey rodeo as an evangelistic event wasn't his idea, but McClendon said Gilbreath was the one to develop it in Alabama. Over the years, he's spoken at turkey rodeos around the state.

McClendon said he hopes it can be a tool for his church to "plant a seed and reach somebody who might otherwise not be reached."

After the message, the church follows up with the hunters, who respond to get them connected and disciplined.

Roger White, pastor of First Baptist Church, Arley, said he has seen the model have a lot of success.

Because Winston County's turkey hunting season opens two weeks later and often collides with Easter, he hasn't been able to hold one yet at First, Arley.

But when he was serving at Friendship Baptist Church, Springville, they held turkey rodeos and saw men come to faith.

'Reaching people'

"It's a great way to break down those barriers and reach people," White said. "I've seen men who wouldn't darken a door of a church come and have the gospel break their hearts."

Registration is open March 20 from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. for the turkey rodeo at Fairview Baptist, Selma. Hunters have to be back with their birds by 11 a.m. to be weighed and scored. Gilbreath will be guest speaker. For more information, call 334-874-9446.

 Get **TAB News** on your laptop, tablet or phone



Your **TAB subscription** includes **FREE** online access to the **TAB News** app and premium content on our award-winning website! Yes, you can read TAB on your smartphone, tablet, desktop or laptop! It's easy: Just register your email address and password, and then download the app for your device.

Visit: tabonline.org/GoDigital

Hear more about turkey rodeos in the Stories podcast

Need a little excitement this week? Check out the first season of the Stories podcast, which tells the story of Sammy Gilbreath's legendary skydive gone wrong, the heart condition that should've killed him years ago and the way God has used him to reach hundreds for Christ in a variety of ways including — you guessed it — turkey rodeos. Stories is available now at tabonline.org/stories. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Sammy Gilbreath

3 stories

you should know



Facebook photos

An Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief shower trailer running from the parking lot of New

Light Baptist Church, Reform, offered free hot showers to anyone in the community without water. In early February, a car hit a fire hydrant and drained the entire city's water supply. Winter storms made recovery more difficult. The system has since been repaired. (TAB)

UMC split expected at 2022 meeting; new name chosen

Conservative United Methodists on March 1 revealed the name chosen for the denomination they plan to form if a proposal to split the United Methodist Church is successful: The Global Methodist Church.

The UMC General Conference is set to consider a proposal to split the denomination based on differing opinions regarding bans on the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ individuals. In February, the UMC again postponed that meeting, now scheduled for Aug. 29–Sept. 6, 2022, in Minneapolis.

The anticipated split would create a new conservative “traditionalist” Methodist denomination.

Individual churches and annual conferences could choose to join the new entity; otherwise, they’ll remain in the existing denomination by default. (RNS)

College campus chaplain organizations merge

Two chaplain organizations that service college campus communities are uniting to form a single organization, the Association for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Life in Higher Education or ACSLHE (pronounced “Axle”).

The 73-year-old National Association of College and University Chaplains and the Association of College and University Religious Affairs, founded in 1959, officially merged March 8 at an inaugural two-day conference.

The merger is a response in part to the diversification of spiritual life at schools, complicated by the growth of the “Nones.”

The leaders of the two organizations believe a united national body will allow chaplains to become acquainted and share their knowledge. (RNS)

Headline news

from around the Southeast

Arkansas

When Kim and Gary Gustin wandered into Colt Baptist Church in Colt, Arkansas, on New Year’s Day in 2017, they were “completely lost,” said Gary Gustin, who described decades of drug and alcohol abuse, alienation from loved ones and jail time. After making professions of faith on that day, the couple experienced a “miraculous” deliverance from their former lives. The two now rent a small home, have a car and are recovering from the physical side effects of drug abuse, reclaiming relationships, earning money doing home maintenance and actively involved in ministry.

Florida

The Psalm 139 Project, a pro-life ministry of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, has donated an ultrasound machine to Care Net of the Treasure Coast, a pregnancy resource center in Port St. Lucie, Florida. Sue Chess, executive

director of the center, said, “We know that 86% of our clients will choose life if they see an ultrasound. The power of this window into the womb cannot be overestimated.”

Mississippi

Mississippi Baptist volunteers lassoed opportunities to share the gospel at the Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo at the State Fairgrounds in Jackson, Mississippi, held Feb. 3–14. This year’s event marked the sixth year that Mississippi Baptists have set up a booth at the show and rodeo, The Baptist Record reported. Each year, volunteers share the gospel more than 1,000 times, with many people coming to faith.

South Carolina

The question, “What would our city look like if we loved like Christ loved?” led Paul and Barbara Crosby on a journey to move into a socially and

economically depressed community with a higher crime rate. There, they launched the Dream Center outreach in Rock Hill, South Carolina, which ultimately led to the planting of the Dream Center Church, the Baptist Courier reported.

Tennessee

The pandemic isn’t a “limitation,” said Tennessee Baptist church planting specialist William Burton, but rather an “invitation” to use more resources to reach more people. In September 2020, Iglesia Bautista Gallatin was launched virtually. On its first Sunday, the church reached two Spanish-speaking families in the Gallatin area, the Baptist and Reflector reported. Another 175 people from nearly 10 different countries and other locations in the United States tuned into the online Bible study. Since then, the Gallatin church has reached many more people, meeting for the first time in person last December.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **David Daniell**, a retired International Mission Board missionary who used radio to reach Spanish-speaking people groups throughout Mexico and Central America, died Jan. 26 of COVID-related pneumonia. He was 83.

A native of Texas, Daniell earned degrees from Texas A&M and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Daniell and his wife, Lorna, were appointed as missionaries to Mexico in 1966, where he served as a media specialist and media consultant for Central America. He set up a studio above the Baptist Book Store in downtown Mexico City and produced hundreds of radio programs in Spanish which were broadcast in Mexico and Central America.

Upon retirement in 2003, Daniell formed "Missionary Broadcasting, Inc.," a nonprofit based in Mobile which allowed him to continue to help struggling Christian radio stations in Mexico, Central and South America and Texas.

Daniell is survived by Lorna, his wife of more than 60 years; son, Forrest; daughter, Rebecca; and seven grandchildren.

► Longtime Mobile-area worship pastor **Ed Keyes** died Feb. 25. He was 78.

During his nearly 60-year ministry, he served 31 years as associate pastor in music at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, 25 of those years serving with pastor Fred Wolfe. After that, Keyes served five years at First Baptist Church, Opelika — "a great church with such loving people," he called them — before Wolfe asked him to help him start Luke 4:18 Fellowship, Mobile, in 2008.

Keyes retired as worship pastor there in January 2020.

Earlier in his ministry, he also served churches in Louisiana, Texas and Tennessee.

Keyes is survived by his wife of 59 years, Jan; son, David; daughter, Marci; 10 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

► **Leo Dudley Wilson**, retired pastor of the now closed Hillcrest Baptist Church, Mobile, died Jan. 12. He was 90.

Over the years, Wilson served churches in Kentucky, Alabama and Texas and founded Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi.

Wilson earned a bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University), a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and a doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

He also did post-graduate work at Yale University and Oxford University.

He served on the board of trustees at Judson College in Marion and various other Baptist and civic organizations and was a lifelong advocate of civil rights and social justice.

Wilson was preceded in death by his wife, Inez, and his daughter, Frances. He is survived by his daughters, Cynthia and Elizabeth; son, Jeffrey Scott; 12 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.



WILSON

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **D.J. McGaughy** is the new youth minister at **Mineral Springs Baptist Church, Clanton**. He previously served as assistant youth minister for eight years at Community Baptist Church, Maylene. He is married to Paige.



McGAUGHY

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

► **Noah Medders** is the new pastor of **East Gadsden Baptist Church**. He previously served as the church's associate pastor and youth minister. Before that, he served on staff at three Baptist churches in Anniston — as youth pastor at Leatherwood, as children's pastor at Goodyear Heights and as student minister at Riddles Bend. Medders holds master's degrees from Liberty University



MEDDERS

ty in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. He also serves as a chaplain with the Alabama Army National Guard. He and his wife, Laynah, have two children.

LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

► **George Whitten** says if his life ended today, he'd die a blessed man and a blessed pastor. His 46 years in ministry have been wonderful from start to finish.

"It's been a great ride," said Whitten, who is retiring March 31 from the pastorate of Fairview Baptist Church, Athens. "I've enjoyed every bit of it."

He started preaching at 18 and later accepted the call to serve as pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, Phil Campbell. From there, he went on to serve at South Hamilton Baptist Church, Hamilton, and First Baptist Church, Double Springs. Then after a three-and-a-half-year stint as director of missions for Muscle Shoals Association, he went back into the pulpit at Fairview Baptist.

"It's hard to believe it's been 46 years," Whitten said.

His wife, Virginia, has been there for nearly all of it — they married 45 years ago.

"We had great times and saw a lot of people come to know Christ," he said.

His favorite parts of ministry were organizing missions trips and seeing people "get it," Whitten said. "All four churches were super good to me, and I tried to be to them too. It was just a good run."



WHITTEN

Persecuted church

Pakistani Christians face charges for studying Bible in public park

LAHORE, Pakistan — Two Christians face blasphemy charges for studying the Bible in a park on Feb. 13.

Haroon Ayub Masih and Salamat Mansha Masih were studying the Bible in Lahore's Model Town Park, when a group of Muslims told them not to do so in public. The group summoned park security, claiming the Christians were evangelizing Muslims and blaspheming Muhammad.

Lahore police charged the men with blas-

pheming Muhammad (punishable by death) and defiling the Koran (punishable by life imprisonment), among other charges.

False accusations of blasphemy are common in Pakistan. On Jan. 29, hospital staff members in Karachi slapped, beat and locked Christian nurse Tabeeta Nazir Gill into a room over an allegation of blaspheming Islam. Police charged her but released her upon learning a co-worker with a vendetta made the accusation.

Pakistan is No. 5 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



Morning Star News



KEYES



DANIELL

Discipleship conference set for April 19-20

The Alabama Baptist Discipleship Conference is set for April 19-20 with both virtual and in-person options.

“Our hope is to help each individual minister, leader and follower of Christ be more of a disciple maker,” said Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, and a member of the Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama team.

The conference — to be held at Fultondale First Baptist Church — will start at 10:30 a.m. on Monday with Daniel Im, author of “No Silver Bullets” and senior associate pastor at Beulah Alliance Church, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

The regular session will run from 1:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Monday and 8:30 a.m. until noon on Tuesday.

In-person attendance is limited to 100 to allow for social distancing.

Speakers for the event are:

► Joël Malm, founder and director of Summit Minis-

tries in Seguin, Texas, and author of “Vision Map,” “Fully You” and “Love Slows Down.”

► Ken Adams, lead pastor at Crossroads Church in Newnan, Georgia, and founder/director of Impact Discipleship Ministries.

► Scott Kindig, pastor of Kingdom Initiatives at Community Bible Fellowship in San Antonio, Texas.

► Robert Coleman, author of “Master Plan of Evangelism.”

The sessions will also include roundtable discussions and worship. Virtual attendees will have the option to interact personally with conference leadership.

The discipleship conference is sponsored by Disciple-Making Ministries of Alabama in partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

For more information, to register or to see the full program, visit alddiscipleshipconference.com. (Grace Thornton)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Union Hill Baptist Church in Oneonta, Alabama, is earnestly seeking God's choice for the full-time pastor to lead our small-town congregation. Prayerfully consider mailing your resumé to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 2919 County Highway 39, Oneonta, AL 35121 or email: sparks@unionhillbaptist.org.

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.

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: bsbcillian@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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.

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 resúmes is Wednesday, March 31.

STUDENT MINISTER

The Baptist Church at McAdory is seeking a full-time student minister for middle-high school grade students with experience in leading and developing young people. More information regarding the position is available upon request. Please send cover letter, resumé and questions directly to the church at: ATTN: Personnel, 4954 Eastern Valley Road, McCalla, AL 35111 or by email to: personnel.bcm@gmail.com.

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.

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.

CAMP ADMINISTRATOR

Excellent opportunity for someone with a passion for camping ministry to give leadership to a small, beautiful and growing camp. Alabama WMU is seeking a camp administrator that has strong relational skills with the ability to communicate the vision and goals of WorldSong Missions Place effectively and passionately. To learn more visit WorldSongRetreat.org. For a detailed position description or to submit your resumé email Cindy Wilson at cwilson@alsbom.org.

SHOCCO SPRINGS IS HIRING

We are currently looking for resident summer staff to join our team to serve thousands of guests this summer! If you are college-aged and looking for a

job-ministry-life-changing experience — RSS is for you! Learn more and apply today at shocco.org/summerstaff. We also have seasonal, part-time positions open in all departments including guest relations, lodging services, lifeguards, food service, recreation and grounds. If you live within commuting distance to Shocco and would love to work alongside us in ministry this summer, we welcome you to apply at shocco.org/employment.

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS

Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

STEEPLES, ETC.

No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for the owner Terry Barnes. Visit gallery at leedsstainedglass.com.

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGNS

Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. www.reliablesigns.com.

TRAVEL/VACATION

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years! Call Donna 251-656-4935, Don 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

GULF SHORES CONDO

1-, 2-, 3-bedroom luxury beachfront condos and four-bedroom beach resort house! Booking with the owner directly saves you \$\$\$. Call Chris at 502-459-7600 or email: cashley945@earthlink.net.

FOR SALE

PIANO

Bergmann 4'11" Baby Grand. Ebony polish. Like new! \$3,950. 334-279-1636. Please leave message if no answer.



**LISTEN TO
TAB TALKS ON
WXJC EVERY
SATURDAY AT
2PM CST**

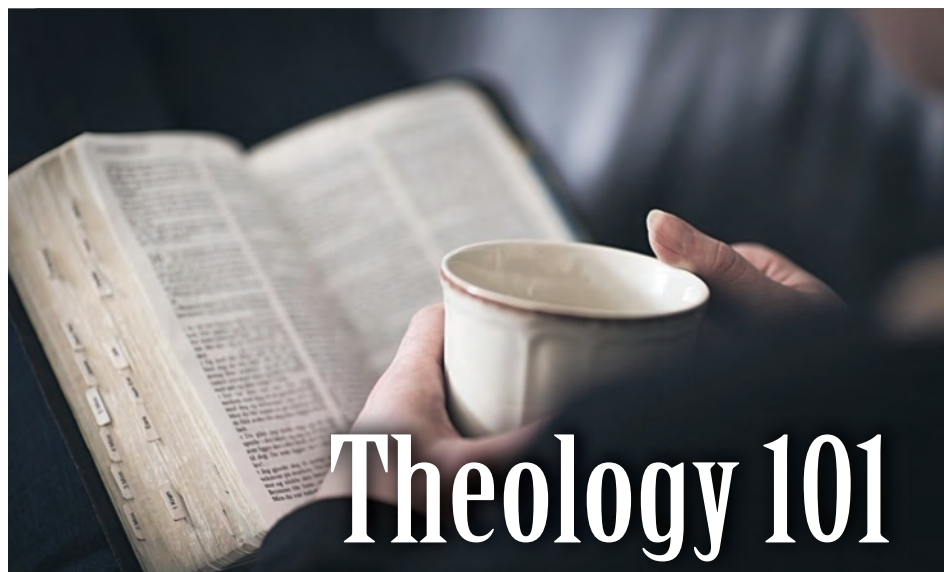
**FM 101.1
AM 850
IN ALABAMA**

**OR ON THE
WXJC RADIO APP**

**ALSO FIND A VARIETY OF
CHRISTIAN RADIO PROGRAMMING
EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK.**

**WXJC
RADIO**

**WXJCRADIO.COM
(205) 879-3324**



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Hope Springs Eternal

For God's Children

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

TAB Media

In an essay written in 1732, Alexander Pope penned the words, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Theology 101 is lifting the three-word phrase, "hope springs eternal," from its 18th century setting and placing it into a biblical context as the theme for the next three weeks. This theme can point us in at least three important directions.

The Bible's hope

First, we look at how biblical hope for God's children individually reaches into eternity. Hope that springs from a saving relationship with Christ is indeed hope that is eternal. In fact, the Bible declares that hope confined to this life would make miserable Christians who would be "of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

At the outset, we must keep in mind the meaning of the Bible's "hope." Our common use of the word often suggests something that has a degree of uncertainty — what might or might not happen, but for which we hold out some degree of expectation. A student might hope for a good grade. An employee might hope for a raise. A couple might hope for a child.

In the Bible, however, hope conveys a confident and earnest expectation about what will be forthcoming. In fact, Romans 8:19 uses "earnest expectation"

to refer to believers' hope of the future glory of God's creation.

As His children, our hope is not entwined with undetermined circumstances but is firmly anchored in Christ. As 1 Timothy states in the opening verse, "the Lord Jesus Christ [is] our hope" (1:1). This hope embraces all God has promised about a Christian's ultimate future. As individual believers, our hope is a sure anchor in God's future, when we shall be finally and fully transformed into the likeness of Christ. This hope is set forth in 1 John 3:2: "It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Being with Christ

This hope is not only about being like Christ but also being eternally with Him. It is expressed in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 as the certain expectation that "we shall always be with the Lord." A Christian can confidently assert, in the language of the beloved 23rd Psalm, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (v. 6).

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.



ALCAP a ministry, missions opportunity, Godfrey says

(continued from page 1)

Association, described Godfrey as a "spectacular leader."

"He's done an incredible job in taking ALCAP into the modern era, building off (longtime director) Dan Ireland's leadership, and taking it to a whole new level."

Godfrey's plan to retire April 30, 2022, allows him to serve for the full length of the 2022 legislative session, which will run early January through mid-April. Following the 2022 session and prior to the 2023 session, members of the House and Senate will meet in an organizational session — quadrennium — to reorganize the Legislature (elect officers, appoint committees, adopt rules of procedure, etc.).

While its too early to know the specifics related to when the next executive director will be in place, Godfrey hopes for a few months of overlap. "This is an important ministry, a missions opportunity," Godfrey said, noting the role needs to be seen as a ministry to remain strong in its mission.

"I've loved working here. It's a dream come true," he said.

"I believe it's been a great ministry for the spiritual gifts and ministry skills that I have. I've been able to be part of a variety of churches and get a first-hand view to ministries across the state.

"It has been a great joy to travel the state and meet other pastors."

Godfrey's wife, Joy, agreed the role has brought a lot of joy for him.

"I was nervous when we moved from pastoring to the role, but it has been a great fit for Joe," she said. "It's been exciting to see so many churches furthering the gospel in their own ways."

Godfrey started at ALCAP in March 2007 and took the helm on June 1, 2008, when Ireland retired after 30 years in the position.

In his role, Godfrey lobbies the Alabama Legislature concerning

moral issues such as alcohol, tobacco, drugs and gambling. He also consults with communities fighting wet-dry elections or gambling expansion and provides oversight for American Character Builders, ALCAP's school-based program.

A native of Rome, Georgia, Godfrey earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a doctor of ministry degree from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee.

He also received an honorary doctor of divinity from Judson College in Marion.

Godfrey served for more than 26 years as a pastor prior to leading ALCAP, serving at First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove; Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery; and Calvary Baptist Church, Abbeville. He also served as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention for two years in 2003 and 2004.

In retirement, the Godfreys plan to

enjoy some quality down time together, something they've not experienced in more than 40 years. They plan to continue as active members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham.

The ALCAP board of directors nominating committee, chaired by Fayette Association director of missions John Killian, will propose a search committee in the coming days to begin seeking the next executive director.

Crain said they "will look for the person who follows in Joe's footsteps to continue to be a missionary to the state Legislature. The person also needs to be a voice for the best interest of our citizens and to work to keep ALCAP strong and moving forward."

"He's done an incredible job in taking ALCAP into the modern era, building off (longtime director) Dan Ireland's leadership, and taking it to a whole new level."

**Chris Crain
chairman of the ALCAP board
and executive director of
Birmingham Metro Baptist
Association**

STRONGER TOGETHER

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

I believe in the Cooperative Program for three basic reasons. First, there is the **PRACTICAL** reason. Giving through the Cooperative Program is an efficient way to fund many Great Commission Ministries. Raising money from each church for each entity and ministry would absorb so much time and energy. In addition, our missionaries do not have to spend their time and energy directly raising money, and they are instead able to focus on their ministries.

Second, there is a **POLITY** reason. As Baptists, we do not have a hierarchical



By Greg Corbin

structure. Each church is autonomous, and our cooperation is voluntary. Nowhere is this more evident than with the Cooperative Program. It is a reflection of the best of our Baptist polity. The Cooperative Program allows churches of all sizes to be part of a great work for the Lord. Together we are able to do what no one church or group of churches can do alone.

Finally, there is a **PERSONAL** reason. As a pastor with degrees from two of our Southern Baptist seminaries, the Cooperative Program allowed me to train for ministry at a greatly reduced cost. In a very real way, Southern Baptists have invested in me

and my ministry through the Cooperative Program.

These three basic reasons are why I have led each church I have served to give generously through the Cooperative Program and will continue to do so.

Greg Corbin is senior pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Birmingham. He serves as chair of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and a member of the Executive Committee.

For more information about the Cooperative Program, visit AlabamaCP.org.



..... UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES!

POST-COVID WORSHIP PRACTICES AND STREAMING

Tuesday, March 16, 10-11:15 am
COVID has rapidly changed our culture and our churches in the past months. What does that mean for worship in the coming years? This session will explore the various aspects of in-person and online worship and the importance of emphasizing both strongly. Special attention will be given to engaging your online community in discipleship and worship, copyright issues and a consideration of a complete reboot of worship ministries beyond COVID-19. What does God want our worship ministries to look like in the near future? Join State Missionary Keith Hibbs and Kenny Lamm, senior consultant in worship & music at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, for this informative and timely webinar.

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 need 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.

MINISTERING TO MEN

Thursday, March 25, 6-8 p.m.
Join author and speaker Randy Hemphill for this free webinar focused on ministering to men and the importance of leading the men in your church along a practical, life-changing path leading to a deeper and healthier relationship with God and others.

For more information or to register for webinars, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

MARCH AND APRIL ARE DISASTER RELIEF TRAINING MONTHS!



Visit SBDR.org/events for a complete list of local and statewide training opportunities in all areas of disaster relief.

ALSO COMING IN APRIL:

A WEBINAR SERIES FOR CHURCH LIBRARIANS

Watch alsbom.org/libraries and PinnacleAlabama.org for details.



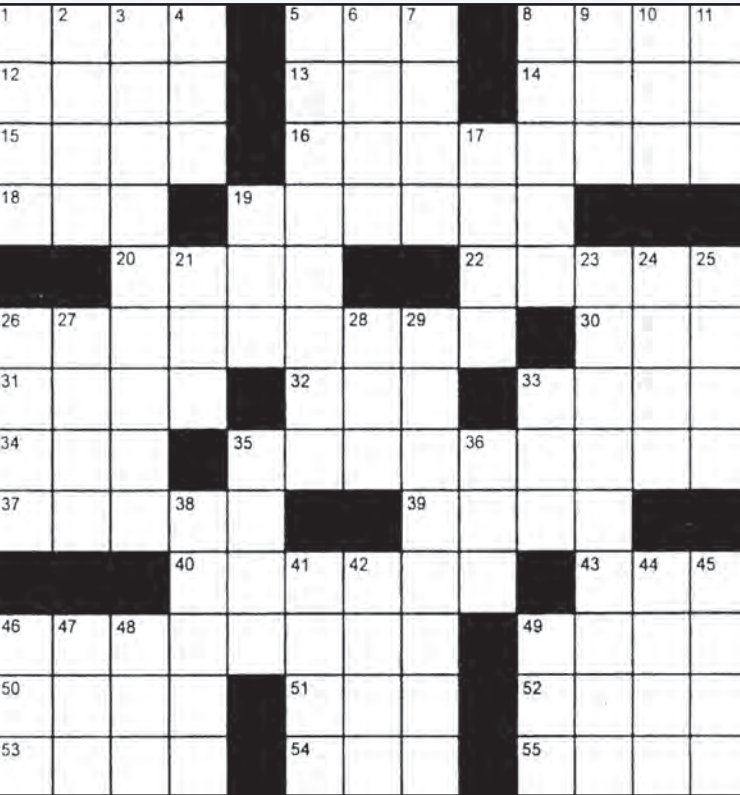
Spot the DIFFERENCES



Differences: Hair is longer, puffy clouds, birds in sky, outline of bushes, coat stripes have zigzags

Christian Crossword

By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- 1. Ruth's second husband. (Ruth 4:13)
- 5. Special attention. (abbr.)
- 8. Donkey's cry.
- 12. He is ___ even to subdue all things. (Phil. 3:21)
- 13. Note of debt.
- 14. Citrus fruit.
- 15. Frog's cousin.
- 16. Paul's companion. (Acts 13:2)
- 18. Israeli Jew. (abbr.)
- 19. Took care of.
- 20. But Peter followed him ___ off. (Matt. 26:58)
- 22. Concise; to the point.
- 26. Engraves.
- 30. He that hath an ___, let him hear. (Rev. 2:7)
- 31. Reserve Officers' Training Corps.
- 32. Assist.
- 33. Capital of Peru.
- 34. For there is ___

- God. (1 Tim. 2:5)
- 35. Approximates.
- 37. Pertaining to Norwegians.
- 39. Become pale.
- 40. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from _____. (1 John 1:7)
- 43. British fliers. (abbr.)
- 46. The Lord our _____. (Mark 12:29)
- 49. Tale.
- 50. The golden calf was one. (Acts 7:41)
- 51. Cereal grass. (sing.)
- 52. We have seen his ___ in the east. (Matt. 2:2)
- 53. And straightway they forsook their _____. (Mark 1:18)
- 54. Speed measurement. (abbr.)
- 55. Segment of time served.

Down

- 1. Body wash.
- 2. Woodwind instrument.
- 3. Gypsum.
- 4. The letter "Z" to a Briton.
- 5. Lake _____. (Sea of Galilee)
- 6. Allow temporary possession.
- 7. Coagulated milk.
- 8. Knife part.
- 9. Eve was created from one.
- 10. Physicians group. (abbr.)
- 11. Affirmative reply.
- 17. Let down your ___ for a draught. (Luke 5:4)
- 19. Roofing substance.
- 21. Government airwaves overseer. (abbr.)
- 23. Repeat.
- 24. Jesus Christ, the ___ yesterday, and today and forever.

- (Heb. 13:8)
- 26. He shall rule them with a rod of _____. (Rev. 2:27)
- 27. Unacceptable deed. (informal)
- 28. Tiny portion.
- 29. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity _____. (1 Cor. 8:1)
- 33. Boy.
- 35. Slippery fish. (plural)
- 36. What is ___, that thou art mindful of him? (Ps. 8:4)
- 38. Travels by water.
- 41. Cloth producer.
- 42. Break suddenly.
- 44. Mount Sinai. (Gal. 4:25)
- 45. Barn locale.
- 46. Cotton _____. (Eli Whitney invention)
- 47. Lengthy lyrical poem.
- 48. Speck.
- 49. Ultrafast airplane. (abbr.)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 14

Explore the Bible

By Benjamin Stubblefield, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



CELEBRATE? Luke 15:20–32

We've all been there. We've all seen it. We've all experienced it. Somebody got something they didn't deserve. Somebody got a raise, a blessing, a compliment. But you know you work harder, you do better, you put in the time. And still that person gets all the favor and none of the flak. Admit it. At some time, all of us have mumbled: "That's not fair."

Justice. That's what we want. Well, at least that's often what we want for others when it seems others are being treated better than us. But this passage reminds us that the gift of God's mercy is so remarkable, so astonishing, so miraculous that its appearance in anyone, especially in the lives of those who are the most undeserving, is worth celebrating.

While it's natural to think, "God should give more to the ones who do more for Him," Jesus teaches us that we, all being equally undeserving, equally receive His inheritance according to the riches of His mercy.

Forgiveness Granted (20–24)

The father shocks us all. He knows it's his son, even though he is "a long ways off," perhaps recognizing his stride or silhouette. He initiates reconciliation with a warm embrace and fatherly affection, which breaks common social protocols of that time. He stops the son's pre-planned speech (vv. 18–19) and insists on immediate celebration and reconciliation.

Jesus intends the whole scene to be jaw-dropping, and it is. And so is every moment a sinner repents because in Christ our heavenly Father will never, ever turn us away. "Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us" (1 John 3:1).

Resentment Expressed (25–30)

The elder brother, dutifully tending to the business of the farm, gets bent out of shape for defensible reasons. He says in effect, "The honorable son gets nothing; the dishonorable son gets celebrated." And he's right! This seems so unfair.

What he fails to see, however, is

that he has fallen victim to the same besetting sin of his younger brother.

The prodigal cared only for himself, regardless of how his actions devastated his family. And now the elder brother, despite this miraculous "resurrection" of his kin, thinks only of himself. He may have stayed on the farm, but his heart is just as self-centered.

We've got to be careful to avoid the same selfishness because it's so easy to fall into. Jealousy can rob us of the joy of seeing God's grace in the lives of sinners.

Reality Defined (31–32)

The son's complaint is well-taken, and the father has a ready reply.

Softly and tenderly, the father reminds the oldest son that all that the father has is, and has always been, his. Not only can the oldest son have a young goat, but all these animals belong to him.

Moreover, the father insists that the son not refer to his brother simply as "this son of yours." Notice, the father intentionally calls the prodigal "this brother of yours." He will not allow the elder to escape the family bind to the younger, no matter how much the older brother resents the younger in the moment.

Finally, the father invites the son to take his eyes off how he's treated and rejoice that one whom he loves "was lost and has been found."

The Lord works in mysterious ways. And sometimes, to our eyes, in unfair ones too. But if we'd see with the Father's perspective, we'd all be relieved and thrilled that He does. For there is not one worthy, "no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). Justice is what we all deserve, and what none of us want.

But God, because of His great love, brought us into His family. Though we are smelly, dead and broken, He comes to us and covers us with lovingkindness. He corrects us with loving patience though we are jealous, smug and self-righteous. To all kinds of sinners, He calls: "Come home." And that's a love worth celebrating. 🌈

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



THE PURPOSE OF HUMANITY Genesis 1:1–5, 26–31

How should we live? To answer this question, we need to know what we are.

What is human nature? And at the heart of human nature is this question: What are humans for? What is our purpose?

If we know an object's purpose, we know how to use it.

We know what to do — and what not to do — with a screwdriver because we know its purpose.

It was made to screw screws, not to hammer nails. Using a screwdriver to hammer nails damages the screwdriver.

So also, we can know how to live in the world, if we know our purpose.

Genesis 1 tells us the purpose for which we were created. But before we look at our purpose, let's consider Who made us.

God created everything. (1:1–5)

The God of Israel created the heavens and the earth.

God the Father made all things through His word (i.e., the Son of God; John 1:1–3) and Spirit.

Genesis 1 repeatedly tells us that God created by His speech (vv. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).

God is the great King of creation. He is the great Sovereign and Ruler whose decrees — whose Word — is wise, powerful and effective.

As the King of creation, God brought order out of the chaotic deep (v. 2). By His decree, He brought light into the darkness (vv. 3–4), and He filled the world with life (vv. 11–13, 20–28).

God is the Creator and King who subdued the chaotic deep and made the world a place for flourishing life. The climax of the King's creation are humans whom He made in His image.

God created us in His image. (1:26–31)

What does it mean that God made us "in His image" and "according to His likeness" (vv. 26–27)?

In the ancient context, the image of a deity may refer to the king who ruled on behalf of the deity.

It also could refer to the statue a king sets up when he defeats an area and subjugates it to himself.

After God makes humans in His image and commands them to fill the earth (v. 28), He tells them to "subdue" the earth and "to rule" over the creatures that God made (vv. 26, 28).

God made us all, both male and female, to be representatives of the great King and Creator of the world.

And God has tasked us with advancing His kingdom and to reign throughout the world.

How do we do this great task?

We are to rule creation in a way that reflects God's reign and character — God's love and righteousness — since we rule on His behalf.

How do we know how to rule creation on God's behalf?

When God made Adam, He placed him in Eden (Gen. 2:7–8), a sacred space, the special place where God's presence dwells.

Adam's role is "to serve" and "to keep" the sacred place (2:15) just as Israel's tabernacle (and later, God's temple) is the space that the priests tend (e.g., Num. 3:7–8).

We are to tend to God's presence and know God's commandment and wisdom (2:15–17).

We are to listen to His word and wisdom, and we are to love God and be faithful to Him. Our role fuels how we advance God's kingdom.

Just as God's kingly rule over creation brought about creation's flourishing and order, we likewise are to rule creation and treat each other in a way that leads to flourishing and life. 🌈

Find us on
Facebook

The Alabama Baptist
newspaper.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

Born legally blind, musician Dowdy presses on in spite of adversity

Musician, songwriter, producer and audio engineer Mark Dowdy has dealt with adversity and disappointment his entire life.

Born legally blind, Dowdy had very limited vision the majority of his life until undergoing a groundbreaking surgery that restored most of his sight in one eye.

He describes his previous vision as “if someone was looking through frosted glass.” However, this disabling condition didn’t keep him from many accomplishments, including a 30-year career in the music industry and a recently released book about his life: “Blind Faith: Believing is Seeing.”

Dowdy’s battle for better vision began when he was only 6 months old. He endured multiple failed procedures to try to improve his eyesight. At age 10, he had his 13th surgery.

Accepting reality

Many of the surgeries would lead to improved vision for a few days or weeks, but his vision always returned to the earlier cloudiness. After that 13th operation, he stopped with his parents’ blessing.

“I was a very active child and was curious and wanted to tackle life. I had great support in my family be-



MARK DOWDY

Photo by Eric Elliott

cause they didn’t hold me back and let me experience things and explore things. I just wanted to be at home and play with my buddies and do all of the things that a 10-year-old would do.”

Dowdy was one of the first in his area to be mainstreamed in a typical public-school setting. He learned to ride a bike. Later he joined the Boy Scouts, eventually becoming an Eagle Scout at 15, with no special concessions for his vision issues.

“I was never one to do well with being told, ‘You can’t do that, or you shouldn’t do that.’ It would actually encourage me to try it,” Dowdy said.

This sense of independence had its downside though, as Dowdy also had to learn how to rely on others. “Sometimes to learn how to set limits was a good thing for a kid because you would do things as a sight-impaired person that could get you into some trouble. I didn’t know when to quit.”

Throughout Dowdy’s life, the hope/disappointment cycle from those early surgeries manifested in other events though.

He had a hard time keeping up in some classes in high school and was held back a year, though he ended up graduating with his class. When he began his music career, he would get a big break, only to be told that his projects needed more work. The first building he had a recording studio in was flooded, and years later another was condemned due to a structural issue. He persevered as roadblock after roadblock was thrown in his path.

At age 37, Dowdy once again researched advances in vision correction. After finding a new procedure and praying about it with his family, Dowdy decided to try again.

This time, it worked. Though he still doesn’t have 20/20 vision, Dowdy’s vision is clearer now, opening up a new world for him.

Interestingly, he had to relearn

many tasks because his new eyesight got in the way of how he was used to doing them.

“I played piano/keyboards and after the surgery, I found out I couldn’t look at the keyboard when I played it because I would mess up,” Dowdy said. “I played golf quite a bit before my surgery. After the surgery my golf game was terrible because I could see the ball but couldn’t connect with it. ... I was a lot better golfer when I couldn’t see the ball.”

“Blind Faith” shares his story of pressing on in spite of adversity.

“[Blind Faith] might be inspirational or uplifting for somebody,” Dowdy said. “Not just a blind person or a visually impaired person, but someone who might be going through something too difficult for them to get past. I’ve always prayed, ‘God give me a platform, give me an opportunity to use my story to help other people.’”

“Blind Faith” does just that. Dowdy said, “The subtitle: ‘Believing is Seeing’ means believe as if it were and go for it.”

Musical platform

Dowdy’s most recent musical venture — Worship 360 — is another platform he uses to reach people.

“Worship 360 started out as a team of musical artists that go into areas that need to raise funds, such as a church or parachurch organization, [doing] a night of worship to help them fundraise,” Dowdy said. “Worship 360 now is starting to be more of a musical label for our recording artists, ... people who really have a heart for ministry.”

Worship 360 is also producing an audiobook of “Blind Faith.”

For more information about Worship 360, go to worship360group.com. To learn more about Dowdy’s music, go to rivercrestmusic.com. 🌈

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.



'BIGGER PURPOSE'

NBA power forward Fernando leans on God during the 'goods and bads' of life

By Bill Sorrell
TAB Media

Bruno Fernando knows what he's talking about when he says, "God gives His hardest battles to His strongest soldiers."

A power forward for the Atlanta Hawks basketball team, Fernando is more than a year into his most heart-breaking battle — on Jan. 4, 2020, his mother died at just 56 years old.

"I felt like everything changed for me as a man, how I see life, my perspective, my approach to life itself," Fernando said. "I don't think you really get through it. As the days go by you learn how to deal with it."

Always by his side is the Bible she gave him. It's in Portuguese, his native Angolan language, and he often turns to Psalm 23 for comfort.

He has grown spiritually since his mother's death, he said.

Person of faith

"She was a very religious person. Before she passed, some of her last words were [for me] to learn how to forgive [and] believe that God has a bigger purpose in everybody's life. She showed me how strong her faith was and how much she believed in God," Fernando remembered.

Under her influence, he grew up as a person of faith in his hometown of Luanda, Angola. His mother got him used to the habit of going to church.

"Being a faithful person and believing in God and creating habits of always praising God and making my devotions, I developed young," he said.

"It's an adjustment I am trying to make — to lean on God, knowing He is always there for me no matter how hard the situation gets. He has my back."

Bruno Fernando
Atlanta Hawks power forward



BRUNO FERNANDO

Photo by Scott Cunningham — NBAE/Getty Images

Fernando thinks about his faith a lot, not only when he is going through trials but in basketball.

"It's big for me. The NBA and college basketball as a whole, it's an up and down life. There are a lot of goods and bads," he said.

"It's an adjustment I am trying to make — to lean on God, knowing He is always there for me no matter how hard the situation gets. He has my back.

"Chapel services before games have made the NBA experience better, and are a continual reminder of ... not just looking to God when we need Him most.

"It's easy to say, 'Lord, please help me' when you are going through a tough time. A lot of us

forget to say, 'Thank you, Lord' when we have good times."

Fernando praises God for the opportunity to play in the NBA. He knows thousands would like to be in his place.

"For me to be one of the 450 players to play in this league, it's not something that many get the opportunity to do. I get to live this dream, and I am extremely happy and thankful and grateful."

Representing his country

The 22-year-old is the first Angolan to play in the NBA. Drafted out of Maryland, he said it is an honor to represent his country.

"It's hard to believe sometimes we can make it to this level. Hopefully that door will open for a lot more kids [from Angola]."

In 56 games in his rookie 2019–2020 coronavirus-shortened season, Fernando averaged 4.3 points and 3.5 rebounds.

The Hawks drafted him in the second round of the 2019 NBA Draft (34th overall).

He played 64 games at Maryland with 8.7 rebounds and a 12-point

average, and a conference-best .595 field goal percentage as a freshman.

The Terrapins played in the NCAA tournament his sophomore season, and through the competitiveness of the Big Ten he was able to develop his game.

Being prepared

"Maryland prepared me a lot (for the NBA)," he said.

Hawks shooting guard Kevin Huerter played there with Fernando and has reunited with him in the NBA. He calls Fernando an "unbelievable rebounder, shot-blocker and finisher around the rim. He has been really good for us."

Huerter has read Fernando's social media quotes about his faith, and the Bible verses he posts, and knows how important faith is to him. "It's a big part of his life."

Fernando noted that "with the platform I have playing basketball, especially in the NBA, people are able to see through social media how much I believe in God and how connected to God I am."

One of eight children, Fernando cherishes that his main connection to the Lord came through his mother.

For him, Jesus means love, belief, caring — "Not just being a man of yourself but being a man of the people as well. He died for us.

"We have to be able to sacrifice our own goodness for the good of others," Fernando said. "I have to come in with the same mindset of not just benefiting myself but everybody else."

While the biggest turning point in his life to this point has been his mother's death, her legacy and his faith will not change.

"I have always stuck to the ways that I have always had, knowing what life is ... being able to display love and affection to people. That is what it is all about at the end of the day." 🙏