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Home run

Bessemer church sees God moving in baseball team, families

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

It was Jeremy Beck's ninth year coaching his son's baseball team, and he felt like he was falling short.

"A lot of the kids in his class were starting to make some bad choices, and I was getting concerned as a dad," he said.

He felt like he could have been more intentional with the time he'd spent with the boys on his Eagles team. So Beck, who also is pastor of Grant Street Baptist Church in Bessemer, "got a burden."

"We always prayed after our games, and I always mentioned the gospel when I could," Beck said. "But being intentional is where I'd fallen short."

Planting seeds

So in January, he started walking the group of 12-year-old boys through a devotional book after every workout.

"We did that for six or seven weeks and really planted some seeds, and then in March, it just felt like it was time to present the gospel," Beck said.

He had them close their eyes — so they didn't do anything because the other boys were

doing it — and asked if any of them would like to start a relationship with Jesus. All of them except the two who were already believers — his son and his assistant coach's son — raised their hand.

Just the beginning

"I thought, 'Well, maybe they didn't understand me,' so I asked them again," Beck said. The same thing happened.

"I got overwhelmed and emotional," he said. "I walked through what that meant with all of them, and I said, 'If you mean it, I want you to go home and tell your parents what you've done.' By the next day, they had told their parents and reached out to me to baptize them."

Soon he would see that was just the beginning.

A couple of nights later, one of the moms showed up at the team's workout with the



Jeremy Beck, pastor of Grant Street Baptist Church in Bessemer, baptizes Michael Daniel as Daniel's son, Caiden, looks on.

Facebook photo

younger sister of one of the boys. She had been hearing her brother talk about Jesus and wanted to know how she could follow Him too.

So Beck sat down with her and led her to Christ.

He began planning a big team baptism in April at Grant Street, which would include the little sister.

But there was still more.

The night before the service, Beck got a call from the father of one of the boys.

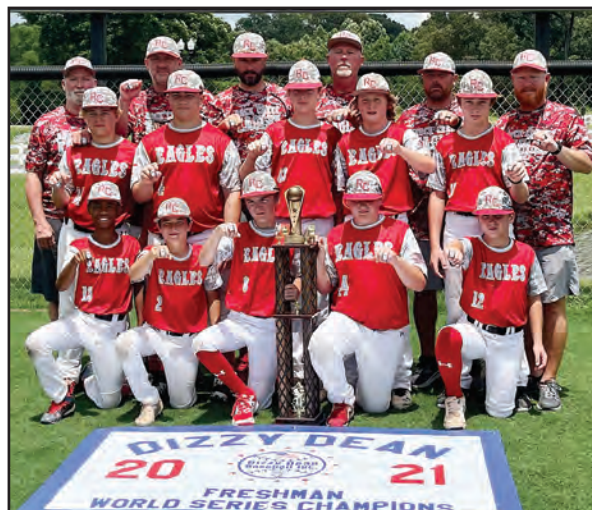
Life-changing

"He wanted to talk about the baptism. He said, 'I don't know what this decision is, but I've seen so much change in these boys I want that in my life,'" Beck recalled.

Beck led him to the Lord, and the next day he gathered the boys in the conference room at the church, and the dad told them what had happened and that he was going to be baptized with his son. "It was very emotional," Beck said.

That day at the baptismal service was standing room only. And once again — there was still more to come.

"After the service, one of the granddads came up to me with tears in his eyes and told me, (See 'Changed,' page 14)



The Eagles baseball team ended up winning this year's Dizzy Dean Freshman World Series.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Beck

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TAB Media photo by Jessica Ingram

Addie Lee Frierson has spent part of her summer working on The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper as an intern with TAB Media Group.

Summer intern shares about faith journey

It's time for students to head back to school, and Addie Lee Frierson — TAB Media's summer intern — is preparing to start her senior year at Samford University as an English major with a double minor in writing and religion.

"I changed my major to English my sophomore year and am so thankful I did," she said. "I have found an amazing community with my professors and peers. They push me and challenge me to think in ways that I wouldn't normally."

She's always loved reading and writing, and her experience with God goes back a long way too.

"I grew up blessed with parents who were invested in my spiritual walk from the beginning," Frierson said.

She went to a Christian school that was a part of the church where she grew up. Then when she was 13, she suffered a head injury and had to spend three weeks on brain rest.

"Spending day after day in a dark room was pretty lonely," Frierson said. "I remember talking to my mom, who explained that I didn't have to feel lonely because of Christ. She explained the relational side of the gospel, which I had heard before, but for the first time, I under-

stood what a blessing it was that Jesus wanted a relationship with me."

She decided to follow Christ and was baptized soon after.

Today her faith journey continues as she attends Samford and Shades Mountain Baptist Church, both in Birmingham.

"Going to college has challenged me in my faith the most. It became my choice, which has made it so much sweeter," Frierson said. "I have found a community at Shades Mountain Baptist Church that challenges me, walks with me and pours into me day in and day out. I have learned more in Shades' college ministry than I ever thought possible."

And at Samford, she has been challenged spiritually and academically, she said.

"I can say with confidence and in the best way possible that I am not the same person I was when I first walked onto campus. I have grown and changed for the better."

Frierson said she's enjoyed her time at TAB too.

"I've enjoyed the work environment and community," she said. "They have all been so intentional in getting to know me." (Grace Thornton)

"I grew up blessed with parents who were invested in my spiritual walk from the beginning."

**Addie Lee Frierson
TAB Media summer intern**

The Alabama Baptist

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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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Life lessons from the garden — and a few sneaky deer

A cold, wet spring and a few sneaky deer challenged my daddy's life-long routine of when, where and how to plant the various vegetables during garden season this year.

He remembers helping his dad when he was just a little guy, dropping purple hull pea seeds between the corn stalks.

Now, 70 years later, he's still planting those purple hull pea seeds — along with every garden delicacy you can imagine — each year on that same land where he was taught.

One of the must-dos has

always been to finish planting by the Fourth of July, even if it meant working that day, he said.

But this year, he planted and replanted his peas, then replanted again. The third time was in late July, his first time ever to plant so late in the season.

My mom and dad's fresh vegetable dishes rival any meat-and-three restaurant you'll find, and while I'm always ready for a home-cooked meal, the summer Sunday dinners are my favorite.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash
Jennifer's dad, Bobby Davis, after tending to his garden in late May.

Will I get fresh peas when I visit soon? Not sure. We are all watching and waiting to see what happens.

If we don't, it's definitely not from a lack of dad trying to make it happen. As each obstacle surfaced, he pulled the plow back out and started over, adapting as needed to find success.

Watching the rows and rows of freshly tilled land sprout into

delicate little leaves and eventually into overgrown stalks hanging full of produce has always been part of my life — as well as my mom and dad's and their parents' and grandparents' lives.

And while my top contribution to the effort now is to go back for seconds, I remember helping prepare, plant, pick and package — shell, shuck, wash and either freeze or can. I can still feel the sensation of the freshly plowed dirt on my bare feet, and the sting of the okra when picking it. Oh, and what about the purple finger nails we all got to keep for a few days after shell-ing peas?

With each step of the process, we had a schedule, a plan and an expectation. We all worked hard to fulfill the role we had been assigned, even the little guy dropping seeds between each cornstalk 70 years ago.

When things didn't work out like we had hoped, we adapted, adjusted and started again. We also accepted the reality of when it was time to let something go or upgrade a system that had previously worked just fine but now needed to function a little differently.

Like when dad installed an automatic belt in our layer house a few weeks after I left for college, not while I was part of the workforce helping gather those roughly 6,000 eggs per day, eh hem — but that's a story for another day.



Photo by Brenda Davis
Latest look at Bobby Davis' okra, tomatoes and peas.

For today, my story is a reminder that life is unpredictable and that maintaining a spirit of flexibility and adaptability will serve us all better as we maneuver through each day.

It's also one of encouragement not to give up when something doesn't work out like we had planned. If we keep our eyes on Jesus and our hand on the plow, we'll find our way through it.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Bobby Davis has planted endless rows of peas, corn, tomatoes, okra, squash, green beans, potatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, onions, a variety of peppers and other vegetables his entire adult life. He was taught as a child and continued to learn along the way.

Your Voice



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

'We've got to do better': Social media and our Christian witness

By **Chris Turner**

Tennessee Baptist Mission Board

Olympic gymnast Simone Biles set off a social media firestorm when she withdrew from the first week of Olympic competition, and apparently her withdrawal sparked a wildfire that's torched Christian witnesses across America.

Biles is arguably the greatest Olympic gymnast in history. Her gold medal sweep at the Tokyo Olympics was all but assumed prior to the opening ceremony. But Biles did not complete a sweep. In fact, she didn't even make it very far into the competition before she withdrew due to mental stress.

It is impossible to know what "mental stress" means in Biles'

context. And that's the point. No one knows except for Biles and possibly a few close confidants with whom she shared information.

However, our collective ignorance of the details hasn't prevented countless individuals from assailing Biles. Unfortunately, even professing Christians have been spewing uninformed, demeaning, belittling, ungodly, mean-spirited and deeply uncompassionate comments through their social media channels. Every such post only torches their witness, leaving an ash heap in place of what may have once been credibility.

And we wonder why people are walking away from, or want nothing to do with, the Church.

Biles' situation is only the latest log to fuel what is perceived by

many as a raging dumpster fire for Christians.

It seems any issue rolled into the public forum these days — politics, racial issues, COVID-19, MLB All-Star game, the Olympics, the Southern Baptist Convention — becomes fodder for division while the world watches Christians engage in verbal knife fights.

'What have we become?'

Reading comments about Biles posted recently by supposed disciples of Jesus leaves me shaking my head. ... Seriously, it is truly worth asking, what have we become and what are we becoming? And what happened to the fruit of the Spirit?

While social media has the capacity to be used for good, I am increasingly convinced it is the tool that saved Wormwood's fledgling demonic "ministry."

You remember Wormwood, the hapless nephew of Screwtape, the head demon in C.S. Lewis' "The Screwtape Letters." Screwtape tells Wormwood that, "All extremes, except extreme devotion to (God), are to be encouraged."

Has there been any "tool" in Wormwood's toolbox over the past 15 years that has inflamed passions, escalated tension and pushed Christians further toward extreme division than the use of social media?

People feel an unyielding determination to not only be right, but to convincingly bludgeon others who they perceive are wrong. We're making Wormwood look like a

genius. We often say things like, "Just because I don't agree with you, doesn't mean I don't still love you." However, we often then take to social media and hammer out self-righteous vitriol 280 characters at a time.

Christians, we've got to do better. A dying world is watching.

What if we did pursue "extreme devotion" to God? What if we did use social media "for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12) rather than tearing it apart and others down? To get there we must start with self-examination and an honest examination of our own social media feeds. If your comments are the antithesis of the grace you supposedly claim, repent and work on your heart.

As Jesus declared "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). He could just as easily have said, "for out of the abundance of the heart your social media speaks."

Self-inflicted destruction

A Christian witness can take years to cultivate then literally be destroyed through social media in a matter of seconds. The destruction is self-inflicted when it happens.

Don't be the cause of your own downfall. Before you hit return and skewer Simone Biles (or anyone else), ask yourself, "Do I really want to strike that match and torch my witness?"

EDITOR'S NOTE — Chris Turner is director of communications for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board. This article first appeared in the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector.

Surveillance, persecution expand

While Americans are relatively protected from many of the human rights violations endured abroad, our online activity contributes to persecution-enabling platforms.

Government disinformation schemes exploit social media channels including Facebook and WhatsApp, as faith groups and news outlets become increasingly dependent on them. And the pandemic-driven rise in online church attendance further exposes people of faith to persecutors.

The spyware software Pegasus, adopted by many nations with histories of human rights violations and capable of recording phone calls, activating cameras and microphones and collecting location data, reveals no online expression of faith is truly safe.

The world must redouble our commitment in pressuring authoritarian regimes to respect the free expression of religion and freedom of speech.

David Curry
President, Open Doors USA

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Who I am today is because of WMU women who’ve invested in me.”

SANDY WISDOM-MARTIN

Executive director/treasurer, National Woman’s Missionary Union

People of faith can be “holy advocates” for children who desperately need care.

Kathy Manis Findley
Macon, Ga.

I feel like Jesus, when he was walking this earth, when he wanted to tell you something straight, he would just tell it to you straight. When he wanted it to make a point, he would turn over a table. But when he wanted to touch your heart, he would tell a story. So when I’m writing, I ask the Lord to put me in the place of the person whose reading my stories.

Author Karen Kingsbury

The cooperative mission of our churches sets Southern Baptists

apart and gives us the privilege of fulfilling the Great Commission together in our generation and in the generations to come.

Pastor Jack Graham
Prestonwood Baptist Church
Plano, Texas

J. Allan Petersen once stated it succinctly and yet with utter significance: “Everything Christ asks of the Church, He did first:

1. To love Him — He loved first
2. To serve Him — He served first
3. To sacrifice for Him — He sacrificed first
4. To be so committed to Him that we are willing to die — He died first.”

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

Churches in Japan are facing the same thing many churches in America are facing, and that is to realize, nowadays, you’ve got some people who absolutely want to get back together and see one another’s face.

Carlton Walker
IMB missionary in Tokyo

We’re trying to balance the tight-rope between faith and risk management. We want to do the best for our church and our folks. I’m thankful we have a team here willing to talk these things over so we can make the best decisions with the information that’s available.

Pastor Charles Mayberry
First Baptist Church
Waycross, Ga.

Thriving churches post-COVID

Thriving churches are realizing that racing back to their pre-COVID approaches to ministry is a wasted opportunity to gain some essential clarity about purpose.

Instead of operating like a tourist or a traveler who skims the surface of what a congregation could be, what if we looked upon this next chapter of our life together as an opportunity to take a pilgrimage? Could we take a more mindful approach to who we are, why we are here, how we got here and where we are going?

It will mean being much more thoughtful and deliberate about everything. Many churches are awakening to the fact that the landscape of congregational culture has changed before our eyes.

Many who were marginal will not be back. Many of our regulars will be showing up much less frequently.

Some who never connected in person are waiting online to see if we have anything to offer them other than being a spectator at our worship service.

“Church on demand” is our new reality, whether we like it or not. We face a nation less and less interested in institutional religion, while still being curious about Jesus. ...

This new landscape is begging for us to begin a pilgrimage.

We can race through it, dabble in it or seek to immerse ourselves in it and learn from it, while maintaining our unique perspective on it.

I firmly believe the Holy Spirit is looking for those who want to join in that holy endeavor and become salt and light to a bland and blind world. I hope you will set off on your pilgrimage soon.

Bill Wilson
Director of The Center
for Healthy Churches
Winston-Salem, N.C.

From the *Twitterverse*

@GaryFenton07

“Let’s have a quick prayer before we start the meeting.” Perhaps if we take our time in prayer, we could then have a quick meeting.

@CSLewisDaily

“If you’re thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you, you’re embarking on something, which will take the whole of you.”—C.S. Lewis

@DianeLangberg

The most effective lies are those that contain some truth in them. People inoculate themselves with a good thought so they can justify the wrongdoing they are about to choose — a common mechanism among fallen human beings.

@brocraige

Received this prayer request from a pastor this morning: “Pray for our community. It’s a dark place with

rocky soil and hard hearts. Pray for our workers not to grow weary.” How many communities need this prayer? How many pastors are praying this prayer over their communities?

@BillyGraham

“Our prayers must be in accordance with the will of God for the simple reason that God knows better what is good for us than we know ourselves.”

@haines_matt

I’ve sometimes regretted several social media posts and tweets that I have sent but I have never regretted one that I chose not to send.
#wisdom

@matalexander

If you were interviewing for a position on our staff and I saw you being pugnacious and mean spirited online, taking potshots at lead-

ers in comments, and constantly expressing outrage I would assume that’s how you’ll treat God’s people as a minister.

@drjamesmerritt

I believe God works everything out together for my good. But I’ve also learned that it’s for what He knows is good, not what I think is good.

@claysmith79

I have preached most Sundays for the last several years. Yet Sunday after Sunday, I feel inadequate to the task. I guess that’s the point. Without God, I’m just spewing words. I pray the Holy Spirit shows up and does what I cannot.

@micahfries

I fear an American Christianity that makes Jesus a commodity and markets him like a cheap ware to disinterested consumers. Don’t cheapen Jesus.

FINANCIAL FITNESS

*“The earth is the Lord’s,
and everything in it, the
world, and all who live in it.”*

Psalm 24:1



Photo by Vitaly Taranov on Unsplash

A biblical approach to teaching children from birth to college about money

By Laura Lee Leathers

TAB Media

There are so many things to consider amid all the joy and stress of being a new parent, including teaching children the value of money and preparing for the future.

For example, planning for a college education begins at a young age, says Marcus Hall, a Christian financial adviser in Dothan.

Countdown to college

His advice to parents: “Treat your child’s countdown to college like your countdown to retirement. Start more aggressive in the early years and adjust your portfolio to become more conservative by the time they reach high school.”

But there is another aspect to nurturing a child’s long-term financial fitness: Don’t wait until the child is in high school to start teaching basic money management skills and don’t depend on someone else to teach them.

As in many things, parents must be intentional and diligent about teaching “financial literacy.”

Teaching your child the steps of financial responsibility begins with a good hard look at your belief system, experiences, what you’ve been taught and where you are financially.

Prepare

To get started, consider these questions:

- ▶ Do you believe God owns everything (Ps. 24:1; 50:10; Hag. 2:8) and you are entrusted as a steward (1 Tim. 6:17–21)?
- ▶ Do you trust Him to provide for your needs (Matt. 6:32–33)?
- ▶ Are you a spender or a saver?

▶ Do you have a save, spend and tithe budget?

▶ What is your debt?

The first item in your “financial playbook” is to review personal finances. Week one might involve

**“‘The silver is mine
and the gold is
mine,’ declares the
Lord Almighty.”**

Haggai 2:8

an overview of what the Bible says about money. Weeks two through six could require taking a money management class. If you are in debt, weeks seven through 52 may require a step-by-step process on how to reduce the deficit or become debt-free.

Also use Luke 16:13 as a daily reminder: “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Remember, the Bible is your first resource for financial literacy. Study the life of Joseph as an example of stewardship, Proverbs for wisdom and the Gospels for the teachings of Jesus.



123rf.com

Implement

The world has changed tremendously in the past 30 years when it comes to finances and money management. Gone are the days when everyone paid cash and never had a credit card.

Today, there are debit and credit cards galore, deposits made into our bank accounts by taking a picture from a smartphone and pay-as-you-go with scan-

ning codes. Identity theft, hackers and other financial crimes have grown in magnitude. We live in a world where we have to literally “be on guard.”

How do we teach our children and grandchildren wise money management skills? It begins early in their lives and must be modeled as well as taught.

Here’s an example: I was at the store paying for my purchase with the last check from my checkbook. My young child observed that I didn’t have any more checks, seemed panicked and said, “What are you going to do? Are you out of money?” I assured him that wasn’t the case. This experience turned into a teachable moment of the banking system and reassurance, and a bank tour was planned.

Financial fitness with a biblical approach means God’s lesson plans and principles never fail. Remember, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5).

Time passes quickly, but looking back through your lessons, you will recall the joys and challenges and hopefully see your children mature into responsible, biblical money managers.

AGE-LEVEL TEACHING GOALS

Some of these suggestions may seem outdated; however, there is a lot to be said for visual and hands-on approaches. Remember, you are trying to teach the process behind the financial transactions.

AGES 3 TO 5. Introduce the concept of money. Use shopping to teach. Make it a point to carry cash and coins to provide a visual for children. They should begin to see a correlation between the money exchanged and the groceries you are taking home for the evening meal.

Instead of paying your tithe online, write a check and allow the child to put the envelope in the offering plate or designated area. Begin to share how God owns everything. He is the provider, and giving back to Him involves obedience and the right heart attitude.

AGES 6 TO 8. When a child enters elementary school, the focus shifts slightly. Move forward with teaching more about the value of money, cost and comparison, and the difference between a need and a want.

AGES 9 TO 10. Find a method to visually demonstrate the importance of saving, spending and tithe. Use envelopes, jars or small banks.

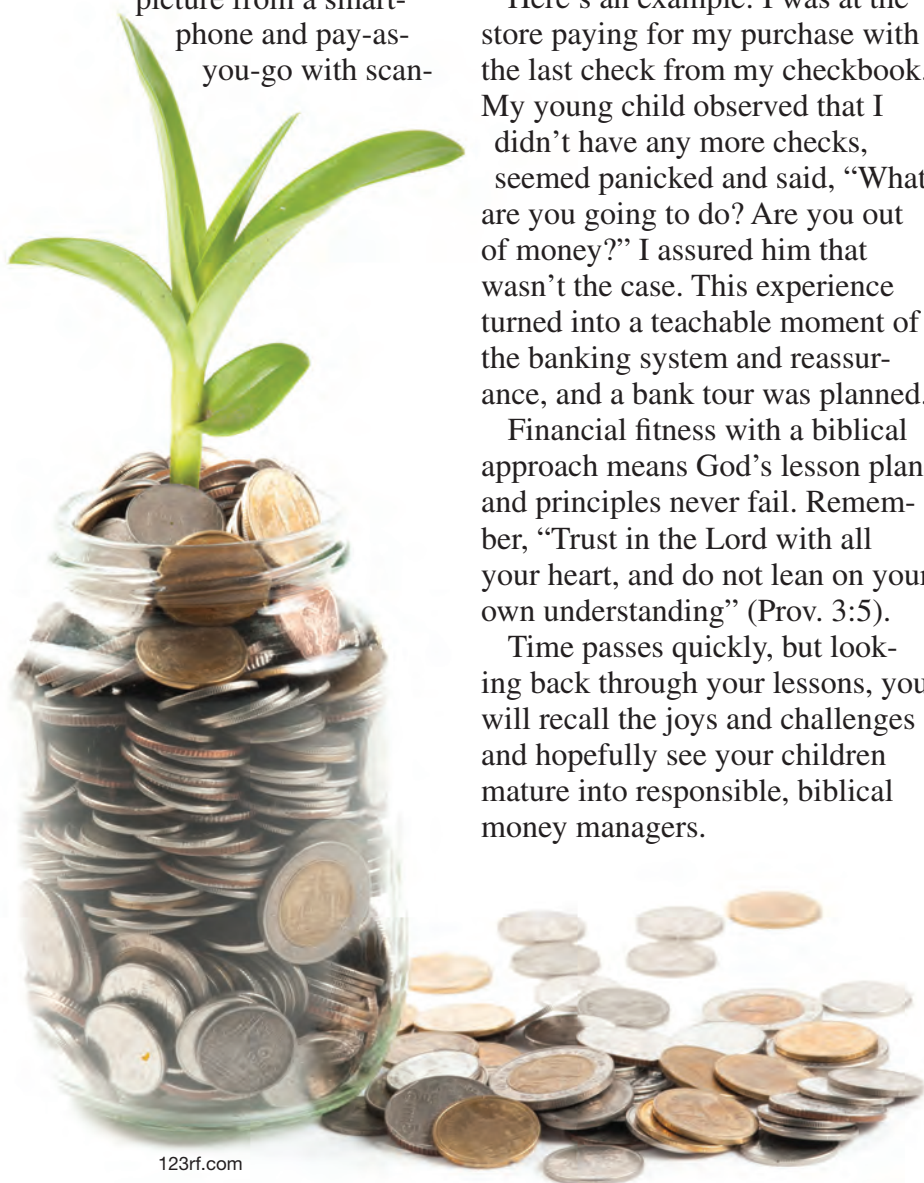
Begin to pay an allowance for things done above routine daily chores. Help the child understand delayed gratification. Talk about wisdom in making purchases, cost comparisons and the difference between needs and wants.

AGES 11 TO 13. Things begin to change, and peer pressure should be addressed. Comparison, learning contentment and involvement in the family budget can help the child comprehend what is required for family living. Assist them in establishing a budget and how to do simple record-keeping.

AGES 14 TO 16. It’s time to open a checking account and teach how to write a check, make deposits and reconcile a bank statement. Wisdom and maturity are needed regarding the possession of a debit card and consistency in logging transactions in the checkbook register. Educate about auto insurance and steps to keep rates affordable. It’s time to be looking for a part-time job.

AGES 17 TO 18. This is the time to be thinking and preparing for college, trade school or going directly into the marketplace upon graduation. Whatever the choice, lots of research and a tentative plan need to be developed and adjusted. This is also when a parent asks, “Have I taught my child the things they need to know to be wise and financially independent when they leave the nest?”

Grant more independence but with accountability. Use of the phone for financial transactions should be discussed. Allow them to learn from their mistakes, reap the consequences and find the right way to resolve the issue. Continue to teach, encourage and provide guidance. (Laura Lee Leathers)



123rf.com

WMU legacy in Childersburg carried on by Circle of Love

The idea of getting out of the building is what shaped the Circle of Love into what it is today — in more ways than one.

Years ago, Catherine Ray and some other members of the Woman's Missionary Union group at First Baptist Church in Childersburg, went to talk to the pastor at the time, and discovered he wasn't supportive of them having a WMU.

Ray wasn't deterred. She had grown up through WMU's missions education groups and spent many hours doing hands-on missions over the years.

"So we actually left the church building and began to meet at Catherine's home and in the home of Ann Casaday (Coosa River Baptist Association WMU director at the time)," remembered Marion Aldridge. "I really credit Catherine Ray for keeping our WMU alive. They kept the light burning for us."

Hands-on projects

Today the Circle of Love has around 25 members from a dozen churches in the area, some of which aren't Baptist. They're meeting back at First Childersburg, but being outside the church walls for a while helped them reach out to a number of congregations.

And in that season, they started getting outside the walls of the church in another way.

"It was really Catherine Ray and Ann Casaday who said, 'Let's get out of this building and do something,'" Aldridge remembered. "So

we began to do hands-on projects. We began to meet needs all over the community."

Efforts ranged from helping a special needs class to providing teddy bears for first responders to give to children in distress.

For years, they've collected school supplies for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and provided items to

Adullam House in Wetumpka.

"We're very hands-on," Aldridge said. "I think that's remarkable because most of us are over the age of 70. Catherine Ray and Ann Casaday were very responsible for that and keeping it alive."

On July 13, the group visited the national WMU office in Birmingham, to see the Walk of Faith prayer garden — specifically, to see the brick dedicated to Catherine Ray, who died in April at age 96. The brick says simply, "Catherine Ray, WMU 50+ years, Childersburg, AL."

But the women know her legacy would take hundreds of words to tell.

There's also a brick there in honor of Casaday and her late husband, William, who formerly was Coosa River Association director of missions. Casaday is still a member of the Circle of Love.

Stan Albright, current director of missions for Coosa River Association, was present at the WMU building and thanked the group for carrying on the legacy of being "the hands and feet of Christ wherever you go." (Grace Thornton)

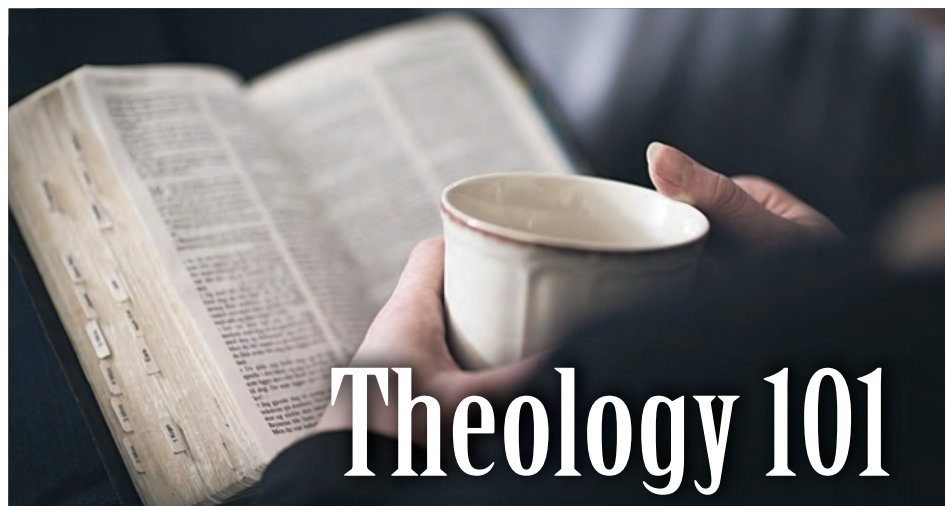


RAY



Photo by Grace Thornton

The Circle of Love group visits the national WMU office in Birmingham on July 13 to see the Walk of Faith prayer garden — specifically, to see the brick dedicated to Catherine Ray, who died in April at age 96.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christ's Power

Teaching Power

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

The biblical idea of power carries not only the connotation of might but also authority. To say that Christ's teachings are powerful is to say they are authoritative.

At the conclusion of His famous teaching that we know as the Sermon on the Mount, the biblical record reports, "When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28–29).

Truth has about it an inherent power or impact. Jesus spoke the truth and that truth made an impact on His hearers; even His opponents recognized it.

When Jewish religious authorities sent a delegation to bring Jesus to them, it came back empty-handed.

When asked why they had not brought Jesus, the record says the officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man" (John 7:46).

Warning

On one occasion Jesus, in speaking to His disciples as well as the crowds, gave them a warning set against the backdrop of the Jewish rabbis who loved to be regarded as teachers: "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi;' for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matt. 23:8).

Jesus' authority as Teacher was seen in His power to inform His hearers of divine truth. His authoritative teaching had power

to inspire and impel them to choose to be obedient to His commands.

In the early years of seeking to be obedient to God's call to preach, a seasoned minister told me to take the Gospels and "read the red." He referred, of course, to an edition of the New Testament that printed all the recorded words of Christ in red ink.

The point is obvious: Give attention to the teachings of Christ.

Inherent power

The teaching of Christ has endured through the ages because of its inherent power and authority. At a point in His public ministry when many who followed Him turned back and walked with Him no more, Jesus addressed the disciples with the searching question, "Do you also want to go away?"

Simon Peter responded simply, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:67–68). The ultimate power of Jesus as Teacher comes from God; His teaching leads repentant sinners into the possession of life abundant and everlasting.

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.



SUPPORTIVE ROLE

Motorcycle riders passionate about prayer, share gospel message with communities

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

A group of motorcycle riders across the U.S. is passionate about sharing the gospel. Though they don't look like typical evangelists, they are intentional in sharing the message of Christ.

"Could a bunch of guys wearing jeans and leather really make an impact?" asked Mike Stewart, national director of F.A.I.T.H. Riders, at a recent commissioning service at North Highlands Baptist Church in Hueytown.

The answer is a definitive "Yes." In the last 15 years, more than 100,000 have heard the gospel one-on-one and some 13,000 have decided to follow Christ, all due to the riders' ministry.

However, as the late Buddy Newsome, founder and former F.A.I.T.H. Riders national director, said in a video about the group, "F.A.I.T.H. Riders motorcycle ministry really isn't about motorcycles. It's really about reaching people for Jesus Christ.

F.A.I.T.H. Riders is really structured to help the local church fulfill the Great Commission. When we start a chapter in a church, it becomes a ministry of that church and it comes under the authority of that senior pastor."

On July 18, North Highlands Baptist inaugurated the 39th Chapter of F.A.I.T.H. Riders of Alabama and the 379th Chapter in the U.S.

Before the commissioning service, Pastor Michael Wallace explained a few reasons why the church wanted a chapter.

"[F.A.I.T.H. Riders] meet together weekly for Bible study. They show up at community events to pray with people. They hosted a ride to

raise money for one of our mission partners: Sav-a-Life. Once a month they're having bike nights for the purpose of sharing the gospel with the people of our community. So when the opportunity came up for us to become a chapter of F.A.I.T.H. Riders over the last few months, this was a no-brainer for us."

Personal testimonies

Phillip Cook, F.A.I.T.H. Riders' state coordinator for Alabama, is a firm believer in how powerful a personal testimony can be, even if it might not feel that way to the individual. The riders are trained how to share the gospel and include their own stories.

Cook's role is to encourage the chapters to stay involved and moving forward. One way is through events.

A few years ago, Cook felt the Lord say, "Hey, I've got guys who like to ride. Why don't we just ride and pray for these pastors and the communities and the churches as we're riding — give our ride a purpose."

On July 15 one of these "prayer rumbles" included 26 members from eight chapters who rode from their communities to a location near

Montgomery. They stopped at 38 churches and prayed for the pastors, church members and communities.

Prayer rumbles often have powerful testimonies. Cook noted one in which, after the riders had finished praying, they saw a man walking by the church's cemetery.

A member of F.A.I.T.H. Riders shared the gospel with him as he was mourning the loss of his brother and poor decisions in his own life.

He was angry with God because his brother had just died. After hearing the gospel, he immediately



Photo courtesy of F.A.I.T.H. Riders
Members of F.A.I.T.H. Riders pray for national director Mike Stewart before a commissioning service and his message at North Highlands Baptist Church in Hueytown on July 18.

accepted Christ. The following Sunday he went to a local church and publicly professed his faith.

Praying for others

"Fast-forward to today. I was at the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. We had a display set up with the F.A.I.T.H. Riders information. This guy came by and said he was a pastor of a Baptist church in Alabama. He [told] me the same story that our guys had told me two years ago," said Cook, confirming it was the pastor of that church.

"It was all because some motorcycle guys pulled up and decided to pray at a church," the pastor told Cook.

He gets a lot of feedback from people wondering why someone would take time to pray for another's community.

After the last prayer rumble, Cook said, "I was overwhelmed at the phone calls, the emails, the thank-you's, and the 'Hey, how can I be a part of this?'"

After the commissioning, Stewart

asked the North Highlands congregation to imagine an event.

"You're driving in your car and you come up to a red light. Then all of a sudden you hear this, 'potato, potato, potato,' this big rumbling noise, and you look to your left and you see this big burly biker all covered in tattoos, probably with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He might have loud rock music going on. And you're reaching over, rolling up the window to your car and you're locking the door. I know you are!"

"Next week that same person is sitting right next to you in this church because one of these F.A.I.T.H. Riders was willing to step out and share the saving knowledge of Jesus

Christ with that person, and his life has been transformed. That's what F.A.I.T.H. Riders can do," Stewart declared.

"We are a motorcycle ministry, not a club, not a gang, passionate about sharing Christ with the world."



Photo courtesy of F.A.I.T.H. Riders
F.A.I.T.H. Riders member Larry Arenth gets ready to pray at Santuck Baptist Church in Wetumpka.

For more information about the group or to start a chapter visit faithriders.com. In Alabama, contact Phillip Cook or F.A.I.T.H. Riders of Alabama through Facebook.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



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Sunday, August 29, SOUTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH, GADSDEN

Monday, August 30, CARROLLTON BAPTIST CHURCH, CARROLLTON

Sunday, September 12, LUSK BAPTIST CHURCH, GILBERTOWN

you and your church's passion for evangelism, then spend Monday morning in practical training sessions designed to equip and mobilize your local church in evangelism.

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LITTON



JENKINS



DEW



AVANT

All events are FREE!

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for more information.

These events are made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.



October 10-11, SHADES MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM

On Sunday evening, join Johnny Hunt for a time of teaching, worship and prayer focused on igniting



God and the gollywhopper

Wayne Edgeworth's faith and passion for hunting provide platform to share Christ

By Dee Ann Campbell
Special to TAB Media

Wearing a T-shirt bearing the logo “Gollywhopper,” a Southern term for something really big, deer hunter Wayne Edgeworth talks with passion about the day in mid-January when God and a massive buck changed his life.

Today, the experience is still impacting his life — and likely the lives of countless others.

“God made that deer so big that people would want to see him,” Edgeworth said. “Now I’ve been given a platform to stand up for Him, and that’s what I’m going to do.”

For those on the outside looking in, the story may seem to have begun when he first saw the buck in 2015.

But for Edgeworth, it began long before, he explained — when God first orchestrated the plan to give him an unusual testimony to share with others.

Edgeworth, a member of Forest Hill Baptist Church in Linden, purchased his farm in Marengo County in 2002, planting crops to attract the deer population. An avid hunter, he hoped to draw large whitetail bucks to the area.

Drawn to him

Years later, in 2015, a young buck showed up on his game camera in the dead of night.

“He was about 3½ years old,” Edgeworth said. “But I never saw him in the daylight — just at night.”

Through the years that followed, he continued to look for the young buck, drawn to him for reasons that he could not yet explain. The next year, the same deer showed up again, still in the cover of darkness.

“I listened for shots, thinking someone would shoot him,” he said. “But no one did, and by the next year, he had gotten huge.”

Still, no one had seen the massive buck in the daylight hours.

Edgeworth waited and watched to



Photo by Dee Ann Campbell

Wayne Edgeworth of Clanton uses the tale of harvesting this record-setting buck, which he calls “the Gollywhopper,” to share his testimony and the gospel. “God gave me this deer to open the door for me to do that,” he said.

see if his deer would resurface again the following year.

“Before the season started, I put cameras out, and there he was,” he recalled. “I pulled every tool out to try to draw him out in the daytime, but I couldn’t.”

In November 2019, Edgeworth was sitting in a shooting house, thinking about the mysterious buck — and praying.

“This was something I’ve wanted to do all of my life, to kill a deer like that,” he said. “It was number one on my bucket list. I said, ‘Lord, I’m turning it over to you, and if it’s your will, I want to kill this deer.’”

Edgeworth admits that it seemed a bit unusual to pray for such things, but since then he has seen an unveiling of God’s plan to use the deer for His own glory.

“God had a plan before I killed him,” he said. “I had the most desire as a deer hunter, but I needed God’s help.”

Edgeworth said that he wanted to take his faith and passion to another level, and God had a plan to make it happen.

“God kept that deer in the dark to

let him get to 7½ years old,” he said.

On Jan. 17, 2020 — after watching his buck grow for over four years — Edgeworth got his chance. The massive 8-point appeared in a green field about 10 minutes after daylight.

Edgeworth fired a shot and harvested the record-setting buck.

The buck has repeatedly scored 175½ on the Boone and Crockett Club’s scoring system, which takes into account the spread and diameter of the antlers, along with other measurement points.

Opportunities to share

In the weeks that followed, attention for the deer grew exponentially.

From social media posts to radio shows to invitations to show off his buck and tell his story, Edgeworth’s phone rang off the hook with opportunities to attend events across the region.

His gollywhopper has been hailed by deer hunters and sportsmen far and wide and continues to gain attention as a record-setter.

The attention has meant opportunities to speak to audiences that

would never have been possible otherwise, and, Edgeworth said, he uses those opportunities to talk about his faith, his salvation and God’s glory. Although he had always had a faith in Christ, he had never been outspoken about his salvation to others — until the gollywhopper gave him the platform to do so.

Open door

“Now I never hesitate,” he said. “I’ll go wherever and whenever I get the chance. God gave me this deer to open the door for me to do that.”

“I’ve had people tell me I was lucky, but it wasn’t luck,” he said. “He made him that big so people would want to see him, and that means I get the chance to tell them about God. People say I am a fanatic, but I’m not apologizing for that. I am a fanatic for Him.”

The record-setting deer, he said, opens the door to talk to people who might not listen otherwise, and it has taken him places where he might not have been able to go, to not only tell the story of the day when he harvested the buck but the story of the day when God gave him eternal life. Using a brochure created by a local minister, he regularly takes every opportunity to present his testimony and talk about the unusual prayer that God answered in order to further His kingdom.

“God has given me the gift of salvation, and that’s eternal,” he said. “But He wanted me to share His word. He gave me the way to do it, and that’s what I intend to do, for as long as I can. He gave me the desire of my heart, and I want to leave here knowing I did everything I could for Him.”

Edgeworth is available to speak at events and can be reached at 205-312-1067.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Dee Ann Campbell is publisher of the Choctaw Sun-Advocate and the Marengo County Leader. Reprinted with permission.

3 stories you should know



Photo by David George

Connie Dixon (right), newly elected president of national Woman's Missionary Union, was the guest of honor at a reception hosted by WMU Foundation July 30 at Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

Dixon is executive director of New Mexico WMU. Pictured with Dixon are Lyle and Claren Dease. Lyle Dease is director of missions for Pickens Baptist Association, and Claren Dease is chair of the board of trustees for Alabama WMU. (TAB Media)

CP giving holds steady in first half of 2021

Giving through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program Allocation Budget remains steady midway through 2021.

According to information released by the SBC Executive Committee, the total amount given through the national CP Allocation Budget in July 2021 totaled \$15,740,795.38, which was 6.22% less than the \$16.79 million received in July 2020 but 1.08% more than this year's monthly budgeted amount of \$15,572,916.67. As of July 30, gifts to the CP total \$162,046,287.12, 4.06% ahead of the \$155.73 million year-to-date budgeted projection to support Southern Baptist ministries.

CP allocation budget gifts received by the Executive Committee are reported monthly and posted online at sbc.net/cp. (TAB Media)

Christian teens prefer to share actions, stories

When compared to previous generations, Gen Z teens ages 13–18 in both the U.S. and Canada seem to prefer actions and telling one's personal story over traditional evangelism strategies.

New research from Barna shows half of teens say "letting your actions speak rather than using words to explain your faith" is an act of evangelism, as is "inviting someone to attend church with you."

They also view as evangelistic acts "telling your personal story about how you came to be a Christian," "telling someone about benefits/changes experienced when following Jesus" and "praying with someone"; only 28% of Christian Gen Zers see sharing online content with someone as evangelism.

Read more at barna.com/research/gen-z-evangelism. (TAB Media)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Arkansas

Knowing their students were craving community post-pandemic, Central Baptist and New Beginnings Community Church in Bald Knob, Arkansas, decided to join forces to host a camp. After getting comfortable, students started opening up, reports Arkansas Baptist News. Jamie McAnelly at Central mentioned a student who said, "There's a pond behind the cabin and a swimming pool over there — I want to get baptized now." The rest of the nights were filled with prayers over the lost and cheers for the saved.

Georgia

Realizing they are stronger together, Baptist churches in a few counties in North Georgia opened a ministry center providing food, health care, bikes and more for their community. The dental and counseling offices have seen 24 salvations combined. Parents are able to get bikes for

their children while students wash cars. Stacy Dyer, associational mission strategist, said, "We are all working together for one common goal and one common good," reports the Christian Index.

Louisiana

Graduating with the small class of 300, Grant and Lauren Phillips reflect on their relationship and time at Louisiana College, seeing God's blessings in their life, reports the Baptist Message. Grant described the school's intimate atmosphere: "Professors got invested in whatever we were doing." They have since moved to Bellevue, Washington, where Lauren works for Amazon as a financial analyst and Grant teaches at a Christian school.

North Carolina

Two Hephzibah Baptist Church members baked

and sold cinnamon rolls to fund a missions trip to the Philippines in 2016 in partnership between their Wendell, North Carolina, church and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. According to the Biblical Recorder, in 2018 the duo completed state inspections and licensing to launch Sweet 31 Baking Company, a reference to Proverbs 31. One of the owners is Melanie Wallace, president of the board of directors of the state convention 2019–2020.

Tennessee

After canceling camps for 2020, the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board decided to refocus and rename their camp for teenagers. YEC (Youth Evangelism Conference) Camp combines evangelism elements with the camp atmosphere, reported Baptist and Reflector. Jay Barbier, TBMB youth specialist, aims to teach youth the basics about what they believe.

Alabama news

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

► **Clarke Skelton** is the new consultant with Asian ministries in the office of associational missions and church planting at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

In this role, Skelton will work part-time building relationships with the state's Korean churches and other Asian American congregations and developing conferences geared toward those groups. In the past, he has served as a pastor and as an International Mission Board missionary in South Korea.



SKELTON

"In the same way Annel Robayna (consultant for intercultural ministries) has been developing conferences for Hispanic churches, he is going to be working with Clarke to develop conferences for Korean churches," said Rick Barnhart, director of the SBOM office of associational missions and church planting. "We want to build intercultural relationships in Alabama and work together on next-generation ministries."

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► A reunion of **West End Baptist Church** members will be held Aug. 21 at Shades Crest Baptist Church, Hoover, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. A covered-dish lunch will be served at noon. The celebration will feature Andy Andrews, Joe McKeever and others. For more information contact Kay Barnes at purplekbarnes@gmail.com.

CHOCTAW ASSOCIATION

► **Chappell Hill Baptist Church, Gilbertown**, is celebrating its 136th anniversary with a homecoming Aug. 15, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. Randy Johnson is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Highland Baptist Church, Florence**, will hold a five-week Wednesday night event called Shoals Family Summit starting Aug. 25 at 6 p.m. The five Wednesday nights will cover these topics — social media safety, mental health in children and teens, success in school, sexuality and gender and raising boys and girls. John Brock is pastor.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **John Monteith** is the new pastor of **Talladega Creek Baptist Church, Talladega**. He has served on staff at churches in Mississippi and Massachusetts, most recently as an associate pastor at a church plant in Winthrop, Massachusetts. He earned a master of divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake



MONTEITH

Forest, North Carolina. Monteith and his wife, Lynn, have three children.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **David Cagle** is the new associate campus pastor at **Downtown Church, Mobile**. He and his wife, Allison, have three children.



CAGLE

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Harris Cook** recently retired as pastor of **Crossbridge Community Church, Helena**, after more than 50 years in ministry.

Cook transferred to Samford University in Birmingham, graduated and went on to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He later earned his doctorate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.



COOK

Cook has served several churches, including West End, Birmingham; First, Alexander City; and Northside, Jasper.

While in Jasper, Cook's wife of 24 years died of cancer at age 42. God later provided Jenny, to whom Cook has been married for 27 years. They went from Jasper to Venezuela

together in 2000 as some of the first International Mission Board workers chosen in the new millennium.

In 2006, Cook was called as co-pastor of Crossbridge.

There definitely were difficult times during 50 years of ministry, Cook acknowledged.

"You just have to be loyal and faithful and true and obedient to the Lord Jesus, and that makes for a wonderful, beautiful experience with God," Cook said. "Even in retirement I know I can do anything He wants me to do because my life is His."

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► **Spencer Helm** is the new student pastor of **First Baptist Church, Opelika**. He previously served as a student pastor for Liberty Live Church in Virginia and on staff at Teen Challenge. He has a bachelor's degree in biblical studies from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. Helm and his wife, Monica, have one daughter.



HELM

WALKER ASSOCIATION

► **Jeff Allred** is the new pastor of **Eastside Baptist Church, Jasper**. He formerly served as pastor of Little Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood, 1996–1998; Dunn's Creek Baptist Church, Echola, 1998–2001; Rock Creek Baptist Church, Eva, 2007–2012; Parrish First Baptist Church, 2014–2016; and Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, Cordova, 2019–2021. He and his wife, Dana, have one daughter.



ALLRED

Persecuted church

Ethiopian Christians experience significant rise in persecution

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Three groups have increased their persecution of Christians in Ethiopia.

Those groups are radicalized Oromo Muslims in the south; Ethiopian Orthodox Church (or "traditional Christians") in the north, and Somali Islamic nationalists in the east.

► Christians have been severely beaten, sometimes beheaded, and their churches, homes and businesses devastated in attacks in the southern region, which is about 60% Muslim.

► Ninety-seven percent of people in the northern and northwestern regions belong to

the EOC, whose teachings are extremely different from biblical Christianity. Those who do not adhere to EOC teachings face beatings, imprisonment and destruction of property.

► Almost 5 million Somalis fled their country and many settled in eastern Ethiopia, bringing with them Islamic nationalism. Somalis who become Christians risk being beaten, ostracized or killed.

Regardless, Christians in Ethiopia continue to love their enemies and tell others about Jesus Christ, states Voice of the Martyrs, a group defending persecuted Christians.

Ethiopia is No. 36 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (VOM)



Persecution.com

Changed lives stir more choices to follow Jesus, be baptized

(continued from page 1)
‘I’ll see you Sunday,’” Beck said. “I found out later he hadn’t set foot in a church in 35 years but had come that day because he’d do anything for his grandson.”

As Beck headed back to his office, a grandmother stopped him and said her grandson had sat through the service and wanted to make a decision too.

Beck explained to him what it meant to follow Jesus — that it wasn’t just about being a cool baseball player, it was about living for the Lord — and the boy said he understood and wanted to follow through.

After Beck finished praying with the boy, he looked up and the grandmother had tears in her eyes.

‘I need Jesus’

“She looked at me and said, ‘Pastor, I’m lost, and I need Jesus too,’” he remembered. “She prayed to receive Christ too.”

From there, the work of God in the community continued to snowball, and Beck was astounded. He got a text from the granddad who had said he’d be back the following Sunday asking Beck to meet with him before that. When they did, he told Beck he had tried churches when he was younger but none of them had stuck. Eventually, he had stopped going.

That day he had something he had to get answered.

“He said, ‘Pastor, I’ve got a question for you — when you stepped in the baptismal water, who was the man in the water with you?’ He told me that another man had stepped in with me, looked straight at him and held out his hands,” Beck said.

“I told him, ‘All I know is Jesus is trying to get your attention.’”

That day, the man started a relationship with Jesus, as



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Beck

When nearly the entire Eagles baseball team was baptized in April by their coach, Pastor Jeremy Beck (back row, third from left), it started a domino effect in their families and the community.

did another of his grandsons he had brought with him.

And another grandson approached Beck one day in the church parking lot, saying he couldn’t shake an overwhelming feeling of conviction. When Beck led him to Christ, his mother was standing nearby. She said she hadn’t been a believer but had decided to follow Jesus now too.

“She said, ‘I’ve seen so much change in my family, I want to follow Jesus as well,’” Beck said.

And it hasn’t stopped there.

One of the dads apologized to his sons in front of the Eagles baseball team recently, saying he had blown off his sons’ spiritual questions in the past and now wanted to lead them in following Jesus. “He’s been coming to church ever since,” Beck said.

Story continues

And others have approached Beck to ask him questions. It’s clear God is working in their lives, he said. “This story is to be continued.”

Now at the end of practices, the Eagles baseball team circles up and walks through Scripture together.

“Even their parents circle up and join us, and we all

have prayer time together afterward,” Beck said.

After all the boys decided to follow Jesus, they started asking the opposing teams — on their own — if they would like to join the Eagles on the mound for prayer, and they led it.

Shining example

“We just stand back in tears watching God use them,” he said.

And they’ve gotten to see that a lot — recently the team went all the way to win the Dizzy Dean Freshman World Series.

Beck said he had simply prayed that their story would “make much of Christ.”

He said it’s been a “crazy, beautiful story.”

“As a dad, there’s this huge freedom in knowing that I was concerned about them making poor choices, and now they get to walk beside each other on this journey of faith,” he said.

David Hobson, director of missions for Mud Creek Baptist Association, said it’s been amazing to see the change at Grant Street Baptist since Beck came as pastor.

“The church has an excitement, and they have become a shining example that God can use a small church in incredible ways,” he said.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Jemison is seeking a full-time senior pastor. He should possess a conviction to preach from the Holy Bible, teaching biblical truths and doctrine of Christianity, as stated in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Must provide pastoral care and counseling; be engaged to all age groups; mentor and supervise church staff; and provide visionary leadership for the future of our church. He will shepherd our congregation in worship, Christian spiritual growth and community outreach as we strive to carry out The Great Commission. Mail resumés to: Jemison First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 760, Jemison, AL 35085 or resumes@jemisonfirstbaptist.com.

PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Moundville, Ala., has position available for bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: jbshaw@mound.net or mail to: PHBC, P.O. Box 339, Moundville, AL 35474-0339.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC & MEDIA

York Bluff Baptist Church in Sheffield, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music and media interested in growing a multigenerational, blended music ministry and overseeing a plan to maximize the church’s web presence. Resumés may be mailed to: Search Committee, York Bluff Baptist Church, 301 N. Atlanta Ave., Sheffield, AL 35660 or emailed to: kim@yorkbluffbaptist.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

Montevallo First Baptist Church is searching for a part-time minister of music. Please send resumés to: ATTN: Audrey Crawford or Pastor Terry Sutton at mfbcbellsouth.net.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP OR YOUTH PASTOR:

Seeking a bivocational worship and/or youth pastor to lead a blended worship service as well as serve in our youth ministry. Position could be divided into two positions or one depending on qualifications. Please email resumés to: Ladonia Baptist,

Phenix City, by Sept. 1 to: PastorGreg@ladoniabaptist.org.

PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN’S MINISTER

Thorington Road Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., is seeking a full-time preschool/children’s minister. If interested please send resumé to: Michael Trull at michael@trbaptist.org.

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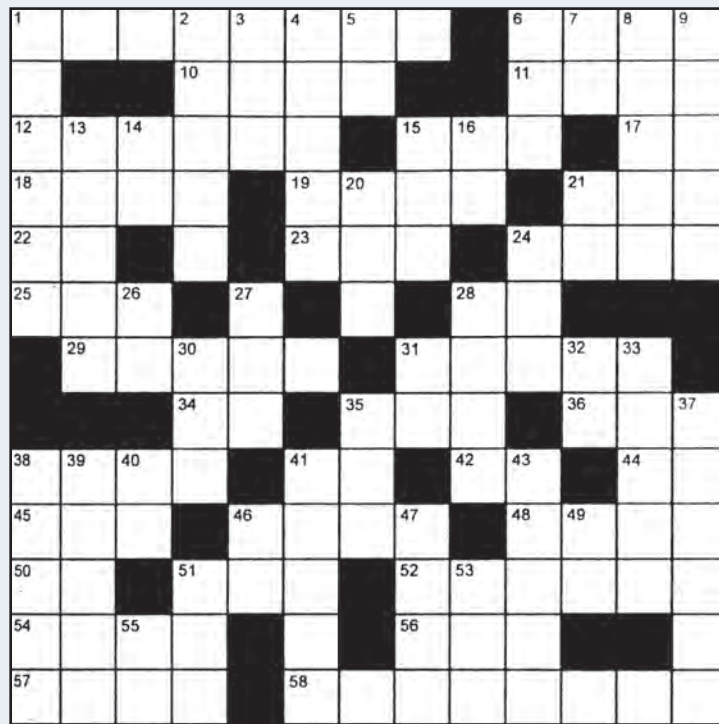
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CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. That he might ____ us alive. (Deut. 6:24)
6. Pitcher.
10. ____, which was the son of Seth. (Luke 3:38)
11. River in Bolivia.
12. Property agency.
15. O. T. book. (abbr.)
17. Naval vessel designation.
18. Canadian Indian.
19. Where is ____ thy brother? (Gen. 4:9)
21. Till he should pay all that was ____ unto him. (Matt. 18:34)
22. Comes after em.
23. Celtic sea god.
24. Right to property.
25. Fr. article.
28. Yes. (Spanish)
29. A word appearing 73 times in Psalms.
31. Woman's title.
34. They could not enter ____ because of unbelief. (Heb. 3:19)
35. Minister's title.
36. Missing in Action.
38. Top of the head.
41. Academic degree.
42. Printer's measure.
44. Symbol for element tellurium.
45. Japanese sash.
46. Became captain over a _____. (1 Kings 11:24)
48. Put him to an ____ shame. (Heb. 6:6)
50. Northwest state. (abbr.)
51. The prince of the power of the _____. (Eph. 2:2)
52. Now therefore ____ thyself what word I shall bring. (1 Chron. 21:12)
54. Full of ____, murder, debate. (Rom. 1:29)
56. As the loving hind and pleasant _____. (Prov. 5:19)
57. Sendeth ____ on the just and on the



By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
58. Solomon reigned over all _____. (1 Kings 4:21)
- (Titus 1:2)
31. Northeast state.
32. I ____ Alpha and Omega. (Rev. 1:8)
33. A poor widow threw in two _____. (Mark 12:42)
35. His father saw him ... and ____ and fell on his neck. (Luke 16:20)
37. He found a certain man named _____. (Acts 9:33)
38. Ye shall receive _____. (Acts 1:8)
39. Are not ____ and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better? (2 Kings 5:12)
40. Musical note.
41. And Deborah said unto ____, Up; for this is the day. (Judg. 4:14)
43. All the city was ____ about them. (Ruth 1:19)
46. Occurring in intervals of two.
47. Mend socks.
49. Greek "P."
51. ____ Rand.
53. Beware of ____s. (Phil. 3:2)
55. Roman numeral 6.

DOWN

1. In a ____ of ground which Jacob bought. (Josh. 24:32)
2. But ____ died without children. (1 Chron. 2:30)
3. Within. (comb. form)
4. If ye fulfill the ____ law. (James 2:8)
5. Competing against.
6. Wane.
7. Us.
8. Let him seek peace, and ____ it. (1 Pet. 3:11)
9. If ye then be ____ with Christ. (Col. 3:1)
13. Sea eagles.
14. ____, ____, I, O, U.
15. Possessive pronoun.
16. ____ Haig.
20. Egyptian pleasure god.
21. Double. (prefix)
24. Top.
26. Compass point.
27. ____ shall be a serpent by the way. (Gen. 49:17)
28. Can faith ____ him? (James 2:14)
30. Eternal life, which God, that can not ____.

WORD search

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| ANCHORS | HEAVENLY |
| ASSURANCE | HOPE |
| CERTAINTY | INHERITANCE |
| CHOIR | LIKENESS |
| CHRIST | MYSTERY |
| CHURCH | NATION |
| CONFIDENT | NEWNESS |
| CREATION | PEOPLE |
| DWELL | PERFECT |
| EAGER | PROFESSION |
| EARNEST | PROSPER |
| ENDURANCE | PURE |
| ENLIGHTEN | PURPOSE |
| ETERNITY | RESTORE |
| EXPECTATION | RICHES |
| FAITHFUL | SPEAK |
| FULFILL | STEADY |
| FULLNESS | TONGUE |
| FUTURE | TRANSFORM |
| GLORIOUS | TRIBE |





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'Get equipped'

Samford's Ministry Training Institute broadens reach, adds three new sites this fall

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Derek Allen said he hopes people don't hear about MTI — Ministry Training Institute — and think it's just for people called to pastoral ministry.

It's also for Bible study teachers, leaders, volunteers or simply followers of Christ, said Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church Tillman's Corner in Mobile, and director of a new MTI site there.

"This is prep for any church member who wants to go deeper in their understanding of the Scripture," he said. "It's for every Christian who wants to go deeper in their faith."

MTI — formerly the

Samford University extension program, which was originally called The Howard Plan — started in 1947 and took on its current name in 2014.

Active sites

This fall, it will have 38 active extension sites, 32 of which are in Alabama and one of which is Allen's church. It and two others — one at the Clarke Baptist Association and one in Tallahassee, Florida — are new this fall semester.

Kevin Blackwell, MTI director, said the purpose behind each of those sites is to resource the church by offering courses from a world-renowned university that are as affordable and accessible as possible.

For more information about MTI, visit samford.edu/go/mti or call 205-726-4055.



Photo courtesy of MTI

Students participate in a previous class at the Ministry Training Institute site in Morgan Baptist Association.

There's a class for everybody, he said. MTI offers biblical studies diplomas for people studying at extension sites as well as five online certificates — disciple making, women's leadership (offered in cooperation with national Woman's

Missionary Union), pastoral leadership, worship leadership and worship administration. Those classes are taught online.

Whether in person or online, "we are here for the local church," Blackwell said. "We want to see as many people as possible get equipped. God's doing a good work through MTI. It continues to grow, and we keep adding sites."

Allen said he's excited about what the new site will offer for both his church and his community.

When he was first contacted about it, he was excited because the classes fit right in with what he and other church leaders were hoping to develop for disci-

pliship at their church. He had taught for MTI in the past when he was serving in the Etowah County area.

"We're really pushing our people toward the classes," Allen said, noting that he hopes they will participate alongside people from other area churches.

At that site, they will offer a class on biblical interpretation starting Aug. 23, followed by an Old Testament survey class. There are 24 classes total offered on a six-year rotating basis. With each set of eight classes, students earn a diploma. "We see this as an opportunity to serve the larger community through the facilities of our church," Allen said.

Online options

And Blackwell said he hopes people all over will join in at a site near them, join one of the extension courses through Zoom or consider an online certificate course. Class registration is open now for the fall, and some full scholarships are available for women pursuing the women's leadership certificate.

"We have a pretty broad spectrum of students and classes, and chances are you'll find one that fits your needs," he said.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 15

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



WHERE IS THE BALANCE? Ecclesiastes 7:11–22

It is easy for us to forget that God has the whole world in His hands. And when we fail to live in light of His sovereignty, we take on a man-centered worldview that tends to downplay God's active involvement in our lives. At this point in Ecclesiastes, Solomon once again acknowledged that God has everything under control. We will see Solomon shift his perspective from the horizontal to the vertical. As the shift takes place, wisdom moves to the forefront in Solomon's life.

Accept It (11–14)

In these verses Solomon emphasized the great value and desirability of divine wisdom. Wisdom can be defined as the righteous application of true knowledge. It is the inner strength that comes from a God-instructed conscience. Wisdom is the gift of God (Prov. 2:6) and is necessary if we are to live our lives for the glory of God.

Just as receiving an inheritance is a blessing, so is receiving wisdom. Both wisdom and financial wealth can provide security in this life. Financial wealth provides protection in a financial crisis, but wisdom transforms our hearts and minds and enables believers to navigate the challenges of life in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

If we have wisdom, we are able to recognize God created everything and does all things according to His own purposes. He is in control of everything. The holy Trinity never meets in emergency session. Therefore, we should be joyful in the seasons of blessing and thoughtful in seasons of adversity.

We are commanded to "consider the work of God." In other words, we need to remind ourselves the good times and the hard times are from the hand of God (Job 2:10). As Christians, we find ourselves having to fight the good fight for faith (Mark 9:24). May the Lord strengthen our faith in Him as we learn more about His character by treasuring His word in our hearts.

Find Balance (15–18)

We have been told to live the good life. But if goodness is not rewarded in this life, why be good? Solomon was sympathetic. His life, like everyone else's, was lived in a world subject to frustration, where temporal rewards and punishments were not neatly packaged. It is all very well to speak of accepting prosperity and adversity. Yet it is strange when a righteous man dies while he still has much to offer while a wicked man lives on to continue his evil actions. In light of the futility and unfairness of life, how are we to live?

In these verses Solomon urges us to live with balance. The Lord does not approve of a super spiritual lifestyle, where a person wants to impress others with their piety. Nor does He sanction a lukewarm attitude toward sin. Excessively foolish behavior can bring a person's life to an end before its time.

Instead, God desires for us to walk with Him in obedience and behave toward others with humility. We should avoid the path of self-righteousness and an inflated perception of how wise we are as well as reject the path of wickedness in our lives. When we fear the Lord in this way, we will find balance in our lives.

Acknowledge Sin (19–22)

Not only does wisdom give balance, it also produces strength. Wisdom gives us strength to handle the painful tensions of life. We must acknowledge sin in the world and in ourselves. This is a tension we have to live with in a Genesis 3 world. We all stumble and fall, but wisdom produces strength to help us handle this tension.

Wisdom gives us strength to avoid the pitfalls of gullibility. When people lavishly praise us, we should not let it go to our heads. Wisdom equips us to keep our feet anchored in reality. Wisdom also gives us strength to handle criticism. Wisdom can help us distinguish between constructive and destructive criticism and keep us from judging others falsely.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University



SERVE WITH LOYALTY 1 Kings 18:20–26, 31–39

Only the true God is worthy of our worship as He is the true provider of life and all other good gifts. People who fail to recognize that their idols are false gods pay a high price. Idols gaslight people like an imposter convincing someone's children that they are their children, alienating them from their real parents, asking them for things to which they are not entitled and promising things they are powerless to provide. Idols also lead us to act in ways that are harmful to ourselves and to those around us.

We shouldn't waver in our loyalty to God. (20–21)

Compromise has been a perennial problem with the people of God. We are tempted to hedge our bets and live partly as though what God says is true, and partly as though it might not be true, and we should be looking out for ourselves and finding our security in something other than our faith in God. Elijah knew that sometimes we need to have our double-minded and halfhearted commitment pointed out before we recognize our need to go "all in" and live a life of serious faith in our Lord.

Other gods will always be proven to be false gods. (22–26)

Elijah was outnumbered 450 to 1, but he knew that didn't matter since Baal wasn't a real god and had no real power, and God didn't need more than one prophet to represent Him.

Elijah proposes that they prepare two offerings, and that each side appeal to its god/God to respond by accepting their offering by consuming it without any human help. Elijah wants to make it clear that the contest isn't between prophets but between two supposed gods, one of which Elijah knows to be the only true God and the other he knows to be a powerless imposter. The prophets of Baal seem to have no objection to Elijah's plan. The group of 450 prophets must

have thought they had strength in numbers and that Baal would surely respond to show everyone that he is real and powerful.

The prophets of Baal spent half of the day calling on him and dancing around their altar. Later, in desperation, they cut themselves in their attempts to get his attention. Of course, there was no response since what false gods do best is ... nothing.

God proves He is the one true God. (31–39)

Elijah was a prophet appointed by God for this task, and he makes it clear in verse 36 that he is only doing what God has instructed him to do, and in this case God decided to reveal Himself in a powerful way to try to turn Israel back from the idolatry that was destroying the nation.

Elijah built the altar out of 12 stones to represent the 12 tribes of Israel that God had redeemed (v. 31), and he built it knowing God would do amazingly more than what his idolatrous "competitors" were asking Baal to do. Three times Elijah ordered that water be poured on the altar. He knew God could burn up not just a normal offering but one that was completely soaked in water.

At the end of the day there was no question about the reality and power of the God of Israel, or about the authority of His prophet, Elijah. But this wasn't just about God's reputation and that of Elijah, but also about the salvation of those who were watching.

God acted "so that this people will know that you, the Lord, are God and that you have turned their hearts back." And God did more than was asked of Him, consuming everything on the altar and turning many people back to Himself in the process. The one true God, revealed to us in the Scriptures and in Jesus Christ our Lord, is worthy of our loyalty, service and worship on days of miracles and on every other day as well.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust

TAB Media

‘Wingfeather Saga’ delivers fantasy TV series for families

Fantasy series are as popular as they’ve ever been on television, but as producer and writer Chris Wall sees it, few are viewable by the entire family.

In fact many — like “Game of Thrones” — are so vulgar they’d make a sailor blush.

Wall hopes to help change that.

He is executive producer and showrunner of a new family-friendly animated fantasy series, “The Wingfeather Saga,” based on a bestselling children’s book series by Christian singer Andrew Peterson.

It will be released by Angel Studios, which produced “The Chosen.”

Although the series is crowd-funded, Angel Studios had no trouble raising money for the first season, pulling in \$5 million from some 8,000 investors in one month.

Crowdfunded

In fact, it broke the record previously held by The Chosen for fastest crowdfunded TV series to reach \$1 million.

“The Wingfeather Saga” passed that mark in 48 hours.

Season 1 currently is in production.



‘THE WINGFEATHER SAGA’

imdb.com

“There’s a scarcity of this kind of material,” said Wall, a veteran of the family-friendly genre who was a producer for “VeggieTales” and “The Slugs & Bugs Show.”

“The Wingfeather Saga” tells the story of a family living in a fantasy world who must flee evil creatures known as “Fangs of Dang.” They search for their place in

the world while opposing a mysterious ruler, Gnag the Nameless.



Angel Studios describes the story as having the wit of “The Princess Bride,” the epic world of “The Lord of the Rings” and the “deep magic” of the Narnia series.

It won’t be overtly Christian but will have a Christian worldview, Wall noted, adding it’s

important for viewers to understand what they are getting.

“If we position the series as Christian fantasy, we will disappoint a number of viewers — because there are dragons, there are legends and fantasy.

“That could be problematic for some families. But if we present a secular fantasy, the secular viewer will go, ‘Wait a minute, I can tell there’s a hand at work, like in Narnia.’ And so we’re somewhere between that.”

Christian values

The world of “The Wingfeather Saga,” Wall said, is similar to Narnia or “The Lord of the Rings.”

“Why would you call Lord of the Rings a Christian fantasy series? Because Tolkien was a believer, yes, and because the material speaks of Christian values: self-sacrifice, family, good over evil, sacrificial love. And what Wingfeather shares is exactly that. There is value in family and there’s an importance in our identity — who we are, who the Creator made us to be.

“And while it’s not overt, it is clearly a subversive play, where it’s understood there’s a Christian worldview at work here.

“The consequences of the choices characters make fall within what we understand.”

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.

“There is value in family and there’s an importance in our identity — who we are, who the Creator made us to be. And while it’s not overt, it is clearly a subversive play, where it’s understood there’s a Christian worldview at work here.”

Chris Wall

producer and writer of “The Wingfeather Saga” TV series

MEET THE REVIEWER

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.



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