

# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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## FLESHING OUT WHAT WAS GOD'S IDEA

### Calera church hosts four-week soccer camp to engage community

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

**F**or Diane Davis, it all started with prayer, and then a conversation — and then confirmation that God was really at work.

"I was working at our food distribution with one of the young people at our church, and I didn't know him well, so I was asking him questions," said Davis, children's director at Concord Church in

Calera, which will officially change its name to Hope Mountain Church on Sept. 12.

#### Making the connection

"I asked him what God was doing in his life," she said.

Davis learned two things. First — God had called him at a young age to be a missionary. Second — he loved soccer and wanted to use it to share the gospel.

That got Davis' wheels turning.

The leadership team at Concord already was praying

and thinking about ways they could use the summer to engage the community through outdoor activities.

From the moment Davis had that conversation, soccer was a recurring theme in her life. Men she talked to at church told her they coached soccer. More youth in the church mentioned they loved soccer.

It wasn't long before the congregation decided to flesh out what clearly was God's idea, and Davis started orga-

nizing a soccer "drills and skills" camp for July.

Every Wednesday night that month, some 50 volunteers from the church across all age groups came together to put on the free camp.

#### Churchwide effort

Pastor Deric Thomas said most of the church was involved, from serving on a prayer team to planning to organizing to buying supplies and equipment and, of course, coaching.

(See 'Church,' page 14)



Concord Church in Calera holds a summer soccer camp to engage the community through outdoor activities.

Photo by Sherry Carlisle



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# TAB writer remembers Jeanne Robertson

By Tracy Riggs  
TAB Media

I've done some great interviews in my time with TAB Media, but I've never had someone take so much time with me, laugh as much and make a connection like Jeanne Robertson did.

While talking with me almost an hour and a half (an eternity in reporters' terms), she said, "Now this is my cell phone, so if you're writing and you need to talk to me again, just pick it up and call."

Since she's such a professional, no follow-up questions were needed. How I wish I had needed to talk to her again. Jeanne died Aug. 21 at the age of 77.

Even before I met Jeanne, she had touched my life. In September 2018, I was driving in downtown Birmingham and saw a long line waiting to get into the Alabama Theater. I later mentioned this to my parents out of curiosity. They told me they had planned to be there to see a humorist named Jeanne Robertson, but it ended up they couldn't go.

## Lots of laughter

I looked her up on YouTube, and I was hooked! I began watching clip after clip of some of the funniest stories I had ever heard. Above the laughs always rang her key message — look for humor

every day, in every circumstance.

"I do think if we don't find [humor], it's not because it's not happening. It's because we've chosen not to look for it," she said.

## Encouraged many

As someone who battles depression, I had never thought this way. I'm not saying it's always easy to find humor, but thanks to her encouragement, I keep trying.

Jeanne Robertson, the world and I will miss you. When I think of



Photo courtesy of Jeanne Robertson

## JEANNE ROBERTSON

you passing, I'll bow my head respectfully, shake it slightly, softly say, "I'm so sorry," and contemplate making a 7-Up Pound Cake for friends and family using Left-Brain's shopping list.

We didn't get to meet in Birmingham, but you're not on the road anymore. You've made it home. I look forward to laughing with

you again. Meanwhile, I'll keep looking for the funny in everything.

To read some nuggets of wisdom from Robertson, go to [tabonline.org/jeanne-robertson](http://tabonline.org/jeanne-robertson).

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Robertson was scheduled to speak in Auburn, Birmingham and Huntsville during her tour. Contact the ticket provider if you have purchased tickets.

*"I do think if we don't find [humor], it's not because it's not happening. It's because we've chosen not to look for it."*

Jeanne Robertson  
Christian humorist

## 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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## Processing emotional toll from current global crises

I don't know about you, but the number of crisis situations around the world are weighing heavily on my heart. Some days it seems as if the crises are basically piling on top of each other.

And while I know we are strong and resilient, that we will find our way through whatever is in front of us, it's still hard and emotionally exhausting.

About the time I think the weight is too heavy, God shows up through His word or a person and reminds me that we are not alone and should fully embrace the strength found in Christ.

I'm also reminded of the importance of fervent prayer and how our military personnel and the people of Afghanistan and Haiti need us praying more than ever right now.

Along with prayer, we can soothe our souls by reaching out to help those in crisis as well as provide a listening ear to those struggling to process all that is happening right now.

I'm encouraged by so many of you who are maintaining a cheerful heart and continuing to truly make a difference despite the difficulties, heaviness and frustrations consistently hovering over us.

The amazing stories coming out of our churches reminds me we are going to be OK, and that

the Light will continue to shine through the darkness.

Thank you for digging in deep and holding tight to Jesus through it all — and for modeling love, joy, peace, grace and confidence for the unbelievers who are watching.

As children of the King, we have a built-in family of tremendous strength that spans worldwide, even when it seems

we are fighting each other more than unifying around our faith.

In many ways, the past 18 months have made it more difficult to trust, and isolation can play tricks on our minds.

I wish we could confidently say life will soon settle into a calm routine that makes sense to us, but I'm honestly not sure what the next week, much less the next year, holds.

However, I can confidently hold to the promises of the One who does know every detail of each of our lives and knows all that lies ahead for our country and our world.

I can decide to move forward in His light and love despite the unknowns ahead, striving to follow His commands above all and working to leave the communities in which I serve better than I found them.

## Keep hope alive; we were trained for these moments and get to be His image bearers amid the chaos

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has

been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.

For it is all for your sake so that as grace extends to more and more people, it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. — *2 Corinthians 4, ESV*

# Your Voice



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

## Letters to the editor

Until I read the Aug. 19 issue of The Alabama Baptist, I had never heard of a chimera, much less the ethical issues and boundaries being pushed to new levels. Who knew the tempest in the teapot brewing in research labs around the world?

Once again, TAB readers are blessed with excellent reporting that provides us with straight-up information and thoughtful questions for us to ponder. Thank you for putting forth this critically important information for us.

**Bruce Barbour**  
Richmond Hill, Ga.

Christian parents want what is best for their children in every aspect of their lives. This includes their education.

One of life's most important decisions is choosing a college or university for your children. Certainly, parents should be part of this decision. There are many factors which must be taken into consideration, but there are none more important than whether Christian students are likely to feel safe with their beliefs.

As God's children, we are loved, nurtured and protected by

Him. As godly parents, we also love and guide our children in all truth and godliness.

An enormous part of that responsibility is to ensure that they are not placed where they are subjected to heretical subject matter by those who are more committed to deceptive ideologies contrary to Christ's teachings than to effectively teach sound curriculum that prepares students for education and/or career.

When he faced difficult circumstances and needed help, the psalmist David sought the Lord to be his "rock and refuge" (Ps. 31:2). Mom and dad, ask God to direct you through His Holy Spirit in finding the right setting for educating your children, whether at the K-12 level or higher education.

Parents should ponder the battle ahead and pray for wisdom and courage to build a hedge around our children.

The Apostle Paul urged the church at Corinth to "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). We can do no less.

**David Nichols**  
Jasper, Ala.

## Readers respond: How long have you been reading The Alabama Baptist?



Larry Patterson

I have been reading TAB since 1973, the year I was called to the ministry.

Like · Reply · 1w



Ron Madison

38 and counting!!

Like · Reply · 1w



Teresa Noell

I began reading TAB as a ten-year-old (1960). I was so excited when it arrived in our mailbox! I was a new Christian and a very active GA. I was thankful for TAB then, and I am thankful for TAB today!

Like · Reply · 1w · Edited



Phil Hicks

"The Baptist" has been a part of my life since we moved back to Alabama from Louisiana in 1951. There was always the latest edition in our living room until the new edition came in the mail. My mother had to get "permission" before throwing one away. After my dad passed away and my mother was placed in a nursing home, my sister and I began sorting through our parents things. Many copies were found that were many years old.

Like · Reply · 1w



Charlie Button

I've been reading for 48 years, since I joined University Baptist in Huntsville. Love what you do with the paper, Jennifer Davis Rash.

Like · Reply · 1w



Janice Pitchford

I don't remember ever not having it!

Like · Reply · 1w



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“ We want to mirror [God’s] heart in the way we serve our neighbor. ”

CHAD MIZE

Associate pastor of teaching, missions and evangelism at Forest Hills Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tenn.

[Alabama’s Myers Mallory State Missions Offering] is something very important in supplementing Great Commission ministries.

**Rick Lance, executive director Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions**

The need to integrate incoming students (sixth or seventh graders) quickly and effectively into the mission and vision of the (church’s) student ministry is vitally important in laying the foundation to build the next generation of student leaders and world changers for Christ.

Encouraging older students to invest in younger students is a challenging yet rewarding step to encourage new students to feel welcomed.

It’s challenging in the sense that it requires older students to sacrifice time with friends. Yet it’s rewarding because there is nothing more satisfying as a young person to know that the “cool” senior, who is the captain of the football team, knows my name and knows about my life.

Suddenly, the fear and worry about what the older students think is replaced with senses of calm because the big older kids have my back.

**Hunter Smith, student minister Mount Zion Baptist Church Huntsville, Ala.**

In [Bobby Bowden’s] retirement years, when he spoke hundreds of times, he would ask the host pastor, “Are there going to be any lost

people here tonight?” He was there to tell humorous stories, but the main thing was his unique way of telling people why they need Jesus Christ in their life as Lord and Savior.

**tabonline.org/remembers-coach-bowden Wayne Atcheson Charlotte, N.C.**

True learning occurs when an alteration of lifestyle or behavior pattern of the learner is evidenced in accordance with our teaching. One key factor: You and I are not the teachers. The Holy Spirit is our teacher. We are His instruments. Listening to the Holy Spirit causes life change.

**George Yates SBOM church health strategist**

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @Blackwell\_Kevin

It has been my experience that a lot of people want to go to heaven, but they are not willing to put in the time to know the One who rules over it. Our ultimate joy is not heaven, it is Jesus.

### @DanielRitchie

Disciples live in such a way that shows God is worth it all.

### @MichaelCatt

People are making going to church online the new normal. We were made for community & fellowship. Convenience has overtaken commitment.

### @ToddUnzicker

“Most Christians don’t intend to become Sodom & Gomorrah. But many Christians are so attracted to the world that they make their home as close to it as possible; & if they are honest, they end up iden-

tifying as much with the world as they do with the people of God.” —J.D. Greear

### @LutherQuots

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

### @DustinBenge

Prayers before you attend worship:

1. Pray for a deceased self.
2. Pray for a receptive heart.
3. Pray for a renewed mind.
4. Pray for a worshipful spirit.
5. Pray for a service attitude.
6. Pray for a revived zeal.
7. Pray for a faithful response.

### @PaulTripp

You will never be smarter than God, your plan for your life will never be better than God’s plan for you, what you want for you will

never [be] better than what your Savior has died to give you.

### @ShaiLinne

The lenses we wear effect our perception of everything that we see. As Christians, our tendency is to say of ourselves, “My lens is strictly the Bible,” while failing to recognize the cultural, philosophical & political lenses we had on before we opened the Bible.

### @haines\_matt

The salvation of God’s future people is accomplished by the intercession of God’s present people.

### @aBrandNewMatt

The words of Kenneth Ridings in preaching class at #fruitland: “Never ever leave the text to read another man’s ideas about the text until God has spoken to YOU from the text.” Good advice for the hour we are in.

## Free advice

Advice comes at different price points. Some advisers, like consultants, doctors and lawyers, charge for advice. You’re probably more familiar with bargain basement advice. It flies around like bees on a crepe myrtle. Some is useful. The rest is total garbage.

A powerful lesson on advice appears in Exodus 18. Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, saw that Moses spent days at a time advising God’s people on their concerns.

Jethro knew Moses couldn’t tote that load alone.

The elder offered sage guidance. “Now listen to me: I will give you counsel (advice). You be the people’s representative before God.” (v. 19).

Jethro suggested that Moses teach some of the godly folks how to handle part of the workload.

Moses heeded that advice and implemented Jethro’s organizational flow chart. It freed Moses to do more vital ministry.

Here’s a tutorial for receiving and giving advice.

### Receiving advice:

1. Hear it with an open mind.
2. Weigh it before you follow it.
3. Consider the trustworthiness of the source.
4. Ask for God’s input in prayer.
5. Act on it, put it on a shelf or shred it.

### Giving advice:

Evaluate the situation. Ask these questions:

- ▶ Am I qualified to comment on this matter?
- ▶ What’s my motivation for comment?
- ▶ Does the person trust me?
- ▶ Is my input needed?

Be Jethro and Moses wise. It pays big time when you receive or give good free advice.

**Darryl Wood**  
“A Personal Word from a Retread Pastor” blog via Facebook

Eddie Gibson (right) takes legal steps to help protect the Dellanna West O'Brien School in Liberia.

# Rebuilding takes time



Photo courtesy of Eddie Gibson

## Liberian Christian school works toward strengthening gospel presence

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

**E**ddie Gibson says it took 20 years for the Dellanna West O'Brien School to get to where it was before a man allegedly drove a bulldozer through the campus in February.

So Gibson isn't afraid to be patient for God to provide the way to build it back.

"I realize it won't happen overnight," said Gibson, who bought the land for the school years ago using funds raised through Eddie Gibson International Ministries, based in Birmingham. "Gradually we believe God will enable us to get it down the road."

Gibson, a native of Liberia, said God gave him the vision to build the school in 1999 when missionaries came to his school and taught the Bible to students. He could see the potential for schools that would not only provide needed education but also produce disciples of Jesus.

"God has been faithful to that conversation," Gibson said. "I have

baptized students and teachers myself."

But the school's facilities were destroyed earlier this year when a man in the community who was angry over a land dispute allegedly used a bulldozer to push over the buildings. Gibson was hoping the man would be convicted of

the crime, but so far that hasn't happened.

So Gibson said he's focusing not on the legal battle but on getting the school rebuilt.

Since the buildings were destroyed, students have been meeting in makeshift classrooms with tarps. They will continue to do so in the fall with nearly 300 students, 40 of whom will graduate later this year.

Gibson hopes to attend those celebrations. In the meantime, he's back in Birmingham — where he and his wife have lived since fleeing Liberia's civil war in 1990 — raising funds to rebuild.

The effort will start with a 33,000-foot-long fence to circle the

property and keep students and facilities safe, said Gibson, pastor of Brewster Road Community Church in Birmingham. As they work toward building the fence, they're calling it the Nehemiah Project, studying and praying through the book of Nehemiah as they look for partners to come alongside to help build the fence foot by foot.

The second phase of the rebuild will be a water system.

### Sharing Christ

"There's no water system, no clean water," Gibson said. This was an issue before the destruction — the school had some hand pumps, but as the student population grew, the pumps failed to

keep up. The rebuild will offer the chance to meet this need, and a \$25,000 grant from national

Woman's Missionary Union's Pure Water, Pure Love ministry will help make that happen.

The third phase will be a two-story building with 40 classrooms.

"We found out the community is growing in population, and since ours is one of the most

credible high schools in the area, we think it will be good to have room to grow," Gibson said, noting they also want to offer vocational classes past high school. "We're not just doing academics, which is good for the community. We also want to do it for discipleship purposes. It becomes an opportunity for us to present Christ."

To learn more visit [brccbham.org](http://brccbham.org). To read the original story, visit [tabonline.org/liberian-school-burned](http://tabonline.org/liberian-school-burned).



Photo courtesy of Eddie Gibson

The Dellanna West O'Brien School in Liberia hosts a Parent and Teacher Association meeting.

*"We found out the community is growing in population ... [so] we think it will be good to have room to grow."*

Eddie Gibson of Eddie Gibson International Ministries



Photo courtesy of Eddie Gibson

A land dispute led to the destruction of buildings at the Dellanna West O'Brien School in Liberia. A \$25,000 grant from national WMU's Pure Water, Pure Love ministry will help supply clean water to the compound.

# Children's Homes develops mini-courses on budgeting

By Erin Roach  
TAB Media

**B**udget preparation guides and other resources for churches now are offered free of charge from the staff of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, a ministry supported by the Cooperative Program, local churches and individuals.

ABCH Learn is "free content and mini-courses developed by our team of professionals to help moms, dads and church leaders across the state. We hope it will be a blessing," said ABCH president Rod Marshall.

ABCH is the largest faith-based provider of foster care services in Alabama, ministering to children and teenagers as well as adults.

ABCH wants to help churches who may not be large enough to have specialized services, such as managing budgets and creating strategies, said Todd McMichen, chief development officer for ABCH.

"We have a lot of similar skill sets to church staffs here on our staff, so we thought we would turn our processes and experiences loose," he said.

Available now at [alabamachild.org/learn-church-budgeting](http://alabamachild.org/learn-church-budgeting) is "Mini-Course 1: Aligning Vision and Budget."

"What we created was one introductory video to help pastors kind of understand what the tools were," McMichen said.

"Then there are three lessons, and each lesson consists of one video that lasts about a minute. Then there's a blog on a topic with some assignments."

One tool is a document by Chip

Colee, ABCH's chief administrative officer, listing five questions a pastor should consider before presenting a budget, such as, "Are you presenting a vision for ministry and a funding plan or just a budget?"

The document then explains how to consider a ministry-based financial plan.

Another tool is an Excel church budgeting template developed by Grace Wood, director of accounting and finance.

Churches can "enter prior year numbers to track income and expense trends, project income and expenses for the coming year and formulate an overall plan to fund the ministry vision," McMichen said.

Pastors can engage the resources in preparation for a meeting with a committee or involve a group in the learning process.

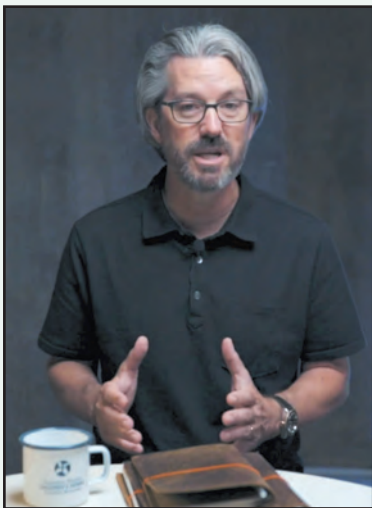
## Vision-casting

One lesson covers how to launch a sermon series aimed at vision-casting and engaging people in praying, volunteering and giving.

"At the Children's Home we have a lot of expertise that's almost well-hidden because most of what we do is helping children from hard places," McMichen said.

"But that is transferable in ministry, so our staff of counselors and social workers are oftentimes speaking in churches and small group settings, doing training.

"We're kind of on a path to take that knowledge and experience public."



Screenshot

Todd McMichen, chief development officer for the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, is part of developing resources to help churches.

For more information, visit [alabamachild.org/nextsteps](http://alabamachild.org/nextsteps).



BP photo

Tusculum Hills World Outreach Pastor Terry Hudgins (left) and missionary Kori Bailey (right) shown with a Karen refugee, are among those helping prepare the Nashville World Outreach Partnership for the possibility of serving Afghans fleeing Taliban rule.

# Nashville ministry gears up for possible Afghan refugees

By Diana Chandler  
Baptist Press

**P**astor Terry Dale Hudgins was in chapel at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary 27 years ago when he heard God's call to international missions.

Decades later, as the world prepares to accept thousands of Afghans fleeing Taliban rule, Hudgins sees God's call realized as he directs the Nashville World Outreach Partnership, a refugee and immigrant ministry based at Tusculum Hills Baptist Church in a diverse community with 20 nationalities and languages.

## 'We need to get ready'

"We were just talking about we need to get ready for Afghanistan, because more than likely there'll be some making their way to Nashville," Hudgins said. "We're just assuming there will be because of when the Kurdish population was brought to America [in 1996], most all the Kurdish people ended up in Nashville, and we have the largest population of Kurdish in the country.

"We don't know that they are coming here, but we're going to certainly prepare as though they are coming. Then we'll see what happens."

In addition to Tusculum Hills Baptist, the partnership is comprised of Forest Hills Baptist Church in suburban Brentwood and the down-

town Nashville First Baptist Church.

Both Forest Hills and Nashville First contribute to the ministry financial gifts, volunteers and administrative support. The Nashville arm of Urban Promise International and Legacy Mission Village are community-based partners.

## 'Big blue cross'

"Tusculum is centrally located to all the refugees and immigrants coming into Nashville. ... Just about everybody on Nolensville Road uses the big blue neon cross we have as the landmark," Hudgins said. "Even when we meet Muslim individuals, they all know about the big blue cross."

Tusculum Hills hosts several international congregations, including Zomi from India, Karen from Burma and Thailand, Chinese and Sudanese. The most recent addition is a Spanish congregation birthed in cooperation with the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board.

Sharing the gospel is the partnership's ultimate goal, Hudgins said.

"Everything we do, that is our end goal — to share the gospel and then enable them to share the gospel with their family and friends, whether they're here or they get to go back to Burma or Thailand or Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan."

Read more about the Nashville World Outreach Partnership at [tabonline.org/nashville-outreach](http://tabonline.org/nashville-outreach).

# Discouragement grows as COVID-19 resurges

Throughout the spring and summer, as COVID-19 cases declined across the U.S., most churches returned to in-person services with hopes of full pews by fall. The recent coronavirus upswing has Americans more cautious and church leaders looking to adapt.

July marked the first time since January that more adults felt pessimistic about the pandemic than optimistic, according to Gallup.

In June, 89% expressed optimism about the COVID situation and only 8% felt things were getting worse. More Americans now say the situation is getting worse (45%) rather than better (40%), Gallup reported.

The U.S. public now expects the pandemic to stretch to the end of 2021 and possibly beyond, with few believing things will be back to normal in a few more months. And that COVID-related pessimism may have an effect on churches.

## Churches adapt

Alabama churches are adapting as the state experiences a record-setting surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.

In Centreville, Haysop Baptist Church canceled services after the pastor and several members of his family tested COVID-19 positive.

And despite the summer heat, on Aug. 1, First Baptist Church St. Elmo in Mobile County went back to offering a drive-in service.

Pastor Jeff Gardner said 10 members of the small congregation contracted COVID-19 in July, which led to the decision.

“Most have had very mild symp-

oms,” he told TAB Media. “One was hospitalized for more than a week, but they are back at home and improving.”

The church also continues to have an indoor service, but church leaders encourage the wearing of masks, even for the vaccinated, as congregants enter and take their seats.

## Watching and wrestling

Across the state, church leaders are watching the situation and wrestling with decisions about weekly and special events, all while trying to encourage their church members.

Mark Bethea, pastor of First Baptist Church Montgomery, wrote in a Facebook post that he joined others in being “deeply concerned about the rise of COVID cases.”

“Our hospitals are crowded; our frontline health care workers are stretched thin; and we are all weary from COVID concerns,” he wrote. “My heart continues to be heavy but encouraged by trusting God’s sufficient grace for each day!”

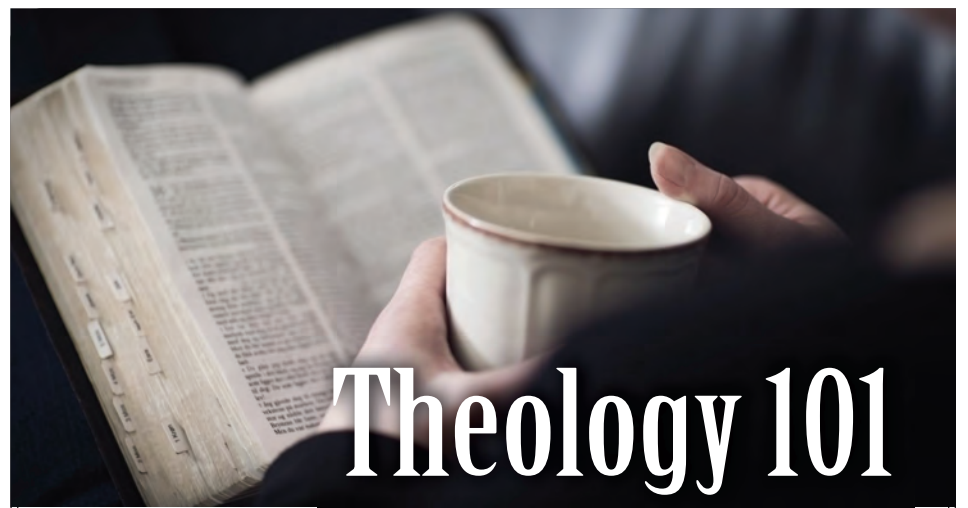
Andy Frazier, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Sumiton, also acknowledged the stressful times on Facebook: “Let’s commit to pray more and complain less. Let’s offer help where we can, instead of finger pointing and ranting. Be patient with those making decisions.” (Lifeway Research, TAB Media)

*EDITOR’S NOTE — Read the full article and additional survey results from Lifeway Research at [tabonline.org/covid-discouragement](https://tabonline.org/covid-discouragement).*



Screenshot

Pastor Jeff Gardner preaches at a drive-up service at FBC St. Elmo on Aug. 22.



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## The Spirit's Ministry

# Guiding and enabling

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

TAB Media

Having previously given thought to the Holy Spirit’s work of convicting and birthing sinners into God’s kingdom, as well as His ministry of teaching and gifting those who are members of that Kingdom, this week attention is drawn to the Holy Spirit’s ministry of guiding and enabling.

As for the Spirit’s guiding, Christ promised the Spirit would guide His followers into truth, saying, “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

Furthermore, being led or guided by the Spirit is one evidence of being a child of God, according to Romans 8:14: “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

The guidance of the Spirit was a major factor in Paul’s missionary ministry.

At one point thought was given to taking the gospel into Asia, but Paul and his team “were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia” (Acts 16:6).

Later, the team thought to go into Bithynia, “but the Spirit did not permit them” (Acts 16:7). This guidance prepared Paul and the others for the advance of the gospel into Europe, in obedience to a vision in the night in which a Macedonian man pleaded with Paul, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9).

The Holy Spirit seeks to guide God’s children to know what to

do and where to go in the service of the gospel.

Not only does the Spirit guide believers in knowing and sharing the truth of the gospel, He enables us to do so out of genuine love for the Lord and for people. Romans 5:5 includes the reminder that “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

## Showing divine love

God’s people should be motivated by divine love, as well as guided by that love, so the ministries they perform show forth divine love. How can this happen? It is by the enabling of the Spirit. A vast difference exists between service done out of duty and that done out of love.

When Galatians 5:22–23 identifies “the fruit of the Spirit,” the list is headed by love. Not only love, but the Spirit also enables believers to experience joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Our world has great need, and the Spirit enables those who confess to be Christians to provide ministry.

*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.*



# PUTTING FEET TO FAITH

## Jubilee Baptist college students minister in Montana, see God's faithfulness

By Norm Miller  
TAB Media

**H**ow can we improve the college ministry at our church?"

That's the question John Saxon and Greg Walker pondered last February. Saxon is family pastor at Jubilee Baptist Church in Daphne where Walker is Sunday School teacher for young singles.

Improving ministry to college-aged church members included a missions trip to Kalispell, Montana, this summer, where John had reached out to Les Walton, executive vice president of Yellowstone Christian College. Formerly based in Billings, the school purchased a vacated campus in Kalispell that needed indoor and outdoor work to prepare for the fall semester.

Saxon caught his breath as tears welled in his eyes. He said he was "blessed by seeing God work to do exactly what we had been praying for."

That prayer sought a deeper fellowship for the church's 18–24 age group. "The main objective was to pull together college students who were barely acquaintances to do this missions trip, and to allow them to serve and grow closer together as a group."

### Assistance and fellowship

Saxon said the team "served the Lord by assisting what He is doing in this location," and fellowship grew among team members on the July 24–31 endeavor.

Walker noted he and Saxon were "very intentional about reengaging the church's college age group. And you build that through community, through lessons, and you get away and connect.

"That's what this has been about. When we get back, I expect this



Photo by Norm Miller

A team of college students from Jubilee Baptist Church in Daphne ministered in Montana this summer. Pictured are (front row, l to r) Calista Patterson, Hannah McLaurin, Kyndall Nelms, Candy Saxon, Madi Saxon, Maddie Hill, (back row, l to r) Sydney Patterson, Greg Walker, Hunter McLaurin, John Saxon, Trace Dixon, Isaac Godfrey and Rachel Fuller.

motivation for reengagement will continue as some go off to college and some will stay."

Scrubbing bathrooms, cleaning dorm rooms, dusting, vacuuming, mowing, weed-eating, painting and unloading four moving vans full of books and furniture may not evoke warm fuzzies for some young people. Nor does such labor typify the behavior of some in that age on summer break from college.

"I think it's important as a Christian to put works to your faith, so I saw this as an opportunity to serve," said Rachel Fuller. "Seeing the Lord's timing in all of this has been such a big blessing too."

A team devotional on Proverbs 27:17 and the "iron sharpens iron" principle motivated Sydney Patterson to "grow closer to my church family and to display our faith for everyone to see."

Blessed by deepened relationships, she said, "God has used our spiritual gifts to complement each other so we could accomplish the goals we had this week. To see His faithfulness, that's been really cool."

### Trusting God

Madi Saxon added, "We got off the plane not knowing exactly what we'd be doing this week. To get here and to work and have fun — just trusting in the Lord that things go right has been a big part of this."

Noting that YCC was outgrowing its Billings campus, Hunter McLaurin said, "I felt a calling to come here and to work and help in any way I could," adding he also wanted to make a deeper connection with God because "I think He is trying to show me something about the future — a role He wants me in that I'm still trying to figure out."

Candy Saxon, who recently

completed her first phase of chemotherapy, said "This was a reward trip for me, a celebratory service trip. I have been blessed by being recharged and refreshed and not having to think about doctors and cancer this week."

As team cook, Saxon said she "enjoyed bonding with these wonderful kids."

### Making an impact

Calista Patterson wanted to help get the school facilities ready and "help impact the community of Kalispell and the maturity and growth of the students that will be here."

"The results that we've seen I feel have been a blessing to our church," she said. "It's been amazing to me to realize that ministry doesn't always happen in big events. It can be in small events that feed on down the line."

Noting encouraging team devotional and share-times, Patterson said, "Our paths cross often at church, but not in this intimate environment."

Gratified by the trip's success, John Saxon said, "At the end of the day, it's all about serving the Lord and doing Kingdom work."

YCC President Marvin Jones praised the group, saying, "The team from Jubilee ... served us and the Lord joyfully. They genuinely care about God's work and what we are attempting to do in Montana, which is still a pioneer state for Southern Baptist work.

"Our team here cannot thank John and Greg and their team nearly enough," he added. "We are debtors to Jubilee Baptist Church too. I know God will bless Jubilee for serving outwardly. Our prayer is for God to bless them all in an overwhelming way so that there will not be room enough to receive it."

# Blending in

## Missionary kids learn U.S. culture before college

By Roger Alford  
The Christian Index

**W**earing shorts and a T-shirt, a soon-to-be college freshman is hanging out with friends who, like her, grew up in missionary families serving around the world.

She's in an outfit she couldn't wear in the predominately Muslim country where her parents serve with the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board.

"I didn't have to wear a burqa, but I wore a scarf. Without the scarf, whatever you were wearing was considered an inappropriate outfit."

Life is certainly going to be different for her and

about 50 of her missionary friends who have returned to the U.S. this fall for college and careers.

They recently spent time at a reentry retreat in the Georgia mountains, a safe haven where they can be reacquainted with American customs and culture.

### New freedom

These teens have lived their formative years in faraway places, working alongside their parents to share the gospel, often in communities that were openly hostile to Christianity.

"I didn't go out by myself," said the teen who grew up in a part of the world that was especially dangerous for Christians.

"There's so much more freedom in the U.S. Here, I can go to the mall and visit with my friends, and it's no big deal."

That's one of life's little pleasures she doesn't take for granted. She and her missionary friends are currently settling into college campuses, others are going into the military and others will find jobs.

Ben Brinkley, IMB's education program manager, said the week's focus is "just helping them transition."

During the retreat, they received a crash course in all things American, picking up on nuances that their peers who grew up in the U.S. take for granted.

IMB partners with



The Christian Index photo

Georgia Baptists gave a group of 50 missionary kids a hero's welcome to the Pinnacle Retreat Center near Clayton.

national Woman's Missionary Union to provide reentry training for between 50 to 90 missionary kids each year.

### Gospel impact

Brinkley said he expects the young missionaries to have a major gospel impact on college campuses and in workplaces. IMB President Paul Chitwood agreed.

"Our IMB family includes more than 2,700 children who serve overseas with

their parents," Chitwood said. "As they graduate high school, most of those young people transition to the U.S. for college or career opportunities.

"They come with the same passion to see the lost saved that led their families to leave their native land and go to the nations. It's exciting to see how God uses them in churches and campus ministries across the country."

NEW CONFERENCE FORMAT



## 2021 ALABAMA BAPTIST PASTORS CONFERENCE

**DATE:** Nov. 15

**TIME:** 11:30 AM

**LOCATION:** FBC Decatur

**COST:** \$10 (includes lunch and dinner)

MUST REGISTER AT [ALBAPTISTPC.COM](http://ALBAPTISTPC.COM)

## GUEST SPEAKERS



**DR. KEVIN EZELL**  
President  
North American Mission Board  
Alpharetta, Ga.



**DR. JUNIOR HILL**  
Pastor, evangelist  
Hartselle, Ala.



**DR. ROBERT SMITH**  
Charles T. Carter Baptist  
Chair of Divinity,  
Beeson Divinity School  
Birmingham, Ala.

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# 'Limitless:' A story of struggle, persistence, hope

By Tracy Riggs  
TAB Media

A little girl with a fighting spirit. A mom who didn't give up. A God who didn't work an instant miracle but continues to work. A story of struggle, persistence and hope.

Jamie and Megan Rowe's first pregnancy was normal until Megan began labor early at 19 weeks and went on bed rest. Brynleigh was born at 39 weeks, but there were some complications.

"We got to see her about 10 hours later. They had started running all kinds of tests to figure out how much damage was done," Rowe explained. "We're not positive how long she was without oxygen, but by the time we got to her at that 10-hour mark, she was breathing on her own."

That wasn't all. Brynleigh had severe jaundice and abnormal lab results, so she stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit for six days. She also had a cleft palate.

After that scary begin-

ning, everything seemed OK. Then 2-month-old Brynleigh had a seizure, flailing and turning blue. Testing again showed abnormalities but a cause wasn't found.

"From that day forward, Brynleigh's medical journey went 90 miles per hour down the interstate," Megan said.

Brynleigh continued to have seizures, never slept through the night, choked on her bottle and wasn't hitting developmental milestones. Doctors said nothing was wrong because tests, including genetic testing, came back normal.

## 'Questioning God'

Megan grew up Southern Baptist, going to church "every time the doors opened," she said. They are members at Enon Baptist Church in Morris. Other than Brynleigh's issues, the family was doing well.

"We did everything the right way, and now our baby's sick, and nobody can help. I started questioning God like most people who



Photo courtesy of Megan Rowe  
Jamie and Megan Rowe encourage their daughter Brynleigh to live without limits. The Rows say they have daily opportunities to share their family's testimony.

have kids with disabilities. What did we do wrong that our baby deserves this?" Megan asked.

Then Jamie was furloughed due to COVID-19. Feeling completely defeated, the family decided to go out of town. Visiting Gulf Shores, they realized God hadn't forgotten them.

The second day of the trip, Jamie ran into their room saying Megan needed to go to the splash pad — there was a child with the same issues as Brynleigh walking with a walker. He told Megan they needed to talk to that family. The family let Brynleigh use their son's walker the entire day.

"Brynleigh stood up on that walker like she had done it 10,000 times and took off walking," she remembered. "She was crying, watching her feet; everyone at the pool was crying; the people we just met were crying. It was a really cool experience.

"This was a God-thing; we were supposed to meet this family."

## Advocating for Bryn

The other mom urged them to keep advocating for Brynleigh, and the encouragement was what the couple needed.

God's involvement continued. Though COVID-19

made things more difficult, they discovered early intervention and Brynleigh started receiving physical, occupational and speech therapy, as well as special instruction.

Seeking a more accurate diagnosis, Megan called Vanderbilt University in Nashville and begged for help. She got in the next week with top pediatric neurologist Emma Carter, who set up appointments with various specialists and ran more tests.

Diagnoses started coming in. Brynleigh had epilepsy, sensory processing disorder and a cleft palate so severe she should have been on a feeding tube.

## Genetic testing

Genetic testing revealed that Brynleigh had an SPG11 gene mutation, a very rare condition like ALS/Lou Gehrig's disease. Though it doesn't affect life expectancy, within 10 years Brynleigh could be a paraplegic.

Fast-forward a year. Even though Brynleigh is a "girly girl," she continues to fight.

Her epilepsy is like a continuous "charley horse" throughout her body. The pain used to make her self-harm, but she now closes

her eyes and keeps going, Megan said. She's beginning to talk after surgery on her cleft palate. Some days she can walk and run; others she isn't mobile. If someone stares at her in her neon pink wheelchair, Brynleigh just smiles and waves. "She has zero cares," Megan said.

## Watching God move

Because Brynleigh's disease is so rare, insurance coverage is limited. God provides through donations and motivational "Limitless" bracelets.

"As a society, we set limits for people with all types of handicaps, but we want Brynleigh to remember she is limitless," Megan said. "Just because something is more difficult for her doesn't mean she shouldn't try to achieve it — it's the world's limits not hers!"

"My hope is that every time someone looks at Bryn's bracelet on their wrist, they are reminded to celebrate everyone's differences and remember that our differences are

what make each of us limitless."

Though Brynleigh's life will never be easy, the Rows know if they depend on God they will make it.

"We've watched Brynleigh move mountains and affect people," Megan said.

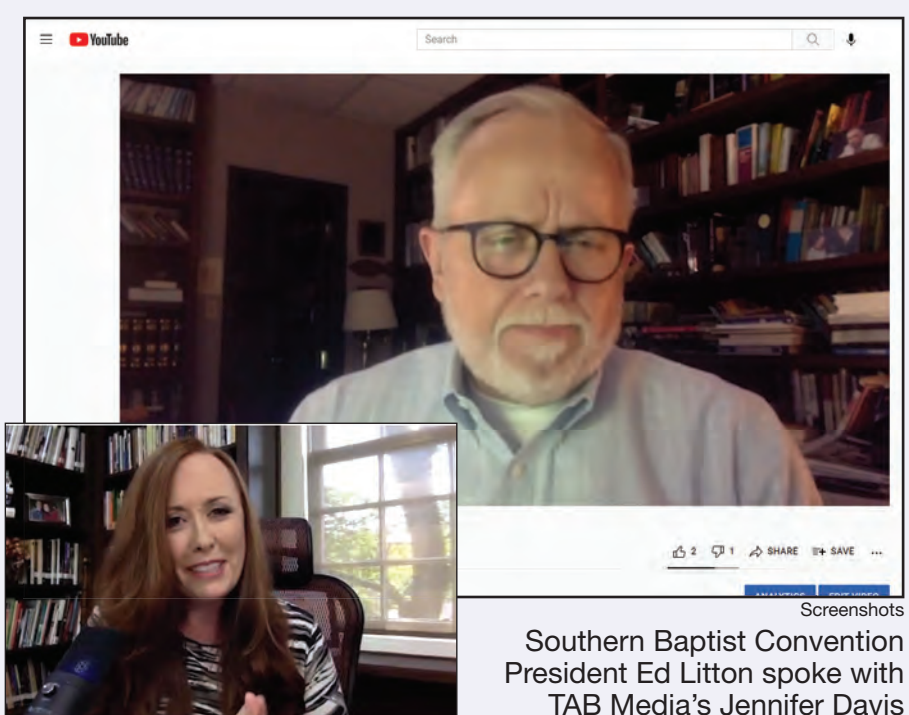
"She doesn't meet a stranger, so we have the opportunity daily to share Bryn's testimony and how God's working through her.

"Do I still struggle with my faith? Of course, because I watch my baby struggle every day. I think it would be abnormal if I didn't. But every time we get down and out and wonder what to do, God's like, 'But watch this!' You can't ask for anything more than to watch God move through your kid."

Follow "Bryn's Bunch" on Facebook or email [brynsbunch@yahoo.com](mailto:brynsbunch@yahoo.com).

# 3 stories

## you should know



Screenshots

Southern Baptist Convention President Ed Litton spoke with TAB Media's Jennifer Davis Rash about his first 10 weeks in office, his formation of a task force to study the SBC's handling of sexual abuse and what he has learned so far in his role as SBC president. Litton serves as pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland. Watch the full interview at [tabonline.org/ed-litton](http://tabonline.org/ed-litton).

### *Crises in Afghanistan, Haiti prompt Send Relief response*

Send Relief, the compassion arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, is working with global partners following recent crises in Afghanistan and Haiti.

Taliban insurgents overtook the Afghan government Aug. 15, triggering a mass exodus from the nation. Afghan Christians are among those fleeing what they expect is imminent persecution under Taliban rule. Send Relief is working with World Relief to help refugees.

In Haiti, Send Relief is partnering with the Florida Baptist Convention and local Haitian churches to meet food, medical and shelter needs of those impacted by the 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck Aug. 14. At least 2,200 people are dead, and thousands more are displaced.

Go to [sendrelief.org](http://sendrelief.org) for more information. (TAB Media)

### *SBC Executive Committee selects Porter to lead BP*

Brandon Porter, communications director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention and editor of Kentucky Today, has been chosen as associate vice president for convention news for the SBC Executive Committee and will direct the daily operations of Baptist Press.



**PORTER**

He has extensive media experience including broadcast roles in the Birmingham market.

Porter also previously served on staff at several churches in Kentucky and two churches in Birmingham — youth pastor at Berney Points Baptist (1998–99) and pastor of Ruffner Valley Baptist (2000). (TAB Media)

## Headline news

### from around the Southeast

#### **Florida**

While searching for a children's camp experience for her impoverished community, Connie McClendon, retired children's director at First Baptist Church of Quincy, knew Chick-fil-A's WinShape Camps would be a perfect fit, reported the Florida Baptist Witness. A Chick-fil-A owner/operator from Tallahassee offered to sponsor the camp, which it has for five years now. This summer, 182 campers attended, with 13 professing faith in Christ. "I want the children of Gadsden County to hear the gospel," McClendon said.

#### **Kentucky**

More than 200 participants had the chance to strengthen their biblical language skills at the recent Greek and Hebrew for Life conference at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, SBTS News reported. Ray Umphrey,

pastor of Briggs Road Baptist Church in Columbus, Ohio, explained that he loves "sharing fellowship with others who share a passion for the biblical languages."

#### **Louisiana**

Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Fellowship Church in Lake Charles first opened its parking lot ministry to serve those impacted by Hurricane Laura, but the ministry has grown beyond expectations, the Baptist Message reported. The church, with an average worship attendance of 15, serves up to 150 motorists boxed meals every Saturday, leading to 20 professions of faith. Pastor Clyde Lewis explained, "We are called to the people's business. People matter to God so people have to matter to us."

#### **Tennessee**

"There's nothing better you can do for the

Lord than teaching His Word," said Marge Tucker. For the past 55 years, "Miss Marge" has been doing just that, teaching Sunday School and leading youth Bible drill at First Baptist Church in Huntingdon, the Baptist and Reflector reported. Members gathered to honor Miss Marge recently, sharing countless stories of how her love for Christ has impacted their lives.

#### **Virginia**

After dropping their son off at Liberty University in Lynchburg, native Texans Charles and Tranay Wilson stopped in Roanoke never imagining the Lord would use an ice cream stop to plant a desire in their hearts. Following God's call, the Wilsons moved to Roanoke to plant The Hill Church, reported the Proclaimer. Pastor Charles Wilson hopes for a place of worship and ministry as they "have people from all walks of life and from all over the city."

NEWS

# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

▶ **Bob Williamson**, a longtime Alabama Baptist pastor and missionary to Africa, died July 25. He was 75.

After graduating from Vigor High School in Mobile, Williamson was drafted into the Army during his first year of college and served as a drill sergeant at Fort Benning in Georgia during the Vietnam War.

After he returned to his studies in 1969, he earned a bachelor's degree in religion from Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and a master of divinity degree and doctor of ministry degree from Southwestern Seminary.

Williamson served as pastor of Alvord Baptist Church, Alvord, Texas, and Pinedale Baptist Church, Montgomery, before he and his wife, Vicki, were appointed as career missionaries with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) to southern Africa.

After two terms, they returned to Alabama for 15 years. During that time, he served at First Baptist Church Eclectic and Moffett Road Baptist Church, Mobile.

In 1996, the Williamsons returned to Africa where they served until they retired in 2011 with 21 years of total service there.

When they returned, he served as pastor of Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, and helped the church rebuild after a tornado destroyed the facilities. The couple served in ministry together for 50 years total.

Williamson is survived by his wife of 53 years; daughter, Melissa Ann; son, Robert Nathan; and five grandchildren.

▶ **James "Bud" Jacks** — pastor of Plainview Baptist Church, Talladega — died Aug. 7. He was 68.

A native of Sylacauga, Jacks spent the past 20 years in Clay County. He worked for Avondale Mills in addition to serving in ministry. Before coming to Plainview Baptist, he served other churches including Redeemed Christian Fellowship Center, Sylacauga.

Jacks is survived by his wife, Susan; daughters, Rosie, Amy, Cindy, Traci and Kathy; 13 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

▶ **Don Smith**, former pastor of several churches in west Alabama, died Aug. 21. He was 85.

A Birmingham native, Smith spent a few years after high school working secular jobs and serving in the Navy Reserves. In 1962, he surrendered to a call to ministry. After completing his education, he spent the next 47 years serving churches in Arkansas and Alabama, including Fairhaven Baptist Church,

Demopolis; Moundville Baptist Church; and Rangeline Baptist Church, Linden.

Smith is survived by his wife of 62 years, Patricia; daughters, Leigh Anna and Linda; son, Donald Wayne; five grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

## BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Gregory Brown** is the new pastor of **Bayside Baptist Church, Lillian**. He previously served as a pastor in Indiana and as a hospice chaplain in Texas. He is a graduate of Southern Seminary. He and his wife,



BROWN

Debbie, have three children and one grandchild.



STRINGER

▶ **Corey Stringer** is the new worship pastor at First Baptist Church Bay Minette. He previously served as worship pastor at Southside Baptist Church. He studied worship leadership at Liberty University. He and his wife, Amy, have two children.

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host southern gospel group The Clay Boys on Sept. 3. Supper begins at 6 p.m. and is followed by the singing at 7. Scott Bush is pastor.

## BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

▶ **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a third Sunday night singing Sept. 19, 5 p.m., featuring Sonlife Quartet from Chattanooga, Tennessee. For more information call 256-796-5986. Earl Harper is pastor.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Senior adults gather July 29 at First Baptist Church Trussville for Oasis 2021.

## Oasis 2021 provides afternoon of laughter

More than 800 people — and their laughter and smiles — filled the auditorium at First Baptist Church Trussville on July 29 for Oasis 2021. Presented by Frank Jones Ministries, Oasis is an annual event for senior adults and features Jones on piano.

Bob Smith, minister to seasoned adults at FBC Trussville, kicked off the afternoon of music and laughter.

FBC Pickers from First Baptist Church Guntersville and Paid in Full from New Albany, Mississippi, led the music.

Dennis Swanberg, known as "America's minister of encouragement," filled the room with laughter.

"Don't let anyone rob you of your joy," he said. (TAB Media)

## Persecuted church

### *Billy Graham, Spurgeon books banned in Luhansk, Ukraine*

DOVZHANSK, Ukraine — Two books by prominent Protestant preachers were added in July to a list of extremist materials in Luhansk People's Republic (a territory in Ukraine) and now are banned.

Quoting a Forum 18 report, Barnabas Fund said a Luhansk court ruled earlier this year that "Born to Die," by Billy Graham, and "The Door Is Open," by 19th-century English preacher C.H. Spurgeon (pictured), are "extremist." The total of Christian works on the extremist list is now 18; they were confiscated from the Council of Baptist Churches in Dovzhansk, the report stated.

Arguing that the books are "propaganda of

exceptionalism, superiority and inadequacy of the individual ...," the Luhansk General Prosecutor's Office said banning them is



Wikipedia.org

necessary to protect the younger generation and promote safety in the republic, Barnabas Fund reported. The office claims the

books "incite religious discord."

Luhansk People's Republic declared itself independent of Ukraine in 2014 but is not internationally recognized as sovereign. They consider themselves Russian, not Ukrainian, the report noted. (Leigh Pritchett)



SMITH

# Church event connects variety of ethnic groups, expands reach

(continued from page 1)

That included the young man who gave Davis the idea in the first place.

Each Wednesday night camp included drills, snacks and devotional and gospel presentations. The first night, 50 kids showed up, and as they invited friends, that number increased, Thomas said.

Davis noted that of all the children who attended, maybe only five already were connected to the church.

“What an opportunity to share with people,” she said.

As the kids played, volunteers including Juan and Juliana Felipe walked around and spent intentional time connecting with families. The fact that the Felipes were there was another clear sign of the hand of God on the whole situation, Thomas said.

“With the high level of Spanish-speakers in Shelby County, we had been praying for God to raise up leaders for a Spanish ministry,” he noted.

Then Brian Harper, an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, reached out to

Concord to see if a potential church planter from Texas could use their church’s pastorium until he and his wife discovered where God was calling them to plant.

That man was Juan Felipe. “They were with us all summer,” Thomas said. “He was one of the coaches at our camp, and his wife was going around engaging the Spanish-speakers and invit-



Photo by Sherry Carlisle

Concord Church’s soccer camp provided a variety of ways for members to connect with families in the community.

ing them to the Bible study they started at the taco stand in Calera.”

Concord now provides the Felipes with support, hoping the Bible study will grow into a church plant out of their congregation.

They’re also hoping the camp will help build relationships in the community.

Davis said after the four weeks of soccer camp, Concord hosted an awards night they used as “more of a

remembrance of what God did for us during this time — making friends, providing good weather and a chance to share the gospel every week.”

Families from a variety of countries not only

participated, but brought their own food to share.

“We felt like God-given connections were made,” Davis said.

She hopes many of the children will continue coming on Wednesday nights now that they’re connected — only now it will be for Awana, a program where they can learn more about Jesus on a weekly basis.

Thomas noted many of the families at the camp already had been coming to the church’s drive-through food distribution. And since the soccer camp, they’ve had new families visit the church.

## Disciple making

He said Concord prays all of it will be a continual disciple-making process.

And church members already are making plans for next year’s soccer camp.

“It was the birth of something that I think could become something even more special in the years to come,” Thomas said. “I think it was a fantastic thing for our church — the excitement for our people to see God do something to engage those who aren’t a part of our church and are in our community.”

Davis said she’d never seen God work in such a specific way as He did to bring the soccer camp and everything around it together.

“I’ve seen Him work over my years, but this was definitely God, and I give Him all the glory,” she said. “I know He is wanting this church to be a place where people can come and be loved and disciplined and go out and reach other people. God is bringing it together — we are just His hands and feet.”

## 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. Send resumé to Jemison First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 760, Jemison, AL 35085 or resumes@jemisonfirstbaptist.com.

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Concord Highland Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: CHBC2672@bellsouth.net or mail to: 105 Concord Highland Drive, Hueytown, AL 35023.

#### SENIOR PASTOR

FBC Dawes in Mobile, Ala., is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Email resumé to: fbcdpastorsearch2021@gmail.com or mail to: FBC Dawes, 3941 Dawes Rd., Mobile, AL 36695. ATTN: Pastor Search Committee. Please include links to online sermons or other reference materials.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Uriah, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please mail resumé to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 337, Uriah, AL 36480.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

#### MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ala., is seeking a full-time or part-time candidate to lead our worship ministry. Please submit resumé to: office@fbcwoodstock.org.

#### BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

FBC Gallant in Gallant, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational worship leader. Please email resumé to: fbcgallant@gmail.com.

### WORSHIP AND/OR YOUTH PASTOR

New Hinson Baptist Church in Slocomb, Ala., is seeking a worship and/or youth pastor to lead a blended worship service as well as serve in our youth ministry. Positions could be divided into two part-time positions or one full-time position depending on qualifications. Please email resumé to: newhinson.com.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### PRINCIPAL

Cornerstone Christian Academy in Rainsville, Ala., is seeking our next principal. Primary responsibilities include developing disciples for Christ and oversight of the educational ministry of the institution. Applicant will need to have appropriate educational degrees and affirm the school’s Statement of Faith. Visit the school’s website at www.cca-eagles.com. Contact Jason Wilks at jwilks@hudsoncoinc.com and Shaunathan Bell at clint\_b27@yahoo.com.

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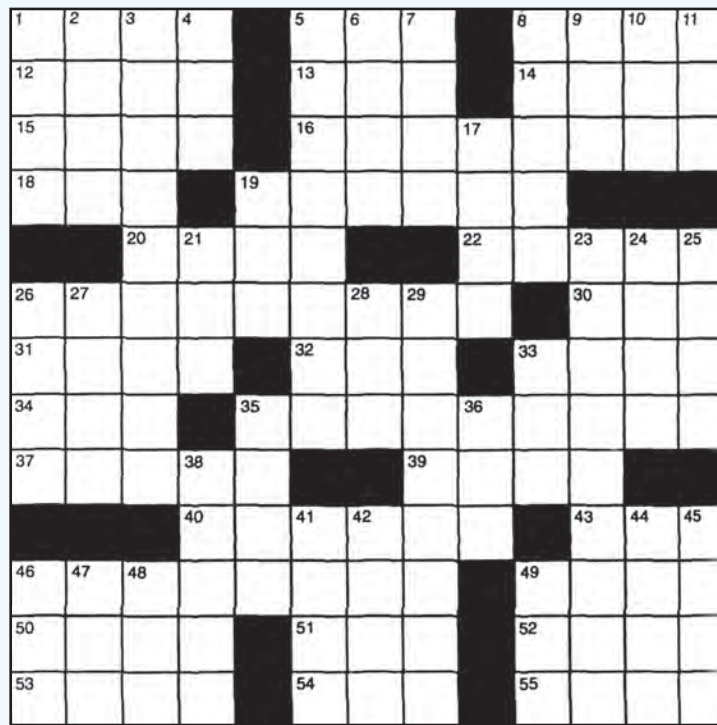
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# CHRISTIAN crossword

## ACROSS

1. There is no fear in \_\_\_\_\_. (1 John 4:18)
5. Depot. (abbr.)
8. Jacob's brother.
12. Persia.
13. Slippery fish.
14. Outdoors.
15. Man.
16. Thy word is a \_\_\_\_\_ my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
18. Samuel's mentor.
19. It is I; be not \_\_\_\_\_. (John 6:20)
20. Plunges.
22. Ancient city of Edom.
26. Scent.
30. Embrace.
31. Car.
32. Cow's cry.
33. Yea, come, buy \_\_\_\_\_ and milk without money. (Isa. 55:1)
34. For to me to live is Christ, and to \_\_\_\_\_ is gain. (Phil. 1:21)
35. Thou hast been faithful over a \_\_\_\_\_, I will make thee ruler over many. (Matt. 25:21)
37. Follow.
39. Sharp, distinctive flavor.
40. Water inlet for ships.
43. Distress call.
46. They \_\_\_\_\_ leaves together, and make themselves aprons. (Gen. 3:7)
49. \_\_\_\_\_ Town, South Africa.
50. Ended.
51. Ginger \_\_\_\_\_.
52. Region.
53. Sleepers.
54. Highways. (abbr.)
55. And he spread abroad the \_\_\_\_\_



By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

\_\_\_\_\_ over the tabernacle. (Ex. 40:19) \_\_\_\_\_ throughout all \_\_\_\_\_. (Eph. 3:21)

## DOWN

1. Citrus fruit.
2. Spoken.
3. Gives official sanction to.
4. Compass direction.
5. And his servant was healed in the \_\_\_\_\_ hour. (Matt. 8:13)
6. Rend.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Mater.
8. Musical exercise.
9. Truly this was the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. (Matt. 27:54)
10. Be gentle unto all men, \_\_\_\_\_ to teach, patient. (2 Tim. 2:24)
11. Troop entertainers. (abbr.)
17. Hollow tube.
19. Yearly interest accrued. (abbr.)
21. \_\_\_\_\_ to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
23. And all \_\_\_\_\_ of God. (2 Cor. 5:18)
24. Part of a ladder.
25. Unto Him be glory ...
26. Lose color.
27. The \_\_\_\_\_ of that house was great. (Luke 6:49)
28. Behold, \_\_\_\_\_ is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2)
29. Small country abodes.
33. Be victorious.
35. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, \_\_\_\_\_ him. (Rom. 12:20)
36. Horse food.
38. Utilizers.
41. I will fetch my knowledge from \_\_\_\_\_. (Job 36:3)
42. Untamed.
44. Some men's sins are \_\_\_\_\_ beforehand. (1 Tim. 5:24)
45. For we shall all stand before the judgment \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ. (Rom. 14:10)
46. Weep.
47. Adam's wife.
48. Marry.
49. Feline.

# WORD search

- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| ADMIRE      | MEDIA       |
| AHASUERUS   | MORDECAI    |
| ASSASSINATE | MOSAICS     |
| BANQUET     | MYRRH       |
| BEAUTIFUL   | NOBLES      |
| CROWN       | OBEY        |
| DEVOTION    | PALACE      |
| ESTHER      | PERSIA      |
| EUNUCHS     | PLOT        |
| GARDEN      | PRINCES     |
| GOBLETS     | PURPLE      |
| GOLD        | QUEEN       |
| GUARDS      | SHAASHGAZ   |
| HADASSAH    | SUSA        |
| HAMAN       | VASHTI      |
| HEGAI       | VAST WEALTH |
| KING        | VIRGINS     |
| LOVELY      | WHITE LINEN |
| MAIDS       | XERXES      |
| MARBLE      | YOUNG       |



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# 6-week Acts study helps students 'Live Sent'

By Grace Thornton  
TAB Media

Madison Lawrence has thought a lot about her "Jerusalem" this summer.

For now, it's the University of Montevallo, where she's in her last year of studies — the place where she heard the gospel for the first time.

Many on St. Vincent and the Grenadines — the island chain where Lawrence grew up — consider the southern Caribbean country to be a Christian nation, she said.

"Everyone kind of thinks they believe in God," Lawrence noted.

"That was me, but I didn't know anything about the gospel. It wasn't until I moved to America and got plugged into BCM [Baptist Campus Ministry] that I learned Who God was."

She was baptized in September 2020.

"When I moved to college in 2018, everything turned around," Lawrence said.

Now she wants to be on mission wherever she is, whether Montevallo, back in her home country or somewhere else entirely.

One thing that encouraged Lawrence's pursuit is Live Sent, an effort sponsored this summer by One Mission Students of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Chris Mills, SBOM student missions mobilizer, said the idea was born out of discussions about how to engage students in missions, as travel was more difficult than pre-COVID-19.

## Virtual study

"What we wanted to do was challenge them to 'live sent' where they are and provide some encouragement and challenge in that regard," he explained.



Photo courtesy of Madison Lawrence

Madison Lawrence, a student at the University of Montevallo, is encouraged to be on mission wherever she is, whether on campus, in her home country or somewhere else.

Starting in late June, Live Sent offered a six-week virtual study through the Book of Acts, led by several teachers including Chuck Lawless, dean/vice president at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina; Emily Hamilton,

compassion ministry director for Etowah Baptist Association and campus minister at Gadsden State Community College; and Zach Beasley, campus minister at Alabama State University in Montgomery and Tuskegee University.

Lawrence said it was one

of the first times she had gone through Acts.

"It made me think of my life and how I'm pursuing my college campus, the way I'm pursuing my relationship with Christ and the people on my campus," she said.

## Weekly challenges

The study brought together students from Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee, and involved weekly challenges such as:

- ▶ Have a gospel conversation
- ▶ Prayer-walk your community
- ▶ Text five friends and pray specifically for them for the next five weeks

"From my perspective, some of the challenges and the way they were processing — that was really encouraging," Mills said, specifically about the idea of living sent.



Sarah Anne

## Takes On Life.

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To learn about Sarah Anne's story and how you can help, visit [ChildrensAL.org/committedtoacure](https://ChildrensAL.org/committedtoacure)

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 5

## Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### JOY IN PRAYER Philippians 1:1–11

#### Shared Faith (1–2)

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi while he was imprisoned in Rome. It is important to recognize this as it shows Paul's demeanor while he is aware of the likelihood he could be executed.

He was with his traveling companion Timothy, one of his closest friends and helpers.

In Paul's greeting, he mentions how he and Timothy are servants of Christ Jesus, affirming their solidarity with the believers in Philippi. Paul and Timothy model what it means to be a servant, helping show that Christians are to serve one another in humility.

Instead of acting like the world acts, where people put themselves over others and often try to puff themselves up, Christians are to find their identity in Christ and in service to Him. We don't have to worry about living up to the world's standards of what it means to have value because we find our value in how God values us.

This is why the modern obsession with identity is so terrible. People often try to find meaning and relevance in being part of some identity group based on race or sexuality. It leads to a divisive and tyrannical worldview where there are "in-groups" and "out-groups."

The only groups in a Christian worldview are believers and unbelievers, and one of our goals is to see the gospel preached to the unbelievers so they can belong to Christ.

Christianity seeks to bring more into the group rather than find ways to exclude people.

#### Thankful Faith (3–8)

Paul expresses thankfulness for the Philippians and the joy he has when thinking about their faithfulness. Paul founded the church back in Acts 16 and had a good relationship with these Christians.

Paul was writing to encourage them that God would not forsake them. Just because Paul was in prison did not mean God had abandoned him — Paul was able to minister

while in prison. Paul affirmed that the same God who had saved them would continue to sanctify them until the day of Christ's return.

Our circumstances do not dictate our relationship with Christ or whether or not God is pleased with us. God allows trials to come our way for a variety of reasons (Rom. 8:18–30), but we should never fear that God would cast us aside. Since God is the One who initiated our salvation, He is not going to take it from us. We can be confident that God holds us firm (Rom. 8:31–39).

Paul also thanked the Philippians for the help they had given him while he was in prison. It is possible that the Philippians were helping take care of Paul's needs with food and clothing. When we help other Christians, we are partakers in their ministry. Many missionaries must raise funds. When Christians support them, they are part of that ministry.

William Carey, the father of modern Protestant missions, went to India but knew he needed help to do so, and he appealed to his Baptist friends in England. You are participating in ministry when you help others by prayer and gifts.

#### Growing Faith (9–11)

In this prayer, Paul is modeling for us how we should pray as well. Sometimes it is difficult to pray for other people — we don't know what is going on in their life, or maybe we only know of a certain trial or praise. But it is important for us to remember to pray for spiritual maturity, not only for ourselves, but for other Christians.

Paul prays their love would grow in knowledge and discernment that would lead to wise actions. Christians are to love, but our world defines love in ways counter to the Bible. We can be easily confused as to what real love means, which is why we pray we would have more wisdom in how to love others.

As we grow in spiritual wisdom, we are being sanctified to become more like Christ.

## Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



### SURE OF FORGIVENESS 1 John 1:5–2:2

Today we begin a series of six lessons on the First Letter of John.

In addition to the Gospel and Revelation, three New Testament writings have "John" in the title. This probably refers to the apostle, the brother of James and son of Zebedee, and Christians have understood this since at least the second century A.D.

The style, vocabulary and some themes in the letters resemble what we read in the Gospel, especially in chapters 1 and 13 through 17.

Only Second and Third John follow the conventions for ancient letters; hence, First John might have been a sermon or exhortation written to deal with a schism: some "false prophets" (4:1) or "antichrists" (2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7) left the group (2:19).

What did they prophesy? Probably that Jesus had no body (4:2), and perhaps that Christians did not sin (1:8, 10), could disobey the commandments (to do so was not to sin; 2:3–6) and could hate fellow Christ-followers (2:9–11; 4:20).

If Jesus only appeared to have a body — if His death, resurrection and deeds were illusions — then what we do with our bodies is also meaningless.

We can love "in word or speech" without "truth and action" (3:18), for action requires bodies. We can ignore God's commandments, for obedience requires bodies. We can hate, for hatred ignores bodies.

John will have none of this. For him, what we do with our bodies matches what we say with our mouths.

First John 1 alludes to John 1, which in turn alludes to Genesis 1: "from the beginning," Jesus is "the Word of life," God as "light," and "there is no darkness" in God. Here we find the first reference to Jesus' body: "what we ... have touched with our hands."

In John 20:27, the resurrected Jesus offers His body for the disciples to touch.

### We are forgiven when we turn from darkness to light. (1:5–7)

Guided by Genesis 1:1–4, John says God is the true source of light. Indeed, God is the light that opposes the darkness.

"Fellowship" is a life shared with others. "Partnership" is an alternative translation, for the word connotes shared goals and deeds. John says we cannot claim to be God's partners while "walking in darkness," which has no part in God.

Note again the care for our deeds: "We do not do what is true."

The remedy is to "walk in the light," where God is.

Our fellowship with one another and our cleansing originate in our partnership with God.

### We are forgiven when we confess our sins. (1:8–10)

John talks about "having sin" (singular) and "confessing our sins" (plural). The distinction may indicate both: a stain that Jesus' death bleaches out and wrongdoings that require our confession and repentance.

Jesus' blood cleanses us but does not force right behavior. We must change our behavior, but we cannot cleanse ourselves.

### We are forgiven when we depend on Jesus as our Advocate. (2:1–2)

To make his point, John uses hyperbole twice: "so that you might not sin" and "if anyone sins."

John knows everyone sins and needs Jesus as an "advocate." He does not, however, dwell on the inevitability of human failure.

Rather, he emphasizes what Jesus Christ has done, not for us alone, but for the entire world.

What a gift. Thanks be to God.

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Minnie Lamberth

TAB Media

## Recent books target leadership, servanthood and students

### Servants for His Glory: Cultivating Christlikeness in a World of Performance

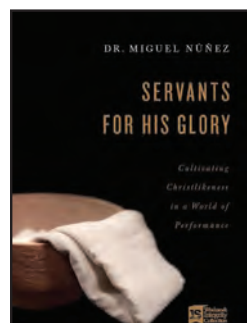
Miguel Núñez

B&H Publishing Group, 2021

“We tend to serve in a ministry capacity as soon as we possibly can because it makes us feel useful,” writes Dr. Miguel Núñez in his new book, “Servants for His Glory.”

“Unfortunately, serving before we are ready not only can lead us to error, but it can lead to the deformation of our character when we take pride in ourselves,” he wrote.

This book is, in a sense, a blueprint to effective, God-honoring ministry, discussing the human characteristics that can get in the way while providing a biblically based guide to growing into one’s call. Each chapter offers a thorough description of the problems that can arise with immaturity and the necessities that provide for maturity, beginning with the work of healing and growth God provides through sanctification.



“You must *be* before you *do*,” Núñez writes.

Recalling the years Moses spent in the king’s palace and the desert, Núñez says, “The testimony of the Old Testament demonstrates that reaching maturity and becoming a servant takes time.”

He also addresses how one’s “inner world” must be in order before ministers can be orderly in their “outer world.” Being able to delegate, for example, is part of a well-ordered inner world. There is much wise counsel in the pages that follow.

Núñez, a medical doctor who also holds a doctorate of ministry, is senior pastor of the International Baptist Church in Santo Domingo, and founding president of Wisdom & Integrity Ministries.

### Big Results Leadership

Mark Croston

B&H Publishing Group, 2021

How do ministry leaders know if they’re going in the right direction?

Author Mark Croston lays out steps to God-centered leadership in an easy-to-read style that brings together cultural references and scriptural direction while drawing on lessons he learned over many years as a pastor.

Part 1, “Study,” involves gaining a clear-eyed view of past and present.

“Every group you lead is different,” Croston writes. Leaders “get in trouble when they fail to first take the time to study those that they are seeking to lead.”



Understanding who the people are, how their geographical location influences their decision-making and how their patterns affect responsiveness to new programming are included in this assessment. As leaders know their people better, they will hopefully skip the misperceptions that come from wrong assumptions.

In Part 2, Croston reminds leaders to “never settle for a plan, instead listen for God’s vision,” as he offers steps to find and cast a vision. He also notes that the hardest part about visions can be the wait for their fulfillment. “Do not step ahead of God because you may end up doing your thing instead of God’s thing.”

Croston moves from there to additional sections on execution and team-building. Readers will find questions at the end of each section to help provide clarity on their own leadership opportunities.

Croston is the national director of black church partnerships for Life-way Christian Resources, having previously served in pastoral ministry for 26 years.

### Letters to My Students: Volume 2 on Pastoring

Jason K. Allen

B&H Publishing, 2021

Reminiscent of Charles Spurgeon’s “Lectures to My Students,” Jason Allen offers local church leaders sound advice about pastoral ministry in a second volume of “Letters to My Students” (the first focused on preaching).

The president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen begins by helping readers clarify their call to pastoral ministry. He next addresses preaching and teaching the word of God as

a pastor’s central responsibility, though not the only one.

“Pastor, treat preaching as seriously as you can, then treat it more so,” he writes.

“Local church ministry all starts with the pulpit.”

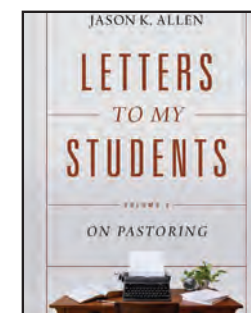
With that foundation, Allen moves into other “hats” pastors wear. In a

section on shepherding the sheep, for

example, he recounts early in his ministry an evening with his wife that was interrupted when he was called out on an emergency. In this familiar situation for any pastor, Allen offers advice for determining the level of emergency and whether the pastor or someone else should respond. He also provides guidance on how to navigate the various types of member visits a pastor makes. Importantly, in congregational life Allen advises establishing healthy first-year precedents.

“If from the start you demonstrate a commitment to the study, an intentionality with pastoral care and a devotion to your family, your members will likely see, appreciate and respect those priorities.”

Ministers and ministers-in-training will find much to treasure in Allen’s book.



### 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.

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