

The Alabama Baptist

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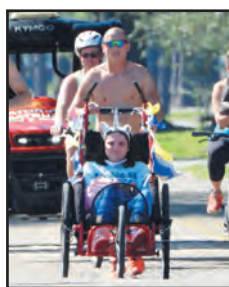
October 28, 2021

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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LET US FEAR THE

Lord
OUR
God,

who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.

JEREMIAH 5:24 (ESV)



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Photo by Terry Newberry

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Benton Baptist commissions team to plant Imago Dei

Last week, you read the story about Imago Dei Church at the 45, a new church being planted in Lowndes County.

One of the quiet forces behind that effort is Benton Baptist Church, a church that didn't hesitate to send out some of its best, even if it cost them.

Revitalization journey

According to Pastor Lee Tate, the 185-year-old church has been on a revitalization journey in recent years. Its 46-member body decreased by four on a recent Sunday night when it commissioned its first-ever missionaries — Davey and Amber Lyon and Terry and Melanie Sharpless. Davey Lyon will serve as pastor of Imago Dei, and the others will serve alongside him.

"It's been wonderful. We're thrilled," Tate said. "But at the same time, it's sad, and you could say inconvenient."

All of them have been integral to Benton Baptist's ministry. Melanie Sharpless has served as the church's pianist.

"When you plant a church, I've always heard that you send out your best, and that's the way this is," Tate said. "We are so proud of these four and thankful to God for allowing our local church body the



Photo courtesy of Benton Baptist Church
Pastor Lee Tate prays over Terry and Melanie Sharpless during a commissioning service at Benton Baptist Church on Sept. 19.

privilege of sending them out."

It's been a whole-church effort, he said. "All of us have gotten behind this to help with food distribution or door-to-door ministry, buying things, helping with block parties."

Tate said Benton Baptist has gotten in the habit of saying, "God can do a lot with a dot."

They may be a small church, he said, but they gave more than \$40,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in 2020, and more than half of their members have served in international missions.

The church goes on about four international trips a year, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they shifted that energy into helping with ministry in Lowndes County.

'A wonderful thing'

And now they're sending out their first four missionaries to plant the church there.

"God had been preparing our hearts for this work," Tate said. "It's a wonderful thing to watch and see how He orchestrates it all." (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Benton Baptist Church
Members of Benton Baptist Church pray over Davey and Amber Lyon in preparation to send them out to plant Imago Dei Church at the 45.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

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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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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Keep in step and everything else will take care of itself

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

—Galatians 5:22–23, 25

Observing the culture around us can be overwhelming, discouraging and even frustrating at times. The problem-solving side of us wants desperately to make a list of what needs to be done, recruit a team to help tackle the items on the list and then cel-

brate a successful effort toward “fixing” the world, but in reality it all seems a bit out of reach.

However, those of us who are believers can make a giant step toward truly changing the world by focusing on our individual callings, taking care of the weeds and withered parts of our hearts, and allowing the Holy Spirit to nurture the fruit planted in us.

As each follower of Jesus Christ showcases genuine love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, the environment around him or her

shines brightly with beams from the one true Light.

You won’t have to worry about what to do next because being sensitive to the Spirit will surface the who, what, when, where, why and how at exactly the right time.

From there, a ripple effect can’t be stopped. Person after person after person will be changed and turn to project the love and grace of our Lord on down the line.

How do we achieve a natural outflowing of these nine world-changing characteristics?

By decluttering our hearts and minds, focusing on the Word and staying alert to the promptings of the Holy Spirit at such an intensity that we can’t help but “keep in step.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — The devotional thought shared here is one of 60 devotions in the special edition of “Be Known: Live Out Your Calling,” published to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the University of Mobile in December. It was an honor to be included in the book along with other leaders from Alabama Baptist life and the UM community. Learn more about the book below.

University of Mobile releases special edition ‘Be Known’ 60-day devotional book to commemorate upcoming 60th anniversary as Christ-centered institution

By Zac Douglas
University of Mobile

The recently released “Be Known: Live Out Your Calling” takes readers on a journey to explore ideas of purpose and calling to find encouragement as they pursue the calling God has for their lives.

The daily devotions — 60 devotions for 60 days — are written by alumni, faculty, staff, trustees and leaders in Baptist life, including Southern Baptist Convention President Ed Litton and Rick Lance, executive director of the

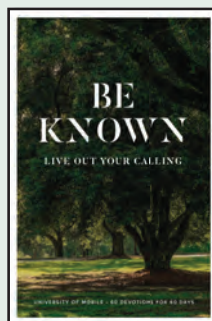
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“Be Known: Live Out Your Calling” is available at the University of Mobile Store, The U. The U is located in Bedsole Commons on the University of Mobile campus or online at universityofmobilestore.com.

“Whether you are a member of the University of Mobile family, or pursuing the calling God has for your life, we hope the messages within the devotional bring comfort,

encouragement and inspiration to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ,” said Lesa Moore, vice president for marketing and public relations at the University of Mobile.

“Be Known: Live Out Your Calling” was produced as part of the 60-year anniversary celebration of the University of Mobile. Proceeds fund scholarships for students attending the Baptist-affiliated university.



“The book speaks to a truth that spans the generations,” Moore said. “It’s as relevant to the alumni who graduated in the charter class of 1967 as it is to students attending today.”

Throughout 2021, UM is celebrating its diamond anniversary through Alumni of the Decade Awards, history exhibits, limited edition merchandise to support scholarships and more. For information on the University of Mobile 60th Diamond Anniversary Year and how to get involved, visit umobile.edu/celebrate60.

Your Voice



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

It's not too late to show your pastor appreciation

By Jason Lowe

Associational mission strategist
Pike (Kentucky) Association of Southern Baptists

If you're a church member, you have no idea how much your simple act of appreciation encourages those whom God has appointed as the spiritual shepherd of your souls.

Pastors don't shepherd their flocks for the praise of others, but it's disappointing when the church remains silent at a time when they are encouraged to express their apprecia-

tion for their leaders. What should you do if you are the pastor of a church that remains silent during Pastor Appreciation Month? Let me encourage you in three ways:

Remember your heavenly reward.

I know it's tough when it seems that no one notices or appreciates your service. But remember we do not serve to be noticed. Rest assured that your faithfulness does not go unnoticed with Him. The Lord knows your stresses. He knows the

sacrifices you have made. And when this life is over, He will reward your faithfulness.

Don't let bitterness creep into your heart.

When you hear how other churches show appreciation to their pastor, you will be tempted to become bitter. Don't give in to that temptation! Instead of becoming bitter for what the church did not do, be grateful for all the ways the church has blessed you. Remember other ways members have expressed their gratitude for you and your ministry throughout the year.

Keep shepherding the flock.

At the end of the day, you are called to shepherd the flock of God when things are going well and when they are not — when you are encouraged and when you are discouraged. Don't start neglecting your pastoral responsibilities simply because the church failed to express its appreciation. Model for members how to continue to serve the Lord even when their circumstances don't meet their expectations.

To the silent church: It's never too late to start. There's still time to show your pastor how much you appreciate him.

Once you start, don't stop. Expressing appreciation for your pastor is appropriate throughout the year. Be a blessing during Pastor Appreciation Month, but also at other times when your pastor may not expect it!

(Reprinted from Baptist Press and edited for space.)

There is an old proverb that says, "One man's trash is another man's treasure." That certainly seems to be true in my neighborhood.

A few weeks ago, one of my neighbors put an old lawn bench out for pickup. It looked like it had seen its better days.

Most of its paint had peeled or worn off. The wood on the armrests had rotted, as well as some of the bracing underneath the seat. The seat slats on each side of it had fallen in on one end.

When I saw it, I thought, "There's enough left here to work with."

I cut out new armrests, and new bracing for underneath. I reattached the seat slats to the new wood. I wiped off all the dirt and grit, sanded it down to bare wood and gave it a couple of fresh coats of midnight blue enamel. It looks almost as good as new.

That old bench and other trash-to-treasure projects reminds me of myself.

There was a time in my life when I was a mess. I was spotted and soiled by the sins in my life and probably looked like something some people might say was trash.

They might have said I wasn't redeemable and could never be repaired, but thank God, He wasn't willing to throw me out like trash.

Bill King

Director of missions
Tuskegee Lee Baptist
Association

Letter to the editor

The recent resignation of Ronnie Floyd from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, along with other resignations from the leadership of our convention over the handling of the business affairs is very troublesome.

This appears to be far more than investigating allegations of abuse that may have taken place, which I believe is taken seriously by all involved. It seems to reveal a deepening split and level of distrust that threatens our very SBC and perhaps the ability to continue spreading the gospel as perhaps no other evangelical organization has ever done.

Further, the SBC may well be the only remaining Christ-centered group with the organiza-

tional strength to halt and even reverse the tide of evil sweeping our land. I do not know what the answer is in resolving this dispute, and I pray that leaders like SBC President Ed Litton will seek and find the words that are needed.

I do know the answer does not lie within anything that is remotely connected to the secular progressive agenda.

To seek and restore the trust and accountability needed in our SBC, it is my hope the membership of every church, no matter the size, will rally themselves to go to Anaheim next year and Charlotte the year after to seek the Lord's will and extend biblical direction to the leadership.

Don Wallace
Moundville, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“The completion of God’s restoration plan for fallen humanity awaits Christ’s return.”

JERRY BATSON

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor, religion professor, and Theology 101 author

Historically, Christians have suffered for the faith, honoring God in the process and witnessing to His love, mercy and judgment. When Christians are persecuted for the gospel, it is imperative we respond as the Apostle Paul did — seeing it as a way to honor God.

The early disciples rejoiced they were considered worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus (see Acts 5:41). We need to remember if we face persecution, we honor and bring glory to God by standing firm in our beliefs.

Robert Olsen

Explore the Bible commentary for Oct. 24, 2021

The Sermon on the Mount tells us that those who are angry with

others, insult others and use derogatory language about others is not a follower of Christ. We who claim to be Christians should consider this carefully. (Matt. 5:22).

Micah Fries

Director at GlocalNet

As church attendance numbers fade across the nation and online services become very convenient, it’s important to remember why church attendance for you and your family matters so much.

You can’t serve from your sofa. You can’t have community of faith on your sofa. You can’t experience the power of a room full of believers worshipping together on your sofa.

Christians aren’t consumers. We

are contributors. We don’t watch. We engage. We give. We sacrifice. We encourage. We pray by laying hands on the hurting. We do life together.

The church needs you.

And you need the church.

Steven Massey
via Facebook

It’s a good thing the kingdom of God is not a company, isn’t it? Who would ever hear the gospel or witness the reality of Christ if we evaluated our actions with a cost analysis? Instead, life in the kingdom of God is measured by this one value: Everything done in the name of Christ has eternal value.

David Jeremiah

Pastor, author and radio host

From the *Twitterverse*

@haines_matt

While evil and wickedness may enjoy temporary fortune, the Lord of Heaven has the final word.

@jdanielatkins

Pastor friends, most people who leave your church will do so because of preference. Not doctrine or immortality. Preference. This means they’re consumers and as a minister of the gospel, you’re not selling anything. Don’t change. Follow Jesus’ leading & don’t look back.

@jordaneasley

If you lack Jesus, you will lack joy.

@LysaTerKeurst

Sometimes changing the world means getting quiet enough for God to change me. Lord, help me choose to make time with You a priority. Each and every day. I want

Your word and Your love to work wonders in my soul.

@samueld_james

There is just an enormous amount of public resentment and animosity between Christians right now. Even worse, technology is normalizing this state and making it seem inevitable. We’re having our emotional default settings recalibrated by what the New Testament literally damns.

@kristenpadilla

“Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness — without it no one will see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14

Lord Jesus, give us grace and help to do so.

@stephenandjill

Godlessness leads to meaninglessness. The areas of your life that leave out God will also be the areas of your life that feel the most empty.

@Matt Smethurst

In all my years of pastoring, I have learned this lesson: A person’s spiritual maturity is not truly visible until they DON’T get their way. Then you see the person.
—@ErikReed

@MichaelCatt

We expect lost people to act like lost people. We should also expect believers to act like Christ followers. It’s not rocket science, it’s a matter of surrender of our agendas to His Lordship.

@DrPaulChitwood

Met #ColinPowell in Feb 2003 and asked for any leadership advice he might offer. He immediately replied, “Do your job, take care of your troops, and don’t worry about your next job.”

I was reminded of this wisdom as I saw the announcement of his passing.

Meat and potatoes

God has created our physical bodies to grow and sustain on a steady diet. If we take those elements away, our body will begin to send up warning signals. If we continue to ignore our body, it will begin to shut down. Little by little, our health will deteriorate.

The same is true with our spiritual being. We need a healthy, steady diet to grow and sustain our spiritual being. Unfortunately, the steady diet many Christians are getting across North America is not the one God has prescribed.

An old saying regarding some preachers and speakers is “All the meat and no potatoes!” Basically, this meant the speaker had all the substance without any sustenance. Substance is necessary, but it does not produce any evidence of learning.

Evidence of learning cannot be found in the lives of many Christians because they are not receiving the sustenance which brings about life change.

The greatest evidence of learning (spiritually speaking) is life change. Substance will never produce life change. It can produce great trivia buffs, yet that is not our objective.

We must use context for the depiction of God’s truths and principles. However, we must also have an earnest portion of application. Only application will bring about evidences of life change.

Jesus’ sermons and teaching consisted of more application than context because people need to know how to put into practice God’s principles and truths. What will you change today in your delivery and conversational practices to enable people to have a true learning experience that will manifest in their actions?

Author George L. Yates
Adapted from “Evidences of Learning: Teaching That Bears Fruit”

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Forrest Wright

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers pray with homeowners in Pelham who were affected by recent flooding. A stalled weather front dumped as much as 13 inches of rain on the area Oct. 6. Six teams with a total of 89 disaster relief volunteers from across the state helped 39 homeowners remove damaged drywall and flooring. They also assisted in treating the homes to help prevent mold.

China tightens rules on firms with Bible apps

Phone apps for reading the Bible have disappeared from the Apple store in mainland China, the latest examples of the country's tightening rules for internet firms.

The makers of apps for reading and listening to the Bible are among publishers who say their apps have been removed from Apple's China-based store at the government's request.

Olive Tree Bible Software, based in Spokane, Washington, removed its app in China after learning it would need to get special permission to distribute an app with "book or magazine content." Olive Tree said it's now reviewing the requirements to obtain the necessary permit "with the hope that we can restore our app to China's App Store and continue to distribute the Bible worldwide." (AP)

Georgia pastor Stone files suit against Moore

Mike Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Georgia, filed a \$750,000 lawsuit Oct. 18 against Russell Moore, former president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, alleging defamation and libel, false light invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The lawsuit was filed with the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee in Nashville and requests a jury trial.

In the lawsuit Stone, 2018–2020 EC chairman and 2021 SBC presidential candidate, alleges Moore, who is currently employed at Christianity Today, launched a "malicious and defamatory campaign against him" in an "extreme and outrageous" manner.

Read more at thebaptistpaper.org. (TAB Media)

Persecuted church

Imprisoned Chinese Christian on hunger strike, prayer fast

SHANGHAI CITY, China — A Christian Chinese lawyer, imprisoned for questioning the Chinese government's "official narrative" on the COVID-19 response, is at risk of dying from her prayer fast and hunger strike, according to the group China Aid.

Zhang Zhan was the first citizen journalist the Chinese Communist Party tried for challenging the government's pandemic response, states the China Aid report. She is in Shanghai City Women's Prison. Standing 5 feet, 10 inches, Zhan weighed 165 pounds prior to her arrest. Now, she weighs less than 90 pounds, said her former lawyer Zhang Kekeher.

Zhang Zhan was arrested after publishing videos in May 2020 on social media that were

critical of China's COVID response. She was sentenced December 2020 to four years in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," China Aid said.

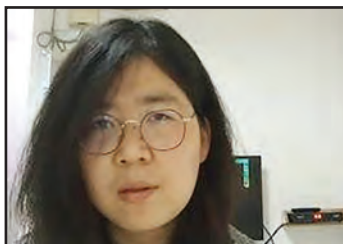


Photo courtesy of China Aid

She was detained on similar charges in September 2019 for reposting information on social media about protests in Hong Kong, China Aid states.

China is No. 17 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Gunmen abduct 3 students from Catholic seminary in Nigeria

LAGOS, Nigeria — Gunmen seized three stu-

dent priests from a Catholic seminary in Nigeria's northwest Kaduna state, authorities said Oct. 12.

The assailants stormed the Christ The King Major Seminary late Oct. 11 and opened fire at the cafeteria where five of the students were sitting after dinner, according to Joseph Hayab, chairman of the Kaduna state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria.

"Before they (the students) knew it, these gunmen came [and] surrounded them. It was later that they released two and went away with three," Hayab said.

Police spokesman Mohammad Jalige told AP that security forces have been deployed "to comb the nearby bushes" and try to rescue the three seminarians abducted. Six seminarians were injured in the attack, according to officials.

The three students taken captive are in their final year before becoming priests.

Alabama news

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Jody Baker** has seen her church through a lot of seasons. Forty years ago, she joined the staff of McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham, and today she's still on that same staff — except it's now **Hope Community Church**.

The church, which became a campus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in 2020, recently honored Baker for her four decades of faithful ministry as minister of education and administration. Baker has a bachelor's degree in education from Samford University, a master of education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and a master of Christian education from New Orleans Seminary.



BAKER

Pastor Jacob Simmons said the impact of her ministry is an "eternal" one.

"Her ministry is an encouraging reminder to everyone of the value of faithful commitment to God and His church," Simmons said. "Those who know Jody know she is marked with the fruit of the Spirit, showing grace and kindness to everyone with a quick smile and an encouraging word. She is a faithful minister of God, and the saints of McElwain and Hope Community Church have been blessed by God through Jody and her ministry."

CONECUH ASSOCIATION

► Pastor **Jack Williamson** said the crowd that showed up for **Brooklyn Baptist Church's** 200th anniversary celebration Oct. 3 was "overwhelming."

"We usually run 12 on Sundays but had around 200 people that day," he said.

During the special service, Joey Rodgers, director of missions for Conecuh Baptist Association, led the music, and his wife, Jeri, played the piano. The Rodgers family — Joey and Jeri plus their children, Drayton and Emily — provided special music, as did Marcia Frazier and Karen Sterling.

The bicentennial committee displayed church memorabilia and photos and produced a bicentennial brochure featuring a map of the old Brooklyn community and historical sketches. The committee also erected a historical marker during the celebration.

Dalton Campbell (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a certificate, and former Conecuh Association DOM Tommy White prayed. Former pastor Bryan Abel also gave the invocation and shared memories of his time at Brooklyn Baptist.



Photo courtesy of Dalton Campbell

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

► After several decades of pastoral ministry, **James Troglen** retired earlier this year from the pastorate at **First Baptist Church Wetumpka**. He has served in that role for more than 18 years.

Before coming to FBC Wetumpka in 2002, Troglen served at FBC Haleyville. He is a graduate of Calhoun Community College and Athens University, and he earned a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary and a doctor of ministry from Beeson Divinity School. He also has completed additional study at UAB in the field of anthropology on a graduate level.

Troglen is veteran of the U.S. Navy having served on the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Forrestal CVA-59 in engineering.



TROGLEN

During his ministry, he was actively involved in Baptist life, serving on various state convention committees and on the board of directors of The Alabama Baptist. He said he "loved every minute" of his ministry.

Troglen and his wife, Jeannie, are avid travelers, and for years Troglen has been an active scuba diver. After recovering from open heart surgery several months ago just after his retirement, he said he is ready to serve in interim or supply pastor roles.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **David McMillen** has been called as senior pastor of **Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Albertville**. He holds a master of arts degree in pastoral ministry and master of divinity degree with specialization in expository preaching. Both degrees are from New Orleans Seminary. He has previously served Rio Vista Baptist Church, New Orleans, as interim pastor. He is married to Jennifer, and they have two children and one grandchild.

Dothan church pays off debt

Bay Springs Baptist Church, Dothan, celebrated Harvest Sunday on Oct. 3, the same day church trustees and the treasurer burned its note on the new building and expansion. A new education building and office suite were constructed, and the fellowship building was expanded to double its size. The cost for the project was estimated at \$1.5 million.

"We always have half the money saved before we build," said Doug Wood, minister of music and education.

With money saved, the church borrowed just over \$700,000 from a local bank, less than half the cost for the whole project.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Patrick Smith** is the new youth pastor at **Shiloh Baptist Church, Somerville**. He previously served eight years at First Baptist Church Falkville as the minister of students and children. He and his wife, Jillian, have one daughter.



SMITH

Nov. 5. The evening begins with dinner at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► October 11 marked the official relaunch of Selma and Cahaba Baptist associations together as **West Central Baptist Association**.

Tom Stacey (right), who now serves as director of missions for West Central, also was honored for 25 years as director of missions for Selma Association. He took on the leadership of Cahaba Association too in 2016 after the death of DOM, Bill Wallace.

Stacey credits Wallace with the idea for the two associations coming together and says he hopes it will serve as a cooperative, unified effort to reach Dallas and Perry counties and part of Lowndes County. The Selma and Cahaba disaster relief teams will remain separate, though they regularly partner together. Stacey, who plans to retire in January, says the move is the culmination of three years of meetings and planning, and he hopes everything will be in place for the new DOM to step into the role and lead.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/
The Alabama Baptist

Photo courtesy of Bay Springs Baptist Church

Bay Springs Baptist Church, Dothan, treasurer and trustees burn the church's note for work that began in 2017 and was completed in 2018.

Headline news

from around the Southeast

ARKANSAS

Jeremy and Natalia Aylett made their way all the way from Russellville, Arkansas, to San Diego, California, 10 years ago. As the two have invested their lives and ministry in what is



Photo courtesy of NAMB

known as “America’s finest city,” they have discovered that San Diego has great weather and “good vibes” but “is also full of spiritual, physical and relational brokenness,” reported Arkansas Baptist News. Sent out as church planting apprentices in 2011 by First Baptist Church Russellville, Jeremy Aylett said, “We wanted to be in a global city where there was great gospel need. We speak Spanish, and San Diego is right on the border. ... We found San Diego to be a great fit.” He has served as the lead planter and pastor of a few churches in San Diego and is now the Send City missionary there. In this role he assesses, trains and encourages other planters in the area.

GEORGIA

The Agape Shoppe in Bainbridge launched in 2006 by two women from First Baptist Church serves the needs of foster children through providing emergency clothes, school supplies, baby formula, diapers and even food, the Christian Index reported. Throughout the history of Agape Shoppe, the community has donated needed items to keep the ministry going. This past year



Photo courtesy of the Christian Index

FBC, through the leadership of Pastor Chris Humphries, provided a building after Agape Shoppe lost the building it had called home for more than a decade. Also, the Georgia Baptist Mission Board’s Women’s Ministries and Bowen Baptist Association have pledged financial support for the ministry. “God provided the way,” Delrose Betts said. “I just had to step back and let Him do it.”

Betts launched the ministry 14 years ago.

KENTUCKY

After three years of planning and praying, a merger of three Kentucky Baptist associations into one has been completed, creating the North Central Baptist Network, Kentucky Today re-

ported. The Shelby, Oldham-Trimble and Henry County Baptist associations approved the merger in their respective annual meetings this fall. The network, at its inception, is composed of 61 Kentucky Baptist churches. The three current associational mission strategists plan to retire soon, and one person will be called into a full-time position for the network. The merger “will give us an opportunity to pool our resources and do some significant things in our area,” said Steve Gouge, part-time AMS in Shelby Association. “We will be more of a regional entity and have a larger voice for our Lord.” Harry Hebert, Shelby Association moderator, agreed, writing in the association’s newsletter that approving the proposal would result in “moving forward in our Great Commission work as one network, maximizing our resources and leveraging our collective energies to have a more significant kingdom impact on our region.”

LOUISIANA

After a full year away from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in the desert sands of Iraq, Adam Harwood returned home to a hero’s welcome

Oct. 8. Harwood, a chaplain with the Louisiana National Guard, also serves as professor of theology at NOBTS and editor of the school’s Journal for Baptist Theology



Photo courtesy of NOBTS

and Ministry. On his deployment, Harwood offered pastoral and religious support to U.S. and Coalition soldiers as well as civilian contractors working on the base, ministering to people of many different faith backgrounds, NOBTS reported. “Chaplains are different than pastors because we provide religious support to all people without violating our own religious convictions or the constraints of our ecclesial endorser,” Harwood said. “In my case, that is the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.” He also led weekly chapel services, Bible studies and special worship events, and he provided confidential counseling and prayers for many in his sphere of influence.

NORTH CAROLINA

When Samantha crossed the stage at her high school graduation, with solid plans to go to college in her future, it was a moment she couldn’t have imagined until five years ago. Since the

age of five, Samantha had been in the custody of the foster care system. With multiple placements and difficult circumstances, Samantha doubted her future

success. Five years ago, she went to live in Odum Home in Pembroke, North Carolina, owned and operated by Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina. There, hope for her future brightened, BCH reported. With her physical and emotional needs covered, Samantha became a Christian. “Christ being a part of the children’s lives and helping to give them hope for the future is phenomenal for them,” said Kathy Locklear, campus manager at Odum Home. “There are people that aren’t blood that have been there for me and shared God’s word with me,” Samantha said, adding, “I don’t feel like I would’ve gotten saved if not for Odum.” With a generous scholarship in her pocket, Samantha has been accepted at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.



Photo courtesy of Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina

TENNESSEE

Bryan Howard, worship pastor at Round Lick Baptist Church in Watertown, was raised by a single mother and had always wanted to minister to single mothers and widows. Recently, he discovered the opportunity to do so, the Baptist and Reflector reported. At a community outreach meeting hosted by Wilson County Baptist Association, Howard recalled an article he had read previously about a church that provided free oil changes. Within three months, the vision became reality. “We firmly believe this ministry is something

God has ordained,” Howard said. A location was found, businesses supported the ministry and the free oil changes began. While one changes the oil and tends to other routine maintenance, the mothers are greeted by another team member. Volunteers are trying to build relationships and are ready to share a testimony or the gospel if the person is receptive. “Jesus said you have to meet physical needs before you meet spiritual needs. We are just planting seeds,” Howard said.



Photo courtesy of the Baptist and Reflector



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Share hope with foster children and families in need across Alabama by attending our Trees for Hope benefit! Join us for food, holiday music, and the opportunity to browse beautifully decorated Christmas trees and wreaths that will be up for grabs to the highest bidders. These events will be held in the Birmingham and Mobile areas.

TUESDAY
NOV
02

6:00PM-
8:30PM

GARDENDALE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SOUTH CAMPUS

940 Main Street, Gardendale, AL 35071

\$25 per ticket, per person; Tickets can be purchased online.

[TREESFORHOPEEVENT.ORG/GARDENDALE21](https://treesforhopeevent.org/gardendale21)

TUESDAY
NOV
30

6:00PM-
8:00PM

DAUPHIN WAY BAPTIST CHURCH GYMNASIUM

3661 Dauphin Street, Mobile, AL 36608

\$25 per ticket, per person; Tickets can be purchased online.

[TREESFORHOPEEVENT.ORG/MOBILE21](https://treesforhopeevent.org/mobile21)

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Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries



Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, was elected SBC president in June. He's only the third Alabamian to hold the position.

Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Alabama's third SBC president shares story of hardship, grace

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

Ed Litton has vivid memories of hiding in the closet as a young boy while his father raged violently through the house.

"My dad was a drunk," Ed said. "That's the world I lived in."

His father had lied about his age to join the Navy during World War II and turned 17 in combat in the South Pacific. It was there he started drinking and became an alcoholic.

Power of the gospel

"We never darkened the door of a church," Ed said.

But one day his father ran into a Southern Baptist pastor at the grocery store and they struck up a conversation. They kept running into each other and eventually developed a friendship. One day the pastor invited Ed's father to church.

So the family went.

"But he got very angry because he thought my mom had called this pastor to tell him all the bad things my dad had been doing," Ed recounted. "And he said, 'We're not going back.'

"But then my dad's world fell apart, and when it did, he turned to that pastor."

The pastor shared the gospel with him, and he was dramatically saved.

"He was delivered from his alcoholism and never went back, never turned back," Ed remembered. "In a good way, I say he was radicalized for Christ. He basically just began to build our whole life and our family on God's word."

It was seeing the power of the gospel in his father's life that made

the appeal of Jesus Christ undeniable for Ed, and would continue to make it undeniable throughout his life even as the road became difficult.

"I fell in love with Jesus," he said.

It was seeing the power of the gospel in his father's life that made the appeal of Jesus Christ undeniable for Ed.

And it was the investment of that Southern Baptist pastor that showed Ed what he is convinced is at the core of the Southern Baptist Convention — a heart for seeing people changed by the power of Christ.

That conviction for Christ and soft spot for the SBC continued even as Ed experienced hurt from the unkind words of people in the church as a young boy and teenager growing up in Tucson, Arizona. His father, now allowing the absolute truth of the

Bible to guide his life, was a "truth teller," Ed said, and would call out sin when he saw it. People didn't always respond well to that.

"It was pretty stormy," Ed remembered. "I tell people it's a miracle I do what I do, because I've seen a lot of hurt as a child from things people would say."

Serving as pastor

What he does now is serve as pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, where he's been for the past 27 years.

He also was elected SBC president at the annual meeting in June — only the third president from Alabama since the SBC's founding in 1845. (The other two were Jonathan Haralson, who served from 1889 to 1898, and Jaroy Weber, who served in 1975 and 1976.)

Ed felt the call to serve in ministry when he was 17, around the time the last SBC president from Alabama was wrapping up his



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Both a hunter and a collector, Ed Litton has filled his office at Redemption Church with hunting trophies and items he's gathered from all over the world.

term. It was the same age Ed's father was when he ran away to the South Pacific to lose himself in combat.

For a little while, Ed tried to lose himself, too.

"I said, 'There's no way I'm doing this,' and so I ran from the Lord," he recalled.

God's grace and mercy

Though he believed in the power of the gospel, Ed didn't think he could sign up for a life of the kind of hurt he'd already faced in the church.

"I was actually trying to prove to Him why that was a mistake," Ed said. "I tried to disqualify myself. But from His grace and mercy, He reissued that call at a point of brokenness in my life where I was repenting."

Ed said he didn't expect a second chance, but when he got one he took it. He went to Grand Canyon University in Phoenix — then a Southern Baptist school — and to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, to get a master's degree.

He says that, in a manner of speaking, as he and his wife Tammy were pulling into Fort Worth with their U-Haul trailer, another couple was pulling out with theirs — Rick and Kathy Ferguson, who would become a greater part of his story than he could imagine.

Ed would see God had been preparing him from a young age to trust that, even when it hurts and things are difficult, God is worth it and at work.

After he earned his master's, Ed worked for nine months at the Home (now North American) Mission Board and was mentored and trained to become a state evangelism director.

But he soon realized it wasn't for him — God had called him to shepherd a local church. So Ed and Tammy headed back to Arizona to plant Mountain View Baptist Church in Tucson, and he brought all that evangelism training with him.

He focused on making sure each person in the church was equipped to share the gospel anytime, anywhere.

"God really blessed, and it just exploded," Ed recalled. "Half of the congregation had never heard the gospel."

The church is still vibrant and active today.

In 1994 he answered the call to serve at First Baptist Church North Mobile, which changed its name to Redemption Church in 2015 when they moved to a multi-site model and the North Mobile name didn't fit the campus in west Mobile.

"We prayed through and had a team of folks who helped find that name," Ed said. "And when we did, we realized our name was now our message."

Missional church

In the years he has been there, Redemption Church has grown to be more and more missional — they support 10 church plants through the Send Network, and have sponsored missionaries

through the International Mission Board and independently.

At the end of each Sunday service the people are sent out to be a missional force in the community, Ed noted, adding they're the most generous people he's ever known. For years, they've scattered from their gatherings to find neighbors in need of hope — the broken, the hurting — and minister to them throughout the week.

Along the way, God walked Ed through another round of learning how to identify with those who have experienced deep hurt — a season of the deepest kind of loss he could imagine.

Around the time Ed and Tammy moved to Saraland to start a new chapter of their ministry, Rick and Kathy Ferguson were living in the West with their three children planting churches. In 2002 their lives suddenly changed dramatically. While on a family vacation they were in a car accident and Rick was killed.

"We were just a few weeks away from our 26th wedding anniversary. Our kids were 17, 18 and 22," Kathy recalled. "Quite honestly, his death just sent me on a trajectory that was extremely difficult. I learned a lot of things about my faith."

One of those was that what she believed in the "light" was more difficult to believe in the "dark." Another was that God understood her broken heart.

"I wouldn't trade that experience because my faith has become more real to me and not less in that journey," she said.

Similar journeys

Fast forward to 2007 when Ed found himself on a similar journey. In August Tammy was driving their 14-year-old daughter, Kayla, to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to an audition, and they ran into the

back of a semitruck parked in the middle of the road.

Tammy was killed.

"We were introduced to grief," Ed said of himself, Kayla and her two older brothers, both of whom were in college.

"As a pastor you know all about grief; you've read books about grief; you've counseled grieving people. But when you experience it, it can be a very dark place."

Ed soaked in Psalm 23 in that season, he said, asking God how

long he was going to be in the valley of the shadow of death.

"He didn't give me an answer, which kind of made me mad," Ed remembered. "But really He had

"As a pastor you know all about grief; you've read books about grief; you've counseled grieving people. But when you experience it, it can be a very dark place."

Ed Litton
SBC president and pastor
of Redemption Church



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

After both lost their first spouse, Ed and Kathy Litton met and married and say God has used their journey through the valley to minister to others.

already given me an answer. It was in the text. It said, 'I will be with you.'"

And miraculously, though he started out angry, Ed came to a place where he told God he could stay there forever, if that's what God wanted.

"The power of His presence is what saved us," he said. "That's our story."

By "us" and "our," Ed means him and his children, but he also means Kathy and her children. After Tammy's death, a mutual friend suggested Kathy call Ed's church to see if she could offer help with supporting a bereaved staff member.

She did, and they ended up connecting her with Ed as well. They talked about their similar journeys, and the two eventually married in 2009.

Sharing their story

Kathy noted they've been able to share their story with a lot of widows and widowers over the years.

"We spend a lot of time with people who have death in their life,



Photo courtesy of Ed Litton
Ed and Kathy Litton stand on the summit of Quandary Peak, one of Colorado's fourteeners. The two love hiking and being outdoors.

and you see the redemptive work" of God in using their story to help others.

"Cooperating with [God's] purpose has been a part of our own healing."

She calls it a "stewardship of suf-

fering," a term Ed said resonates with him, too.

"That stewardship is important because we all suffer," he said.

Sometimes believers "argue against health and wealth theology, but we are practitioners," Ed noted.

"When something bad happens, we tend to get pretty upset and say this isn't fair, this isn't what I counted on. But in truth our whole theology is based on suffering, the suffering Savior. Suffering in life is actually 'street cred' for the gospel, because everybody understands what it means to hurt on some level."

A heart for the hurting

Grief tenderizes a person, Ed explained, and it's one of the most humbling experiences.

As time went on, Ed also became "tenderized" to a different kind of reality in his city — racial strife.

"Our city has a very painful past," he noted. "The last lynching in North America was right here. The last slave ship to offload was here."

And that's just the historical markers, he said. As he watched the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 he started to be more aware of the daily pain some people in his city faced.

"It was after Ferguson that a group of local pastors and leaders

said, 'We've got to talk,'" Ed remembered.

"So we sat down and started talking. It was awkward, as it often is, but you just learn to get used to awkward. You have to cross the bridge of awkward to get to the reality of what needs to be done."

It became known as the Pledge Group — basically people who pledge to engage those who "don't look like you, think like you or maybe even vote like you," Ed explained.

'Love one another'

"For us in this city, it has led to becoming friends and working together to try to expand and get the body of Christ in this city from all different denominations to set aside our differences for a moment and say, 'How can we reach people for Christ in this city?'" Ed noted. "The most obvious way is we can demonstrate what Jesus said: 'By this they will know that you are My disciples, that you love one another.'"

Often that can start with a smile

— to bridge the gap and extend love to someone different.

That's in essence what changed Ed's life and the life of his family — a pastor who was willing to smile and extend love to his father in the grocery store decades ago.

These days, Ed continues to pass that along to others. He feels called to shepherd his church to continue loving people in the way Jesus demonstrated and instructed. He and Kathy are deeply invested in their ministries — she just celebrated 10 years of working

with NAMB, serving as director of planter spouse development for the Send Network. And he is "very passionate" about following God's call to lead well in the places God has put him.

The Littons also are deeply invested in their children and 11 grandchildren. Ed said he's proud of Kathy's strength not just as a mom and grandmother but also "in her convictions about the gospel and helping people who are on the front lines."

Kathy said her husband is a man of courage and honesty.

For a video recap and a second expanded interview, visit tabonline.org/Litton.

"How can we reach people for Christ in this city?"
The most obvious way is we can demonstrate what Jesus said: 'By this they will know that you are My disciples, that you love one another.'

Ed Litton
SBC president and pastor of Redemption Church

"Ed has rich character, and he does not back down," she said. "He does that with softness. He's not a hard person. There's much respect when you're married to a man like that."

A love for the outdoors

Ed and Kathy love hiking and being outdoors, and he said at times there's a big part of him that would love to spend his days sitting on top of a mountain somewhere or fly fishing. But God has called him to lead, even when it's difficult.

He said what he's seen ever since he watched God change his father was this: Jesus has the power to change lives.

"He's moving in this world," Ed declared. "We can look around and see doom and gloom, but the reality is Jesus has people in this city He wants to save. Our job is to say, 'Put me in their path, send me to them; bring them to me, help me to find them.'"

Until that's done, there's still work to be done for Ed, his family, his church and the SBC.

"[GOD'S] MOVING IN THIS WORLD. WE CAN LOOK AROUND

and see doom and gloom, but the reality is that

JESUS HAS PEOPLE IN THIS CITY HE WANTS TO SAVE.

Our job is to say, 'Put me in their path, send me

TO THEM; BRING THEM TO ME, HELP ME TO FIND THEM.'"

— ED LITTON



Ed Litton preaches on a recent Sunday morning service at Redemption Church, where he has served for the past 27 years.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What Is Man?

Partners with God

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

TAB Media

Just as God intended at creation that Adam should share in a partnership in which he was to tend the garden God had made (Gen. 2:15), so we as redeemed sinners can experience the dignity of being partners with God.

We can be in partnership with God in tending and preserving the rest of His creation, subduing it with a sense of stewardship and exercising dominion over it without abusing, exploiting or destroying it.

God's fellow workers

This week we explore some further aspects of this remarkable truth that God made us to be partners with Him. What higher role can we aspire to occupy than being God's fellow workers?

God's creation instruction was that His image-bearers would partner with Him in procreation, filling the earth with descendants.

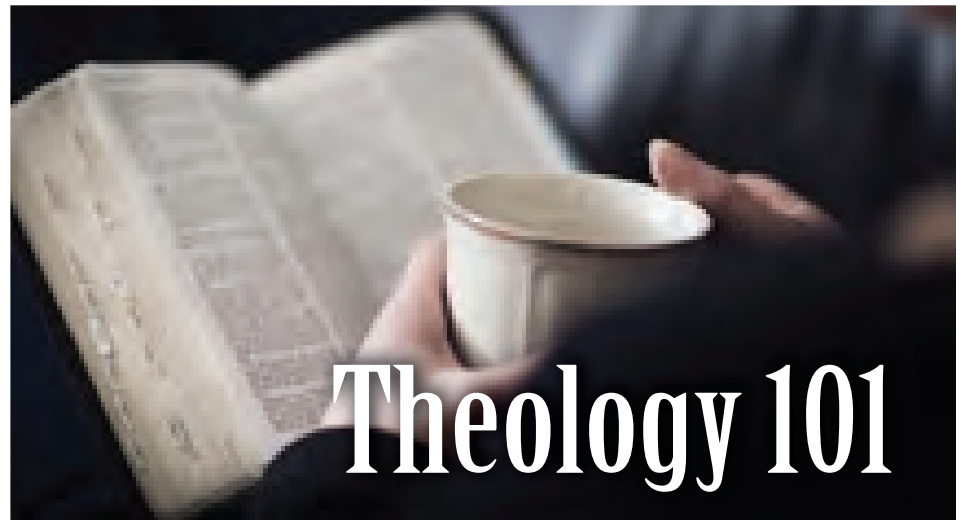
Scripture states, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Gen. 1:27-28).

To the end of the procreation of the race, gender was one of God's good creation gifts to humankind that enables us to bear and raise children.

Furthermore, as bearers of God's likeness, humans are partners with God in making Him known in all the earth.

The explanation given for humans like Paul and his companions engaging in missionary and evangelistic outreach is simply put in 1 Corinthians 3:9: "For we are God's fellow workers."

In addition, we partner with God through prayer. Of all the creatures God made, only human beings



hold the high privilege of joining with God in prayer. No fish, fowl or beast ever engages in prayer for their needs or those of others. As the redeemed children of God, we possess the high honor of fellowship with Him through prayer. We petition, God responds. We intercede, God answers.

Believing prayer

While God could do as He pleases without our partnership in prayer, He has determined to do some things only in answer to believing prayer. Hence, the Bible frequently invites us to come to

God as a beloved child would approach an earthly father. Often divine intervention awaits human asking. It is as the Bible says, "You do not have, because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

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.



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

GUEST SPEAKERS



DR. JUNIOR HILL

Pastor, evangelist
Hartselle, Ala.



DR. KEVIN EZELL

President
North American Mission Board
Alpharetta, Ga.



JAY WATSON

Pastor
Life Community
Nashville, Tenn.

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Virtual Boston Marathon

Race run in Satsuma earns woman with autism a prized unicorn medal

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media Group

Rebecca Charles had tried everything she could to help her daughter. “Early on, she had struggles,” she said of Julia, who has autism and many medical issues. “She really didn’t have any communication skills whatsoever. She didn’t talk much.”

Over the years, Julia had multiple surgeries. Her mother took her to physical, speech, occupational and eating therapy, and she tried to help her make friends. It was an uphill battle.

“If it was out there to try, we tried it,” Charles said.

Then one day in 2014, a friend invited them to a nighttime “glow race” where runners planned to push people with disabilities in racing wheelchairs. Charles was nervous about saying yes.

“Julia does not do nights well,” she explained. “She is usually so stimulated by 5:30 or 6:00, she wants to be in bed already.”

But they went. To her surprise, Julia loved it. And that night kicked off something new for her. Charles got her connected with that team of runners, and they began pushing Julia in races. She found a community that accepted her.

And she started communicating.

“She started talking to the people around her in the races,” Charles said, noting she suddenly was hearing Julia tell runners they were doing a great job, to run like their life depends on it, that she liked their shoes and to keep going. The wind, Julia said, freed her up to talk.

‘Encourages everybody’

“She really encourages everybody, and everybody comes and talks to her and tells her what an encouragement she is,” Charles said.

Over the years the racing team around her changed, but Julia kept going, even finishing a Spartan Race, a Just for the Mud of It race and the Murder Creek Mud Run — all of



Photo courtesy of Chris Strayhorn

Julia Charles (center) and her running partner Lance Johnson (pushing Julia) tackle a virtual Boston Marathon Oct. 10 with a few friends from their running community and First Baptist Church Satsuma.

which required being in mud and dirty water, something she’s always hated.

“She really overcame,” Charles said.

In addition to the community she has gained and her personal progress along the way, Julia has racked up finisher medals.

“Some autistic kids have a weighted vest,” Charles said. “Julia likes the weight of the medals on her chest.”

For her 16th birthday, one of Julia’s running friends started a Facebook page to ask people all over the country to send her racing medals. She received hundreds, and she loves them all, Charles said.

But there was still something missing — the coveted unicorn medal given out at the Boston Marathon.

“Nobody gives those medals up,” Charles said with a laugh.

Getting in the race with a wheelchair seemed like an impossibility until this year’s Boston Marathon

added a virtual option. Charles asked the man who had become Julia’s go-to race buddy — Lance Johnson — if he might be interested in giving that a try.

Ever since the Spartan Race in 2019 when Johnson first met Julia, he’d become more than just a racing companion — he and his family were now close friends. When Julia has a bad day, Charles calls Johnson, and he comes and takes her for a run.

“They have built a bond, and Julia is like their family, and their girls are like our family,” she said.

Johnson said he’d love to try, and they started putting plans in place and getting approval from race officials for Julia’s medical status.

But plans were lacking something critical — the crowd.

That’s where First Baptist Church Satsuma became part of the picture — Johnson’s good friend, Brent Rawson, is pastor there, and he saw an opportunity for the church.

“I presented it to the church and said, ‘Why don’t we do this on a Sunday morning, then come in and worship with the runners if anyone else wants to run?’

“They got really excited about how it could be a really good picture of the love of Jesus,” Rawson said.

The children’s ministry made signs, and Rawson — a local cross-country coach — mapped out the route, starting and finishing at the church, with a break at the halfway mark, before repeating the route. After the race, everyone would be invited for a worship service, and they’d grill burgers in the parking lot afterward.

In total, the Oct. 10 race took just under five hours. Rawson ran beside Johnson the whole way, as did two others, one of whom was Rawson’s son, Leith, in his first marathon.

About 25 others from the church, the community and his cross-country team ran or rode racing wheelchairs for portions of the race, including Rawson’s wife, Maria, who ran a half marathon.

Enormous support

A crowd from the church cheered at the finish line and shot off fireworks donated by TNT Fireworks.

“She’s such a special person, the way she thinks, the personality she has — it’s contagious,” Johnson said. “Just running with her, she’ll tell me things about God and how He’s everywhere around us, and things I might not remember to think about on my own. She’s a beautiful person inside and out.”

Now that Julia is 19, Charles said she’s so thankful for the friends who invited them to that first race, and for Johnson, who continues to be a family friend. And she’s thankful for the way FBC Satsuma came together to make it a special day for her daughter.

“I was reminded of what the Church is called to do,” Rawson said. “Let’s be reminded to stop going to church and start being the Church.”

“Just running with her, she’ll tell me things about God and how He’s everywhere around us.”

Lance Johnson
racing companion and friend

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CHRIST CENTERED

Colossians 1:17-18



ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION NOVEMBER 16-17, 2021

WHITESBURG BAPTIST CHURCH • HUNTSVILLE

FEATURING MESSAGES BY:

TUESDAY MORNING
Tim Cox • Pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea

TUESDAY EVENING
Jamie Dew • President, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

WEDNESDAY MORNING
Jeff Meyers • Pastor, First Baptist Church, Opelika



Tim Cox



Jamie Dew



Jeff Meyers

CHRIST CENTERED

Colossians 1:17-18 testimonies by

Dewayne Rembert
Pastor, Flatline Church, Montgomery

Joshua del Risco
Hispanic Pastor, Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham

Zachary Beasley
Campus Minister, Alabama State University and Tuskegee University



Dewayne Rembert



Joshua del Risco



Zachary Beasley

MINI-CONCERT, Tuesday Evening
by Contemporary Christian Singer Christy Nockels,



Events Surrounding the Annual Meeting

CHURCH PLANTER NETWORK DINNER

November 14, 4 p.m. • House of Hope and Restoration Church, Huntsville
Register at PlantAlabama.org/events

ALABAMA BAPTIST PASTORS CONFERENCE

November 15, 10 a.m. • First Baptist Church, Decatur
More info at albaptistpc.com

UNITE, A GATHERING OF ALABAMA BAPTIST COLLEGE MINISTRY LEADERS

November 15, 4 p.m. • The Well Church, Huntsville
Register at BCMlink.org/events

CONVERSATIONS WITH IMB

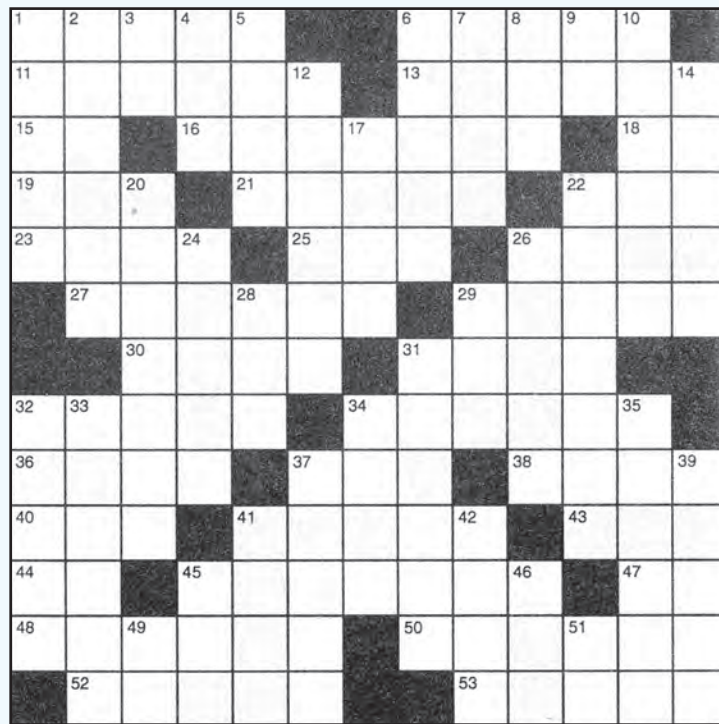
November 16 and 17 during the convention • Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville
Learn more and sign up for your 30-minute slot at alsbom.org/events

Visit alsbom.org/convention for complete schedule and hotel information or contact Amy Nelson, anelson@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2231.

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. The ___ was like a lion. (Dan. 7:4)
6. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and _____. (Ps. 91:13)
11. The Lord is risen _____. (Luke 24:34)
13. Recycled.
15. The children of Gad called the altar _____. (Josh. 22:34)
16. He hath cut ___ the cords of the wicked. (Ps. 129:4)
18. Trade union. (abbr.)
19. ___ not your heart be troubled. (John 14:1)
21. Leah said, A ___ cometh. (Gen. 30:11)
22. Cozbi, the daughter of _____. (Num. 25:15)
23. They that ___ truly are his delight. (Prov. 12:22)
25. Incline thine ___ unto me. (Ps. 17:6)
26. Equalities.
27. A broken spirit ___ the bones. (Prov. 17:22)
29. Three times in a year did Solomon offer ___ offerings. (1 Kings 9:25)
30. Lest thou ___ thy foot against a stone. (Ps. 91:12)
31. He paid the ___ thereof. (Jonah 1:3)
32. Blouse.
34. I will restore ___ unto thee. (Jer. 30:17)
36. The ___ of the feet were part of iron. (Dan. 2:42)
37. Therefore called she his name _____. (Gen. 30:6)
38. ___, why persecutest thou Me? (Acts 9:4)
40. The Lord ___ God shall deliver us. (2 Chron. 32:11)
41. They would come and take Him by _____. (John 6:15)
43. Compass point.
44. Mind your ___ and Qs.
45. The Father ___ such



By Evelyn M. Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- to worship Him. (John 4:23)
47. Southern state. (abbr.)
48. Have their ___ exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:14)
50. As they ___ He fell asleep. (Luke 8:23)
52. All the land which thou _____. (Gen. 13:15)
53. Masts.
17. And ___ built an altar unto the Lord. (Gen. 8:20)
20. Later.
22. The city Adam, that is beside _____. (Josh. 3:16)
24. All men are _____. (Ps. 116:11)
26. Knitting stitches.
28. Eastern Standard Time. (abbr.)
29. Sheep's bleat.
31. Barriers.
32. Who ___ his ears from hearing of bloodshed. (Isa. 33:15)
33. David made him ___ in the city of David. (1 Chron. 15:1)
34. Listen!
35. They shall not ___ nor thirst. (Isa. 49:10)
37. ___ thou well to be angry? (Jon. 4:4)
39. He ___ me beside the still waters. (Ps. 23:2).
41. Charges.
42. Greek letters.
45. Compass point.
46. He smote them ___ and thigh. (Judg. 15:8)
49. Maine direction.
51. City on the west coast.

DOWN

1. Let the ___ be joyful. (Ps. 96:12)
2. The Lord is risen _____. (Luke 24:34)
3. Ave.
4. The ___ and the waves roaring. (Luke 21:25)
5. Exam.
6. Zeal.
7. All the fountains of the great ___ broken up. (Gen. 7:11)
8. He set it up in the plain of ___ a. (Dan. 3:1)
9. Plural ending.
10. ___ unto Me; for I have redeemed thee. (Isa. 44:22)
12. Hath he not root in himself, but ___ for a while. (Matt. 13:21)
14. None of the disciples ___ ask Him. (John 21:12)

WORD search

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| ABRAM | HERDS |
| AI | JORDAN |
| ALTAR | LIVESTOCK |
| BEAUTIFUL | LOT |
| BETHEL | MAMRE |
| BLESSING | MOREH |
| CANAAN | NAME |
| CATTLE | NATION |
| COVENANT | NEGEV |
| CURSE | OFFSPRING |
| DARKNESS | PEACE |
| DESCENDANTS | PHARAOH |
| DISEASES | PIGEON |
| DOVE | PLAIN |
| EGYPT | POSSESSIONS |
| FAMINE | SARAI |
| FLOCKS | SHECHEM |
| GOLD | SILVER |
| GREAT | WIFE |
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NOVEMBER

- 1 Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 2 Ministers Wives' Connection**, ONLINE, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 4 Time to Plant**, Madison Association Office, Huntsville, Jarman Leatherwood, jleatherwood7@gmail.com
- 7 A Night of Encouragement & Evangelism**, Centre First, Centre, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 8 A Night of Encouragement & Evangelism**, Carrollton Baptist, Carrollton, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 9 Great Commission Conversations-Morning**, ONLINE, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 9 Great Commission Conversations-Evening**, ONLINE, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 11 Ministers Wives' Connection**, ONLINE, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 14 ALCAP Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 14 Alabama Church Planter Network Dinner**, House of Hope & Restoration Church, Huntsville, Lynn Graham, ext. 2244
- 15 Unite**, The Well Church, Huntsville, Mike Nuss, ext. 2276
- 16-17 Annual Meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention**, Whitesburg, Huntsville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231
- 16-17 Conversations with IMB**, Whitesburg, Huntsville, Scotty Goldman, ext. 2387
- 20 International Friends Retreat**, Earle Trent Assembly, Florence, Debbie Adams, ext. 2275
- 28-12/5 Week of Prayer for International Missions & Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**

DECEMBER

- 5 Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, West End, Valley, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 9 Early Bird Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263

JANUARY 2022

- 2-9 January Bible Study**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 10 Church Tax Conference**, Tennessee River Association Office, Scottsboro, Lee Wright, ext. 2210
- 11 Church Tax Conference**, CrossPoint, Trussville, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 16 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 18 Great Commission Conversations-Morning**, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 18 Great Commission Conversations-Evening**, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 20-22 Southeast Youth Conclave**, Chattanooga Convention Center, Tennessee, Scotter Kellum, ext. 2280
- 24 Church Tax Conference**, Mobile Association Office, Mobile, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 25 Church Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 27-28 Discipleship Network of Alabama**, First, Athens, Steve Layton, ext. 2221
- 28-29 Living and Leading on God's Agenda**, Heritage, Montgomery, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
- 28-29 Alabama Bible Skills and Drills Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2271
- 30-31 Sharing Hope Conference**, Dauphin Way, Mobile, Lori McGough, ext. 2245

'Out of control'

Missionary says efforts in Nigeria demonstrate turning other cheek

Nigeria is increasingly in the news, and not for its tourist attractions. Headlines amplify the spiral of hatred, civil unrest, violence, kidnapping and destruction that is "spinning out of control" in many parts of the African nation, according to some observers.

International Mission Board missionaries serving in West Africa are aware of how complicated the news-making situations seem to others.

Deron Thomas, who serves in the region, said the events are complex and built on long-standing distrust of people who are different — different tribes and different religions of people from different parts of the country. And sometimes, it's just violence against innocent victims.

The situation is complex, but the ministry doesn't have to be, Thomas said.

Through Send Relief,

missionaries and national Nigerian partners are offering assistance to Christians, including converts from predominantly Muslim people groups — who have been targets of violence.

"We want to help those communities of believers heal from the trauma and attacks and be restored," Thomas said.

Ministry for all

That includes rebuilding homes and churches that have been burned down, providing seeds to replant farms and offering psychological and spiritual healing.

But the ministry isn't reserved for Christians alone.

"We're actually working on our first project to extend a kind of olive branch to the community that has sponsored some recent attacks," Thomas said.

Christians have formally approached those who at-



IMB photo
A woman reads the Bible at Utan Baptist Church in Jos, Nigeria. Violence and unrest continue to plague the African nation, and Christians are often targets.

tacked them, asking, "What is something we can do to serve your community?"

The community leaders were taken aback at the offer. They said they need a medical clinic and a veterinary clinic for their cattle.

"There is going to be this component of tangibly turning the other cheek because

one of the big problems here is this endless cycle of violence and retaliation," Thomas explained.

Alabama connection

"Turning the other cheek is something that no one can do apart from the power of the Holy Spirit working in them, especially when things as devastating as these attacks happen."

Shirley Crowder, an Alabama Baptist and the daughter of former missionaries to Nigeria, said she also believes the gospel can break

the cycle of violence.

"There are centuries of tribal warfare, but traditions can be changed as people come to know Christ and they become new creations," she said.

Although Crowder's family left the field more than 50 years ago, she said Nigeria is still home to her.

"The all-too-frequent reports of my dear Nigerian brothers and sisters being kidnapped, tortured and killed breaks my heart," she said.

Crowder, a member of Valley View Baptist Church in Leeds, asked for prayer for Christians in the country to stay strong as they try to live out their faith.

"Our missionaries, Nigerian pastors, Christ-followers and their families are in grave danger; yet, emboldened by the Holy Spirit, they faithfully preach and teach the word of God as they introduce people to Jesus Christ," she said. (IMB, TAB Media)

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



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'Who's Your One?'

Alabama event continues evangelistic theme

By Tracy Riggs
& Dianna L. Cagle

TAB Media

Ted Traylor raised his Bible and showed where he wrote three names of people he was praying would find Christ.

Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida, preached during the "Who's Your One?" Alabama conference hosted by Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills Oct. 10-11.

The event was part of a tour visiting cities across the United States, challenging believers to pray for one person with whom to have a gospel conversation, and to pray for God to open the hearts and minds of that person to Jesus.

Saving the lost

"The purpose of the gospel is to save," Traylor declared at an opening rally.

He told the audience the main reason he originally pursued preaching was lost souls. One of the names in Traylor's Bible died without Jesus.

One seems close to following Christ — he is at-

tending church and asking questions.

The other still doesn't know Jesus, but Traylor has committed to keep sharing the gospel. He said his heart hurts over the one who is lost forever.

Traylor detailed four ways to lead: exposition,

ethics, encounter and evangelism.

"Hear me, Church: we can never go and find 'who's our one?' if He is not our first one," Traylor asserted. "It's the 'Jesus life' that we are to have.

"We are in the 10th month. Who have you shared the gospel with one-on-one

this year?" Traylor asked, challenging the more than 100 in attendance, "If you ask God to use you, He'll wear you out. Doors are going to open — will you walk through?"

Referring to Malachi 2:6, Traylor noted "true instruc-

tion is to be in our mouth." "Folks, we've got to get bold about this thing. It's not hard."

He encouraged the audience to make sharing the gospel so much a "part of your life ... that you begin to talk about Jesus as part of your daily conversations." In a later workshop, Traylor shared practical applications of advancing the gospel.

Reaching more

Reading from "The Unstuck Church" by Tony Morgan, Traylor said, "When you stick with your current customers, come hell or high water, you are cutting yourself off from new customers. Your product or service becomes so tailored to your current customers that you stop appealing to fresh blood. And that's how your company starts to die."

Traylor applied the idea to churches that focus only on their members, suggesting they won't thrive, but must be outwardly focused. He provided seven ideas based on Acts 28 to help a church accomplish the task:

1. Faithful Stewardship — "Your budget at your church will reflect

"Your budget at your church will reflect your convictions and where you're putting emphasis."

Ted Traylor, pastor
Olive Baptist Church



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist
Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida, emphasizes "He's our One" before "Who's Your One?"

your convictions and where you're putting emphasis," he said. "If you're spending all your money internally, rather than externally, you've made a statement that we've turned inward rather than outward. We've got to put our money where our mission is," he said.

2. Kingdom Preaching — Give an invitation at the end of every service, whether through "coming forward" or providing a card to turn in or number to text. "Every generation does it different," Traylor said. "When you preach the Kingdom, you must invite people to the King."

3. Inspirational Writing — Noting the power

of written words, Traylor said according to Success magazine, a personal, handwritten note is 100 times more powerful than a text. However, all types of writing can be used to further the Kingdom.

4. Developing Disciples — Be proactive in tying community ministry to evangelism. "You don't help people just if they smell better and look better [but still] go to hell," Traylor said. "It's getting your hands dirty with people. Social ministry tied to the gospel will advance the gospel because there are some people who aren't coming in here. ... Of course, we have to go out there to where they are."

... Of course, we have to go out there to where they are."

5. Spiritual Friendships — Spiritual friendships are very important, but not just with Christians. Believers need friends both lost and saved — people with whom they can honestly discuss spiritual issues, with whom they can bare their soul.

6. Personal Evangelism — While the Apostle Paul was under house arrest he was chained to guards, and every eight hours the guard was changed, Traylor said. "Can you imagine? The praetorian was hooked up for eight hours with the greatest preacher the world has ever seen. You reckon he got a lesson? You know he did! The word of God said in Philippians 1:13 that the gospel became well-known among the Praetorian."

7. Supernatural Favor — Though not related directly to the Acts 28 text,



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist
Shane Pruitt, Next Gen director for the North American Mission Board, gives tips for sharing Christ with Gen Z. Read more about Pruitt's session at tabonline.org/one-conference.

Traylor emphasized Paul had the favor of God.

To learn more from the breakout sessions, go to tabonline.org/one-conference. For a gallery of photos, visit tabonline.org/whos-your-one.

Traylor concluded with a summary of a sermon by C.T. Studd about "chocolate Christians."

"Those that are chocolate Christians, when it gets

hot in the kitchen, they just melt away. But those that know the favor of Almighty God will stand even with the world on fire."

Stand for Christ

"And that's what I encourage you to be. Don't be a chocolate Christian. Be one standing and letting God be your source of favor and supply," Traylor said.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 31

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



THE GOSPEL'S FORGIVENESS Colossians 2:4–15

A major issue confronting the Colossian church was the presence of false teachers trying to lead believers astray. That remains a problem for the Church.

Christians are bombarded by arguments that come from inside and outside the Church. Many cults have sprung up from well-meaning small groups within congregations, where a charismatic leader begins to focus on something other than the gospel.

In addition, outside the Church there is always a threat from other religions, but also from culture itself. Many Christians today believe things that permeate the culture but are antithetical to the gospel. Thus, it is imperative we remain rooted in the truth.

Continue (4–7)

How did Paul encourage the Colossians? He entreated them to continue in the teaching they'd had from the beginning. Instead of putting stock in new teaching, the Colossians were to cling to what was handed down to them.

This wisdom applies to us as well — it would be foolish for younger Christians to dismiss the teaching of godly men and women who invested in their lives.

When we dismiss the wisdom of those who have come before us, we take a great risk, opening ourselves up to worldly arguments that may seem good, but are poison, altering the gospel.

Be Careful (8–10)

Paul also warns the Colossians not to buy into philosophies being pressed upon them by false teachers who de-emphasized the importance and validity of Christ alone.

The gospel is rooted in a salvation that comes by grace through faith — not philosophy or knowledge. This is why the gospel is good news for the illiterate orphan as well as the most educated person in the world. The gospel is good news for all because it depends upon God's faithfulness to us, not our ability to reach God; and God meets us in Jesus,

who became man for us. One of the core teachings of the Bible is that Jesus is both human and God — one of the most attacked teachings of Christianity. Paul doubles down on this, reminding the Colossians of Jesus' divinity. Because Jesus is God, we can trust all He says, believing His words over and against those who seek to undermine His truth.

Remember (11–15)

Christian cults add something to the gospel. Instead of focusing on Christ alone for salvation, they require something more, adding works or other beliefs. A common idea in the early Church was believers needed to be circumcised, following the Old Testament command to the Jews. Paul informs the Colossians the circumcision they received was spiritual, a circumcision of the heart, a spiritual transformation from death to life. Salvation does not require any physical action on our part.

While the idea of circumcision being necessary for salvation is not prevalent today, the idea that baptism is a requirement for salvation is common. Paul points out baptism demonstrates a solidarity with Christ, representing our death to self and being made alive in Christ. Baptism is not what saves us.

Just like Paul, we need to emphasize the exclusivity of the gospel, teaching it clearly to our congregations, Sunday School classes and families, and holding it high against all other philosophies, religions and cults. We must be rooted and grounded in the faith, presenting the gospel clearly.

Believing in something aside from Christ is a miserable approach to life. As believers we can rest in the completeness of the gospel (Matt. 11:28–30) so we can live in joy and abundant life. This helps us show the world the joy of what it means to be a Christian, joyfully pleasing God out of a genuine love for Him.

This apologetic is one the world needs to see in these dark times to provide hope for a lost and dying world.

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



CONFIDENCE IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT Genesis 13:5–11, 14–18

After the debacle in Egypt, Abram and Sarai have returned to one of their earlier encampments in the Central Hills of Canaan. As before, Abram calls on the Lord where he had built an altar, perhaps in penance for the harm he brought to Pharaoh's household and the anguish he caused Sarai.

As we shall see, trust will wane often in Abram and Sarai. The story does not aim to present them as moral heroes. The emphasis is on God's trustworthiness.

The rest of Abram's and Sarai's story happens in the land of Canaan. Because their journey takes readers through much of the biblical world, it helps to consult a map.

Reread Chapter 12 for context.

Conflict happens even in the best relationships. (5–8)

The narrative presents both Abram and Lot as immensely wealthy, having vast herds and numerous people, probably slaves (12:5; "possessions" in 13:6) who are their household servants and herders. Consequently, we see one part of God's promise in 12:2 is already being fulfilled, for "blessing" often refers to prosperity (see Deut. 28:1–14).

Because the volume of animals and people taxes the pastureland, herders quarrel about whose flocks may graze and water in various places. We can imagine Abram's herders place weight on his authority while Lot's argue they are treated unfairly.

Verse 8 suggests the strife between their herders is beginning to cause a rift between uncle and nephew. The two could have burrowed into their growing resentment and intensified the fight over land. Instead, Abram initiates a solution: They will separate for the sake of peace.

Place others' needs before your own. (9–11)

As the head of the family, Abram could have either divided the pastureland himself or sent Lot far away. Instead, Abram allows Lot to

choose the Jordan Valley, which seems best to him. That is an act of generosity.

Abram relinquishes authority, when holding onto what was his by right would probably have accelerated bitterness and conflict. It is ironic the land Lot chooses will be part of ancient Israel.

Note the narrative does two other things: It anticipates the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Chapter 19, and it removes one potential heir of Abram's household, as Lot volunteers to leave Canaan and, after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, becomes the ancestor of the Moabites and Amorites (19:36–38).

Trust God to remain faithful to keep His promises. (14–18)

God underscores this last point in verse 15, repeating the promise of 12:7 that God will give the land to Abram's "seed" ("offspring" in many translations), that is, to Abram's and Sarai's descendants.

Neither Lot nor Eliezer of Damascus (15:2–4) will be Abram's heir. Nor will Ishmael, Abram's oldest son by the enslaved Egyptian Hagar, for Ishmael is not Sarai's son.

Abram's sons through Keturah and concubines will become the ancestors of Arabian tribes (25:1–6). As we will learn, the child of the promise will be Isaac, the sole offspring of Abram and Sarai (17:16).

Abram and Sarai do not behave as if they believe a word of it. After hearing the promise more than once, Abram twice turns Sarai over to a king's harem (12:10–20; 20:1–18) and chooses Eliezer as his heir.

For her part, Sarai gives an enslaved woman to her husband to impregnate (16:1–3). The father and mother of the faith show the strain of trust. They reveal what people will do when conviction fades.

Is it any wonder Israel, the people who traced their ancestry to Abram and Sarai, so often strayed? Is it any wonder you and I, their descendants through faith, must work at trust?

As ever, we rely, not on our own virtues of certitude and loyalty, but on God's mercy and faithfulness.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Lanell Downs Smith

TAB Media

Pandemic slowdown opened way for Peterson to focus on Creator

Award-winning singer-songwriter and author Andrew Peterson has a passion for changing lives — one song, one book, one blog post at a time.

This month, he released his much-anticipated second adult trade, nonfiction book, a memoir about his encounters with God in creation.

Pandemic-related restrictions grounded Peterson from his busy touring schedule in 2020. At the beginning of the lockdown he recalled reading how one of the biggest Google searches was, “Why are the birds so loud?”

Like many, slowing down helped Peterson realize birds had always been singing but he had been too busy to notice.

‘The richest time’

“I stopped moving for a solid year and was home with my wife and my family; really able for the first time in my adult life to see the seasons come and go,” Peterson said. “And it was just the richest time. It was the perfect time to slow down and keep track of the ways the Lord was speaking to me through those seasons.”

Written during the lockdown from his home in Nashville, “The



ANDREW PETERSON

Photo courtesy of Hoganson Media Relations

God of the Garden” presents an intimate portrait of Peterson’s encounters with the creator God — the One working for and keeping His beloved creation, planting and pruning to reap a harvest of righteousness.

“Part of the reason I wrote the book was to kind of get to the bottom of the way He speaks through His creation,” Peterson reflected. “I was taking the time to pay attention to my own story, remembering certain key moments in my life where I really was overwhelmed with a sense of God’s presence and a sense of who He is. And those moments tended to happen either in the company of a specific tree or in a specific woodland or forest.”

The Bible is full of examples of God “showing up” where there are trees, Peterson noted, and they play a big role in the story He’s telling with all of creation.

The story became a kind of experiment for the author, looking back at the moments when he felt God’s presence most acutely and realizing they occurred most often when he was surrounded by trees.

The book follows Peterson’s 2019 memoir, “Adorning the Dark: Thoughts on Community, Calling and the Mystery of Making,” which received several notable awards from The Gospel Coalition and Christianity Today.

Begun as a writing discipline, “Adorning the Dark” soon developed into a journal focused on the creation process, written to help songwriters, poets, pastors and even painters understand how the Christian’s calling intersects with the “great mystery of creativity.”

Peterson’s award-winning, four-book, youth fantasy adventure series, “The Wingfeather Saga,” was adapted into a short film, and

production is underway on the first season of an animated series.

Peterson founded The Rabbit Room ministry in 2008 to help foster the Christian arts creative community — it hosts concerts, symposiums and yearly conferences. To date, Rabbit Room Press has published more than 30 books.

“We have seen so much, like encouraging communities who are now making their own stuff, writing their own books, putting out music,” Peterson said. “One of the big things that I got from this season of stillness is that we can’t always control the outcome. We’re not in charge of the outcome; we’re in charge of being obedient to tilling the field. We’re [going to do] the work that is put in front of us and trust that the Lord is going to nourish these communities.”

Peterson forged his own path as a singer-songwriter, refusing to compromise his message by chasing album sales and radio singles. His songs are part of an ongoing conversation filled with real human experiences like sorrow, joy and integrity, he said.

Jesus is woven in

“Most of my songs get their start in the dailiness of things. And Jesus is just kind of woven into that.”

This fall Peterson will release the album, “Behold the Lamb of God: The True Tall Tale of the Coming of Christ,” to mark the 20th anniversary of the annual “Behold the Lamb of God” tour.

Peterson and his wife Jamie have been married for 24 years and have three children.

“The God of the Garden,” published by B&H Publishing, is available wherever books are sold. For more information, visit bhpublishing.com.



EDITOR'S NOTE

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