

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



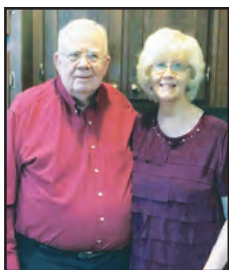
Church's game day breakfasts have big impact for Grove Hill community

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Doctors didn't expect Caden to see his first birthday, but he did. Today he is 11 years old.

Photo courtesy of Anna Nelson

'Faith and prayer'

One family's journey with the God who carried them through

By Lanell Downs Smith
The Alabama Baptist

Chad and Anna Nelson prepared to welcome their first child in spring 2010. Everything appeared normal until just 18 weeks into the pregnancy, when an anatomy scan uncovered a problem.

The couple received unset-

tling news. A maternal fetal specialist explained the baby had a bladder outlet obstruction and a small amount of amniotic fluid.

The Nelsons were offered three choices: terminate the pregnancy, do nothing and wait for premature labor or visit a specialist in Miami for possible treatment options.

"We basically had to make a decision on the spot," Anna Nelson said. "I was overwhelmed and emotional and just broken, quite honestly."

The Nelsons enlisted friends and family to pray with them.

After a weekend of prayer,

they decided to pursue treatment in Miami.

"We just left on faith and prayer," Nelson said. "We had no idea if the doctor would see us or if our insurance would cover any of the expenses."

Qualified for treatment

On their way, the couple learned the results from their genetic testing were normal and their baby would qualify for treatment.

They also learned they were expecting a little boy they named Caden.

But the news in Miami was still difficult.

Even at full term, Caden could face multiple complications, including a condition called hypoplastic lungs — incomplete lung development — affecting his overall outcome.

Surgeons placed a shunt into Caden's bladder in utero. Approximately 29 weeks into the pregnancy, the shunt clogged and the couple returned to Miami for a second procedure.

As Nelson was prepped for surgery, premature labor began.

One week later, Caden was born, breathing on his own (See 'Pell City,' page 12)



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Photo courtesy of John and Kim Dobbs

Justin Dobbs traveled with a missions team to Mexico the week of his 16th birthday in July 2010, six months before he was found dead.

Stories episode shares about teen's death, revival that followed

If you listened to Season 3 of TAB Media's Stories podcast, you heard a little bit of Justin Dobbs' story.

In Episode 3, Jeremy Beck shares about how God brought beauty from the ashes of his grief journey in the past 11 years, including the painful season brought on by the death of his father in late 2020.

The initial painful season came with the death of Justin, a 16-year-old student who was a leader in Beck's youth group when he died unexpectedly in 2011.

"It was a wake-up call of how fragile life is," Beck said.

He said Justin was a talented kid — he could play pretty much any instrument he picked up. But more importantly, he was passionate about reaching the lost for Christ.

The day he died, he was getting ready to lead a Bible study at his house that night.

But his death was a wake-up call, not just for Beck, but also for the youth group. As a result, they started sharing their faith, and for the next year, Valley Creek Baptist

Church in Hueytown baptized at least one teenager every week.

"It was a revival that broke out into our church," said Beck, who now serves as pastor of Grant Street Baptist Church in Bessemer.

In the newly released Season 4, Episode 3, we'll talk with Beck again, along with Justin's parents, John and Kim Dobbs. You'll hear more of what it's been like for them to grapple with losing their son and struggle with the question of how he died and whether or not he took his life.

You'll hear them share in their own words what it's like to cling to God through suffering and watch

God work in a way they say they wouldn't go back and change even if they could. (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of John and Kim Dobbs

Justin Dobbs was known for his passion for Jesus and love for people.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 14.

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

✉ jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

🐦 @RashionalThts

Craving more clarity, time and energy? Review your routines

Systems and routine procedures make sense to me, especially when several people serve on a team and need to be as efficient and effective as possible.

For instance, our production-related team members can log into the server, click on any issue folder and know exactly where we stand related to the upcoming deadline merely by reviewing the coding on each page.

Our content-focused team members know the status of articles based on where they are located in the system.

Our web-based team members know which links connect to each of the daily newsletters based on the templates we developed and the date of the submissions.

It's similar to how we communicate related to the dishwasher in our staff kitchen.

We have two magnets. One says "clean" and the other "dirty" — and as long as everyone moves the magnets appropriately, anyone can walk into the kitchen and instantly know the status of the dishes in the dishwasher.

You might call these internal controls, such as how we refer to the systematic steps put in

place in our business office. We work to follow the same steps in the same order for each item processed.

We even place the signature approval lines in the same spot for every sheet of paper needing hard copy approval and attempt to write similar subject lines in email messages for digital approvals.

Understanding the system

The goal is to train all who work on a team to be able to look at the information and know what it means without requiring the help of others to figure it out.

Of course, it only works if everyone on the team follows the system and routines.

If someone misses a step or decides it's not important for whatever reason, then it automatically sets others up for confusion or to do unnecessary work to figure out what's happening.

As with all of life, sometimes exceptions need to be made and that's OK.

We all need to be flexible enough to adapt when needed, but communicating clearly what is taking place becomes an important step to prevent confusion when changes are made.

A quick message to those involved alerting them to what is different is typically all that is needed to keep everything moving smoothly.

However, if someone doesn't follow the system and fails to communicate the change, then the others on the team have a decision to make.

Will they allow the disruption to upset them and cause massive confusion, or will they attempt to calmly investigate the situation to solve the mystery?

Taking a few minutes to think about all the angles and alerting the rest of the team that something is amiss will typically surface the missing piece and help get everything back on track.

It also helps showcase potential holes in the system or unclear concepts held by different team members, allowing these issues to be solved.

Developing disciplines

Learning and practicing routines and following systems help us grow as a team and challenge us to be disciplined in our daily and weekly assignments.

It allows each of us to pull our weight while also providing a clear path for others to help when we need a little grace.

The same concept can be applied to our personal lives and the work we do through the church.

We can save time and energy by systemizing the routine chores and agenda items both at home and church.

Everything from laundry and exercise to Bible study and our focused time with the Lord is more likely to take place daily with a schedule and routine.

At church, assigning a team of volunteers to oversee each area ensures ownership and ongoing coverage of the work.

If the pastor or other staff member starts from scratch each week looking for volunteers and/or outlining the plans, then unnecessary energy, time and resources will be spent.

And, in all parts of life, periodically reviewing the systems with those involved helps us cull outdated steps and reminds everyone of the importance of each assignment and role — which also should encourage team members to strive for excellence in taking care of their specific areas.

The more we understand about the various assignments, routines and systems we are asked to support, the more we grasp our own value in the process and respect it overall.

Your Voice



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

Following Christ in a world of imitators

By **Brian Hobbs**
Editor, The Baptist Messenger

Do you recall the 2021 social media trend, “the milk crate challenge”? For those not familiar, the summer of 2021 saw people stack milk crates in an obstacle course style and video themselves walking on their precarious setup.

The internet abounded with videos showing people falling and nearly breaking their necks just to get views. This phenomenon apparently originated on TikTok, the social media entertainment app that boasts more than 1 billion users.

TikTok reportedly stopped carrying the videos but has been associated with other controversies, including reports of cybersecurity issues and local school safety concerns.

I will refer you to others to discuss all the problems connected to

this social media app and instead focus on one particular aspect that relates to multiple social media — namely, the trend toward imitation.

Why do people mimic whatever they see online, even when it’s a dangerous or a corrupt practice?

We know that people — especially young people — are impressionable.

‘Monkey-see, monkey-do’

But all of us are prone toward the “monkey-see, monkey-do” phenomenon. One theologian said, “We become what we behold.”

Amid this backdrop, Christians must do a better job putting Christ-like, redeeming content out there online. We must also guard our own hearts for fear we will be led away in this culture of mimicry.

One dictionary defines “mimic,”

the verb, as “(to) imitate someone or their actions or words, especially in order to entertain or ridicule.” Too often, we Christians have found ourselves joining the cultural mimicking in unhelpful or even bad ways.

Meanwhile, the Bible says, “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Eph. 5:1–7).

The next time a trend like the crate challenge comes, don’t just curse the darkness. Use that as your cue to point that person toward something more meaningful. Use it to tell them about Jesus, who we can imitate to our own good.

Let’s turn the culture “monkey-see, monkey-do” effect into something redemptive. Tell them about Christ the Rock that all people can stand on, the Rock that will not fall or fail.

“We want to provide answers to questions, hope in the midst of anxiety and direction toward Jesus in the chaos of our world,” said **Randall Payleitner**, associate publisher at Moody Publishers, announcing the launch of Moody’s new online ministry, BibletoLife.com.

I learned how to build a crowd and also how to hold that crowd’s attention. At the same time, I got to practice sharing my faith. ... I never want to slip into believing that the thousands who’ve trusted Christ at my shows are somehow because I’m an amazing speaker. It’s not up to me.

Matt Adams
Christian illusionist

“The fact that God has allowed the nations to come to our country — we don’t have an excuse not to do missions without ever getting in an airplane,” said **Alan Morris**, area missionary for North Central Missions Center in Woodstock, Georgia.

“People are turning to God and the Bible for answers to their questions,” said YouVersion founder **Bobby Gruenewald** on seeing high levels of Bible engagement in 2021.

‘We hear our Father’s voice’

We are not afraid, for we hear our Father’s voice. And what favored child ever trembled at his Father’s speech?

We love to hear that voice; although it’s deep and booming, yet we love its matchless melody, for it comes from the depths of love and affection.

“He drives His chariot through the sky,

Beneath His feet His thunders roar;

He shakes the earth, He veils the sky,

My soul, my soul, this God I adore —

He is my Father, and my love.”

Fall down before His feet and worship Him, for He loves you by His grace. The clouds are the dust of GOD’s feet! (Nahum 1:3).

Annette Brown
TAB Media guest services coordinator via Facebook

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“God made you with design, with detail and with days. ... May we celebrate life.”

DOUGLAS K. WILSON
Dean of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

Students are a lot harder to connect with, and they're not as interested in connecting with campus ministries. We have to go to them. ... In many ways for us it's kind of a restart.

Stephen Thompson
Senior campus minister
Auburn University BCM

As a ministry wife for many years, would you let me offer you some advice? More than a dinner out, more than verbal praise, more than any other gift you could give your pastor ... he will treasure your prayers for his family.

Would you be willing to pray for your pastor's family? Since we live in two realities — the seen and the

unseen (Col. 1:16) — would you be willing to take up your position on the invisible but real battlefield where your pastor's family lives as their earthly husband and father serves our King?

Jani Ortlund
crossway.org/articles/how-to-pray-for-your-pastors-family/

We want to have a ministry that cares, really cares, a group of people who have the vision and the love of Jesus in their heart.

Derry Johnson
Board chair
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries

“It was a hallelujah moment

when we discovered that everybody was accounted for and safe. ... We can replace technology and equipment and buildings. But you just can't replace a life,” said **Charles Fowler**, president of Carson-Newman University, regarding a Nov. 26 campus fire.

As we move forward in worship ... how can we have more 'us'; how can we have more 'our'? How can we pull us together so that our worship is the Body of Christ gathered together so we see the community of our worship?

Pastor David Eldridge
Dawson Memorial Baptist in Birmingham at the LIFT worship conference

Plodders also finish the race

Even though I've run since I was 20, I feel uneasy calling myself a runner. This is because I know a lot of bona fide runners, and, compared to them, I'm no runner.

I log quite a few miles on foot every week. But I'm more of a plodder.

The way I see it, runners are at the front of the pack speeding to the finish. Plodders lag towards the back of the pack trudging to the finish.

Runners run in hopes of qualifying for a spot in the Boston Marathon. Plodders run in hopes they can still fit in their pants after the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

The Apostle Paul often compared life to running a race. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:24, “Run in such a way as to get the prize.” At the end of his life, he said, “I have finished the race” (2 Tim. 4:7).

There's a lot of us in this race called life who aren't the smartest, coolest, prettiest, strongest or richest. We're not in the front of the pack leading everybody else. And we're not going to win medals or impress a bunch of people with the results we post in the race of life.

But that doesn't matter. We didn't quit. We hung in there, faithfully trudging along in the middle of the pack. And that's worth something.

In fact, that's worth everything. It's worth everything to hear Jesus say one day, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:23).

So if you're not a runner, just plod. And if you're not first, just finish. Be faithful. That's good enough for God.

Daniel Wilson
Director of the evangelism office for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

From the *Twitterverse*

@brocraige

“Brought safely by his hand thus far, why wilt thou now give place to fear?” —John Newton

@sPeytonHill

I'm overwhelmed by God's grace displayed in the generous giving of the church I get to serve. The gospel will not be bound & we're just grateful to come along the journey. It's exciting to see the passion of our church reflect God's passion for the nations to know Him.

@micahfries

The more we love the more we risk getting hurt, emotionally. The potential for love & the risk of hurt are correlated. Some attempt to mitigate the risk of pain by not loving deeply. This is understandable, but sad. Everyone will get hurt at some point but love is worth the risk.

@DianeLangberg

We will have to restrain the loudness of our voices, the suddenness of our movements and the intensity of our emotions if we are to provide a safe place for the scared, the suffering, the traumatized and the silenced.

@philipnation

I've been slowly reading Psalm 119 in the mornings. It makes my soul rejoice to experience the goodness of God through His word.

@mhenslee

Pastor, your attendance today was not indicative of, really, much of anything. If you were faithful to preach to 10 instead of 50, 50 instead of 100, 100 instead of 200, etc., and were faithful to #preach-theWord, thank you. That matters, and God is using it more than you know.

@PriscillaShirer

Some of the best advice I ever received was in my early 20s from a woman in her 60s. She said: “A woman who lives well is a woman who is brave enough to change her course when/if she realizes she is going in a direction that she doesn't want to go or doesn't need to go.”

@TaylorLassiter

I heard it dozens of times, and it was true — seeing members leave the church you love and serve has been one of the hardest things about pastoral ministry.

@jakegwright

There is no distinction between “teaching” elders and “ruling” elders in the New Testament.

All elders teach
All elders rule
All elders oversee
All elders shepherd

3 stories you should know



Photo by Doug Rogers/State Board of Missions

Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, prays for the executive branch of Alabama's state government at a Jan. 11 prayer rally hosted by Alabama Citizens Action Program prior to the start of the 2022 legislative session. ALCAP expects the Alabama Legislature to consider bills on transgender treatments for children, marijuana regulation and gambling expansion, among other issues, in this year's session. (TAB Media)

49th March for Life will be held Jan. 21

The 49th annual March for Life will be held Jan. 21 in Washington. This year's theme is Equality Begins in the Womb.

Scheduled speakers include members of Congress, Duck Dynasty star Lisa Robertson, actor Kirk Cameron and other prominent pro-life leaders. A concert by Matthew West will be held at 10 a.m. CT preceding the main event.

Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life Education and Defense Fund, expects this year's march to be "historic with even higher levels of enthusiasm from participants."

Many are hopeful the Supreme Court will soon overturn or weaken abortion protections under *Roe v. Wade* and bring the U.S. "much closer" to a culture of life, Mancini said. (TAB Media)

Prayer resources focus on persecuted church

The 2022 Global Prayer Guide for the persecuted church is now available from Voice of the Martyrs.

This year's prayer guide tracks more than 60 countries where Christians suffer persecution, including many in Southeast and Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Prayer is vital to persecuted believers, said VOM spokesperson Todd Nettleton.

"It's the first thing they want Christians in the free world to do to help them and to stand with them," he said.

VOM offers other free tools as well, including Pray Today, an app that sends a daily prayer reminder with a specific prayer request, and a website, icommittopray.com. Find all these resources at persecution.com/prayerguide. (TAB Media)

Persecuted church

Islamic extremists decapitate pastor, force his wife to carry head to police

CABO DELGADO, Mozambique — Suspected Islamic extremists decapitated a pastor in Cabo Delgado province in mid-December, then forced his wife to carry the severed head to a police station, reports the advocacy group International Christian Concern.

The heinous act comes amid a four-year insurgency that has plagued the country, states ICC. The violence has left about 3,000 people dead and an estimated 100,000 displaced.

Driving the violence is a terrorist group calling itself Al-Shabab. Loosely affiliated with the Islamic State group, Al-Shabab attacks Christians in Cabo Delgado, killing or kidnapping them or forcing them to flee, ICC states.

Jihadis have now widened their reign of terror

into the neighboring Niassa province, as well as into the country of Tanzania, ICC reports.

Mozambique was No. 45 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. That was the country's first year to appear on the list, according to relief agency Barnabas Fund.

Hindu mobs assault pastor, harass dozens of Christians in India

NEW DELHI, India — Hindu mobs assaulted a pastor and 64 Christians in separate incidents in India.

About 25 Hindu extremists attacked and threatened Pastor Raj Masih while he was buying vegetables to feed his three children, the report states. (Masih's wife died in April from COVID-19.)

After the attack, Masih and his children

moved from Simri village in Bihar state to an undisclosed location. Masih's ministry has seen many Hindus come to faith in Jesus.

In another incident, a mob of about 500 Hindu nationalists assaulted and harassed 64 Christians at The Pentecostal Mission, the reports say.

Police ultimately charged the Christians with "injuring or defiling a place of worship." The dinner host was held on a charge of forcible conversion, but the others were released after a few hours.

India is No. 10 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



Graphic by Planemad

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **William R. “Bill” Jones Jr.** died Dec. 18. He was 93. Jones was an Air Force chaplain during World War II. A retired preacher, Jones previously led three churches in Florida and two churches in Maryland. In Alabama, he was pastor of Westmont Baptist Church, Minor; Fayetteville Baptist Church; Sardis Baptist Church, Rockford and Rocky Mount Baptist Church, Sycamore.



JONES

“Brother Bill was witty, quick to smile and generous with praise and kindness,” and had “a velvet smooth voice and a gentle manner,” said Rick Patrick, senior pastor of First Baptist Church Sylacauga, where Jones was a member. “He will be dearly missed by our church family.”

Jones was preceded in death by his first wife, Alene. He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Betty; daughters, Joy Jones Melton and Beverly Sprayberry White; sons, William R. Jones III and Steven Sprayberry; and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Barry Hughes** is the new pastor of **Perdido Beach Baptist Church**. He became a believer in 1964 while a member of First Baptist Church West Palm Beach, Florida.

He has a business management and hospitality industry degree from Valencia Community College, Orlando, Florida, and a Christian education and Bible degree from Southeastern Bible College, Birmingham. Ordained at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, in 1992, his first church was Good Hope Baptist, Grove Hill.



HUGHES

He managed with Grand Hotel and worked with ServiceMaster for many years. Hughes also served as member of the board of registrars for Baldwin County. During his years of ministry, he has served as youth director, Sunday School teacher and director, ordained deacon and outreach leader. He and his wife, Colleen, have three children.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Ashley Pettus** is the new senior pastor of **Forest Hills Baptist Church, Florence**. He previously served as associate pastor/minister of education of First Baptist Church Killen. He and his wife, Dara, have one child.

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

▶ **Chase Higginbotham** is the new lead pas-

tor of **Redeemer Community Church, Oneonta**. He previously served as Redeemer’s pastor of students and discipleship and has served in student ministry since 2012.

He has a bachelor’s degree in broadcast news from the University of Alabama and is pursuing a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Rachel, are expecting their first child.



HIGGINBOTHAM

FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

▶ Locust Fork Baptist Church and Friendship Baptist Association’s men’s ministry team are sponsoring “**Becoming a Champion in Christ, Building Champions for Christ**,” a special event Jan. 29 featuring former pro football star Jeremiah Castille. A chili supper at 6 p.m. kicks off the event followed by music and worship at 7.

HALE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Jake Duke**, a native of York, Alabama, is the new associational mission strategist for **Hale Baptist Association**.

Before accepting this position, Duke served as an Alabama Baptist state missionary in the office of collegiate and student ministries as campus minister for West Central Alabama, which included the University of West Alabama and community colleges in the area.



DUKE

From 2003 to 2007, he was director of missions for Bigbee Baptist Association. He received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Alabama and a master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary. He is bivocational pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church and Epes Baptist Church, both in Demopolis. Duke and his wife, Jannalee, have two children.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Johnny Beard**’s ministry was built on his time at the University of Montevallo, where he was active in the Baptist Student Union (now Baptist Campus Ministries).

“It was there that I observed the ministries of campus ministers Rodney Ellis, Bob Ford and the pastor of University Baptist Church, George ‘Dub’ Steincross,” said Beard, who recently retired as minister of education of **First Baptist Church Guntersville** after 21 years of service.



BEARD

“From those influences, I began to prepare for vocational ministry.”

After college, Beard went to Southern Seminary. He has served several other churches over the years: Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens; FBC Fort Payne and Southside Baptist Church.

“Each church was special and unique and was God’s blessing to my family and me,” he said.

He and his wife, Robin, plan to stay in Guntersville. They have two adult children.

“Johnny faithfully served ... as our minister of education for almost 21 years,” said Joel Samuels, pastor of FBC Guntersville. “During that time, our Sunday School/discipleship ministry was one of the great strengths of our church.”

The church held a reception for him Dec. 19.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

▶ The Freedom Tour 2022, a Connecting Ministries women’s event, will be held Feb. 19 at **First Baptist Church Decatur**, 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Tasha Layton, Cheryl Goss, Ali Propst and Alive Worship will lead music and speak. Visit connectingministries.org/freedom-al.

SOUTHEAST ALABAMA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan**, recently celebrated 125 years of God’s faithfulness. On Jan. 2, the church celebrated the anniversary during its worship service with a presentation of a plaque to Senior Pastor Bradley Rushing from Southeast Alabama Baptist Association mission strategist John Thomas.



Photo courtesy of Mount Gilead Baptist Church

The church has much to be proud of, including “seeking to be a light within our community” and nurturing a vibrant children’s ministry, Rushing said.

OTHER

▶ “**Reaching People Like Jesus**,” a retreat designed for bivocational pastors/spouses, will feature Ken Adams.



ADAMS

The two-day event, which is sponsored by the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Ministers Association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will be Feb. 18–19 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. Adams is pastor of Crossroads Church, Newnan, Georgia, and president of Impact Discipleship Ministries. Visit shocco.org/events/potential-associational-missionary-training-2.

‘A GOD THING’

Church’s game day breakfasts have big impact for Grove Hill community

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

In cities all over Alabama, Friday night football games are one of the most beloved parts of the week. That’s certainly true for Grove Hill, where the Clarke County High School football team recently won the state 2A championship.

But for some in Grove Hill, Friday morning breakfasts have become even more beloved. That’s because ever since Grove Hill Baptist Church started feeding football players from Clarke County High and Clarke Preparatory School on game day before school, 14 players have professed new faith in Christ.

It all started last summer when the church’s senior pastor, Kyle Routzahn, asked the deacons if there could be one of them every day at the church praying about what God might have them do to reach their community. It wasn’t long before one of those deacons, Brandon Garrick, felt God begin to lay something specific on his heart.

Coming up with a plan

“When I was growing up and playing ball in school, we always had a church that did that outreach and would always invite the football players to eat breakfast every Friday morning,” Garrick said.

He mentioned it to a friend — Eric Neel, defensive coordinator at Clarke County High — and Neel told him there wasn’t anything like that for the players.

“Some moms used to do it, but there wasn’t anyone feeding them on game day these days,” Garrick said.

Garrick and Neel, a fellow church member at Grove Hill Baptist, put their heads together with Routzahn and Austin Bedwell, the church’s student pastor, and came up with a plan. They invited football players from both schools, recruited people to share devotions each week and figured out how to feed breakfast to as many as 100.

Some of the senior adult members



Photo courtesy of Kyle Routzahn
Kyle Routzahn (center), pastor of Grove Hill Baptist Church, prays as football players from Clarke County High and Clarke Preparatory School gather at the altar.

of the church helped out, providing fresh eggs, Routzahn said.

The first week they served around 45 players. Soon, they were averaging 80 to 90 each Friday morning, including cheerleaders and band members.

Along the way they saw God work, Routzahn said. He shared his own testimony with the players of meeting Jesus while in rehab at age 25. Garrick also shared his testimony of coming to faith at 26. Jeremiah Castille, who played in the NFL in the 1980s, spoke one Sunday, and they invited the football teams to the service.

Along the way, Routzahn said he could see God “was disarming them.”

Having conversations

Garrick watched the same thing happening. Many of the players had never been regular church attendees, but he had conversations with several who were ready to give their lives to Christ. When Routzahn shared

the gospel, 14 football players responded.

Leaders got each player who attended the breakfasts a study Bible with his name and number on it.

Garrick said all this had nothing to do with them — “first it had to do with prayer; our deacons started praying and God started moving.”

And it kept going.

As both teams got into the playoffs, the breakfasts continued. Clarke Prep lost out in the first round, but Clarke County High kept winning. They’d win, and Grove Hill Baptist would host another breakfast. Garrick said he thinks it was a “God thing” that they kept winning, so the breakfast outreach could keep going.

He said the players agreed — even mentioning it in news interviews after they won the state championship game in December.

“As they spoke after the game, the first thing they said is, ‘The only reason we’re here is because of God,’”

Garrick noted. “The kids were saying God didn’t want that ministry to stop. I truly believe that state game and that season we just had with that football team, that it was a God thing.”

Garrick said it’s been a blessing to watch the students grow spiritually and see outreach grow. He said it’s also been a blessing to observe the way it’s brought the two schools together.

Taking notice

“When Clarke County rolled out of town on the buses, Clarke Prep was standing out on the road cheering for them as they left,” he recalled.

Routzahn said the community is taking notice too, and a number of people have invested in the ministry with donations. The mother of one of the players stopped him one day in the store and said her son had been coming to the breakfasts.

“She said, ‘Please keep doing what you’re doing,’” Routzahn recounted.

Right now they’re working on providing breakfasts for the basketball teams and other sports at the schools.

Bedwell said he’s been thrilled about the opportunity to have an inlet.

“We’re always looking for ways to reach them, and I had no idea how big of an impact such a simple idea could make,” he said.

Stacy Luker, head coach at Clarke County High, said after the ministry started, “You could just see a change in the players — a lot of them — for the better.”

“I just really appreciate what Grove Hill Baptist has done with our kids and our school,” he added. “It’s been a neat thing to watch.”

Routzahn said it’s been a big encouragement for the church, which has been looking for what God has for them in this post-pandemic season. “It started with prayer,” he asserted. “And I would recommend it to anyone who thinks it’s something they could do in their own community.”



Photo courtesy of Kyle Routzahn
Clarke County High School football players pray at the goal posts before a game.



Photo courtesy of Scott Goolsby

Scott Goolsby, defensive coordinator at Auburn High School, was honored in 2021 with the Broyles Award, given each year to a top assistant coach in the state.

Broyles Award winner combines faith and coaching

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Scott Goolsby is always telling people he doesn't think he'd be able to coach high school football without his faith in Jesus.

"Coaching is such a stressful job," said the defensive coordinator for the Auburn High School football team. "You want to win every game you play, and obviously you can't. Over the years, I've had highs and lows, ups and

downs. There have been issues with kids and their families — kids have more issues now than they ever have in my career. I don't think I could deal with that if I wasn't a Christian."

Goolsby said he became a coach because of the impact his own high school coach had on him.

Lifelong love

"I've loved sports my entire life," he said. "My high school head football coach, Hugh Fountain, impacted me in so many ways. It made me want to

have the impact on kids that he had on me."

Before coaching at Auburn High, Goolsby coached at Charles Henderson High School in Troy for eight years, then became defensive coordinator at Geneva High School, where he coached for five years.

He came to Auburn High in 2013 and was named defensive coordinator in 2020. He was honored in late 2021 with the Broyles Award, given each year to a top assistant coach in the state.

Goolsby said "the people — the kids and the coaches" are his favorite part of coaching. He has relationships with players that have lasted through the years, much like his friendship with Fountain.

He also is actively involved in ministry at First Baptist Church Opelika, and said he has a "football family" — his wife, Amber, and two daughters are invested in his work and ministry.

"They love it, and they don't want me to do anything else," Goolsby said.

Goolsby said "the people — the kids and the coaches" are his favorite part of coaching.

Hispanic Alabama Baptists kick off 2022 evangelism focus

By Carrie B. McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

As representatives of Hispanic churches throughout Alabama gathered Jan. 8 in Montgomery to kick off this year's evangelism focus and to pray for the lost, the results were immediate — four people were saved.

More than 130 pastors and others from Hispanic Alabama Baptist churches attended the event at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, said state missionary Annel Robayna, who leads Hispanic work and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Robayna and other state leaders hope to see more salvations in 2022.

A 2021 prayer emphasis prepared the way for this year's focus on evangelism, Robayna said.

Penetrating the dark

"Our prayer is that this year, the local churches will penetrate the darkness of their communities with the gospel message," he said.

Hispanic churches are planning international festivals, door-to-door evangelism, individual evangelism,



Photo courtesy of Annel Robayna

David Romero, pastor of the Vaughn Forest Hispanic congregation, speaks to Hispanic Baptists at a Jan. 8 gathering in Montgomery. The event focused on prayer and evangelism.

and "harvest Sundays," where they will invite people for a special evangelism service.

And for the third year in a row, Hispanic leaders will partner with the SBOM evangelism office to have a Spanish component at the Sharing Hope state evangelism conference to be held Feb. 27–28 at First Baptist Church Pelham.

On Sunday night, a multicultural time of prayer and worship will be held. Other nationalities and language groups are invited to attend.

Following that, participants will break into smaller groups by language

preferences, Robayna said.

Monday morning will be a time of training to prepare attendees to evangelize in their communities.

'La toma Alabama'

"Our goal for this year is 'La toma Alabama' — taking over Alabama with the gospel," Robayna said.

But Robayna and other Hispanic leaders also are looking beyond Alabama's borders.

A global missions conference for Hispanics is planned March 17–19 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, he said.

He expects between 150 and 200 pastors and leaders from five different states to attend and learn how to reach the "utmost part of the earth."

"We will talk about opportunities for overseas missions for Hispanics," Robayna said. "For us, going to places like Mexico or Honduras, that is not our 'utmost part of the earth.' We hope to mobilize Hispanics to reach other people groups."

For more information about Hispanic work and events in Alabama, visit ibhalabama.org or contact Robayna by email at arobayna@alsbom.org.

You are invited to attend the

2022 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Purpose Baptist Church
3211 Waverly Parkway | Opelika, AL 36801

February 4, 2022 | 6:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.
February 5, 2022 | 8:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tabitha Vasilas
Presenting "Unraveled" based on Lazarus

GUEST WORSHIP LEADER: Shaunte Heyward

Registration is \$10 and includes light breakfast on Saturday from 7:45–8:15 a.m. and lunch during conference

Please register no later than February 1, 2022
by sending your name, address, phone number and registration fee to:
Purpose Baptist Church, P.O. Box 2161, Opelika, AL 36803
or emailing: Womenofpurpose22@gmail.com and Venmo @Vicki-Arnold-12

Bible study search



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Abundance of materials available to meet every small group's needs

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

A friend tells of accepting an invitation to attend a Bible study for senior adult women.

"These women represented several churches in our area," she said. "Being friends for years, we had adult children about the same age. Most of the ladies were grandparents. Needless to say, we were all of retirement age.

"Imagine the surprise when the leader of our Bible study presented us with the selected study course book — focusing on young career mothers with small children."

Janet Scherer, women's ministry director at First Baptist Church Kennett, Missouri, plans about three Bible studies a year.

Research and pray

"This is the 15th year for our studies, and we've had from 50 to 75 different women attend," Scherer said. "Most last about six weeks, some longer."

Scherer understands how important the selection of the book is to those who attend.

"Today, there are so many studies to choose from. Each week I receive dozens of ads in the mail for these books.

"The first approach is to do my research. Then, I pray and pray some more," Scherer said. "I want it to be a study that our women really need. When I feel this is the book the Lord wants us to use, I present this to the Bible study team that helps in the selection."

She added many of the studies are video-based.

"This can be good as we learn in multiple ways. Some people are visual learners; others auditory and

some" are kinesthetic, Scherer said. "However, most people have two dominant ways to learn.

"But with the video, there is homework. A person will not receive the benefit of the Bible study unless (she) reads the Scriptures and does the homework. Sometimes you just have to dig it out."

Where do you start?

If you've been asked to choose a Bible study curriculum, where do you go? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of study guides on the market. A few years ago, only a handful of publishers provided Bible studies; today, most Christian publishers offer a selection.

Do you follow the advice of another Baptist church that just completed a study? Do you scan the latest Christian publishers' catalogs? Do you order the most recent book on the market? You might think, "If everyone is buying the book ... surely it must be what we need."

Tips for creating a teaching environment for Bible study

Preparing and presenting a Bible book study takes prayer, thought and preparation. Use these tips to create a learning and teaching environment:

- ▶ Pray the material will touch the lives of the participants.
- ▶ Pray God will guide you as you lead the Bible book study.
- ▶ Be prepared and know the material.
- ▶ Arrange the room in a comfortable and welcoming manner.
- ▶ Start and end on time.

Do you consider options from publishers advertising their books in your state Baptist publication?

After praying about the responsibility, hopefully you'll choose a book or curriculum that directs people to Jesus. Those who attend should feel the study is worthy of their time. The material should be based on Scripture instead of what the author believes.

These questions will help guide you to make the right decision, evaluate the material and choose wisely.

▶ Is the material written by an author we've used before? Those who write curriculum based on Scripture usually continue in a similar tone. If your group enjoyed the former study, this selection probably will be well received.

▶ What topics are most relevant to the group? Search study guides by topic. Do you feel your group would benefit from a study on for-

givenness? Prayer? Being faithful to God's Word?

▶ What books of the Bible would be interesting to study? John, the book of showing love to others, is always a good choice. Others are Hebrews, James and Matthew. By studying a book, participants may receive a wider view of the text than by studying only Scripture related to a topic.

▶ What are the authors' beliefs? Research online and ask Baptist leaders and pastors. Are their beliefs in line with your church/denomination?

▶ Does the guide include historical information or offer sources? Words and phrases change in context over time. Does the guide include commentaries or suggest sources for additional study?

▶ Does the study require reasonable preparation time? Choose one that is realistic in terms of time to prepare. Depending on your group, you can adjust the speed of the sessions. Does the Bible study apply to life? It's like the person who goes to a doctor for a medical condition. The doctor prescribes medicine, but the patient never takes it. God's word is important to our lives.

How to search

Key phrases will save time while searching online or using Amazon. Try phrases such as author's name; Bible study; individual books, such as Hebrews or Genesis; study guide; individual books, commentary guide; Baptist Bible study; in-depth Bible study; short Bible studies and applicable Bible studies.

Participants should come away with a greater knowledge of Scripture and a growing personal relationship with Jesus.

Plugging in volunteers

Finding people to fill roles can be challenging for some churches

By Denise George
The Alabama Baptist

No matter the time of year, churches have a hard time finding volunteers for various ministries. With the new year just under way, many needs abound.

First, there is always a need for Bible study teachers for all ages, nursery workers, program directors and other church positions. Churches also need churchgoers to advocate for and support various causes essential to church ministry.

In his recent Barna Highlight, researcher George Barna addressed the issue of church leadership and motivating members to support ministry.

“If you’re looking for ways to get your congregation more involved in important causes, it helps to know what motivates U.S. churchgoers,” Barna said.

Worthwhile goals

According to Barna, the top reason churchgoers get involved in supporting ministry is they think they can make a difference. One in six Americans credit their decision to get involved to a vision cast at their church.

Active ministry gives members a worthwhile goal, especially in areas where they can use their personal talents and skills.

When church leaders invite members to join in, give them a clear vision of the task, show them how the ministry will make a difference and give them a tangible goal, members are more apt to support the ministry.

People also enjoy working together as part of a team to bring about a clearly defined, tangible goal and vision.

Purpose

In these days when COVID-19 has interfered with people’s plans, work and goals — even bringing some projects to a complete halt —



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Finding volunteers takes time, but matching individuals to tasks that utilize their passions helps with maintaining long-term volunteers for that particular role, whether it be leading a Bible study or working in the nursery.

becoming involved with an active church ministry can offer purpose.

Work that helps others and is done as part of the church’s ministry provides meaning and value.

People live with greater intention when they pursue a goal; they are more motivated to give of themselves when they feel useful and needed.

Friends

Friends can be a motivating factor in getting people to take part in ministry.

Volunteers often admit what initially drew them to a ministry is that “someone I know personally was very involved.”

It’s common knowledge that one of the best ways to increase church membership and attendance is for a friend to bring a friend.

When friends are enthusiastic about a ministry cause, explain

the reasons they are personally involved, share a tangible goal the work will accomplish and issue an invitation to a friend to join in, that can be a big motivator to getting involved.

Volunteers often admit what initially drew them to a ministry is that “someone I know personally was very involved.”

Needs

People respond to stories that show special, urgent needs.

Members often become involved when they hear or see a story that moves them. It might be the plight of the hungry in the church’s community, those impoverished around the world, mothers with no milk

to feed their babies or a community contracting disease because no clean water is available.

The fact that another person suffers touches the hearts of compassionate Christians, prompting and motivating them to ease the pain of another by meeting urgent needs.

For instance, when Charles Spur-

geon saw orphaned children, homeless, hungry and dying on the dirty streets of London, it touched his heart, motivating him to found the Stockwell Orphanage in 1867 (for boys) and 1879 (for girls).

The lost people of India deeply touched Baptist missionary William Carey’s heart, motivating him to spend 41 years there, in spite of incredible hardship and personal sacrifice.

India’s desperate need to know Christ propelled Carey to translate the entire Bible into Bengali.

After his 1773 conversion, African American Baptist missionary George Liele, a slave in Virginia and Georgia, felt compelled to travel to Jamaica to teach slaves the gospel.

Individual gifts

One of the best ways to involve members in causes and ministries is to learn the individual’s personal gifts and talents. For instance, when church member Sally, who loves teaching women the Bible, receives the opportunity to teach a women’s Bible study class, she’ll eagerly study and anticipate it. But ask Sally to care for babies in the nursery, a task she doesn’t enjoy and for which she possesses no gifts, and Sally will drag her feet, dread the job and probably quit.

When church leaders take the time and effort to learn their members’ individual spiritual gifts, then invite them to serve in those ministries about which they are passionate, members will get involved, work hard and enjoy it. A person who works in his or her area of skill, giftedness and passion will feel fulfilled and will work more effectively.

When church leaders notice the effectiveness of their work, give them unlimited opportunities to serve and provide generous encouragement, support and affirmation, the church will increase its volunteers and ministries.

Pell City church family makes safety protocols a priority

(continued from page 1) but weighing just over 3 pounds.

He seemed perfect, but underlying health conditions soon materialized. His digestive system wasn't eliminating properly, so on Father's Day, at just five days old, Caden underwent his first major surgery, revealing Megacystis Microcolon Intestinal Hypoperistalsis Syndrome (MMIHS) — a rare congenital condition causing decreased or absent intestinal movements.

MMIHS is considered "incompatible with life," and surgeons suggested the Nelsons withdraw Caden's nutrition. Once again, they were asked to consider ending his life.

"Chad and I left the hospital, prayed and cried," Nelson said. "We strongly felt like we shouldn't determine how many days Caden has. That's God's job."

Caden began receiving nutrition intravenously, was transferred to a Birmingham newborn intensive care unit the next month and went home that September.

Defying the doctors

Doctors didn't expect Caden to see his first birthday, but he did. In the coming months, he learned to sit up, crawl, walk and talk.

And through all the surgeries and the ups and downs, the Nelsons have relied on their faith in God.

"God has carried us through so much," Nelson



Photo by Captured Photography by Misty Beams

Caden Nelson (far left) with his mom Anna, dad Chad and younger brothers Luke and Jacob. The Nelsons are members of Cropwell Baptist Church in Pell City.

said. "If not for Him I don't know where we would be."

Caden has been in and out of hospitals since birth. His diagnosis was changed to Neuronal Intestinal Dysplasia Type B, plus a host of other conditions including neurogenic bladder, scoliosis, kyphosis, restrictive lung disease and Eagle-Barrett Syndrome.

At seven months old, Caden underwent spinal fusion surgery. In 2020, he had not one, but two major spinal surgeries — this time in New York City — during a global pandemic.

"We prayed that God would lead us down the right path and keep us all healthy, and once again, He provided," Nelson said.

Away from home and unable to have visitors, the Nelsons prayed constantly.

"We have always talked to Caden about Jesus and letting his light shine, but during this time we really

encouraged him to go to the Lord when he was scared," Nelson recalled.

Church protects

The Nelsons have been members of Cropwell Baptist Church in Pell City, Alabama, since 2019. Through the pandemic, the church has ministered to the family in ways that protected Caden from exposure to COVID-19. During their stay in New York, church members sent letters and kept in touch.

"We have prayed and continue to pray for Caden and his family," said preschool director Amanda Jacobs. "It is amazing to see God at work in this family's life."

Magic Moments

In 2021, the nonprofit Magic Moments gifted the Nelsons with a trip to Walt Disney World, SeaWorld and Universal Studios. Caden enjoyed it very much, especially the Christmas theme night at Give Kids the World Village.

No matter what Caden goes through, Nelson said he has a smile on his face, tries his hardest and has the sweetest spirit.

"Caden is a true joy to watch. You can see the joy in his eyes."



Photo courtesy of Anna Nelson

Caden Nelson, 11, tries baseball with the help of his family and his team.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Leatherwood Baptist Church in Anniston, Ala., is prayerfully looking for our next pastor. God has blessed our church over the last 25 years under our previous leadership, and we are excited that you may be God's man for our church. We are a biblically conservative church that loves the communities that we serve. We are in the middle of construction on a new children's building for K-4th grades. We are debt-free and small group/Sunday School focused. With our outreach efforts, we have new guests almost every week. Minimum qualifications: 10-15 years experience in a similar sized church 300-450+. If you feel led to be considered for this position please email your resumé to: office@leatherwood.church and look up our church online on our website leatherwood.church and facebook.com.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP

Northwood Hills Baptist Church, Northport, Ala., is seeking an individual who feels called to lead worship at our growing, multi-generational church by incorporating hymns, a worship band and choir. Responsibilities will include weekly service planning, organizing music for special events and managing a team of production volunteers. Compensation range for this position is \$30-\$45K per year depending upon availability, qualifications and experience. To request a complete job description or submit a resumé, please contact Rusty Selman, pastor at 205-339-3196 or office@northwoodhillschurch.com.

WORSHIP LEADER

Mount Carmel Baptist Church, West Blocton, is looking for a part-time worship leader. Send resumé to: mt.carmelbaptistchurchwb@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

New Market Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational worship leader. The church is located in N.E. Madison County near Huntsville, Ala. Send resumé to: newmarketbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

YOUTH MINISTER

First Baptist Church, Center Star, youth minister position. Part-time (20 hours estimate). For more information about this job opportunity, contact the FBCCS church office at 256-757-1310.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God's choice for a bivocational children's minister who will lead the children's ministry program. Applicants should

subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith & Message. See additional information under the announcements tab at ehbc.church. Please send resumé to: cmcsc@ehbc.church.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The Biblical Recorder is seeking a full-time executive editor. The ideal candidate will have journalistic experience, a bachelor's degree in journalism or a related field (master's degree preferred) and will display discernment in covering and disseminating North Carolina Baptist news. The ideal candidate will display an understanding of print media along with a skill-set maximizing current journalistic platforms. The editor search committee is looking for a self-starter who has the courage to take appropriate risks with regard to the business model for this news outlet. Resumé for this position will be accepted through Feb. 18. More information as well as a candidate profile can be found at BRnow.org. Interested candidates can apply by sending a resumé to: editorsearch@brnow.org.

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State Evangelism Conference

4 Locations

FREE ADMISSION
2022

Sharing Hope

On The Road

JANUARY 30-31, 2022

Dauphin Way Baptist Church,
Mobile

SUNDAY EVENING
Chuck Kelley &
J.J. Washington

MONDAY MORNING
Sammy Gilbreath,
Lawrence Phipps
& Blake Newsom



For each event, the Sunday session begins at 5:30 p.m. Monday sessions are 9-11:30 a.m.



FEBRUARY 6-7, 2022

Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

SUNDAY EVENING
Noe Garcia &
Ted Traylor

MONDAY MORNING
Dean Inserra,
Lawrence Phipps
& Daniel Atkins



FEBRUARY 27-28, 2022

First Baptist Church, Pelham

SUNDAY EVENING
Jarman Leatherwood
& Lee Strobel

MONDAY MORNING
Lee Strobel &
Daven Watkins



MARCH 13-14, 2022

First Baptist Church, Cullman

SUNDAY EVENING
Ronnie Hill &
Ed Litton

MONDAY MORNING
Tim Beougher &
Tom Richter



Sunday evening sessions at all locations are being livestreamed at live.alsbom.org. If you can't attend in person, consider gathering a group and participating online!

Ministers' Wives Gathering at each location, Monday 9-10:30 am
More info at alabamawmu.org/ministerswivesgathering



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

evangelizeAL.org/sharinghope

WORD search

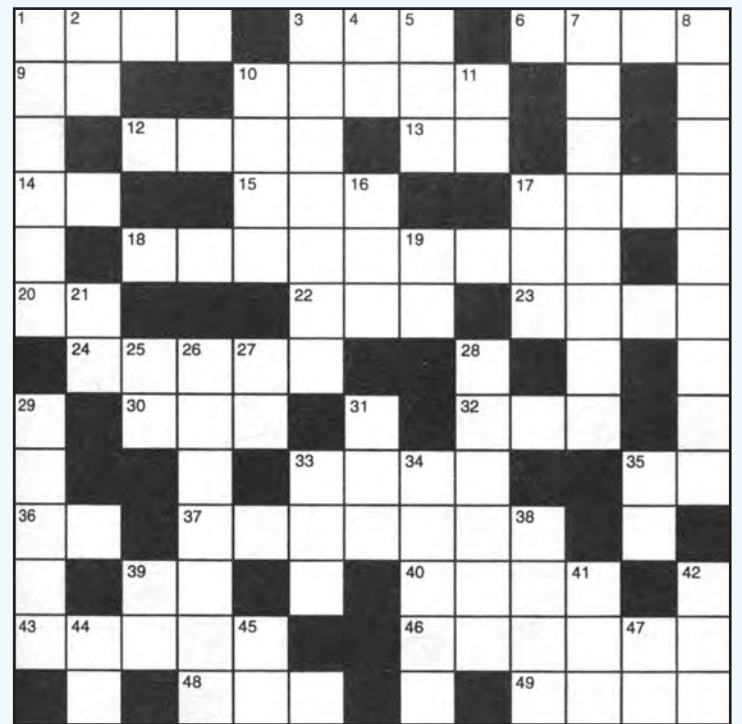
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| BLESS | NEW IS HERE |
| CALVES | OLD IS GONE |
| CROPS | PERCEIVE |
| DESIRES | PLANS |
| EAGLES | PRESENT |
| FAINT | PRESERVES |
| FAITHFUL | PROSPER |
| FALL | RENEW |
| FLOCKS | REVEALED |
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| FUTURE | SELF |
| GLORY | SOAR |
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 N A P S I R S D R E H K K O G A
 O P R L S T O C L R D E J H L E
 I R E V D E E P E T S K V V O R
 T K S M E I N P S A B Y W Z R T
 A Y E X V L S I E R D P N K Y S
 V H R E W O O R L D W L A M B S
 L B V L R K C U V O C A L V E S
 A J E P P N K T S T H Z W A L K
 S F S L I K G N I R E F F U S B

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

- Sister of Lazarus. (John 11:2)
- ___ seek ye first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33)
- And he said, I ___ my brethren. (Gen. 37:16)
- I ___. (John 8:58)
- ___ ... said ... except a man be born again. (John 3:3)
- Actual.
- I ___ to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
- In ___.
- Charged particle.
- Let both ___ together until the harvest. (Matt. 13:30)
- Through faith unto ___. (1 Pet. 1:5)
- Help for the alcoholic. (abbr.)
- ___ hath not seen, nor ear heard. (1 Cor. 2:9)
- Eat.
- He killed Goliath.
- Whatever is not of faith is ___. (Rom. 14:23)
- Precedes "one," "body," and "way."
- They have beaten me, and I ___ it not. (Prov. 23:35)
- ___ ye holy. (Lev. 20:7)
- Not down but ___.
- Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
- ___, now speakest thou plainly. (John 16:29)

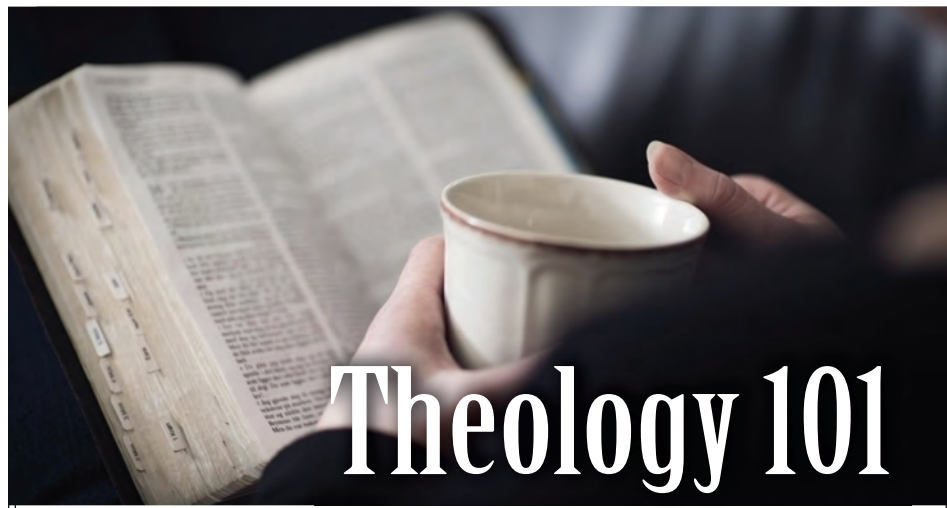


By Joan M. Jarzebinski Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 40. Joy. | ___ He is. |
| 43. Let not your ___ be troubled. (John 14:1) | (1 John 3:2) |
| 46. "Highway to ___," Michael Landon's show. | 26. He will swallow up death in ___. (Isa. 25:8) |
| 48. I love ___. | 27. Not out. |
| 49. Landlord's income. | 28. "___ Hymn of the Republic." |
| | 29. I am the way, the ___, and the life. (John 14:6) |
| | 31. ___ of lions. (Dan. 6:16) |
| | 33. Parable of the ___ tree. (Matt. 24:32) |
| | 34. I am the ___ of the world. (John 8:12) |
| | 35. Not ___ might. (Zech. 4:6) |
| | 38. 365 days. |
| | 39. Do, re, mi, fa, so, ___. |
| | 41. Adam's mate. |
| | 42. Go to the ___, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6) |
| | 44. Former. |
| | 45. ___ God be the glory. |
| | 47. Printer's measure. |

DOWN

- See 1 across.
- Morning.
- My ___ Son. (Matt. 3:17)
- We.
- ___boat Annie.
- Time without end.
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of ___. (Prov. 1:7)
- Prison.
- God ___ loved the world. (John 3:16)
- No.
- ___ is love. (1 John 4:8)
- He invented the light bulb. (initials)
- Classified ___.
- For we shall see Him



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Reflections on Christ's Coming

Jesus Came to Teach Truth

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

As we continue reflecting on Christ's first coming, we add to the prior topics of Jesus coming to reveal God and redeem sinners. This week's reflection centers on the fact that He also came to teach truth.

The prologue that opens the Gospel of John puts it simply: "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:17).

The impact of Jesus' words on those who heard Him teach was such that they began to refer to Him as the Teacher.

Nicodemus, whom Jesus described as "the teacher of Israel" in John 3:10, referred to Jesus as "a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). Two dear friends of Jesus were the sisters Martha and Mary. When Martha announced to Mary that Jesus had come while they were mourning the death of their brother, Lazarus, she phrased it, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you" (John 11:28).

The title of Teacher was one Jesus accepted and endorsed, saying to His disciples, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am" (John 13:13).

Jesus' reputation as Teacher was not due merely to His eloquence or method, although both were present. His eloquence was not that of flowery, high-sounding phrases or of extensive vocabulary, but rather it was an eloquence of clarity. His method was to couch truth in everyday images, illustrations and parables,

thereby putting divine truth within the grasp of ordinary people.

He spoke with clarity and authority. He put heavenly truth down at street level so common people could understand Him.

What made Jesus different from other teachers was not only the down-to-earth quality of His words, but the fact that He embodied the truth He taught.

We recall His famous claim about being "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). As truth incarnate, Jesus was the consummate Teacher of truth. He came to be the truth in order to teach the truth with authority and accuracy.

Words of truth

Therein lies a valuable principle for all who would speak the things of God: We are at our best when we speak out of lives that exemplify the truth we seek to communicate. Words of truth backed up by a life which embodies that truth are infused with energy and power. Jesus put it this way: "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

Eloquent words without the endorsement of a godly life become rather lifeless.

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.



Someone You Should Know

GARY WOODS

By Leigh Pritchett
The Alabama Baptist

Gary Woods, 63, of Dora believes his mission is to help others. He became a Christian and joined his church in 1969 and has served as deacon, head deacon and vice moderator or moderator for business meetings, among other responsibilities. He is a construction discipline lead at Southern Company for Alabama Power.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: Calling shut-ins and others; checking on widows and widowers, former pastors and the spouse of each; making repairs for the church and people in the community; putting out hand sanitizer; checking to see that the FM 88.3 connection works properly for those listening to the sermon broadcast.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?

A: The most would probably be George (G.W.) Campbell. To go with that would be a couple of pastors and their wives: Ray and Sue Key and Frank and Pat McCowen. And the other would be my mother, Helen Woods. She used to be the WMU director and the Vacation Bible School director.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

A: Patience and giving back. To reach out to others to continue to learn from them or to help them.

Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.

A: When I learned to be in church for all services, not just pick and choose when I was going. Not to go hunting and fishing instead of going to church. When I learned to also give my tithes, whether I was at church or not.

When I had children, one of the best pieces of advice I got at that time was, "Don't go anywhere you

MINISTRY:
Helper

CHURCH
NAME:
Dora Second
Mission-
ary Baptist
Church in
Walker Bap-
tist Association



LIFE VERSE: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

can't take your kids." This got me focused on being involved in church and staying involved.

Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: I would like to tell my younger self a lot of things. Not to take things for granted about people knowing how to live for Christ. (I would tell myself) to be more dedicated to the Lord.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?

A: "In His Steps" — it shows how we overlook people less fortunate. We wind up, maybe not intentionally, looking at people as "how are they going to help me or the church" instead of letting the Lord determine how they are going to contribute.

Q: Does your church have any special traditions that mean a lot to you? What are they?

A: Our church always has a very welcoming spirit to love each other. We also distribute fruit baskets every Christmas to shut-ins. This ministry has really grown and been a blessing for all involved.



LIVING ...AND... LEADING ON GOD'S AGENDA

JANUARY 28-29, 2022

(Begins at 6 p.m. Friday, concludes at 11:30 a.m. Saturday)

HOLY BIBLE

Heritage Baptist Church, 1849 Perry Hill Road, Montgomery

Amid a culture unmoored from eternal truth and immersed in the opinions of people from every spectrum of society, how do leaders remain focused on what is on God's heart and mind and help those they lead navigate daily life with a strong faith? Remaining God-centered vs. people-centered is crucial as a leader that moves others onto God's agenda. Join conference leader **Richard Blackaby** as we look at how God prepares His leaders, adjusts and shapes us for His purposes, and refreshes us for the calling of leadership. This event is especially for pastors and is hosted by the offices of LeaderCare and Church Health. *For more information including cost or to register, visit alsbom.org/livingandleading or contact State Missionary Ken Allen, kallen@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2210.*



Photo by IMB

HUNGER CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST PROBLEMS FACING OUR WORLD TODAY

An estimated 1 billion people do not have enough food to be healthy. Every day 25,000 people die from hunger-related causes. In our own country, approximately 49 million Americans struggle with hunger – nearly 800,000 right here in Alabama.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

You can give.

Participate in the Hunger Offering on **Sunday, February 20**, by giving through your local church (*designate your check for "Hunger Offering"*) or by sending a check to the State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 681970, Prattville, AL 36068-1970. You'll find helpful promotional materials at alsbom.org/hunger, including downloadable videos you can show in your worship service.

You can educate.

Download a copy of the *Hunger Offering Factbook and Guide for Teaching and Preaching* at alsbom.org/hunger or request one by contacting Lori Lockett at llockett@alsbom.org or (334) 613-2304.

You can pray.

Please pray for the hungry in our world and that through the ministries reaching out to them, many will receive physical assistance and also seek and find our Lord.

You can make a difference by participating in the 2022 Hunger Offering.



Alabama **Hunger** Offering

Global**Hunger**

bread for life.

**SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 20**

‘God is opening doors’

Alabama Baptist songwriter finds new avenue to celebrate God’s faithfulness

By Meredith Flynn
The Alabama Baptist

Guenda Vincent spent more than five decades writing songs before the COVID-19 pandemic led her to put some of them out into the world.

The pastor’s wife has composed more than 1,000 songs over years of ministry, singing many of them with her family as they served churches pastored by her husband, Chuck. Then the pandemic confined the Vincents to their Alabama home.

“That’s when the Lord began to deal with me to try to find an outlet for my music,” Guenda said.

Concept videos

This year, she has worked with musicians and a video producer to make concept videos of three of her songs. The videos feature them played over inspirational images. One, “Wash Away My Sins,” has more than 58,000 views on Facebook.

“The internet’s wonderful,” the 77-year-old said.

Two follow-up songs,

“I’ll Keep on Loving You” and “New Jerusalem Coming Down,” also have been turned into videos.

And Guenda is still writing.

Inspired music

“There’s almost a story behind every song, because the Lord inspires me,” she explained. “And sometimes I have woken up during the middle of the night with a song on my heart that I was singing.”

Throughout their ministry, Chuck pastored small churches, retiring at age 82 from Concord Baptist Church in Notasulga, Alabama.

“She was really a blessing in my ministry,” Chuck said.

Guenda sometimes wrote songs inspired by his sermons. “I never did count them,” she said of those she’s written over the years. She knows it’s more than 1,000, although she said she probably only had 10 or 15 she considered really good. She tried to find a publisher at one point but needed a



Chuck & Guenda Vincent

Photo courtesy of Guenda Vincent

CD to make that happen — a process that was too costly for the Vincents.

“We always just sang in church and just used them for the Lord,” Guenda said.

She also led choirs for kids and youth.

“I’ve just been in the music right up to my neck,” she laughed.

The pair often led worship together with Chuck on guitar and Guenda on accordion.

“She didn’t tell you, but

after she got saved she had a dream that she went to heaven,” he related. “And Jesus took her into a music room, and He gave her a golden accordion, and she played it there in heaven. Wasn’t too long after that her dad brought her an accordion home.”

Self-taught musician

Guenda, who plays piano by ear, is a self-taught musician. She records her songs in her bedroom and emails them to a recording artist. A production company specializing in gospel music, VCB Videos, creates the video from the finished product and publishes it on Facebook.

Her songs are testimonies to her faith in Christ, a faith deepened by challenging and sometimes tragic circumstances. Guenda’s sister and her family were killed in a car accident. The Vincents lost their oldest daughter when she was only 14.

“We’ve had a lot of tragedy in our family, a lot of loss,” she said.

But the focus of her songs is on the hope she has because of Christ. Her song “New Jerusalem Coming

Down” is about heaven.

Guenda’s health also is a challenge. She suffers from fibromyalgia, a painful neurological disease. She was feeling poorly the day she wrote “Wash Away My Sins” and was resting when she heard the song in her head.

“I heard the words. I heard the tune. And I began to cry, and I felt the Spirit of God,” Guenda remembered.

She worked all day on the song that is a plea for people to turn to the Lord.

“I’m not in good health. I have A Fib (atrial fibrillation) and I’ve got a pacemaker, and I’ve got so many things wrong with me. But if I dwell upon those things, then I’m just going to be a basket case,” Guenda said. “And the Lord has shown me that I can do more.”

Several years ago, Guenda wrote a book chronicling her family’s life and ministry. “A Song for Life’s Journey” also includes several of her compositions.

“I need to put another chapter at the end of it,” she said. “Because I’m still writing music, and all of a sudden, God is opening doors for me that I never even dreamed about.”

The Vincents have a daughter and a son — their daughter is in a Christian singing group and plans to record one of her mom’s songs.

Amid the ongoing pandemic the couple isn’t able to attend church in person because of health concerns; but even in their confinement, they’ve reached more people than they ever thought possible.

“I don’t think God’s through with me or Chuck,” Guenda said. “We just want to do something for God.”

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 23

Explore the Bible

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



INTEGRITY ESTABLISHED Daniel 1:8–21

As a young man, Daniel and his promising compatriots were invited to Mesopotamia on a cultural exchange. These men were the future leaders of Judah, so they were chosen by the Babylonian government for cross-cultural training.

A brief survey of Chapter 1 provides the Babylonians' comprehensive plan to transform the worldview of these young men of Judah.

They moved to a new place, learned a different language, read different literature and were introduced to a new diet. They were given new names which contained the names of Babylonian deities, rather than their given names which bore Hebrew Yah and El within them.

A Commitment Expressed (8–10)

“Daniel determined that he would not defile himself.” He was a stranger in a strange land, but he had deep convictions that affected his behavior, no matter where he was.

As far as he was concerned, the king's meat and wine were off-limits to him. The passage does not explain why Daniel abstained from the royal menu, only that he was committed to this abstinence.

Christians today often compromise convictions, saying things like “when in Rome ...” or “what happens in Vegas ...” or “it's easier to ask forgiveness ...”

We may say we believe something to be right or wrong, but then we allow circumstances to determine how we behave. We are often reactive, rather than proactive. Daniel decided in advance his beliefs and his behavior would align. He chose to live what he believed.

A Test Passed (11–16)

The chief steward was concerned about their appearance, as well as his own status. What if the Jewish young men began to lose weight? He was responsible for their welfare. Disappointing the king could lead to banishment or death. Daniel was asking the steward to trust him, but that might prove to be disastrous.

Daniel proposed a test. He and his compatriots would abstain from meat and wine. Instead, they would eat only vegetables and drink water. After the 10-day trial run, everyone agreed Judah's young men looked healthier than the other men in training. Their faith and food made others notice.

A Recognized Difference (17–21)

This final passage speaks of knowledge, understanding and wisdom — among other concepts. Knowledge is the retention of information. Understanding is the ability to apply that knowledge. Wisdom is borne out of understanding applied and passed on to others.

Though they were young men with only three years of diplomatic training, God gave them advanced skills in knowledge, understanding and wisdom, so even King Nebuchadnezzar took notice.

In addition, Daniel was gifted with prophetic abilities to discern the meaning of visions and dreams. This supernatural gifting would make Daniel a valuable asset to the king, his successors and the Persians who would conquer Babylon.

Rare is the young believer whose commitment to God and spiritual convictions are so firm they are not compromised throughout his or her life. In some cases, they die young, compromise themselves sexually, redefine the clear teachings of Scripture or become complete apostates who publicly deny the Christ they once proclaimed.

May God raise up a generation of men and women who know who they are, who know the God who made them, who know the Christ who died for them and who know the Word that serves as their authority for belief and behavior.

May God call them out to know who they believe, what they believe and why they believe. May God grant them the conviction to live out their faith no matter what threats they encounter along the way. And may God allow us to live long enough to see this generation arise!

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies, Samford University



THE PITFALL OF BETRAYAL Genesis 37:1–5, 19–24, 26–27

Currents of favoritism ran deep in Joseph's family. His grandparents, Isaac and Rebekah, played favorites when it came to their children, Jacob and Esau. Isaac loved Esau and the tasty game he brought back when he went on a hunt; Rebekah preferred the homebody Jacob. The struggle between the two parents came to a head when Rebekah prevailed upon Jacob to disguise himself as his brother and steal Esau's blessing.

Jacob was forced to flee to Mesopotamia to escape his brother's wrath. Of course, Isaac was just as complicit in the affair, as the blessing he intended for Esau was also meant to be a curse on Jacob (Gen. 27:29). Jacob picked up the torch of his parents' favoritism and carried it even further.

Through a series of twists and turns, Jacob had ended up with four wives: Leah and her maidservant, Zilpah, plus Rachel and her maidservant, Bilhah. Unfortunately, Jacob only really loved one of these wives, Rachel, and his feelings toward the women were reflected in his feelings toward the sons they produced. Jacob's affections rested squarely on Rachel's two, Joseph and Benjamin.

The extent of Jacob's favoritism is perhaps most vividly seen in the way he prepared for his reunion with Esau. After his sojourn in Mesopotamia, Jacob had four wives, 11 sons (Benjamin was still to come) and much livestock.

Jacob sent waves of animals and gifts to Esau. The maidservants and their sons went in the first and most dangerous position to meet Esau; Leah and her sons went next; and last of all, in the safest position, went Rachel and her son Joseph. None could have missed this show of favoritism (Gen. 33:1–2).

Sometimes pitfalls come through no fault of our own. (1–5)

The resentment of Joseph's brothers over their father's favoritism would come to a head through

three particular issues. First, Joseph had brought his father a bad report about his brothers while they were shepherding. Second, he had been given a special coat specifically, the text tells us, because his father loved him more than his brothers. Third, Joseph had shared dreams about his family that suggested they would one day bow down to him.

Animosity and jealousy can cause others to betray us. (19–24)

One day, while the brothers were out working as shepherds, Joseph (who was not working) was sent by his father to check on them.

Perhaps still stung by the bad report Joseph had given about them, the brothers were apparently in no mood to welcome Joseph again.

They spotted him from a mile away (he was wearing his “Dad's Favorite” coat!) and planned to do their own part to ensure Joseph's dreams never became reality.

The brothers seized Joseph and threw him in a pit; they would have done worse had Reuben not prevented them from killing him outright. That their father's favoritism was forefront in their minds was evident from the way they treated Joseph's “special robe.”

They stripped it off him, dipped it in goat's blood and sent it back to their father. They left him to work out the obvious suggestion that his favorite son had been torn apart by wild animals.

God is at work on our behalf even when others abandon us. (26–27)

In the end, Joseph was taken to Egypt, where he would be sold as a slave to Potiphar. Reading the story in real time, one could be forgiven for thinking that was the end of Joseph, but such is not the case.

In a particularly striking display of God's ironic sovereignty, He used the brothers' mistreatment of Joseph to later rescue them from famine and to preserve His promises to the nation.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By The Alabama Baptist staff

New releases explore small-town life, trials and post-COVID church

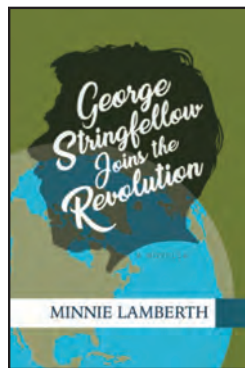
George Stringfellow Joins the Revolution

By Minnie Lamberth
Self-published, 2021

In her latest novella, “George Stringfellow Joins the Revolution,” Montgomery writer Minnie Lamberth brings readers back to fictional Wellton, Alabama, a small town with some real characters — in more than one sense of the word. Readers will find the residents of Wellton familiar and more like friends by the time the final page is turned.

“George Stringfellow Joins the Revolution” picks up where Lamberth’s previous book, “Miss Bertie Explains the Beginning of the World,” left off, and yes, Miss Bertie brings her wisdom into this new installment.

But this is the story of George Stringfellow, an aging gentleman coping with widowerhood and the mistakes of his past, looking for ways to make his future a little more cheerful and a little less lonely. What aids George’s reinvention?



For starters, an accident, a church Christmas program and a cookbook. You’ll have to read the book to find out how, but each situation has a touch of humor, nostalgia and comfort that will encourage readers to consider how they too might see life through a new lens, no matter their present circumstances.

Lamberth’s first novel, “Life with Strings Attached,” set in Wellton 20 years prior to “Miss Bertie Explains the Beginning of the World,” was selected as winner of the 2004 Paraclete Fiction Award. This award goes to a literary novel with Christian themes.

Each of the three books is a standalone story, though readers are sure to enjoy all three. They are, as one Amazon reviewer put it, “comfort food” for readers, who may find that they, like George Stringfellow, are ready to turn over a new leaf.

“George Stringfellow Joins the Revolution” is available through Amazon. For more details, visit minnielamberth.com. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

EDITOR’S NOTE — Minnie Lamberth is a Montgomery-based content creator, writer and author. She regularly reviews books for TAB Media.

The Post Covid Church: An Action Plan to Thrive, Not Just Survive

By Stuart Kellogg
Self-published, 2021

Author Stuart Kellogg, a retired TV station general manager, launched a social media project in 2020 to consider how the church could react to the pandemic, and he has drawn takeaways from that project for his book, “The Post Covid Church: An Action Plan to Thrive, Not Just Survive.”

Notably, Kellogg had an opportunity to study under Christian leader and founder of Prison Fellowship Chuck Colson, and this work points to Christian worldview concepts.

As it relates to shutdowns, Kellogg describes a line between “turtle churches” that hunkered down and waited for a return to normal and those that responded to new opportunities. From his examples, readers will find a number of things churches employed —

such as conducting services online while adding interaction among viewers and staff, but also using the simple technology of the telephone to call members.

The Mobile, Alabama, author notes an increase in isolation has produced mental health issues churches can help address, while congregations also can provide ministries to serve the community.

The book goes beyond times of quarantine, however. Kellogg cites research that reflects declining church membership and cultural influence before the pandemic reached the U.S., and he delves into American politics and culture wars. Amid various challenges, a “post-COVID church” also must often navigate different views on health protocols or other related issues within the congregation. (Minnie Lamberth)

Transforming Trials: A Study Through James

By Mason and Marina Shelton
Self-published, 2021

Marina Shelton’s heart is for those who are hurting and need Christ,

which shows in her latest book, “Transforming Trials: A Study Through James.”

Written with her husband Mason, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, the book aims to “point people back to Christ,” Marina Shelton told The Alabama Baptist.

“‘Transforming Trials’ is by no means complete and is by no means the most exhaustive understanding of trials that you’ll have as a believer,” she said.

Marina grew up in a writing family and began writing in high school. In addition to other books and a blog called “The Pursuit,” she is also social media and web associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

“Transforming Trials” is a result of communicating with readers of “The Pursuit,” as well as personal trials the Sheltons have faced. In February 2021, they suffered a miscarriage. The two started writing the devotional book in March while still processing their loss. In November, just after the book’s release, they had a second miscarriage.

The authors are in the middle of their story and will continue to grow in understanding of trials, Marina said. She hopes “Transforming Trials” will help. The book’s five weekly lessons include Scripture, short studies and meditations and stories from others who have experienced trials.

Information about ordering the book can be found at thepursuitblog.co. (Tracy Riggs)



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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