

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

It is _____ **FINISHED**

He said, "It is finished,"
and He bowed His head
and gave up His spirit.

JOHN 19:30

Celebrate the RISEN SAVIOR this Easter

Several members of The Alabama Baptist staff were on hand to talk about TAB's beginnings in Marion, Alabama, during a tour of historic sites in Wilcox County.



Photo by Sam Evans/
The Alabama Baptist

Sharing the story

TAB's original building joins tour of historical homes

TAB's first office building is officially settled in its new home in Furman, Alabama, and was one of 14 historical stops on Wilcox Historical Society's Tour of Homes on March 26.

Nearly 1,000 people participated in the tour and visited the little white building where the first copies of The Alabama Baptist were produced. From 1997 until this year, the nearly-200-year-old building rested on the campus of Judson College, just blocks from the place where it was first constructed in the early 1830s.

Exactly two months before the pilgrimage, the building was moved 71 miles to the nearby annex property of Bethsaida Baptist Church. Church members have graciously and lovingly built brick footers and steps for the building and will be maintaining and restoring it in the years to come.

Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB's edi-

tor-in-chief, expressed gratitude for their hospitality and was on hand at the pilgrimage along with other TAB staff to share the story of the newspaper.

"What a fun experience sharing about the history of The Alabama Baptist and being able to show

those who stopped by during the pilgrimage tour the room where the first issue of the paper was prepared and printed in 1843," Rash said. "We love knowing the original building has found a home where it will be preserved and the origins of our story can be kept alive perpetually." (Grace Thornton)

To see a gallery of photos from the pilgrimage, visit tabonline.org/pilgrimage.

To see a video about the original TAB building, visit tabonline.org/original-building.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Jennifer Davis Rash (left), editor-in-chief of The Alabama Baptist, had the opportunity to meet and chat with hundreds of readers, supporters and even former staff members during the Wilcox Historical Society's Tour of Homes March 26.

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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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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OTTO	ROS	ETRE
LEAN	YET	NEAR

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 13.



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash, President and Editor-in-Chief

✉ jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

🐦 @RashionalThts

What does it mean to follow Jesus' example of love, sacrifice?

Stories surface daily of Baptists and other believers risking personal safety and giving sacrificially to help the people of Ukraine.

At the same time, storms, wildfires and other weather-related situations continue damaging various parts of our country almost weekly now.

Right behind the destructive forces emerges the light shining from disaster relief volunteers.

News reports also seem to always include mention of a mass shooting that happened somewhere overnight or a list of needless murders taking place within families and across neighborhoods.

And standing with the survivors and those left to pick up the pieces are committed followers of Christ, providing needed consolation, support and strength.

It's not surprising to hear we are running toward those who are hurting — it's instinctive to do everything we can in crisis moments.

We don't worry about political party alliances or denominational preferences when a horrifying event devastates a community.

We merely see someone hurting and reach out to help.

The beauty of the moment can easily be missed because of the chaos swirling around the devastation, and once life settles back down the giving spirit also can quickly grow cold again.

But Easter provides the perfect weekend to focus on what our daily lives might look like if we intentionally sought to serve others sacrificially, even outside of the crisis moments.

What does it really mean when we chat in our church circles about “being the hands and feet of Jesus”?

Do we keep a uniform — the Jesus shawl — hanging in our closet, only to pull out when we go on a missions trip or when a tragedy occurs?

How do we reconcile the simple concept in 1 John 4:19 — “We love because He first loved us” — with the way we think about and treat others who think or act differently than we do?

Are we able to see others through the eyes of Jesus?

And are we willing to love them like Jesus loves them even when they have done wrong or are making bad choices?

Pain, disappointment, frustration and fear are part of all our lives, but that doesn't mean we need to take it out on others.

Why purposefully turn others into enemies and work to destroy them rather than build each other up?

And why would we not look for every opportunity possible to show those who don't know Jesus a glimpse of the love and grace He has for them?

How will I answer?

Sometimes I imagine how I will explain myself to Jesus when I make it Home. Will I be able to point to all the times I kept my eyes on Him, trusted even when the pain didn't seem fair and obeyed despite not being able to see the full picture?

Will others have examples of when I genuinely reflected the light of our Savior, or will they quickly turn away, leaving me to the stark reality of the selfish motives of my heart?

'Ambassadors for Christ (with) ministry of reconciliation'

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ... Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ...

“For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim ... to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear

before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ...

“He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. ...

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the

ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

—2 Corinthians 5

Your Voice



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

'Poor in spirit' something to strive for in life

By Karen O. Allen
ewerblessed.com/blog

Every Wednesday for the past decade I have met with my prayer partner, Jean. Before we pray, we discuss upcoming events, family, church and spiritual concerns.

On one of my recent visits Jean asked a question that gave me pause.

What does "poor in spirit" mean? I had an idea but confessed I really wasn't sure.

I agreed to do a little research and report back the next week. I was glad she asked since I had wondered about the answer myself.

So what is this phrase "poor in spirit" about?

Some might suggest it refers to economic poverty. That God wants us to be poor. Not true.

Certainly God warns us about the dangers of money, but that doesn't mean He desires us to be lacking. Quite the opposite.

God desires us to have an abundance, enabling us to be a channel of blessing for others.

The phrase poor in spirit is only used once in the Bible when Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

The verse is the first of eight beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus shared insights into true righteousness and the blessings it brings.

This righteousness Jesus described is internal, a matter of Christian character. The Pharisees of the day knew nothing about this as they followed external righteousness based on law. Their concern was on conduct, not character.

Jesus' message was used as a teaching moment for His disciples and those listening on the mountainside, but the powerful words are still applicable today for believers.

Who, what and why?

Who are the poor in spirit? The rich tend to feel security in wealth. If that wealth is threatened, they

may feel their earthly life could collapse. Not the poor in spirit. The poor in spirit understand they have absolutely nothing of worth to offer God.

This doesn't mean they are worthless and can't do anything.

It means they are aware of their desperate need for His help and cannot live without Him.

To be poor in spirit means to be humble and honest with ourselves recognizing our sinful nature and submitting to His mercy for deliverance.

Being poor in spirit acknowledges that on a spiritual level all people are bankrupt.

In fact, we aren't just spiritually bankrupt, we are spiritually dead because of our sinfulness. But Christ allows for a resurrection of spirit to live beyond this life. He offers eternal life.

Being poor in spirit is something to strive for.

There is value and importance in its acquisition. The stakes are high. Those who are poor in spirit are blessed with the kingdom of heaven.

Humility, having a servant's heart and exhibiting dependence on God's grace and provision summarize the characteristics of the poor in spirit.

Being blessed with this quality results in embracing the spiritual wealth we have inherited in Christ.



ALLEN

Characteristics of being poor in spirit

(modified from Aksel Smith's ActiveChristianity)

▶ Does not exalt oneself and is not proud. May be considered insignificant by others but rejoices in humiliation.

▶ Does not seek honor from others.

▶ Occupies the lowest place, not to be recognized, but because that is where it is most suitable.

▶ Reserved in conduct — not aggressive or demanding.

▶ Gives up advantages for the benefit of others.

▶ Does not seek recognition; only a desire to do God's will.

▶ Longs for others to come under the influence of God.

▶ Works calmly and never in haste using every precious minute without waste.

▶ Denies himself or herself so as not to be offensive.

▶ Willingly accepts his or her cross to bear without complaint.

▶ Happy wherever he is as he knows God is there.

▶ Contributes to the good of others.

▶ No work is insignificant. Serving others, no matter how small, is worthy.

▶ Does not discriminate in any circumstance.

▶ Would willingly sacrifice his life if needed.

▶ Listens to God's voice and heeds His calling.

Karen O. Allen
ewerblessed.com/blog

Excerpts from the Beatitudes (Matt. 5)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ...

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for

they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... [G]reat is your reward. ..."

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“Our old history ends with the cross; our new history begins with the resurrection.”

WATCHMAN NEE

Chinese church leader and Christian teacher

“A proper Sabbath means we have a healthy rhythm of labor and rest,” said **Scott Cormode, Hugh De Pree professor of leadership development at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California**, speaking at a seminar hosted by the Center for Congregational Resources of Samford University in Birmingham.

“I think the key is listening to people, that’s just so important — to listen to them first and earn that right to share with them,” said **Beth Gardner, campus minister at Metro Mobile Baptist Campus Ministries**.

“In times of war, the people who suffer most are vulnerable people, especially vulnerable children. It’s

something we are highlighting with the administration,” said **Chelsea Sobolik, director of public policy at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission**.

“When churches are not prepared, everyone loses, especially the survivor of the abuse who may not feel heard, seen, safe or that the abuse is addressed appropriately,” said **Rod Campbell, Pathways Professional Counseling**.

“Celebration is essential to the character of Christ and central to His mission. ... It’s absolutely central to why He came and essential to His character. We don’t often think of Jesus in the center of our joy,” said **Nicole Zasowski, marriage and family therapist and**

author of “What If It’s Wonderful? Release Your Fears, Choose Joy, and Find the Courage to Celebrate.”

“There is a sense of helplessness. But we’re not a hopeless people. ... I truly believe that as Scripture tells us in the Book of Hebrews, we can cling to [our] unwavering hope, despite some of the challenges we see in our world,” said **Eugene Cho, president and CEO of Bread for the World**, a Christian advocacy group whose mission is to help end world hunger.

Since sin destroyed relationships in the beginning, it is still destroying relationships today.
Morris Murray Jr. Jasper, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@GaryFenton07

As a Christian if you are not encouraging your fellow believers, you are missing the most important duty of your calling and you are probably discouraged.

@packratpastor

Small church pastors, your work is not small.

@jenniferwilkin

Parents, before we can tell our child to love others as their neighbor we must view and treat *them* as *our neighbor*. Fully human, albeit still growing and maturing.

Deserving of respect. Never to be treated contemptuously in thought, word or deed. Bearing the image of God.

@DavidCCrowther

A man gave his life to Christ this

morning @ibcwichita & the only reason he was at church to begin with is because his neighbor told him he would cut his grass if he would come to church with him. #whosyourone

@mhenslee

Over the past few days, I’ve celebrated with a pastor, dreamed with a pastor ... and more. Ministry is awesome! It’s exciting! It’s hard at times too. It’s a joy to be a pastor and an indescribable privilege of walking with pastors through trials and triumphs.

@crisalley

I often encourage those in ministry to go as far in Christian education as they can.

These are days of discontinuous change. Culture poses problems and questions today unimagined just 20 years ago. These days re-

quire rigorous gospel-centered thought.

@kswhitfield

To deal with someone’s position and argument takes respect and it takes work.

@MattSmethurst

Holiness is not the way to Christ, but Christ is the way to holiness —Spurgeon

@shane_pruitt78

Completely overwhelmed by what God did on the @winterjam-tour! @NAMB_SBC

- ▶ 39 cities
- ▶ 27,800+ salvation
- ▶ 21,000+ new dots added to the

@whosyour1_map

One church family using their God-given talents working together in unity to advance the gospel.

To God be the glory!

Armstrong’s continuing influence

Annie Armstrong was tireless in her efforts on behalf of Southern Baptists. We all enjoy the fruits from the toil of her labor.

As a young adult, Armstrong helped Southern Baptists open and sustain foreign missions fields. With encouragement from Lottie Moon, Armstrong helped Southern Baptists continue to channel their energies toward missions with the launch of Woman’s Missionary Union on May 14, 1888.

Armstrong was elected as the first corresponding secretary of WMU and would fill the role (unpaid) for 18 years.

During her first year, Annie personally wrote 637 letters and 182 postcards. She doubled the letters written the second year, and in the third she sent 2,737. In 1894, she wrote 17,718 letters. Her writing hand was damaged permanently by this effort and never regained its strength.

All money collected by the organization would go to the mission boards.

In 1894, both the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board (now known as NAMB and IMB, respectively) were in debt.

Armstrong rallied WMU to join with the SBC to wipe out the Foreign Mission Board’s debt, raising even more than asked.

Annie Armstrong had a profound and unprecedented impact on SBC missions — both in North America and around the world — that continues to resonate today in our collective Southern Baptist work and life.

As you give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, remember the legacy of this indomitable leader whose influence is still being felt today.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin
Executive director
National WMU

(Read more at tabonline.org/annies-influence.)

3 stories you should know



IMB photo

A volunteer checks the blood pressure of a Ukrainian refugee after he crossed over the border into Poland. Southern Baptists are partnering with local churches in Poland and Romania to provide food, shelter and health care for those that have been displaced by the Ukraine-Russia war. Disaster relief teams from several state conventions have been mobilized to aid in the relief work, and Southern Baptists have given more than \$5.5 million to help. (IMB)

SBC president's race: who's in, who's out

Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church Farmersville, Texas, will be nominated for Southern Baptist Convention president by Matt Henslee, president of the SBC Pastors Conference.

The April 7 announcement came the day after Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Church in Clearwater, Florida, withdrew from consideration for the role.

His withdrawal stemmed from controversy over a church deacon being allowed to serve despite past sexual misconduct prior to becoming a Christian.

Other announced nominees at press time are Florida pastor and Founders Ministries President Tom Ascol and former IMB missionary Robin Hadaway of California. Read more on the SBC candidates at tabonline.org/barber-rice. (TAB)

Faithlife releases list of top worship songs

Pat Barrett's "Build My Life" was the most popular worship song sung in churches in 2021, according to an analysis by Faithlife Proclaim, a provider of worship software for churches.

Faithlife analyzed data from nearly 750,000 church services to compile a list of the Top 10 worship songs of last year. Rounding out the Top 5 are "Way Maker," "Great Are You Lord," "Goodness of God" and "10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)."

The top 10 songs have an average age of 8.6 years. The oldest song in Faithlife's Top 20 is "How Great Thou Art," published in English in 1949, though the song's origins trace back to the late 1800s.

Newer songs on the 2021 list include "Graves into Gardens" (2019) and "Raise a Hallelujah" (2019). (The Alabama Baptist)

Persecuted church

Pastor barred from holding church services after Buddhist protests

TRINCOMALEE, Sri Lanka — A Christian pastor received a notice banning him from having church services in his home, reported relief organization Barnabas Fund.

The Jan. 8 letter from the Padavi Sripura Divisional Secretariat noted the police and central government had conferred about the matter and permission is necessary for a building to be used for religious activities, the report said. The Pradeshiya Sasanarakshaka, which is the local authority over Buddhist affairs, had objected to the pastor's home being used for Christian purposes.

According to Barnabas Fund, the pastor had hosted church services in his home since 2013. Although the pastor had applied to the Ministry

of Buddhasasana and Religious Affairs office several times for permission to hold services in his home, no response was received.

A Barnabas Fund source said official registration for places of worship is not required by law.

Fewer than 8% of Sri Lanka's people are Christians.

Iran's high court denies retrial for imprisoned Christian

TEHRAN, Iran — An Iranian Christian sentenced to 10 years for conducting a house church has been denied a retrial.

Naser Navard Gol-Tapeh, 60, has already served more than four years for the conviction on "acting against national security with the intention to overthrow the regime"

by conducting a house church. He has been incarcerated in Tehran's Evin Prison, known as a place where inmates are treated abusively, stated Barnabas Fund, a relief organization.

Additionally, he is alleged to have ties to churches and Christian entities outside the country. During his imprisonment, Naser has requested a retrial three times. All the requests were rejected. Then, the Supreme Court considered his case but ruled his request did not meet requirements for a retrial, said the report.

Although the court's ruling was dated Feb. 19, Naser's family was not informed until March 1.

Iran is No. 9 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



GOL-TAPEH

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Casey Lynn Caver**, pastor of **Pine Grove Baptist Church, Brent**, died April 4. He was 44.



CAVER

A native of Pascagoula, Mississippi, Caver was a graduate of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, where he earned a master's degree in theology.

He is survived by his wife, Beth, and three children.

▶ **Ronald Jackson**, 83, died Feb. 14. In his 64 years of preaching and singing, he led a number of churches in Alabama. He preached and sang in revivals and Bible conferences in several states. He had been serving **Pleasant Plains Baptist Church, Clayton**, since November 2006. He is survived by his wife, Hazel, and a daughter.



JACKSON

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION



WILKINSON

▶ **Chris Wilkinson** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Eufaula**, where he has served as youth minister for 27 years. Chris and his wife, Lori, have two children.

▶ **Justin Mills** is the new minister of music, youth and children for **Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Enterprise**. He previously served as worship pastor at Bethany Baptist Church, New Brockton, and music and youth pastor at Holmes Creek Baptist Church, Chipley, Florida. He is currently studying worship leadership at Liberty University. Mills and his wife, Alyson, have three children.



MILLS

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals**, celebrated its 75th anniversary April 3 at its 10:30 a.m. service. Worship pastor



Photo courtesy of WABC

Timmy Ray (right) preached the message and led congregational singing. The worship choir sang "He Will Rejoice," and pianist Anita Scott pro-

vided the offertory music. Jimmy Austin (left), of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate.

"Our celebration was smaller than originally planned," said anniversary committee chair Susan Freeman, of the event, which was originally scheduled in April 2020 but was delayed due to COVID-19. "The Lord has held us together through COVID and other challenges. We know He has our future in His hands."

DALE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Keith Reynolds** is the new pastor of **Post Oak Baptist Church, Ozark**, where he served as interim pastor for six months. He previously led Spring Hill Baptist, Troy, for 13 years. He has also served as pastor and interim at other churches. Reynolds, who has an associate's degree from Bethany Bible College and Seminary, worked at Fort Rucker as an aviation life support equipment technician until he retired in 2021. He and his wife, April, have three children.



REYNOLDS

▶ **Holmes Baptist Church, Ariton**, will host singer-songwriter Laura Lewis from Nashville, Tennessee, on April 17 during the 10:30 a.m. worship service. The church is located on Highway 51. Ron Jeffers is music minister.

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Bethlehem East Baptist Church, Tallassee**, will celebrate its 178th homecoming May 1 at 11 a.m. Pastor John E. Sparks will preach.

FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

▶ Man Church featuring evangelist Scott Dawson will be April 23 at 6:30 p.m. **Friendship Association** is hosting this event at Cross-Roads Baptist Church, Warrior.

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Blue Springs Baptist Church, Somerville**, celebrated its 175th anniversary April 3 at its 11 a.m. service. Pastor Richard Richie (left) preached a sermon on 1 Samuel 7, and longtime member Jimmy Lynn shared the history of the church. The choir sang "Standing on the Solid Rock," and the Lindsey family shared some special music. Joe Teal (right) presented a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Former staff members were rec-



Photo courtesy of Joe Teal

ognized as well as Ken Blackwood, director of missions for Morgan Baptist Association; Ray Long and Randy Vest, county commissioners; Congressman Mo Brooks; and Sen. Arthur Orr.

▶ **Johnny Whitten** is the new pastor of **Unity Baptist Church, Henagar**. He has previously led Hopewell Baptist Church, Geraldine; New Life Baptist Church, Rainsville; and Free Hill Baptist Church, Fyffe. He is a bivocational pastor. He and his wife, Diane, have two children.



WHITTEN

SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Rick Wright** is the new pastor of the **Church at Chelsea-Westover, Harpersville**. He previously served as the assistant pastor. He received his master's degree from Carolina University. He was also the youth pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Connersville, Indiana. He and his wife, Heather, have three children.



WRIGHT

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Westover**, will celebrate its 76th anniversary, "Celebrating our Past ... Claiming our Future," on May 1 at 10 a.m. The Vaughn family will sing. Lunch will be served. Interim pastor is Steven Wallace.

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion**, will celebrate homecoming and its 200th anniversary April 17. The theme is "Looking Forward while Remembering the Past." The event begins with special music at 10 a.m., followed by a time of fellowship and a worship service. Pastor emeritus Joe Bob Mizzell will preach, and lunch will follow. George Washburn is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vinemont**, will have revival services April 24-27 with preaching by Greg Dollar, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Arley. Services will be held at 5 p.m. on April 24 and 7 p.m. on April 25-27. Dennis Trimble is pastor.

OTHER

▶ "Shindig," an event for the **Women's Health Care Center** in Spanish Fort, will be April 22 at Coastal Alabama Community College's Halstead Amphitheater in Fairhope from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. The event will feature musical artists Nu Image, Kirk Jay and Neil Dover. A donation will be collected.

**FREE
ADMISSION**

Revive

Senior Adult Evangelism Conference



**Monday, May 2 – 9:30-Noon
Glynwood Baptist Church – Prattville**

SPEAKERS:
*Jay Wolf and
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SPECIAL MUSIC:
*Karen Peck
and New River*



For more information, please visit evangelizeAL.org/revive

Headline news

from around the Southeast

ARKANSAS

The Arkansas Baptist State Convention Missions Team recently hosted Arkansas Department of Corrections chaplains at Camp Paron for a three-day retreat. Among several topics discussed was preparation for receiving inmate field ministers in 2023, reported Arkansas Baptist News.

The convention partnered with the Arkansas Department of Corrections Division of Correction and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary to become the 16th state in the nation to start a “prison seminary,” a Christian ministries



Photo courtesy of Arkansas Baptist News

bachelor’s degree program that produces inmate graduates trained to assist in the moral rehabilitation of their fellow inmates.

States with inmate field ministers see a tangible reduction

in self-harm and inmate violence against officers and fellow inmates. Inmate field ministers conduct Bible studies, mentor, visit cells and lead by example. (Arkansas Baptist News)

FLORIDA

New Hope Church in Cape Coral is expanding its Kingdom impact by creating a missional culture among its people that offers a new dimension in worship, reported the Florida Baptist Witness.

Pastor David Acton created a ministry for new community groups and led the church to construct an outdoor building. The building has been a safe space during the pandemic and provides a casual worship atmosphere for the church’s “Church on the Turf” services every Saturday evening.



Photo courtesy of Florida Baptist Witness

The church adopted an “everyone brings one” emphasis, and it has added almost 50 new members. New Hope hosts several outreach events, is involved in local missions and created new programs to meet needs, such as a café to support foster and adoptive parents and single moms. (Florida BaptistWitness)

GEORGIA

First Baptist Church Cartersville named a chapel after and dedicated it to the memory of Lottie Moon, a missionary who served among the people of China and opened a school for girls in Cartersville in 1871, reported Georgia’s Christian Index.



Photo courtesy of The Christian Index

The chapel is the centerpiece of a \$9.7 million building expansion at the church’s campus. Gene Lee, an elder, stated, “We named our building venture The Legacy Project, because of our 180-year history as a church and the significance of learning from previous generations and the opportunity to pass that on to those who come behind us. One of the key legacies in our history is that Lottie Moon was once a part of our fellowship.” (The Christian Index)

KENTUCKY

A dozen Kentucky Baptists recently handed out coffee and initiated gospel conversations with college students at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College, reported Kentucky Today.



Photo by Robin Cornetet/Kentucky Today

The outreach effort on ECTC’s campus was one of three events to share the gospel in Elizabethtown and surrounding areas. A second group mobilized in Radcliff to share the gospel door to door as a part of the Gospel to Every Home initiative. (Kentucky Today)

LOUISIANA

Multiple tornadoes ripped through southeast Louisiana damaging homes and leaving thousands without power March 22. The tornadoes caused multiple injuries and at least one confirmed death, reported Louisiana Baptist Messenger.



St. Bernard Parish government photo

Disaster Relief teams have been

assessing damage in the hard-hit areas of Arabi and New Orleans where people are still trying to recover from last year’s Hurricane Ida. Alex Brian, with New Orleans Baptist Association, said the association is coordinating with Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief and Send Relief. (Louisiana Baptist Messenger)

NORTH CAROLINA

Just two hours from where he grew up in Durham, North Carolina, Chad Ferrell planted King’s Church Charlotte near UNC-Charlotte, one of the largest schools in the state, reported



Photo courtesy of Biblical Recorder

North Carolina’s Biblical Recorder. Ferrell and his wife, Christy, along with a core team from Crosspoint Church in Clemson, South Carolina, planted King’s Church Charlotte in

October 2020. The church merged with an older North Carolina Baptist congregation to grow multi-generationally.

King’s Church added facilities a mile from UNC-Charlotte’s campus, including a gym to further engage college students. The church hosts sports outreach nights where they play sports and share the gospel. (Biblical Recorder)

SOUTH CAROLINA

Greenville Baptist Association, which has 10 Hispanic congregations throughout the county, is among the associations across the state preparing for the rapid growth — 100,000 Hispanics in the next decade — by starting more churches, reported South Carolina’s The Courier.

Erwin Soto, pastor of Monaghan en Español, which meets at Monaghan Baptist Church in Greenville, leads one of the association’s new Hispanic congregations with about 40 members.



Screenshot from The Courier

“We all know that God has brought the nations ... to our country so that we can share the gospel with them without even leaving our neighborhood,” Ramón Osorio, ethnic-linguistic church planting director for the North American Mission Board, said. (The Courier)

DNow weekends reach outside church walls with gospel message

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Justin Caton said he already knew God's hand was in the planning of his church's Disciple Now weekend in late January. But it was confirmed in a big way when one particular student showed up that Sunday morning.

Caton's wife is a high school teacher, and one of her students chose to turn in all his papers with "Lucifer" written at the top.

"I couldn't get him out of my mind," said Caton, associate pastor of families and students at First Baptist Church Thorsby. This is one of the reasons he chose to break a long-standing FBC youth group tradition, a trip to a winter student conference in the mountains, and hold a local DNow event.

The idea for the change first started when FBC's Wednesday night student Bible studies doubled in size to around 60 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students in the small central Alabama town were looking for somewhere to go, Caton explained. It continued growing from there.

"My budget was still for a 30-person student ministry, so there was no way we could take that many students to the mountains," he noted.

The church also had only one bus he trusted enough to drive out of the county, and it wouldn't hold that many students.

God's provision

Caton began considering other options. He thought about having their own event at FBC, but that seemed daunting. He said the Holy Spirit kept bringing to his mind something he had heard at one of those past winter conferences: His responsibility wasn't limited to the 60 students he could load



Photo courtesy of FBC Thorsby

Justin Caton, associate pastor of families and students at FBC Thorsby, says God miraculously provided — from prayer warriors to a sound engineer and a band — for its recent Disciple Now weekend.

up on buses and take to the mountains. It was to get the gospel to all the students in Thorsby, including the student who wrote "Lucifer" at the top of his papers.

Caton said God began miraculously providing everything they needed — a band, a sound engineer and someone to help turn the traditional sanctuary into a youth venue for the weekend.

Caton said people in the church were behind the event in every way, from praying to offering to pay for giveaways.

"It took our whole church to pull off," Caton acknowledged.

And in the end, God gave even more confirmation. The student he had specifically been praying for showed up on Sunday morning.

More than 100 attended Prodigal Weekend, as it was called. Caton led the Bible studies, and 28 students decided to follow Christ for the first time.

"It was just unreal — the floodgates opened," Caton recalled.

Scooter Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said it looks different in different contexts, but what he's seeing this year at DNow weekends all over the state is pre-

COVID participation levels with more intentionality in planning.

Intentionality

"I think our youth pastors have been very good about being intentional with what they're doing and how they're doing it this year," Kellum said, noting Caton was one of those.

For churches like FBC Trussville, DNow was used as a way to kick off a whole new vision for student ministry.

For Big Hurricane Baptist Church in Brookwood it meant bringing together students from small congregations in the area to encourage and send them out with a new fire to reach their friends.

And at Fultondale FBC, it was a chance for Timothy Anderson to try for the first time a model he'd seen work well at his home church, Enon Baptist in Morris.

"I've been a part of a lot of awesome DNows at Enon, but the way God moved on Saturday night was special," Anderson related.

Kellum said another thing he's enjoyed seeing this year is how many youth pastors either led their own Bible studies or invited youth pastors from other churches in the state to lead.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Shiloh Baptist Church, Hartford, Ala., is searching for a full-time pastor. Please mail resumés to: Shiloh Baptist Church, P.O. Box 326, Hartford, AL 36344 or by email to: SBCHSearch@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Thomaston Baptist Church, Thomaston, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Florala, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: 23593 Fifth Avenue, Florala, AL 36442 or email resumés to: fbcloralapsc@yahoo.com.

PASTOR

Full-time or bivocational pastor. Oak Grove Baptist Church, Frisco City, Ala. Please email resumés to: oakgbaptist@gmail.com.

MISSIONS/DISCIPLSHIP MINISTER

Woodmont Baptist Church in Florence, Ala., is searching for a missions/discipleship minister. We are searching for someone to develop and grow our missions and discipleship ministry. Minimum five years ministry experience. College degree required, seminary degree preferred. Strong interpersonal and communications skills needed. Please go to woodmontbaptist.org to submit resumés by April 15.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

STUDENT PASTOR

Siluria Baptist Church is seeking a part-time student minister responsible for Bible teaching on Wednesday nights, worship participation on Sunday mornings and planning and execution of student activities in concert with the student ministry team. Send resumé to: 10696 Highway 119 South, Alabaster, AL 35007. Church website is Siluriabaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational youth minister. Please send resumés and or questions to Ken Blakney at ktblakney@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Government Street Baptist

Church, Mobile, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's minister. Applicants should subscribe to the Baptist Faith & Message. Please send resumé to: governmentstreetbaptist@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's ministry director. Please send resumés or questions to Lori Johnson at macedoniachildrensministry@gmail.com.

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.

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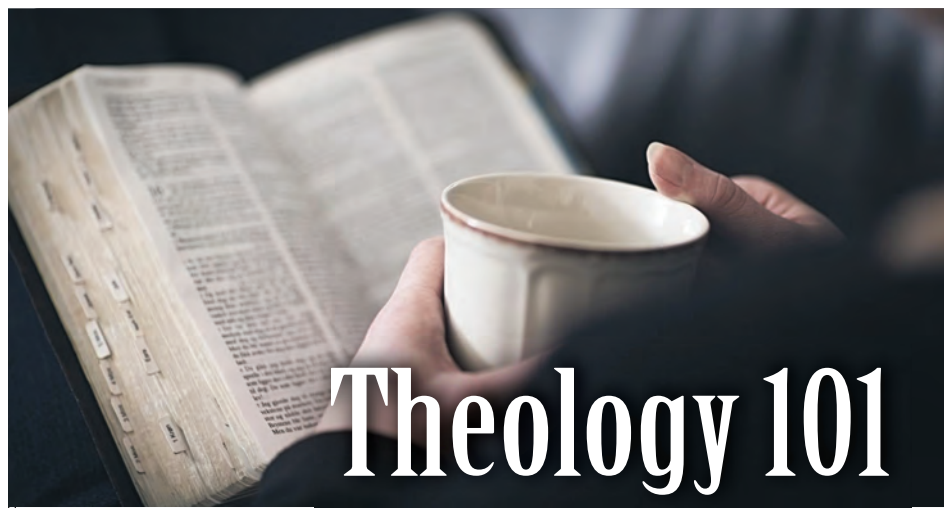
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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

God's Flock

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

From last week's imagery of the Church as God's field, we turn this week to the imagery of God's people as His flock, which has deep roots in the Old Testament. The centerpiece of the five verses that compose Psalm 100 confesses, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (v. 3).

Psalm 77 uses God's care for the generation of His people Moses and Aaron led out of Egypt as the psalmist's encouragement for his own generation to confess their faith: "You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (v. 20).

The prophet Isaiah used this same image to declare, "Behold, the Lord God ... will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young" (Is. 40:10-11).

Promise of security

In the New Testament we read of an occasion when Jesus spoke to the 12 apostles, saying, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is Your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Using the imagery of His followers as sheep, Jesus gave the promise of security, saying, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28).

The Apostle Paul cautioned the

Ephesian elders, "I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:29-30). We take note that false teaching can come from either of two directions — from the outside or arising within the flock.

Two basic strategies

There are two basic strategies to address the possibility of false teaching infiltrating God's people. We could study all false teachings or heresies God's flock has ever encountered; theoretically, this would equip us to identify and thus avoid false teaching. Or we can choose to listen closely to the voice of the Good Shepherd so we can discern teachings that have the ring of truth in them.

The strategy of studying all about heresies would leave us with minimal edification since all we would have amassed is a knowledge of doctrinal errors, but knowing God's truth in Christ will fit us for life now and for heaven to come.

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.



Clubs discover missions field in elementary schools

By Hamilton Richardson
The Alabama Baptist

In the world of children's ministry, several goals always sit at the top of the priority list: ensuring the gospel is shared with every child, teaching respect for others and modeling self-control. All of these prime concerns and more are taught every day through Discovery Clubs, a ministry of the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

Discovery Clubs was founded in 2003 by John Glasser who previously founded Better Basics literacy tutoring program, explained Rachel Moore, director of the children's ministry.

"Glasser came to realize that most children they encountered in the public schools were unchurched," Moore said. "In 2001, a Supreme Court ruling declared that as long as it is not during school hours and is permission-based, a religious organization can hold events on a school campus, which opened a door allowing Discovery Clubs to share the gospel with these children."

As an after-school meeting, Discovery Clubs are typically held in public elementary schools for one hour following dismissal, one day a week during the school year. The clubs, which are free to attend, offer enrollment to children in grades 1-5.

Each weekly club hour consists of social time, praise through music, memory verses, a 15-minute Bible lesson and small group mentoring.

Influencing lives

"Children are not the only ones who benefit from Discovery Clubs," Moore said.

The director explained she has heard from mentors who have expressed their love for Discovery Clubs and how they have seen it influence the lives of children.

One volunteer said they had decided to become a mentor with Discovery Clubs because they thought they could help the children learn more about Jesus and His word. The person said they soon learned

they were receiving far more than they were giving. Another mentor said they saw Discovery Clubs as their missions field.

Making a difference

"The teachers and faculty at several schools have also commented on the fact that Discovery Clubs makes a difference in the attitude and demeanor of the children who attend," Moore added. "We have even had teachers and principals who have moved away from schools with Discovery Clubs contact us to see how they can get a Discovery Club started at their new school."

Discovery Clubs has not always been a ministry of BMBA. Michael Ethridge, director of operations for the association, said the association began providing office space for Discovery Clubs in 2020. In December 2021, the BMBA acquired Discovery Clubs, making the organization a ministry of BMBA rather than a partner.

"Discovery Clubs and BMBA share the same values and commitment to the Great Commission to make disciples," Ethridge said.

Although Discovery Clubs has seen great success, as with so many other ministries and businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic affected its impact for a season.

"Discovery Clubs had 45 clubs in 14 schools and reached over 900 children in the Birmingham Metro area and surrounding counties with 164 volunteers this year alone," Moore described. "Before the pandemic, those numbers were more than double."

The clubs' director added they are expanding again as schools open, and they hope to resume clubs at more schools this fall, as well as open clubs at new ones.

It's so important for that to happen because of its influence on everyone involved, Moore said.

"Discovery Clubs not only teaches about the gospel of Jesus Christ but also how to have respect for yourself and others," she said.



For more information, visit discoveryclubs.org or BMBAonline.org.

HAPPY EASTER FROM THE
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS!

*He is not here;
for He is risen,
as He said.*

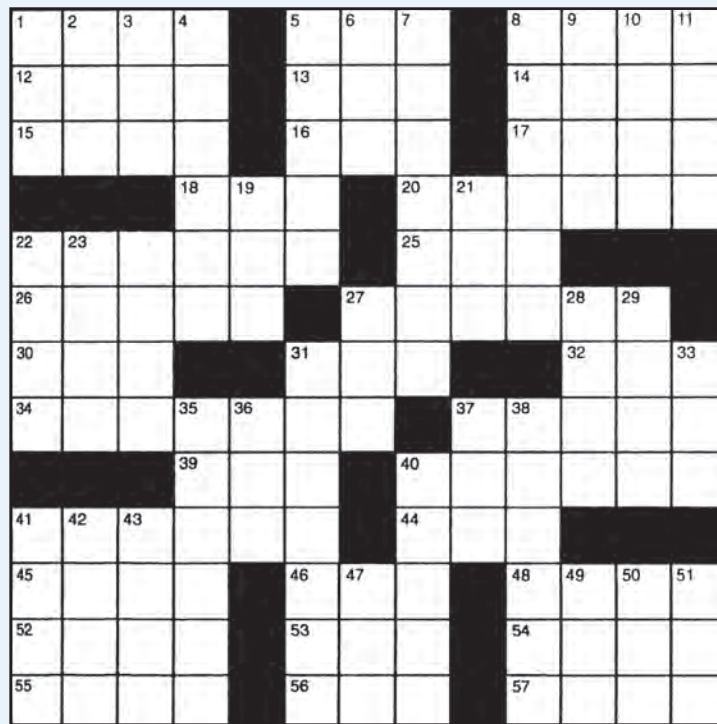
MATTHEW 28:6

Thank you for your partnership in telling the Good News
of our risen Lord to those who need to hear it in our state,
across the nation and around the world!

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. Trademark.
5. Roman household god.
8. They put on Him a purple _____. (John 19:2)
12. Jezebel said to _____, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth." (1 Kings 21:15)
13. Indian tribe.
14. Toward the coast of Edom southward were Kabzeel, and _____. (Josh. 15:21)
15. He shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door _____. (Ex. 21:6)
16. Machine part.
17. Chinese Communist leader.
18. Is not _____ on the Levite thy brother? (Ex. 4:14)
20. Put forth too much effort.
22. A wrathful man stirreth up _____. (Prov. 15:18)
25. Contend.
26. Places where David himself and his men were wont to _____. (1 Sam. 30:31)
27. There sat women weeping for _____. (Ezek. 8:14)
30. Alas.
31. One book of a series. (abbr.)
32. Type of grass. (biblical sp.)
34. And let all the angels of God _____ Him. (Heb. 1:6)
37. Therefore have I set my face like a _____. (Isa. 50:7)
39. European Economic Community.
40. As men enter into a city wherein is made a _____. (Ezek. 26:10)
41. There shall be no more thence an _____ of days. (Isa. 65:20)
44. Same sort as "i" and "u."
45. "Do," third person.
46. Mouth.
48. Use not _____ repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)



By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

52. Holy Roman Emperor (962–973).
 53. Mrs. Jimmy Carter.
 54. To be. (French)
 55. Yet will they _____ upon the Lord. (Mic. 3:11)
 56. When there were _____ three months to the harvest. (Amos 4:7)
 57. Know that it is _____, even at the doors. (Matt. 24:33)
- ## DOWN
1. Separate those who _____ the water ... like a dog. (Judg. 7:5)
 2. Interjection.
 3. Fuel.
 4. So run, that ye may _____. (1 Cor. 9:24)
 5. Not greedy of filthy _____. (1 Tim. 3:8)
 6. Indonesian.
 7. Taking away.
 8. That He might _____ us from all iniquity. (Titus 2:14)
 9. River to the Baltic Sea.
 10. And they _____ their tongues like their bow for lies. (Jer. 9:3)
 11. Therefore.
 19. Stern of a ship.
 21. Zest.
 22. Study to _____ thyself approved. (2 Tim. 2:15; modern sp.)
 23. Mexican food.
 27. The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the _____ to the bottom. (Matt. 27:51)
 28. And when _____h was come unto him, David demanded of him. (2 Sam. 11:7)
 29. White metal.
 31. Them that had gotten the _____ over the beast. (Rev. 15:2)
 33. Biblical suffix.
 35. They should rest yet for a little _____. (Rev. 6:11)
 36. As a _____ gathereth her chickens. (Matt. 23:37)
 37. Is a vanity tossed to and _____. (Prov. 21:6)
 38. Beware of the _____ of the Pharisees. (Matt. 16:6)
 40. Set him on his own _____. (Luke 10:34)
 41. The golden calf.
 42. Short letter.
 43. Type of cheese.
 47. Deliver thyself as a _____ from the hand of the hunter. (Prov. 6:5)
 49. Did eat.
 50. _____ the lthrite. (1 Chron. 11:40)
 51. And _____ begat Kish. (1 Chron. 8:33)

WORD search

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| ALARMED | KING |
| AMAZED | LIVING |
| APPEARANCE | MESSIAH |
| CAST LOTS | MOCKED |
| CLOTHS | MORNING |
| CONDEMNED | NAILS |
| CROSS | PERFUME |
| CRUCIFIED | POWER |
| CURTAIN | RAISED |
| DELIVERED | REBUKED |
| DISCIPLES | ROBE |
| DO NOT WEEP | SABBATH |
| EXALTED | SCOURGED |
| FINISHED | SOLDIERS |
| GLOIFIED | SPICES |
| GOLGOTHA | SPIRIT |
| GUARD | STONE |
| HUMBLER | TOMB |
| INSULTS | WOMEN |



And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 17

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



RISEN!

Matthew 28:1–10, 16–20

Truly, there's nothing quite like Easter, the day we consecrate on our calendar the resurrection of the Son of God — the foretaste of glory divine, life abundant and the death of death.

Resurrected (1–4)

On that resurrection morning, the birds began their singing, the dew began drying and folks all over Israel started their day, going to their jobs and being with their children just like every other morning.

But there was a strange sound in the garden at sunrise — the sound of a stone rolling away.

While Matthew's account of the resurrection includes some details the other Gospels do not (for example, an earthquake), all of the Gospels are in unison on this fact: That rock moved.

In his book on the final week of Jesus, William F. Cook III comments on the theological significance of the boulder being moved, saying, "The stone was not moved to let Jesus out of the tomb but rather to let the women in." And I think that's right.

This fact would become the turning point in the confidence of the disciples that Jesus undid death. This was not a secret resurrection. Jesus could have passed through the walls. No, this was a public example of a now public fact. Jesus borrowed the tomb, and He was happy to give it back to someone who could get some real use out of it.

Announced (5–7)

Though the guards shook with fear at first sight of the angel, only the women were told, "Do not be afraid." It's a refrain we see through the Bible when heavenly beings reveal themselves to people who are in God's favor. The angel tells Mary (Luke 1:30), the angels tell the shepherds (Luke 2:10), Jesus tells his disciples (Matt. 28:10) and Jesus tells John: "Do not be afraid" (Rev. 1:17).

But the Lord offers no such consolation to those who resist his lordship. In the presence of the Judge of

the living and the dead, those cut off from Christ receive no such consolation, and they live in trembling and fear (Rev. 6:16–17).

Encountered (8–10)

Jesus meets the women on their way to tell the disciples about the empty tomb in order to confirm for them what they had been told by the angel and to give them instructions for the other disciples.

Upon seeing Jesus, they "took hold of His feet and worshipped Him." Could there be a better or more appropriate response? Nobody strides into the presence of God; nobody parades themselves into the company of Jesus. When people encounter the King, they drop and they bow. They get low to make sure the One who is worthy of all honor and praise receives it all.

Commissioned (16–20)

Jesus designates the mountain spot to give what will be, in the Book of Matthew, His final instructions. But even still, some are doubtful.

We can understand the doubts that must have been running through their minds. Is this really Jesus? Did He really die? Even if this is Jesus, He's getting ready to leave again. What are we supposed to do now?

I appreciate the honesty of Matthew's reporting because that doubt is an emotion I, and others like me, can relate to. Sometimes it is difficult to believe.

What I also appreciate about Jesus' words here is that He's not chastising the doubtful or exasperated with their caution. Instead, He tells them exactly what they need to hear — I'm in charge, I've got a job that you need to do and I'll be with you to the end of all things.

The consequence of those words is that you and I are now sharing an article on the resurrection of Jesus Christ 2,000 years later.

Clearly, His counsel motivated those who heard it to trust and obey, and we, as well as future generations of Christians yet to come, are the evidence of the fact.

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



JESUS LIVES — AND YOU CAN TOO

Matthew 28:1–10

The gospel is world-shattering. It turns our understanding of ourselves, of reality itself, upside down. That can be frightening — we are not what we thought we were. We are both less worthy and far more valued. The Creator of heaven and earth has entered into this fallen world and broken the rules by which we thought it operated. Death has been defeated. Hope reigns. That message must be shared.

The event of the resurrection of Christ was no cause for fear. (1–5)

"Do not be afraid" is commanded twice in this passage (vv. 5, 10). That in itself indicates the two Marys have had multiple experiences so far outside the norm that fear would be reasonable, even expected.

Violent earthquakes, lightning-like angelic appearances, supernatural voices and the unexpected presence of one formerly dead certainly justify some degree of trepidation.

It can be terrifying to realize there is more to reality than we previously believed. But both the angel and Jesus command these women not to be afraid because the deeper reality they reveal is thoroughly good, a source of ultimate comfort, not terror.

In the world the women glimpse in these events, death is defeated and hope reigns. These are things only God, who defines reality, could do.

The evidence of the resurrection of Christ can be investigated. (6–7)

It's tempting to try and find some means of squeezing things that defy reality back into the constraints of our understanding. Humans do not rise from the dead, so this must be symbolism, metaphor or myth, some might say.

We couldn't blame the two Marys if their initial reaction was

similar. But the angel doesn't allow them to escape the world-transforming implication of what they have witnessed. "Come and see the place where He lay," the angel commands. There used to be a dead body there. It lies there no more.

Jesus will do the same with Thomas: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27). Paul, too, appeals to verifiable evidence of the resurrection: Jesus appeared to Peter, the 12 disciples, James, all the apostles and to more than 500 at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). Paul says most of them are still living, which is an encouragement to go check their stories. The reality of the resurrection is vital, because, as Paul goes on to write, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Cor. 15:14).

The news of the resurrection of Christ needs to be shared. (8–10)

A second command is repeated in this passage: Go and tell (vv. 7, 10). Like the angel, Jesus instructs the women to share this reality-expanding news with the disciples. But first He receives their worship, which indicates His divine status since worship is reserved for God alone.

The command to "tell" is combined with one to "go," and the message the women are given includes a command for the disciples to meet with Jesus in Galilee. When they do, He commands them similarly to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19) and teach others to obey all His commands (Matt. 28:20).

Speech and action must coincide. He has risen, and He assures them He will be with them "always, to the very end of the age."

Has Jesus' resurrection transformed your understanding of reality? If so, do not be afraid; go and tell!

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Songwriter uses talents to help children memorize God's word

Music has long been part of Linda Harper's life. Now she is sharing her passion through a YouTube channel for children's ministry, focusing on original songs written to teach children God's word.

"I want to be a resource for parents, grandparents and teachers," Harper said, "to help them build a foundation of faith in their children and reinforce critical truth. There are some truths getting lost, like that God is our Creator. A lot of my songs talk about how God made you and God made me. I want children to know that He made them and that He loves them."

Harper has been teaching children for more than 40 years. When she started writing music, her children's pastor was grateful for her help.

Early collaboration

He would share lesson ideas for the next few weeks, and Harper would write songs for those topics, giving her a lot of experience and quick feedback on how well her songs were received.

Through her ministry, Linda Harper Music, Harper continues to write songs that teach truths about God and help children memorize His word, with the goal of "infusing the word of God into the next gen-



Songwriter Linda Harper leads children in worship. Her original songs are written to teach children God's word.

Photo courtesy of Linda Harper Music

eration through song. Quality music for children is very difficult to find. Scripture memory songs are hard to find," Harper said.

"When parents and teachers play these songs, it gives them creative learning opportunities."

One of Harper's favorites is "Thank You Jesus for Your Love."

One year she was invited to Avondale United Methodist Church in Birmingham to hear it sung by their children during the annual Hanging of the Green.

"That was just the thrill of a lifetime — to see this very traditional church with a whole line of children all the way across the front. They were all singing my song, and my heart was just rejoicing that something God had given me for them was being used.

"They were learning to have a heart of gratitude."

Harper adds motions to her songs

whenever possible. During that performance, one plaid-shirted child stood out to her by swinging his imaginary baseball bat intensely.

After the performance, Harper found him and expressed her appreciation for singing her song.

"He looked up at me and he said, 'Thank you for writing it,'" Harper related. "It was a word from the Lord from this little boy. He said, 'Thank you for writing it,' just as thoughtful

and as serious as he could be. That made my day."

Many of Harper's songs are born through her own worship and meditation, and she loves it when Scripture is brought to life through music. She keeps guidelines in mind when writing: be simple, write a melody children will enjoy and, most importantly, be biblically sound.

After coming up with a tune, Harper moves to her keyboard and records a rough draft on her phone, then decides if it's guitar-friendly. She types the lyrics and chord sheet and makes up motions that "little ones can do and the older aren't bored with."

Larger audience

For any song slated for release, she works with a producer to find talent to record it.

Harper then uploads the song to her online store and to CD Baby, which allows the song to be streamed or downloaded through sites such as Amazon, Spotify and YouTube Music.

"That's how I'm able to reach the children. This is the way I can be international and global with this ministry — and I am. The songs are all over now. I think it's awesome that children on the other side of the world can hear my songs. All the way from California to Australia, parents are downloading songs. I just thank God," Harper said.

Harper is willing to go through any door God opens to get the word out and said music motivates her to stay busy for the Kingdom.

"I have all of these songs in me. Children are in need of a way to connect with the Father, and music is such an awesome way to connect."

Individual songs and more can be downloaded at LindaHarperMusic.com. For more about Harper's ministry and a free download of the popular "The Fruit of the Spirit" song, visit LindaHarperMusic.com.

Find select songs and videos with accompanying motions at Harper's YouTube channel, youtube.com/user/LindaHarperMusic.

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.

For more information, visit LindaHarperMusic.com.



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