

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Home-schooling allows David Cobb to spend more time with his children, Jonas, Charis and Nathan.

Photo by Carrie Brown McWhorter/The Alabama Baptist

‘Going all in’

‘Thorn’ of cystic fibrosis transforms man’s perspective on suffering, value of life

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

David Cobb says that over the course of his life there have been moments where it was easy to breathe, but many more moments when it’s been very difficult. He’s grateful for both, he noted, since both have come from the Lord. Without the

difficult breaths, he wonders if he would ever have come to know Jesus.

Cobb, a member of Heflin Baptist Church, has cystic fibrosis, a progressive disease that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs. For people with CF avoiding germs is a top priority.

“The way everybody acted with masks and social distancing during COVID-19 is the way people with cystic fibrosis have lived since the 1990s,” Cobb said. “It wasn’t a shock to my system; it was, ‘Welcome to my world.’”

When he shares about CF,

Cobb describes it this way: “Picture your yard, and it’s full of leaves. The yard itself represents your lungs, your sinuses and parts of your gastrointestinal tract,” he says. “The leaves represent all of the bacteria and viruses and dust and pollen and anything else you breathe in.”

The difference

For people without CF, it’s as if a 100-person crew comes every day and cleans the yard fantastically, then comes again and does the same thing the next day.

Here’s the difference: “You had 100 people cleaning. I

had five,” Cobb says. “No matter what they do, they will never get all the leaves up.”

About 30,000 people in the U.S. have CF, according to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. When Cobb was a child his parents were told he would not survive. Until the 1990s, few people with CF lived past childhood.

But improvements in medical care have increased life expectancy by decades, and he has exceeded it several times. That’s a blessing, but it doesn’t mean it’s been easy.

Each day, Cobb takes about 35 pills and spends 4–6 hours (See ‘I rejoice,’ page 14)



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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

On Anticipation of a Historic Moment in the Pro-Life Movement

A little more than a week prior to the U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, messengers affirmed the following resolution during the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Anaheim, California:

WHEREAS, Scripture reveals that all human life is created in the image of God, and therefore sacred to our Creator (Gen. 1:27; 9:6); and

WHEREAS, the Bible affirms that the preborn child is a person bearing the image of God from the moment of conception (Ps. 139:13-16; Luke 1:44); and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists have historically recognized the sanctity of life in the womb and repeatedly reaffirmed our pro-life ethic, our opposition to the heinous act of abortion and our support for abortion-vulnerable women in more than 20 resolutions over the course of 40 years; and

WHEREAS, beginning with our 1989 Resolution “On Encouraging Laws Regulating Abortion,” we have supported laws in the various state legislatures that have brought us incrementally to the threshold of a moment of great victory in the pro-life cause; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists pray for a historic United States Supreme Court ruling in the coming days in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which may overturn the precedent established by the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade* and reaffirmed in the 1992 ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists stand in prayerful expectation and hopeful anticipation of this ruling from the nation’s highest court, which will enable state legislators to affirm the truth that life begins at conception and that the preborn are worthy of dignity and protection; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists remain committed to our ongoing pro-life efforts and partnerships with state and local governments, pro-life

legislators and like-minded pro-life organizations; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists have been on the forefront of this work beginning with the election of Richard Land to the Christian Life Commission and continuing through the work of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission staff and leadership today; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the messengers to the SBC meeting in Anaheim, California, June 14–15, 2022, encourage all Southern Baptists to pray for the overturning of the disastrous precedent set in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commend the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission’s frontline work on the pro-life cause and urge all Southern Baptists to continue our faithful pro-life advocacy by partnering with local, state and federal governments to enact pro-life and pro-family policies that serve and support vulnerable women, children and families; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we implore Southern Baptists to continue and increase their efforts to serve and support local pregnancy resource centers, pro-life organizations, churches, foster care and adoptive families, doing invaluable and often under-recognized work in the care of women and children at every stage of life; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we commit to stand with and pray for abortion-vulnerable women, to eliminate any perceived need for the horror of abortion and to oppose *Planned Parenthood* and other predatory organizations or institutions who exploit vulnerable women for profit; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we urge the Supreme Court of the United States to overturn the precedent set in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, and urge the state legislatures to enact pro-life policies that uphold the dignity and value of every human life, including both vulnerable women and children.

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

Why villainize each other in the fight against the ultimate villain?

My friend joked on social media about how she had become the person she typically judges on planes — the one who brings the overstuffed bag that takes up an excessive amount of room.

Her recent trip requiring the massive carry-on was likely a rare occurrence, but her witty admission reminded me of how we all can fall prey to criticizing others about situations we don't understand or haven't experienced.

It might be related to families or communities and could involve how decisions are made or why a person thinks, acts or lives in a certain way.

Sometimes it's about things a person can control; sometimes it's not.

And unfortunately we also find it happening as a way to earn someone's trust or support.

Consider the motive

For many, publicly and loudly criticizing others for pretty much anything and everything has become the go-to style of marketing an agenda.

We are watching it play out as negative reports are being spread about the motives of

those seeking to save the lives of unborn children.

The attempt to villainize pro-life advocates instills fear and misunderstanding in those who see abortion differently.

Of course, we know the goal of pro-lifers is to protect and value life — which includes striving to ensure the mother and father are educated, equipped and resourced to give their baby a fighting chance to become the person God intends. It also means valuing all life (read more from Tony Evans on page 4).

But with skewed messaging, the pro-life efforts can be misinterpreted, preventing many from finding their way to the caring arms of those who want to show the parents a life-giving, sustainable path forward.

At the same time, it has been encouraging to watch those leading in the fight for life model humble and respectful communication efforts, especially following the June 24 historic and long-awaited decision by the U.S. Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

As people of faith across the nation, we know it's our time to shine. We are built for missions and ministries and helping the hurting, so expanding our efforts with pregnancy centers, foster care ministries and adop-

tion efforts will be an automatic response (read related stories on pages 4–5, 9 and 11–13).

Still, the work won't be easy. Along with the energy it will take to change the conversation and help those in crisis realize the hope and help available, we also must work beyond the immediate and find ways to decrease the number finding themselves in crisis in the first place.

How do we do this exactly? I don't know, but I'm hopeful we will dig in deeper and commit to finding solutions and making a difference.

Working together will be vital, and that sometimes gets sticky when we have disagreements within our own family of faith.

I can be a bit idealistic at times and while the denominational culture is tense in other areas right now, I'm not ready to give up on Southern Baptists.

I believe the majority of Southern Baptists are kind, loving, grace-filled, thoughtful, concerned, dedicated followers of Christ.

I'm confident the majority of us are passionate about our faith and committed to growing closer to Christ daily.

At the same time, some voices (on all sides) are a bit louder than others and, in some cases,

are taking their passion to a level that borders on an ends-justifies-the-means mentality.

Some also paint those who disagree with them as evil, even those within the faith family.

Focused on the mission

I saw some of this play out during the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Anaheim in June when varying groups shared the heart of their missions, which in all cases boiled down to loving and serving God and winning people to Christ.

Those speaking all indicated a desire to maintain a sound theological foundation. However, the way the various groups want to go about their Christian service differs and has the potential to cause increased division if we allow it.

Is it possible all of us in Southern Baptist life love God, believe the Bible and want to share Christ with those who don't know Him?

Is it possible to work together and remain a unified body even if our individual passions and ministry focuses differ?

The world around us is desperate for hope and help — and we have the answer. Staying focused on the mission is the key.

Your Voice



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

Promoting a 'Whole Life Agenda' after Roe

By Pastor Tony Evans

Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas, Texas

Christians everywhere ought to humbly celebrate [the] decision to overturn the 1973 ruling of *Roe v. Wade*. This decision removes the federal constitutional right to an abortion and returns abortion laws to the states, some of which plan to restrict or ban abortion altogether.

In addition to saving countless lives of our collective humanity, this decision also positions us more fully to intercede for God's mercy on our nation in order to reverse the crime epidemic.

This is so because Scripture states

that when innocent blood is shed, we can expect more innocent blood in the society to be shed through violence and oppression (Ps. 106:36–42; Joel 3:19). Thus a decrease in the number of abortions can lead to a decrease in violent crime.

At the heart of the abortion debate stands the Imago Dei. Attacking the unborn is tantamount to attacking God since all life is created in His image (Gen. 1:26–28), including the life developing in the womb (Ps. 139:13–16).

While celebrating and giving God

praise for His movement in this momentous space in time, we must also not lose sight of the fact that the Imago Dei equally applies to protecting the dignity of people once they are born (James 3:9; Ps. 8:4–5).

Therefore anything that demeans the value of people's lives must be addressed with the same fervor and passion given to preserving the life of the unborn.

All forms of the denial of justice and human dignity, whether racism, classism or degradation of any kind, must be viewed and addressed in terms of and with respect to the image of God.

It is time for God's people to lead the way in promoting a "Whole Life Agenda," from the womb to the tomb, as we simultaneously proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and the gift of forgiveness He offers to all who come to Him for it.

While doing so, may we never forget to show compassion to those who have experienced abortion, as well as kindness to those who believe differently than we do on this issue or any other issue.

Lastly, men, my statement to you remains as it has always been: You are to live responsible lives in your actions and decisions. Men should be held personally and financially accountable for the children they help produce, whether planned or unplanned. But most importantly, women should never have to bear the challenges of an unplanned pregnancy on their own. We, as the body of Christ, should come alongside those in need through spiritual and tangible support.



EVANS

Responding to Roe decision

As Alabama Baptists welcome the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, let us be good stewards of our influence in responding with grace, civility and concerted prayer for all.

What we have been praying and working for has now become a reality and is certainly cause for celebration.

It is also a call for us to continue to be salt and light in a culture that does not understand or care to understand our convictions.

We rejoice knowing the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has finally happened after almost 50 years. We know the lives of unborn children are precious in God's sight.

Let us also realize we have much more work to be done and have entered into a new era of

ministry in the protection and support of preborn life.

Rick Lance
Executive director
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

Regarding the article about preparing for protestors (see article, page 11), I just wanted to thank Baptists for standing firm enough against the world to draw a protest. Most churches seek to be nonconfrontational, but the result is a watered-down gospel and witness. If we are not getting resistance by now in this crazy world, we are not standing for the Word! Praying protection and boldness in Christ.

Lee Mathews
Birmingham, Ala.

Saying unborn lives are not valuable at any stage of gestation is like saying people ... aren't valuable because of their circumstances. The only difference is location.

People can overcome poverty. People can grow into successful adults with less-than-ideal parents. People can overcome trauma. Their lives are still worth living. ...

Abortion doesn't fix foster care systems broken at the core.

Abortion doesn't fix poverty.

Abortion doesn't make society more accepting of people with differing abilities.

Abortion doesn't fix the emotional/physical damage caused by rape/assault/abuse.

Abortion doesn't fix familial relationships with issues.

Abortion doesn't fix a broken, ugly society.

Abortion doesn't fix anything, but it DOES take away the potential of the little life lost to make a difference in this messed-up world.

Jesus loves babies, born and unborn. Jesus loves women. Jesus loves women who have had abortions — forgiveness is not selective at the foot of the cross. Jesus loves women who place their babies for adoption, foster families who sacrifice to step up and parent, and adoptive parents. Jesus loves women who choose to parent in hard situations despite the odds being stacked against them.

Courtney Ball
via Facebook

“How we talk about life in these crucial weeks following the opinion matters.”

LYNN FITCH

Attorney General of Mississippi

The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; Roe and Casey are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives.

From the Supreme Court opinion in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization

With this decision, thousands—maybe millions—of children can potentially be saved and have the chance at life they deserve. Though the church can't bring back the children we've lost since Roe v. Wade, Christians can add to the correction of this injustice.

Greg Laurie
Pastor and author

Before you sleep tonight (June 24), thank the Lord for letting us see this day and the fall of Roe. Many feared it would never happen. We CAN celebrate without gloating, rejoice without arrogance and give thanks without forgetting those we've been called by Christ Jesus to serve.

Pastor John Brock
Highland Baptist Church
Florence, Alabama

So after Roe, what's our job now? It is the same as always. We must be gospel advocates of all that is right and good and true.

We must care for the poor, the hurting and the marginalized. We must speak the truth in love. We

must remind our magistrates of their responsibilities. We must disciple. We must be unflinching in the proclamation of the good news which changes everything. Our intercessions and labors must be unceasing.

George Grant
lignonier.org

There will still be many women who will face an unplanned pregnancy. ... The Church has a significant opportunity to serve and support these women in crisis and their preborn children.

Elizabeth Graham
Vice president of life initiatives
Ethics & Religious Liberty
Commission

From the *Twitterverse*

@HeathLambert

June 24, 2022, is a day which will be remembered in eternity as one of justice, righteousness and faithfulness. It is a day so many of us have desired for so long. Roe v. Wade is overturned.

@pstroybrewer

[June 24] is considered the birthdate of John the Baptist!!!! Roe v. Wade overturned. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:41).

@ERLC

"Even with this victory, our focus does not change. Thousands of pro-life people will continue in the same work we were doing — advocating for the preborn, serving

mothers and families and fostering a true culture of life in our communities." — @LoriBova

@jamesrwelchjr

May God work in the hearts of Americans to stand for life. May God give us courageous hearts to speak with grace and truth. #life

@DanielDickard

If the goal of prayer is to get something from God, you will be disappointed when your circumstances do not change. But when the goal of prayer is to be with God, you will never be disappointed, and in the process you will be changed.

@jdgrear

Some weeks it seems like the news comes faster than our hearts

can keep up. But tragedies and systemic failures do not get the last word. God will wipe every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. In the midst of the hurt, there is hope.

@richardblackaby

It is when the world is the darkest that the Church needs to be shining its brightest.

@OSHawkins

I see some are already asking an important question — Are the big companies promising to pay their employees' abortion expenses and travel also willing to pay the expenses of their employees who are foster parents and for the expenses of those who want to adopt an unwanted child?

Resources for the vulnerable

By Chris Crain

Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

Those who know me understand that I am a proponent of adoption, foster care and other ministries to care for mothers and children.

When I held my oldest daughter in my arms at the courthouse and the judge finalized the adoption, we paused and prayed for our daughter's birth mother. The courage this young teenage birth mother displayed will always be an inspiration to me.

Thankfully each congregation I have served has shared my concern for women who experience unplanned pregnancies. This posture of compassion is true of the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association as well.

The Church's support and compassion radiate from hearts transformed by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

Over the next few weeks the crisis pregnancy and medical center at the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association will begin offering services.

Women and men in challenging circumstances will find help, hope and healing in the name of Jesus Christ. Our sovereign God in His providence planned for the BMBA — in partnership with Sav-A-Life Vestavia — to provide this center at just the right moment in history.

God has provided many other resources for women and men in our BMBA Partner Center: WorkFaith Birmingham; Lifeline; Decisions, Choices and Options; Pathways; and Awaken ministries.

We ask you to pray for women, men and children visiting the center.

We desire that each person who enters the door finds the love of Jesus Christ and a connection to essential resources.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

3 stories you should know



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

The theme for the 2023 SBC Pastors Conference is “Character Matters in Ministry: Beatitudes of a Pastor,” based on Matthew 5, according to Daniel Dickard, president of the 2023 event set for June 11–12 in New Orleans. Dickard also named a planning team, which includes Mac Brunson, pastor of Valleydale Church in Birmingham, and announced initial efforts to establish governing documents and bylaws for the conference. Read more at tabonline.org/sbcpc-23.

Several killed in US during holiday week

A rash of shootings has left several communities in shock.

In Alabama, Bibb County Sheriff’s Deputy Brad Johnson, 32, died June 30 after he was shot while pursuing a stolen vehicle the previous day.

In Kentucky, three police officers were killed and several others wounded while serving a warrant at a private home in Allen, a community of 166 people, on June 30.

In Illinois, a gunman killed seven and wounded dozens more who had gathered for a July Fourth parade in Highland Park, a suburb of Chicago.

Former police chaplain Ric Worshill, missions manager for Lake Baptist Association serving Highland Park, said “Something like this ... destroys most of the people who were there. Even if they didn’t see the incident ... it can make someone devastated for life.” (BP, TAB)

Idaho students can share views for now

A federal judge on June 30 temporarily blocked a University of Idaho policy that censored three Christian students who had expressed opposition to same-sex “marriage” on religious grounds.

Students Peter Perlot, Mark Miller and Ryan Alexander are members of the Christian Legal Society Chapter of the university. The group holds traditional views on the definition of marriage and sexual ethics.

The university’s policy barred them from talking with another student about their views.

Chief U.S. District Judge David C. Nye issued a preliminary injunction against the enforcement of the university’s policy. Nye said university officials targeted the plaintiffs over their religious speech, noting others on campus were free to express support of same-sex “marriage.” (TAB)

Persecuted church

Two Christian leaders slain in India after refusing to stop praying

NEW DELHI, India — Radical Hindus are suspected in the brutal murders of two Christians in India.

The bodies of a man and his nephew were discovered on a roadside June 10. They had been stabbed multiple times and sustained other injuries as well, human rights group International Christian Concern reported.

Local Christians believe the two men were killed because of their faith. Sources told ICC they had accepted Jesus as Savior in February 2020. The men not only attended a small church in their village but also led worship services when the pastor was absent.

About three months ago some community members threatened the men and the congrega-

tion and insisted they stop praying. The men chose to exercise their faith, sources said.

ICC reports that targeting of Christians in India is occurring with greater frequency. The country is No. 10 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Youth minister dies after extremist attack at church in Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda — A youth minister died of injuries sustained in an attack on a church in Uganda by Muslim extremists.

Emmanuel Mugabi, 32, succumbed to a blood clot from head injuries six days after the May 20 attack on Bukomero Miracle Center Church in Kiboga District, Morning Star News reported. Mugabi suffered other injuries, including a blow to the head from an ax.

A Muslim mob attacked the church after mem-

bers held an evangelistic event and distributed Bibles in a Muslim area. The assailants also burned the church building. Extremists later attacked the pastor and associate pastor as they returned from



Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

Mugabi’s funeral May 29, Morning Star News said.

Approximately 12% of Uganda’s population is Muslim. The constitution and laws allow for freedom of religion,

including converting from one faith to another. However, Christian churches increasingly have received threats of violence, and some Christian converts have been attacked, killed or excommunicated by Muslim family members, according to World Atlas.

NEWS

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Albert George “Bro. Al” Dykeman**, 90, of Jackson, died June 22. A New York native, Dykeman was a radar instructor at Keesler Air Force base in Biloxi, Mississippi, during the Korean War. He left the military to answer a call to ministry. He held degrees from Howard Payne University and New Orleans Seminary.



DYKEMAN

He was a pastor for 62 years at churches in Alabama, Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

While serving as pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church, Opelika, he taught in the Samford University extension program. He retired from full-time ministry in October 2017 from West Bend Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife, Jeraline Chance; daughter, Gina Dykeman; 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

▶ **Kevin O’Connor** is the new pastor of **Oak Grove Baptist Church, Frisco City**. He previously served as pastor/founder of Agape’ Fellowship Church, Coffeyville, Kansas. He has been in the ministry since 1999 and has served as youth pastor, interim pastor and pastor. He holds a theology degree from Liberty University. He also has done itinerant preaching and pulpit supply work in Kansas.



O’CONNOR

He and his wife, Carmen, have four children.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Drew Sprayberry** is the new minister of students, recreation and missions of **Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove**. He previously served students at Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, and has held other ministry positions in Calhoun and Cleburne counties. He is a graduate of Jacksonville State University and is currently enrolled in the master of divinity program at New Orleans Seminary.



SPRAYBERRY

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Jerry Starling** retired as pastor of **Angel Grove Baptist Church, Jacksonville**.

He has been in ministry 51 years, 49 of those years as a senior pastor at six churches, all in Alabama. A native of Dothan, Starling felt called to ministry at age 23. He pursued studies

at what is now Baptist College of Florida, Graceville, before graduating from what is now University of Mobile. He received a master’s degree from New Orleans Seminary.

He was pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford, for 23 years until his first retirement. Angel Grove Baptist then called him as interim pastor and later asked him to serve as pastor. Thinking back over his years of ministry, Starling said, “It was possible only by the grace of God. It was a great experience.”

He and his wife, Earlene, have three adult children; seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

▶ Enterprise Military Support Group meets Tuesdays, 7 p.m., at **Church on Boll Weevil Circle**, Enterprise. Call 334-894-6411 for more information.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Benjamin “Ben” S. Stubblefield** is the new pastor of **Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile**. A native of Mobile, Stubblefield holds a bachelor’s degree in English and finance from Auburn University and a master of divinity and doctor of philosophy in New Testament theology from Southern Seminary, where he currently serves as a trustee.



STUBBLEFIELD

He served nine years as pastor of First Baptist Church Jackson.

Prior to that, he was pastor of New Washington Christian Church in Indiana for five years while completing his seminary degrees.



STARLING

Stubblefield has served as professor of New Testament for the Center for Christian Calling at University of Mobile and an adjunct faculty member for other Baptist institutions.

He has been active in his community of Jackson, where the mayor recently declared June 5 as Ben Stubblefield Day.

He also has served in several roles with Clarke County Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist State Convention on the Committee on Committees.

He and his wife, Carrie, have three children.

SALEM-TROY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Jason Howell** is the new pastor for **Shady Grove Baptist Church, Brundidge**. Previously he was the youth pastor/associate pastor for Ariton Baptist Church. He also served as youth pastor of Henderson Baptist Church, Goshen; Mexia Baptist Church; and First Baptist Church Monroeville.



HOWELL

He and his wife, Jamie, have one child.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Salem Macon Baptist Church, Notasulga**, will celebrate its homecoming July 17. Paid In Full, a trio from Mississippi, will sing from 10 until 11 a.m., followed by preaching by Phillip Garrett, a former pastor of the church. A covered dish meal will follow.

WINSTON ASSOCIATION

▶ **New Prospect Baptist Church, Haleyville**, will host its 26th annual revival celebration July 24–26. Sunday services are at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. with Monday–Tuesday evening services at 7 p.m. Bob Pitman from Muscle Shoals will be the evangelist. New Prospect’s pastor is Ron Horton.

Samford’s Pittman, Brock retire

Samford University’s W. Randall “Randy” Pittman (left with his wife, Daina) and Harry B. “Buck” Brock III (below with his wife, Nancy, and a grandson) retired June 30. Pittman, who is a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, was vice president of university advancement, while Brock, a member of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, was vice president for business and financial affairs. Both men previously served on Samford’s board of trustees. They were recognized by the university in June events on campus.



Photo courtesy of Samford University



Photo courtesy of Samford University

6 revealing questions to ask your congregation

By Mark MacDonald

Church Branding Strategist and Consultant

Church congregations are everchanging, which presents many challenges for pastors and other leaders.

But leaders can learn a lot about their local ministry and the needs, concerns and interests of members simply by asking questions.

Here are six revealing questions to ask your congregation regularly:

1. What brought you here originally? Establish a baseline of why people chose your church. Get feedback from several people or groups to better understand the foundation of what's bringing people in from the community. Master those things and you'll probably see growth.

2. What's keeping you here? This allows you to understand what's creating the "sticky" quality of your ministry. Make sure you continue to do these things or improve on them.

3. What are we known for in the community? Who better to ask than church members from your community? This gives an idea of the church's perception and allows you to understand what needs to be corrected or communicated differently to reinforce who you really are.

4. Do you know why someone is leaving? This will reveal what may be not working well. Allow church members to reply anonymously in order to expose more truth. Exit interviews with parting members also

can help with this eye-opening data.

5. Are there any barriers to visiting us or getting connected? Exposing barriers (from the members' vantage point) is the first step in eliminating them. It may be difficult for a member to answer this particular question, so listen for peoples' difficulties in discovering next steps, finding information on your website, signage issues, etc.

6. If you could improve one thing, what would it be? This empowers ministry improvement. It shouldn't be asked to stir up trouble or gossip, so request constructive solutions or ways to improve incrementally. They'll feel like you want their opinion and may be more open to helping implement changes.

Be strategic

There are at least two ways to be strategic in asking questions:

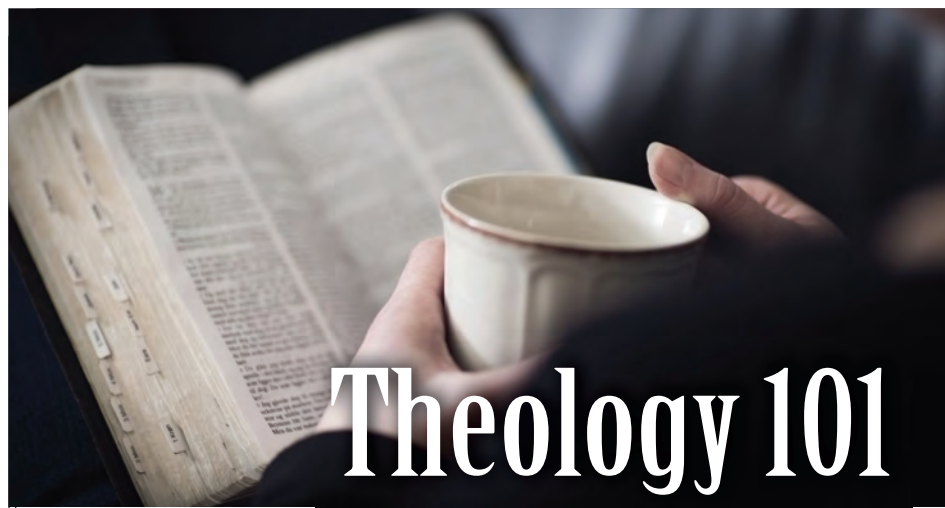
► **Focus groups:** Set up homogeneous groups based on demographics or ministry areas. Create groups of 6–10 and have a caring person lead them. You'll get even better feedback if the leader is a consultant who understands focus groups and the church.

► **Informal conversations:** Each time a church leader has the opportunity to connect with a member, consider it an informal focus group. Help staff understand the importance of these questions and create a mechanism to collect feedback.



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By listening to church members and processing their answers to six revealing questions, pastors and leaders gain a deeper understanding of local ministry needs, says Mark MacDonald, founder of BeKnownforSomething.com.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Spiritual Blessings

Our Great Salvation

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

The Alabama Baptist

In recent installments of Theology 101, we have considered salvation to include the incoming of Christ into our hearts, His consequent indwelling in our lives and the resultant witness made by His outworking.

Given these irreplaceable truths, Hebrews 2:3 raises an eternally important question when it asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

This question takes on added significance when we ponder the greatness of the salvation which God provided upon sending His Son into the world to make this salvation possible.

That greatness lies in the fact that salvation is not only eternal, but also has remarkable significance for life here and now.

Resurrection

One aspect of salvation's greatness is that it is spiritually a resurrection from the dead, as we see in Ephesians 2:1: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Believers are made alive to fellowship with God here and now, as well as for the prospect of eternity with Him and all His redeemed people.

Ephesians 2:2 tells us this great salvation is a release from disobedience. Satan is termed "the prince of the power of the air." The oft-recited Model Prayer contains the petition, "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13).

Our great salvation makes possible such deliverance. Jesus declared concerning some He encountered, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44). Thus, Galatians 5:1 implores, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free."

Rescue

Ephesians 2:3 tells us our great salvation is also a rescue from condemnation. Before coming to Christ, we humans are "children of wrath" given over to "the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

Without the salvation Christ provides, we humans are living in double jeopardy — over what we have done (the bad) and what we have not done (the good).

We have all sinned in thought, word and action, and we have not loved God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind (Matt. 22:37).

In summary, three major aspects of our great salvation are a spiritual resurrection from death, a spiritual release from disobedience and a spiritual rescue from eternal condemnation.

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.



‘THAT SAFE PLACE’

Pregnancy resource centers prepare for ‘new era’ following Dobbs decision

Staff and volunteers at pro-life pregnancy resource centers across the U.S. expect to serve more clients following the Supreme Court’s historic decision overturning federal protections for abortion rights in the U.S.

Lisa Hogan, executive director of Sav-A-Life Vestavia (which serves the Birmingham area with three partner locations), said she is “thrilled” with the ruling issued June 24 in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, adding the decision emphasizes the importance of the work Sav-A-Life and other similar centers do each day.

‘Business as usual’

“We just want to be that safe place for anyone who is in a situation that seems untenable, so the ruling doesn’t change anything we do,” Hogan said. “In fact, we expect to see some increase in our numbers as a result of the Supreme Court decision. We’re continuing business as usual and are grateful to do what we do.”

Elizabeth Graham, vice president of life initiatives for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, echoed those thoughts.

“We celebrate that thousands of lives will now be saved,” Graham said in a statement. “Yet while we are grateful for any law or ruling that protects and defends life, the ultimate goal is for every person, born and preborn, to be protected and seen with inherent dignity and value.”

On June 24 the Supreme Court ruled in a 6–3 vote for the state of Mississippi in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, upholding the state’s ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. The



Photo courtesy of Sav-A-Life Fultondale

Volunteers at Sav-A-Life in Fultondale bundle diapers for expectant mothers. The location in North Jefferson County is part of a trio of partnership pregnancy resource centers serving the Birmingham area. The other two are in Vestavia and Crestwood.

Dobbs decision, in which five of the justices voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, returns the power to regulate abortion policy back to the states.

“Today marks a new era in American history — and a great day for the American people,” said Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch in a statement. “This decision is a victory not only for women and children, but for the court itself.

“Now, our work to empower women and promote life truly begins. The court has let loose its hold on abortion policymaking and given it back to the people.”

Though *Dobbs v. Jackson* dealt with a ban on abortions after 15 weeks of

pregnancy, the state of Mississippi, as well as several pro-life organizations, including ERLC, urged the high court not only to uphold the 15-week prohibition contested in the case, but to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v.*

The United States reportedly is one of a handful of countries, including China and North Korea, that permits elective abortions after 20 weeks’ gestation.

State laws in effect

As a result of the ruling, more than 20 states will prohibit or restrict abortions according to The Guttmacher Institute, a research and policy organization affiliated with the abortion-rights movement.

Thirteen states have so-called “trigger” laws that automatically take effect now that *Roe* is overturned: Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

Nine states have pre-*Roe* abortion bans still on the books: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin. Some states, including Alabama, have both pre- and post-*Roe* laws banning abortion (see story, page 13).

In addition to the states with bans in place, Guttmacher classifies four states — Florida, Indiana, Nebraska and Montana — as likely to ban abortion based on their history and political atmosphere. (TAB Media)

Casey opinion that affirmed the *Roe* decision.

Under the *Roe/Casey* framework, the United States had one of the most permissive abortion policies in the world. A 2021 study by the pro-life Charlotte Lozier Institute said, “47 of 50 European countries ... either do not allow elective abortion (8) or limit elective abortion to 15 weeks or earlier (39).”

“We’re ... grateful to do what we do. ... We just want to be that safe place for anyone who is in a situation that seems untenable.”

**Lisa Hogan
executive director
Sav-A-Life Vestavia**

5 ways you can pray

1. Pray that clients, advocates and staff of pregnancy resource centers will be protected from potential backlash or violence that may occur.

2. Pray for advocates and staff at pregnancy resource centers to not be consumed by a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7).

3. Pray for clarity of mind for advocates as they meet with clients and share compassionate help, hope and love.

4. Pray for transformed lives for clients seeking abortion, that they will be pointed to truth and hope by those surrounding them.

5. Pray for the centers that will be in the cross hairs of those who launch violent attacks in the coming days and for leaders as they implement best practices to keep clients, volunteers and staff safe in the case of backlash. (Lisa Hogan)



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HIGHLIGHTS

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Conversation Outposts Meet with practitioners and experts in their field of ministry for conversations and connections around your specific questions as well as personal and professional ministry opportunities.



How to handle demonstrations at your church

Protests occur at worship centers across the country for a number of reasons. Hate groups, social activist organizations and others spread their message by staging events that provoke confrontation and attract media attention.

If demonstrators responding to the Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* were to appear on your doorstep this Sunday, would you know what to do?

Make it a nonevent

Your ultimate goal should be to give as little attention to demonstrators as possible.

▶ **Avoid counter protests.** Like a bellows, attention to demonstrators can fan hot coals into a full-blown fire.

▶ **Don't respond to protesters.** Reduce the chances of a protest or demonstration growing into something more destructive.

▶ **Protect your people.** It's also important not to ignore a demonstration. Concern for the safety and security of those attending your church requires you to

deal with demonstrators appropriately.

Three steps

The following three action steps may help your ministry strike the proper balance of minimizing the protest's effectiveness while also monitoring a potential threat.

Step 1: Call the police. This is the single most effective step your ministry can take to avert problems.

▶ **Use their expertise.** Law enforcement agencies are trained in tactics and strategies designed to cool hot situations, including protests, demonstrations and riots.

▶ **Give them time to prepare.** Get the police involved ahead of time if you can. With enough advance notice, local law enforcement can contact demonstration leaders beforehand to establish ground rules for the event. For example, police can require protesters to stay off church property or to demonstrate in a place where they won't interfere with people or traffic.



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▶ **Minimize conflict.** Only law enforcement officers possess the legal authority to deal with the most dangerous elements of a disruptive group.

Laws in every state allow officers to arrest demonstrators for even the slightest assault on an officer, effectively removing potentially dangerous individuals from the demonstration. Allowing the police to deal with protesters outside your ministry allows you to focus on the people inside your ministry.

Step 2: Craft your message. After giving local law enforcement any informa-

tion you have about a pending demonstration, the next step is to craft the message that your church wants to communicate before, during and after this event. Often media will cover a church protest.

▶ **Express your mission.** The message should convey your church's identity and avoid engaging in a debate with the demonstrators.

It may also describe briefly what steps the church is taking to ensure the safety of its members and guests.

▶ **Maintain your focus.** It's important to communicate your own message rather than making comments about the demonstration or its organizers. Focusing comments on your ministry's goals can help deflate protesters' attempts to smear your reputation and decrease their opportunity to sue you for defamation. Even if you ultimately win a defamation suit, the media attention and cost of the legal proceedings could be far more damaging to the church than the demonstration itself.

Step 3: Coach the congregation. To prepare your church to be united in the face of protests, you'll need to instruct members how to respond appropriately.

▶ **Train staff and volunteers.** Explain their specific roles and the procedures to follow in the event of a demonstration.

▶ **Target key people.**

Parking lot attendants and security team members are the people most likely to have direct contact with demonstrators, so their training is critical. Security team members, ushers and greeters are those most likely to encounter disruptive individuals who make their way into your building, so they need to be equipped to handle this kind of disturbance, as well.

▶ **Inform the general membership.** It's also important to coach the congregation as a whole. In a brief statement, you'll want to remind members and regular guests of the church's core identity, reassure them that church leaders are providing for their safety and ask them to avoid contact with demonstrators.

Encourage them to follow additional instructions from police or security team members.

Be ready to respond

When picketers line the street across from your church, it can be difficult to understand how the same set of laws that give you freedom to worship also protect those who oppose your beliefs.

But they do, and courts have consistently protected the right of American citizens to express their opinion publicly even if the message is unpopular or offensive.

By understanding the pitfalls of confronting protesters, your ministry can be better equipped to respond when people with picket signs show up at your door. By refusing to give the demonstration air time, you can smother a potential fire and help turn a planned demonstration into a non-event.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by Brotherhood Mutual.

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Photo courtesy of Sara Bible

Sara Bible speaks at a Sanctity of Life service held earlier this year at First Baptist Church Opelika. She often speaks to groups, telling her story of life and how her birth mother chose adoption.

'I am here because my birth mother said yes to me'

By Denise George
The Alabama Baptist

Among those celebrating the Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* is an Alabama woman whose birth mother chose life.

"I am living proof that life, no matter the conception, is created in the image of God and is worthy," said Alabama native Sara Bible.

Sara, a graduate of Judson College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, is the church and pastoral ministry assistant at First Baptist Church Demopolis. She often speaks to groups telling her story of life.

Sara was conceived when her birth mother, a freshman in college, was raped by two unknown men.

Her mother hid her pregnancy for seven months before sharing it with her family or seeking medical care.

'Given life'

"I am here," Sara said, "because my birth mother said yes to me when I

could not speak for myself. And I was given life in a world that says rape equals abortion."

'Created on purpose'

She believes "every baby, no matter the conception or in utero conditions, was created on purpose by our Creator and for a purpose of His great design."

Through Birmingham-based Lifeline Children's Services, Sara's birth mother facilitated the adoption of her newborn

baby girl. Sara's "forever family" provided her a stable, Christ-loving home.

"I can't help but stand in not only gratitude for [my birth mother] but also [in] admiration

of her resolve and grit," Sara said.

Sara speaks often to pro-life groups, each time expressing her gratitude to her birth mother.

"I am so honored every time the Lord gives me the opportunity to share my story — His story — of redemption," she said. "I truly believe adoption is a picture of the gospel."

For more on the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, visit tabonline.org/roe-v-wade.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Providence Baptist Church, Town Creek, Alabama, is in search of a senior pastor. Please send resumés to: jcrosslin89@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Ryans Creek Baptist Church seeks God's man to be our pastor. The church is located in Brushy Pond near Smith Lake. Baptist pastors interested may mail your resumé to the church at 24849 County Road 222, Bremen, AL 35033, or email to: RCBC35033@gmail.com. ATTN: Search Committee.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church Irvington, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: DARBREL59@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumés to: stamar171526@gmail.com or sonyahumber@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Shelby (Shelby, Alabama) is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: fbc141891@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumés to: padenbaptist-church@yahoo.com or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35903.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR — WORSHIP & EDUCATION

Linden Baptist Church is now accepting resumés for the position of associate pastor. This is a full-time position. The primary focuses of this position will be worship leadership and education, though there will be other responsibilities. For a complete job description and to apply online, visit lindenbaptist.org and click the "Assoc. Pastor Application" button. To apply by mail, send resumé and cover letter to: P.O. Box 480776, Linden, AL 36748. Applications will be received until July 15.

YOUTH/EDUCATION MINISTER

Taylorville Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of youth/education. An ordained minister with a college degree preferred and at least three years of ministry experience required.

A nice parsonage is included in the pay package. Please email your resumé and cover letter to: rpate@taylorvillebaptist.org. Resumés will be accepted until July 31.

FAMILY PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Atmore, Alabama, is seeking a full-time family pastor. He will serve as "second-chair" to the pastor with oversight of volunteers within age-group and small-group ministries, having direct responsibility over student ministry. Resumés may be submitted to: keving@fbcatmore.org.

YOUTH PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Hokes Bluff is seeking a godly, dynamic part-time youth pastor. Interested applicants should send resumés to: secretary@fbchb.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Gibson Baptist Association (Gibson County in NW Tennessee) is prayerfully seeking a director of missions (DOM) to lead our local Baptist association in missions and evangelism. We desire a conservative man called by God with at least 10 years ministry and/or missions experience. Please send resumés and inquiries to: gbaresumes@gmail.com. All resumés must be submitted no later than August 31. Any resumés received after the cutoff date may not be considered. To find further information about the Gibson Baptist Association, go to www.gbalife.org.

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PODCAST

STORIES SEASON 6: MUD BOGGER STORY

Terry Billings used to spend his life mud racing in his old drinking truck, until one day everything turned on a dime — in Walmart. Now he and his truck have both had a transformation — and have found a very different purpose. This season, the "Stories" podcast shares his story. TAB's Grace Thornton writes and produces the shows. Listen at tabonline.org/stories or wherever you listen to podcasts.

MINISTRIES

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition, The Alabama Baptist also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscribers' email. The digital edition comes in PDF form as well as part of an app and is included with all subscriptions. To update your email address, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

TAB HIGHLIGHTS

TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered every Monday–Wednesday–Friday with the day's top stories from the world of faith-based news. The complimentary service is managed by the TAB Media team. To sign up, email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Senators seek to silence pro-life speech

Even before the Supreme Court released its decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, legislators began efforts to limit the pro-life message of pregnancy resource centers.

On June 23, Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey, joined by Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and others, introduced the Stop Anti-Abortion Disinformation Act.

The bill directs the Federal Trade Commission to issue rules prohibiting a “person from advertising with the use of misleading statements related to the provision of abortion services.” It also gives the FTC power to issue hefty fines and sue pregnancy resource centers — also known as crisis pregnancy centers — in court.

A similar effort is underway in the House of Representatives.

Warren said crisis pregnancy centers “mislead women about reproductive health care” and engage in “deceptive practices.”

Defending the work

Advocates for PRCs immediately took to social media to defend the help they provide to pregnant women.

“Our center helps women find jobs, child care, has paid rent and given vehicles to women in need,” tweeted one.

“The pregnancy care center in our town is a beacon of light,” tweeted another.

“Crisis pregnancy centers provide free care for women, food, clothes and whatever help is needed for their families,” another tweeted. “They do that so that women don’t feel forced by circumstances to abort a baby they would otherwise keep. Don’t attack them. They are integral to many communities.”

By most estimates, there are at least three PRCs in the U.S. for every one abortion clinic. (TAB Media)

Implemented

Federal judge lifts injunction, Alabama abortion ban in effect

By Michael Foust
The Alabama Baptist

Most abortions are now illegal in Alabama after a federal judge lifted the injunction preventing a 2019 state law from going into effect.

U.S. District Court Judge Myron Thompson issued the order June 24 in response to a request from Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall. Thompson said the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which returned the power to regulate abortion back to individual states, removed the legal underpinning for the injunction.

The Human Life Protection Act, signed by Gov. Kay Ivey in May 2019, prohibits nearly all abortions and defines an “unborn child in utero at any stage of development” as a human being, regardless of viability. In 2018 a majority of Alabama voters approved a constitutional amendment affirming support for “the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children.”

The 2019 law makes no exceptions for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest but does include exceptions for medical emergencies, ectopic pregnancies or other situations where the mother’s life is in danger and in cases where the unborn child has a “lethal anomaly,” defined as a condition from which the unborn child would die after birth or shortly thereafter or be stillborn.

The law also provides an exception in the event a physician with at least three years of experience “documents that the woman has a diagnosed serious mental illness” and “will engage in conduct that could result in her death or the death of her unborn child.”

Doctors who violate the law could face a Class A felony and up



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to 99 years in prison for violating the law.

Eric Johnston, president of the Southeast Law Institute, helped write the bill.

Speaking June 24 on Priority Talk, a radio program hosted by Greg Davis, president of Alabama Citizens Action Program, Johnston noted that Marshall told abortion clinics they must stop performing abortions following the *Dobbs* decision.

The lifting of the injunction followed soon after.

The law’s criminal penalties will prohibit doctors from trying to violate it, Johnston said.

“The [abortion clinic] in Tuscaloosa ... they said they quit doing them,” Johnston said of West Alabama Women’s Center in Tuscaloosa. “They didn’t want to take a chance of going to prison.

“Because it’s a Class A felony to violate [the law].”

The criminal penalties make the law a good deterrent, Johnston said.

“That could end up being life in prison,” he said.

“You’re not going to have doctors

randomly making these decisions and thinking, ‘I can get away with it.’ ... Life in prison is not worth doing a \$500 back-alley abortion.”

The Human Life Protection Act does not impact miscarriages or in vitro fertilization, Johnston said.

It also does not outlaw the Plan B morning-after pill, he said, although it does prohibit the abortion pill (formerly known as RU-486).

“It (medication abortion) would be illegal,” he said. “The problem is enforcement.”

Johnston noted the law does not hold the pregnant woman criminally responsible for an abortion. He added he is personally opposed to charging the woman.

“Our policy since 1990 ... is that we don’t prosecute the woman,” he said of the Southeast Law Institute. “She’s got enough problems as it is. We want to provide service and assistance to her.”

Show your support

Johnston urged the pro-life community to increase their support for women facing crisis pregnancies.

“We want to reach out in every kind of way we possibly can — legislatively through nongovernmental organizations, crisis pregnancy centers, whatever — to help women and provide resources to them. We owe it to them.”

“We want to reach out in every kind of way we possibly can ... to help women.”

**Eric Johnston
president, Southeast
Law Institute**

‘I rejoice in my suffering’

Cobb says valleys of illness provide opportunities to share Christ, grow in faith

(continued from page 1)

doing chest physical therapy and other airway clearance therapies, including hours hooked up to a chest vest, inhaling antibiotics and nebulizing medications.

When he’s sick, it’s even more limiting.

About 20 years ago, Cobb was stuck in a sick-and-well pattern, and overall he was struggling. At the same time his wife, Misty, started getting serious about her faith.

‘Typical experience’

“We had a typical college experience of ‘we say we’re Christians, and we go to church some,’ but it was very much punching the clock on Sunday mornings,” Cobb recalled. “There was no life in it and no hunger to glorify God through Christ.”

When the “typical problems a married couple would have” hit home, they hit hard, he said. But all of a sudden his wife began to change. Misty committed her life to Christ in 2002, and everything about her changed for the better, he recalled.

But everything about him stayed the same — or got worse, he admitted.

“My immune system would get overwhelmed. I’d get super sick and end up at the hospital, and back then (with CF) you needed to go in for nearly two weeks.”

He also began having paralyzing anxiety and panic attacks.

“I became a diabetic from CF because it scars your pancreas,” Cobb said. “I was pumped full of insulin so my body felt weird and was in a racing mode, which made the panic attacks worse.”

Their marital problems got worse, too. But during all of it, Cobb said



Photo by Carrie Brown McWhorter/The Alabama Baptist
Misty and David Cobb reminiscence with David's parents, Ann and Richard Cobb, about David's childhood and how they balanced his cystic fibrosis-related health needs with their desire to allow him to live as normal a life as possible.

his wife gave him space and prayed for him.

“She had continued to grow, and I had continued a downward spiral,” he lamented.

Nearly a year later God began to work on his heart. He read an evangelistic tract with the gospel message, and around the same time he heard someone mention a thorn one of Jesus’ followers had, so he looked it up.

“Of course it was Paul,” Cobb said. “I began to see CF as my thorn. And I read what Paul said about that, that he rejoiced in the thorn.”

From then on, “every time I touched the Bible and read the words, the panic attacks stopped,” Cobb recalled. “Can you imagine if you’d been suffering from this for years and instantly, like a light switch, it stopped? I remember cry-

ing out in my bathroom, ‘Help me and save me.’

“Every conversion to Christ is always radical, but for me it was just, ‘I’m going all in.’”

From that point on, God began to grow his faith. It became an anchor as his health declined and he had to quit his job in IT about eight years ago. He said he probably would have died if a new DNA modulator therapy hadn’t come out around that time.

“My health is stable now,” Cobb said.

Being anchored

His faith also anchored him and his wife over the years as they walked through infertility and the loss of four babies. They now rejoice in the gift of three children —

Married in 2001, David and Misty Cobb faced a host of challenges, including David’s health issues. Their lives changed when Misty got serious about her faith in 2002, and David soon committed his life to Christ too.

Nathan, Charis and Jonas.

Cobb said he is grateful “God took Misty and me on the journey to become Christians and then the journey toward becoming parents. ... Had we done that in the reverse order, our marriage wouldn’t have made it. It would’ve been too hard.”

‘For His glory’

The valleys he’s walked through and the reality of his CF “thorn” have given Cobb many opportunities to share his faith, including his work with CF-related organizations. As he grew, it “really began to sink in with me that CF is not a curse, it’s not punishment — it’s something God is going to use for His glory.”

The fact that his illness was the very thing that opened him up to faith in Jesus has also changed his perspective on suffering.

“That is a different way to think — to think that the thing I hated and feared is the thing He used to bring me to faith,” Cobb said. “For years it felt like I had done something wrong or my family had done something wrong, but in reality God was giving me the opportunity to know Him through suffering. And so I rejoice in my suffering.”



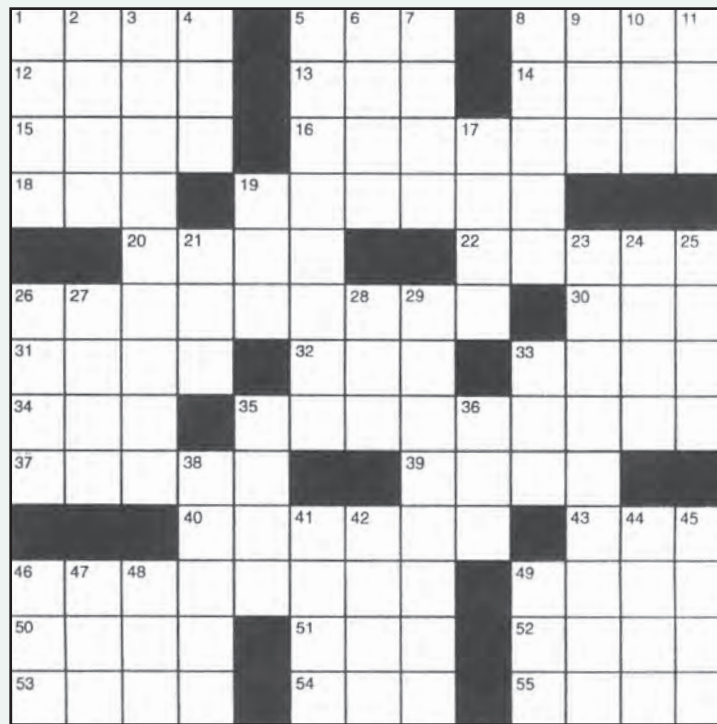
Photo courtesy of Misty Cobb

By some estimates, 95% of babies diagnosed in utero with cystic fibrosis are aborted. Hear more about the Cobb family’s story of choosing life and David’s encouragement to parents at tabonline.org/cobb.

CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. And now abideth faith, ____, charity. (1 Cor. 13:13)
5. He is ____ the God of the dead. (Mark 12:27)
8. Jesus attended a wedding here.
12. So be it.
13. Physician's group. (abbr.)
14. And He took one of his _____. (Gen. 2:21)
15. Behold, I ____ you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. (Matt. 10:16)
16. The wife of Moses.
18. High explosive. (for short)
19. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the _____. (Gen. 1:2)
20. Pitcher.
22. Bone. (prefix)
26. He came to Jesus by night.
30. The sixth captain ... was _____. (1 Chron. 27:9)
31. Having their conscience seared with a hot _____. (1 Tim. 4:2)
32. ____ Pan Alley.
33. Send out.
34. ____ Cruces, New Mexico.
35. Religious sect of Jesus' day.
37. ____ ye in at the strait gate. (Matt. 7:13)
39. Praise Him for His mighty _____. (Ps. 150:2)
40. Experience again.
43. Female sibling. (for short)
46. It is your Father's good ____ to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)



By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

49. For if we believe that Jesus died and ____ again. (1 Thess. 4:14)
 50. Belonging to Adam's wife.
 51. Feel ill.
 52. Prophetic sign.
 53. Floor covering.
 54. Uncle Sam's sailing vessel. (abbr.)
 55. Undesirable plant.
- ## DOWN
1. Thou ____ the words of eternal life. (John 6:68)
 2. Sign.
 3. The apostles received the Holy Ghost on this day.
 4. For Christ is the ____ of the law. (Rom. 10:4)
 5. Jesus' hometown.
 6. Leave out.
 7. Record.
 8. For the preaching of the ____ is to them that perish foolishness. (1 Cor. 1:18)
 9. Foxes have holes, and birds of the ____ have nests. (Luke 9:58)
 10. National Basketball Association.
 11. Common tree.
 17. Aces. (for short)
 19. Marry.
 21. Was victorious.
 23. In the latter ____ shall depart from the faith. (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 words)
 24. A Great Lake.
 25. Cereal grass. (pl.)
 26. Egyptian river.
 27. It borders Iraq.
 28. Soldier unaccounted for.
 29. Solves a mystery.
 33. Founded. (abbr.)
 35. Company overseer. (abbr.)
 36. He casteth forth His ____ like morsels. (Ps. 147:17)
 38. Expunge.
 41. Hawaiian feast.
 42. Eye part.
 44. ____ men as trees, walking. (Mark 8:24)
 45. Here I am; ____ me. (Isa. 6:8)
 46. House cat.
 47. 56. (Roman numeral)
 48. Scaleless fish.
 49. Propel a boat manually.

All Bible verses are from KJV unless otherwise specified.

Supreme Court sides with football coach

By Carrie B. McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

In a decision hailed by many as a victory for religious freedom, the Supreme Court on June 27 ruled in favor of a Washington state high school football coach who resigned his job after school officials demanded he stop praying on the field after games.

The court ruled 6-3 in favor of Joe Kennedy, an 18-year Marine veteran and assistant coach for the Bremerton High School varsity football team, who for years prayed on the 50-yard line at the end of games.

As students began to join him, the school district grew concerned Kennedy's prayers would be seen as a violation of students' religious freedom rights.

Kennedy stopped leading students in prayer on the field and in the locker room, but continued to pray on the field himself. When Kennedy and the school could not agree on the coach's right to do so, Kennedy voluntarily resigned his position but challenged the school's policy.

Religious expression

Writing for the majority, Justice Neil Gorsuch said, "Respect for religious expressions is indispensable to life.

"Here, a government entity sought to punish an individual for engaging in a personal religious observance, based on a mistaken view that it has a duty to suppress religious observances even as it allows comparable secular speech.

"The Constitution neither mandates nor tolerates that kind of discrimination," Gorsuch wrote.

'Deeply personal'

Brent Leatherwood, acting president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the decision is a religious expression victory.

"As any Christian knows, our faith is deeply personal and rightly shapes every aspect of our lives," Leatherwood said in a statement. "We live out our faith in any number of ways, both privately and publicly.

"[The] case centered on the latter, and the Supreme Court rightly determined that an individual employed by a school does not forfeit his or her constitutional right to free expression simply by entering 'the schoolhouse gate' or, as it were in this case, the field of play.

"We, and many others, have long held that religious liberty is our nation's first freedom and that it bolsters and strengthens other foundational rights."



Photo courtesy of First Liberty Institute

Joe Kennedy, former football coach at Bremerton High School, prays on the field. He won his legal challenge to a demand by school officials to stop praying at the 50-yard line.

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Centenarian celebrates 75 years of supporting missions

By Sherry Kughn
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Anne Powers was an impressionable young mother of a small daughter when she and her husband, Orbie, returned home after his World War II military service. Back in Anniston, Powers met a doctor's wife at the church she attended, Parker Memorial Baptist Church, and her eyes were opened to a new perspective on missions that has lasted 75 years.

"Flora Woodruff was a wonderful person," said Powers who on June 15 turned 100 years old. "She was on fire to help missionaries through Woman's Missionary Union. I got interested through her."

Fiery torch

That fiery torch passed to Powers who has carried it forward many decades after Woodruff's passing. Lottie Moon, an early missionary to China, and Annie Armstrong, one of the founders of WMU, became well known in Powers' household.

Powers, who was born in 1922, often hosted in her home one of the 10 groups that met regularly and were part of the 100-member WMU group who met monthly at the church building. Under Woodruff's leadership they learned about the missionaries, their families and their hardships. They prayed, raised money and regularly contributed to WMU, a practice that Powers has never stopped, even as she had two more daughters. Today she still meets monthly with a WMU group called Women on Mission.

In addition she spends two hours a week as part of a rotating group of volunteers who pray from a special room set up at Parker Memorial. As sunlight streams through a stained glass window there, hardly an hour passes without someone coming in to pray for the people whose names are written on cards kept updated by the church staff. When the church kept a house for missionaries on furlough, Powers helped ensure the



Photo courtesy of Sherry Kughn

Anne Powers of Anniston has been active in WMU and missions support for 75 years. She recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

missionary house remained well furnished and in good repair.

She often entertained missionaries in her home and remembers those who retired to Anniston and became close friends.

These days Powers still can be found at Parker Memorial on Sunday mornings, sitting on a front pew with family members. She has a lively personality and stays engaged with fellow Christians who are decades younger than herself.

Her faithfulness to God has consumed much of her time throughout her life. When asked what other interests she has had, she recounts more activities involving the church: She taught Sunday School for 60 years, 22 of them as a teacher who taught other teachers, and she volunteered with Anniston's Interfaith Ministries for about 16 years on its executive committee and raised money to care for the city's needy residents.

"I guess my life has always been involved with the church," she said.

Investing in youth

Powers was interested in her community, too. She was a member of a women's civic group that helped establish what has become Coosa Valley Youth Services.

It covers an 11-county area and since the mid-1970s has provided alternative sentences and treatments for hundreds of troubled teens.

During a past interview Powers recalled the horror

of seeing incarcerated teenagers sitting on the concrete floor of a jail cell with nothing to do. The women's civic group secured mattresses and a television for the troubled teens. Powers worked with a local judge to secure a building and continued improving the services offered to the young people.

Returned words

Orbie lived to be 88 years old. He struggled with a chronic disease that affected his leg muscles. Two of their three daughters have the same disease. Years ago, one of Powers' granddaughters was killed in a car wreck, and one of her daughters died from natural causes a short time ago.

During those difficult events, Powers' church members returned to her some of the same words of encouragement and prayers she had given to them.

Her faith in Christ also gave her the hope and strength she needed to press forward.

Powers' empathy for missionaries remains strong. She studies her "Missions Mosaic," WMU's missions magazine for adults, each month.

"I have [ministered to] people who have been older than her, but none more faithful and active in their longevity," said Mack Amis, pastor of Parker Memorial. "For her, she is steady. Even through COVID, she never stopped coming to services. She is a pillar. You could live five lifetimes and never encounter anyone like her."

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 17

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Theology, University of Mobile



HOPE 1 Kings 19:9–18

Elijah's victory on Mount Carmel was one of the glorious moments in Israel's history. The Lord had revealed Himself dramatically in the fire and the rain. The people assembled on Mount Carmel repented and confessed their faith in the Lord, and then Elijah had the prophets of Baal slaughtered. Upon hearing of the death of the prophets of Baal, Jezebel swore to have Elijah killed. Her track record of killing the prophets of God made clear these were not idle words. God's prophet Elijah was terrified.

Alone? (9–10)

Elijah ran to Beer-sheba, about 100 miles south of Mount Carmel. He abandoned his assistant, went out into the wilderness and prayed he might die. Two times an angel of the Lord gave him food and water and then told him to get up and get going on his journey. After 40 days, Elijah arrived at Mount Horeb.

He went into a cave and spent the night. He had traveled 200 miles farther south from Beer-sheba to the mountain of God. He had fled as far as he could from Jezebel and her influence. Then the word of the Lord came to him and asked, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" The Lord was not seeking information from Elijah. God knew Elijah's heart better than Elijah himself did. God was challenging Elijah to speak his mind and to make his case.

Elijah replied Israel was apostate, they killed the prophets of God and he alone stood for covenant faith. Elijah saw no real reason to continue. Apparently he had hoped the showdown on Mount Carmel would have led to ultimate victory over Baal worship. He felt like a failure.

The Whisper (11–14)

The Lord commanded Elijah to go out of the cave and stand on the mountain in the Lord's presence. This theophany reminds readers of Exodus 33:18–22, where Moses had desired to see God's glory and was allowed to view the "back" of the Lord's splendor. God placed Moses

in the rock and covered him with a divine hand to protect him.

Here, Elijah waited for God's word through the tearing wind, ground-shaking earthquake and roaring flame. The Lord, however, did not speak through any of these natural phenomena.

In the past Elijah had experienced God's sovereignty over nature, and he had benefited from miraculous fire, but what he needed at this moment of despair was a definitive word from the Lord.

He received this word in a soft whisper. Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. He covered his face with his mantle as a sign of reverence in the presence of God.

God asked Elijah the same question: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" The prophet responded by restating his previous protests word for word. He stressed his zeal for God and how everyone else had rejected the Lord and had killed the prophets of God. He declared he was alone and was being hunted in order to be killed. He seemed to be stuck in his gloom.

Reality Defined (15–18)

The Lord's word to Elijah reaffirmed God's sovereignty over all nations and the importance of the prophetic word. God commanded him to return the way he had come. The Lord was sending Elijah back into active service. First, he was to anoint Hazael king of Syria, demonstrating God's sovereignty over this country. Second, he was to anoint Jehu king of Israel, reestablishing God's rule over the northern kingdom. Third, he was to anoint Elisha to take his place as prophet. God also told Elijah there were 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Elijah learned God's plan involved a pagan king, a new dynasty in Israel and his successor prophet.

God dealt with Elijah's discouragement by giving him a new perspective on ministry. Elijah needed to know that although he was a part of God's plan, he was not the plan itself. He was important, but he was not indispensable.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D.

Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



UNITED THROUGH THE SPIRIT 1 Corinthians 12:4–14

It is an incredible thing that God gives every single believer a gift, and other members of the church are also expected to benefit from this gift as it is shared with everyone else.

The Holy Spirit works through every believer for a singular common good. (4–7)

In Paul's world, social relationships and status were maintained in part by a system of gift-giving known as a patronage system. In this system, people of high socioeconomic status used their influence and resources to help those who depended on them for help, sometimes called "clients."

The system created a hierarchy all the way down to the poorest people. Everyone had or sought to secure a patron, and those patrons depended on their own patrons who had even greater resources.

In that society one knew exactly where one stood in the larger hierarchy.

That background helps us understand part of the significance of the spiritual gifts Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians. In the church, every member receives a gift or gifts directly from God. These gifts are special ways the Holy Spirit empowers each believer to bless and strengthen the church and its ministry. And every person's gift is important for the well-being of the church as a whole.

Even Christians with the highest social status in the church depend on the use of spiritual gifts given to people with little social status in the church. The ministry of every believer is important to the well-being of every other believer. Believers don't receive their gifts from people of differing levels of status and influence, but instead all are given from "the same Spirit."

We have different ministries or roles in the church, but it is all in the service of "the same Lord." The very same God works through each believer; note the Trinitarian refer-

ences seen in Spirit, Lord and God.

All of those gifts and ministries are given not for the aggrandizement of the one who receives the gift but "for the common good." That is, it isn't about the one with the gift but about how that gift can be used for the good of all.

The Holy Spirit works through us in different ways toward that common good. (8–11)

Here we find one of several partial lists of diverse gifts God gives to believers "by the same Spirit" (see 1:5; 12:28–30; 13:1–3, 8–9; Rom. 12:6–8; Eph. 4:11). There is no exhaustive list of potential spiritual gifts. We do not have space here to explain the various gifts, but the key to this passage is Paul's emphasis on both the great diversity of the gifts and the fact that every gift is given "by the same Spirit."

Every gift, every Spirit-enabled ability to bless and strengthen the church and its ministry, has the same origin: the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit makes us one body. (12–14)

While in verses 8–11 Paul emphasized the diversity of gifts and the singular and identical source of each one, in these verses he emphasizes the relationship between "all" (or "many") and "one." The body is one but has many parts. All the parts of the body are part of one body, and it is the same in Christ. All believers have been baptized into one body and drink from one Spirit, whatever our ethnic or social backgrounds.

The body (both the human body and the body of Christ, which is the church) is not one part but consists of many parts.

The metaphor of the body is a wonderful reminder no matter how diverse the church might be (just as our bodies have many different parts), we are ultimately one organic community which functions at its best when all the parts are encouraged and allowed to serve for the good of all.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust
The Alabama Baptist

C.S. Lewis' story retold in 'The Most Reluctant Convert'

You may not know Max McLean's face, but you may know his rich baritone voice from the Bible translations he has narrated. His voice is so popular, it's the default choice on many English Bible apps.

And thanks to a new movie that became a hit, McLean's face is growing in popularity, too.

"The Most Reluctant Convert: The Untold Story of C.S. Lewis" retells the dramatic conversion experience of Lewis. Lewis enrolled at Oxford University as an atheist before becoming a Christian thanks to the influence of J.R.R. Tolkien and others. McLean stars as a middle-aged Lewis in the movie, a mixture of narration and drama. It was filmed at 18 sites in and around Oxford, England.

On its opening night last year, the film finished No. 2 at the box office — trailing only "Dune" — and No. 1 in per-theater average. It now is available on home video.

People 'resonate' with him

"The Most Reluctant Convert" is based on a stage play of the same name starring McLean, who said he was naturally drawn to Lewis' story.

"I'm an adult convert to Chris-



'THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT'

Photo courtesy of cslewismovie.com

tianity. He was an adult convert to Christianity. I read his works at an early age in my Christian development," McLean recalled.

Lewis' atheism was grounded in multiple life tragedies, McLean noted.

"People really resonate with [him]," McLean said. "He lost his mother to cancer at a very young age. He had an estranged relationship with his

father that got worse when his mother died. He had firsthand experience with the senseless brutality of trench warfare in World

War I — he called it the hell where youth and laughter go, only to see horribly smashed men still moving about like crushed beetles."

Lewis came to the conclusion that either God does not exist or is indifferent to good and evil, McLean said.

Eventually, though, logic and reason — and the Holy Spirit — drew Lewis to Christ. He "saw

the contradiction in his own beliefs," McLean noted.

A line can be called "crooked," Lewis argued, only because a



straight line exists with which to compare it. Similarly, he said, "What was I comparing this universe with when I called it cruel and unjust?" McLean recounted.

Lewis eventually concluded, "'If pain is so undeniably real [then] that which overcomes pain is even more real, more essential,' and that to Lewis was the essence of Christianity," McLean said.

'Faithful to the calling'

All the words in the film attributed to Lewis are his, McLean added.

"The Most Reluctant Convert" debuted as a stage play at the New York City-based Fellowship for Performing Arts, which McLean founded. The theater's goal is to produce stories from a "Christian worldview to engage a religiously diverse audience."

"It's just my feeble attempt of being faithful to the calling that God has given me," McLean explained. "My life verse is Ephesians 2:10, 'We were created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.' So I've always felt that the obligation of a Christian is to listen to the Holy Ghost when He speaks."

For more information visit CSLewisMovie.com.

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.

Lewis eventually concluded, "If pain is so undeniably real [then] that which overcomes pain is even more real, more essential,' and that to Lewis was the essence of Christianity."

Max McLean, actor and writer

MEET THE REVIEWER

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

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