

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Revelation study sees international influx, interest

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Alabama couple serving in Moldova sought retirement 'to something, not from something'

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Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to focus on encouraging one another

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Nursing students work on a patient simulator in University of Mobile's 'living laboratories,' an advanced patient care center aimed at providing students with real-life medical experience.

Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

Reversing a trend

Alabama Baptist universities help address nursing shortage

By Yvette Hammett Hull
The Alabama Baptist

The nationwide nursing shortage has placed health care systems everywhere in a fairly desperate situation. In Alabama, low pay and high student debt are stumbling blocks to getting nurses trained and on the floor.

Samford University and the

University of Mobile are working to help reverse those negative trends, taking advantage of partnerships with other Alabama Baptists when possible.

Sarah Barnes-Witherspoon, dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Mobile, said, "The biggest problem in Alabama is keeping nurses."

"Other states are paying two to three times more than Alabama nurses [are paid], so that's a factor too. Alabama nurses are paid 8% lower than [nurses in] other southeastern states. They're also working alongside travel nurses who are paid even more for the same job. Therefore, many Alabama

nurses leave health care facilities to take travel jobs.

"The issue is relatively easy to resolve," Barnes-Witherspoon asserted. "Rather than pay a nurse not vested or dedicated to Alabama hospitals, increase nurses' salaries to keep experienced nurses in Alabama."

Offering incentives

Student debt is an issue Samford seeks to address by offering incentives to nurses who want to get a master's degree.

"Samford is addressing the issue by preparing nurses to become educators," said Stephanie Wynn, professor

and associate dean for scholarly activities. "How this reflects on the workforce is that nurses need to be taught by other nurses because there is also a shortage of educators.

"We don't have enough people to take their places ... because nurse educators are leaving and retiring. We don't have enough nurses to replace them."

The Samford program has provided loan forgiveness to 187 students so far this year, Wynn noted.

"This is the 20th year of the loan forgiveness program, and (See 'Nursing,' page 17)



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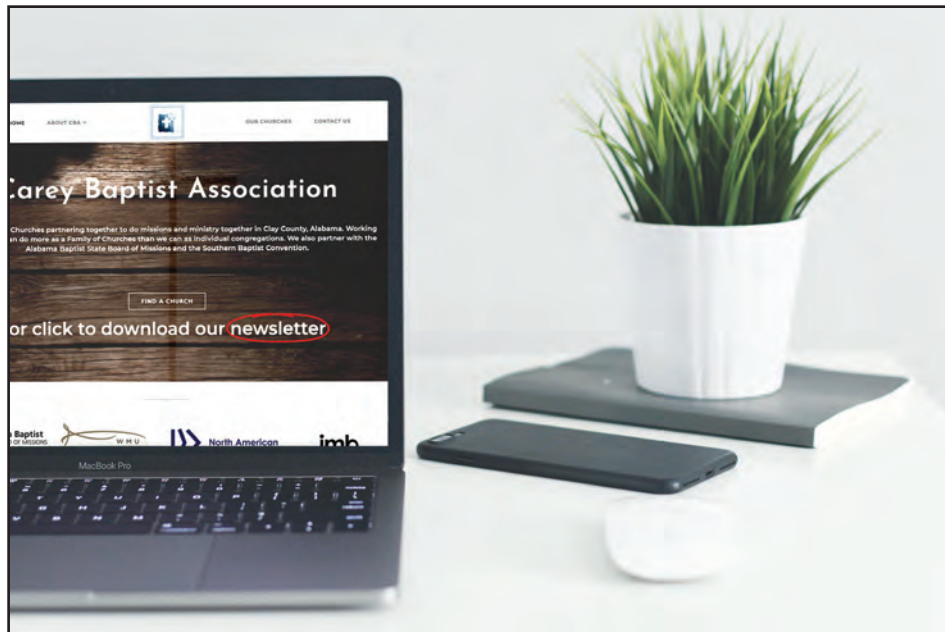
TABMediaGroup



TABMediaGroup



tabonline.org/
podcasts



Unsplash.com edited photo

Carey Baptist Association enlisted Hosted Church — a service offered by TAB Media Group — to help them develop a website for the association.

TAB Media Group offers website solution for churches

Donna Farrow, ministry assistant for Carey Baptist Association, said her work keeps her too busy to deal with building or maintaining a website.

So when she and Bruce Willis, the director of missions, learned about Hosted Church, they thought it might work for them.

“I have all I can do now without keeping up a website, so that was a good option for us,” Farrow said.

The goal of Hosted Church — a service offered by TAB Media Group — is to be a turnkey solution for websites, specifically focusing on churches, associations and

nonprofit ministries, said James Hammack, digital services manager for TAB Media Group.

It’s a premium one-stop shop a church or other ministry can use to quickly get a website up and running without sacrificing quality and functionality, he explained.

“Hosted Church takes the headache out of beginning an online web presence through a white-glove set-

up process where we help churches from start to finish.”

Hosted Church offers templates from which to choose; then TAB’s digital media team personalizes the site’s colors, images and information based on preferences. The team offers regular security scans and backups to keep the information safe, as well as quick help if something “breaks.” They also make changes throughout the year as needed.

Farrow said site “maintenance” is her favorite part of the service.

“That’s the benefit for us, that somebody keeps it up. All I have to do is send

an email to James,” she said. “It’s definitely well worth it.”

She also loves that people can now look up information about churches in the area in one place, as well as learn what the association is all about.

With Hosted Church, a low annual cost covers the purchase of a domain name and updates to information as it changes. (Grace Thornton)

To check out Carey Association’s website visit careybaptistassociation.org. For more information about Hosted Church visit hostedchurch.com or call 205-475-4630, ext. 108.

“That’s the benefit for us, that somebody keeps it up. ... It’s definitely well worth it.”

Donna Farrow
ministry assistant, Carey Baptist Association

The Alabama Baptist

“If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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@RashionalThts

‘Experiencing God’ study moves believer beyond ‘knowing God’

The concept is so simple, yet we miss it so often: “Watch to see where God is working, and join Him in His work.”

That’s the famous quote by retired pastor and Bible teacher Henry Blackaby, co-author of “Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God.”

First published in 1990 by Lifeway Christian Resources, the study was recently revised and updated in honor of its 30th anniversary, a bit delayed because of the pandemic but nonetheless out and experiencing a revival of sorts.

Alabama Baptists know the teachings of Blackaby and his son, Richard, well. They’ve preached and taught in various settings through the years.

Richard, who will be back in Alabama in October, joined his father and co-author Claude King in the revision of the study. Blackaby’s grandsons, Mike and Daniel, also participate in the latest video sessions accompanying the workbook.

King, who recently spoke to Alabama Baptist leaders attending the Pinnacle workshop at Shocco Springs Conference Center, was a Lifeway editor in 1990. He constructed the workbook based on Blackaby’s Bible study presentations.

In a 2005 article at news.lifeway.com, King shared how it all came to be.

“We videotaped Henry as he spoke to groups at Glorieta, then transcribed the tapes and compiled it all as a first-person narrative and added the learning activities,” King said in the article written by Polly House, longtime writer and communications specialist for Lifeway.

House shared King’s description of “Experiencing God” being “different from what Southern Baptists were accustomed to studying. It was not a program, but an experience.”

“As people began responding to the message in the workbook,

we saw lives changed,” King said in the article.

In the preface of the newly revised “Experiencing God,” Henry Blackaby describes King as a “spirit-filled, gracious man.”

“We spent many hours discussing how God walks with people and reveals His will,” Blackaby said of his time with King.

When Lifeway originally wanted to call the study “Knowing God,” Blackaby pushed back.

“My concern was that God’s people were already immersed in Bible studies and Christian books that gave them an enor-

mous amount of information about God. As a result, sincere Christians were coming to church every week and learning more and more about God, but they were not experiencing Him. To many, He was simply a faraway God to be believed in, a doctrine to affirm, an invisible deity to whom they recited their prayers,” Blackaby explained.

“They needed to know He is a Person with whom Christians can enjoy an intimate, growing, loving fellowship.”

We’d love to know how the “Experiencing God” study has helped you in your walk with the Lord. Email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Message of ‘Experiencing God’ built on what author Henry Blackaby calls “Seven Realities” ...

1. God is always at work around you.

2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.

3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes and His ways.

5. God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.

6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.

7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

Source:

“Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God”

Your Voice



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

Disciple-making culture nurtures new leaders

By **Chris Crain**

Executive director, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

Recently I had the privilege of meeting pastor and author Craig Etheredge of the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Etheredge serves as pastor of an influential church and stewards his talent as a voice of disciple making. He spent time in Alabama sharing insights with church leaders.

Much of his content was from his recent book, “The Disciple-Making Leader.” The simplicity and practicality of the book are refreshing.

“The Disciple-Making Leader” expresses how any church can design a leadership pipeline and disciple-making pathway to transform the church, community and culture.

I sat up in my chair when he said to us, “When leaders lose their why, they lose their way.”

I have seen it happen so often in individuals and entire churches. If we lose clarity in our mission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18–20), we will veer off course missionally or morally.

‘The main thing’

When we recognize we may be diverging from the main thing, we should think about something else. Etheredge said, “Jesus started the Church the way He wanted it. Now, He wants it the way He started it!”

How do we get back to the main

purpose of making disciples of Jesus in our local churches?

Etheredge believes that “to build a movement, you must make disciples and move them into greater levels of leadership.”

This concept was fundamental to the early church as God raised leaders from within. These leaders from the earliest days of Christianity were character-proven, time-tested and doctrinally sound.

Even the business world understands the importance of building a leadership pipeline within an organization.

This concept was expressed in the monumental book by Jim Noel and Ram Charan titled “The Leadership Pipeline.”

Etheredge advocates for not moving anyone, no matter how gifted, through the leader-

ship pipeline (or up the leadership ladder) unless they are advancing simultaneously on the discipleship pathway.

A maturing disciple is devoted to Jesus, developed in character and deployed in the mission of Jesus.

The dangers of moving someone up the leadership ladder cannot be overstated. Only a maturing disciple who leads out of the overflow of their walk with Jesus and intentionally invests in others will build a robust disciple-making culture in the church.

Too many “gifted” leaders have

been elevated in our churches without being led on a disciple-making pathway. The tragic results are fallen leaders, conflicted congregations and diminished witness in communities.

A leader’s character must always take precedence above immediate results. Competencies will likely increase as a person grows in their character. However, when the church elevates “superstars” who are on shaky moral footing, the outcomes will detract from God’s glory.

Powerful point

Etheredge made a powerful point: “Jesus did not say, ‘Go and make more superstars.’ He did say, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’”

Is making disciples your clear priority? Do you have a leadership pipeline in your church that is inextricably connected to a disciple-making pathway?

Let me be clear: I am not talking about a discipleship class or program. Instead, I offer a more profound challenge. Cultivate a disciple-making culture in your church that helps connect new believers and grows them to multiply.

When Jesus ministered with his disciples, the rabbis understood a disciple to be on a journey to become like their teacher and to carry on the teacher’s work long after the teacher was gone. The Apostle Paul said it this way: “Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Real ministry sends Jesus’ people into the world to fulfill His mission.

“I’ve seen more students at least start the conversation about the call to ministry in the last 10 years,” noted **Larry Hyche**, who served 20 years in local church ministry before his current assignment as **men’s spiritual development specialist** for the **Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions**. “I think there’s more of an awareness of the need for workers.”

“Most of us have probably heard the cliché phrase, ‘In the world, but not of the world,’” said **Ryan Gray**, **minister to college students and single adults** at **First Baptist Church Montgomery**. A better paraphrase might be, he noted, “Not of the world, but sent into the world.”

“You have to choose who or what you’re going to serve,” said **Bill Morrison**, **Baptist campus minister** at the **University of Alabama at Birmingham**. “Jesus addressed the subject of money more than any other subject in His teachings because it has such an attraction for us. [Money] gives us a false sense of security.”

We will be judged on how we fulfilled our potential.
Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“The essence of the gospel is serving people and not exploiting what they have to offer.”

JOE SOUZA

Ethnic ministry coordinator, Baptist Churches of New England

“God is in the miracle business and God is in the saving business — to see Him come out on top time after time — God always prevails and always shows out that He’s taking care of these kids no matter what,” said **Suzanne Owens, CEO** of the nonprofit **Sozo Children** based in Birmingham.

There are no perfect people, things or situations. There is none good, no, not one. Only in heaven will the health, peace, holiness and happiness of the Garden of Eden be permanently restored. Only in heaven will we spend eternity with the One perfect sinless God-Man, Jesus.

Don’t do what you can’t do; do what you can do. You cannot resolve all the conflicts or all the world’s

problems, but you can avert your own greatest disaster, right now, once and for all.

Once you die, it is all over for you. There are no second chances. Either you have given your whole life to God and been forgiven of your sins through the death of Jesus Christ, or you must pay the penalty for your sins in hell. If you die tonight, tomorrow is too late.

Bob Cosby
Birmingham

“It was a role reversal, and it was hard for both of us to adjust. It was very difficult for her losing her independence, and it takes that kind of setting yourself aside for someone else. It’s a calling.” said **Linda Winn, author** of “The Road to

Glory: Walking Mama Home,” on caring for her mother.

Scripture says we’ve all fallen short, but we’re invited to turn from rebellion and humble ourselves before God. One day we’ll stand in his heavenly courtroom to give account.

It’s far better to humble ourselves today than wait until then, for humility is the pathway to redemption.

Pastor Michael J. Brooks
Siluria Baptist Church
Alabaster

If you want to lead people to Christ, find common ground, not battlegrounds.

Pastor Justin Driver
Forward Church
Irvington, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@DrKBlackwell

The greatest challenge is not overcoming the external challenges you face, but to overcome the internal struggle of self-centeredness and pride. You will never make the impact God intends if you don’t at first place a cross on your back and a servant’s towel in your hand.

@alan_floyd

“... for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in hardships, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

In the trials you may be facing today, cry out to the Lord. It may be difficult, but thank Him for what He will accomplish through your weaknesses.

@kristenpadilla

“About brotherly love: You don’t need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. ... But we encour-

age you, brothers and sisters, to do this even more, to seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands ...” (1 Thess. 4:9–11)

@shadesmtn

Are we seeking to craft a doctrine that bends to our will? Or are we willing to let doctrine mold us toward God’s heart?

@DanaWatson

On August 29, 1987, I entered foster care. I was 11 years old. Thirty-five years ago today, God began to change the trajectory of my life. I was introduced to Jesus. He transformed my heart and renewed my mind. I am thankful.

@pastorjgkell

I once asked Chuck Swindoll what advice he’d give a young pastor. He said,

1. Be yourself. Don’t try to imi-

tate others; God made you who you are on purpose.

2. Live better than you preach. Study to preach, but even more to live what you preach.

Good advice.

@KaitlynSchuess

Another reminder that children’s ministry is not the “easy” one:

After teaching in Sunday School today about Noah’s ark, the first question was: “When they got off the ark, were there lots of dead bodies all over the place?”

Guess what every question after that was about.

@ERLC

Now more than ever we must seek to retrieve a biblical understanding of personal privacy, which accords with the dignity of every individual and cares for the most vulnerable among us. —@jason-thacker

How’s your spiritual vision?

Since fourth grade I’ve been a four-eyed person. And I’m thankful for all four.

My God-given eyes need augmentation.

Spectacles hang on my face most of the time.

With eyes you behold a beautiful landscape or work of art.

They enable you to see family and friends you love.

Some things, however, can’t be viewed with human eyes, even when boosted by extra help.

Paul prayed for his friends to receive altered eyes: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (Eph. 1:18–19).

Paul’s prayer called for an openness to something only God can put in you.

Enhanced spiritual eyesight enables you to experience some God-given blessings:

1. The certain assurance of salvation
2. The revelation of what comes with a relationship in Christ

3. Acquisition of the power bestowed on believers for living in a troubled world.

You don’t get those eyes from the optical shop or drug store.

Believers are fitted with the eyes of the heart by the Heavenly Optometrist.

My human eyes get weaker day by day.

But heart eyes get sharper the more you use them.

That requires an ongoing submission to the lordship of Christ.

You do that through the ongoing practice of the spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible study and centering yourself in God’s presence.

How’s your vision?

Darryl Wood
via Facebook

3 stories you should know



Screenshot

Rick Warren preached his final sermon as pastor of the California-based Saddleback Church on Aug. 28. Rick and Kay Warren launched Saddleback in 1980. The church has grown from the original 50 people to more than 40,000 members today. One of the largest churches in the SBC, Saddleback has been the subject of controversy since ordaining three women in 2021 for staff ministerial roles that have pastor in the title. Andy Wood will succeed Warren. (TAB)

Acts 29 leader, pastor violates church policy

Matt Chandler, pastor of The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, announced Aug. 28 he is taking a “leave of absence” after violating the church’s social media use policies.

Chandler will also step aside from his responsibilities as president and chairman of the board of the Acts 29 church-planting network, according to a statement from Acts 29.

Chandler and the church acknowledged he had exchanged messages with a woman not his wife that were not “romantic or sexual in nature” but were “unbefitting” of a lead pastor and elder.

When the messages came to light, church elders determined a leave of absence, deemed both “disciplinary and developmental,” was a necessary course of action. (The Baptist Paper)

Judges: No mandate for transgender ‘care’

A federal appeals court on Aug. 26 said doctors and hospitals do not have to perform gender-transition medical procedures and abortions that violate their conscience or medical judgment.

A religious hospital and a group of over 20,000 health care professionals sued the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in August 2016 after the federal government mandated that most health care providers must perform and provide insurance coverage for such procedures.

A three-judge panel affirmed the decision of the district court that granted Franciscan Alliance a permanent injunction, barring HHS from forcing it to provide gender-reassignment surgeries or abortions against its religious beliefs. (The Alabama Baptist)

Persecuted **church**

Myanmar army restricts amount of aid going to Christian areas

NAY PYI TAW, Myanmar — A relief organization reported Myanmar’s army is restricting humanitarian aid in three states that have a considerable Christian population.

The nongovernmental Refugees International said the Tatmadaw is restricting humanitarian assistance in the states of Kayah and Karen, both of which have a significant Christian population, and in the state of Chin, which is predominantly Christian.

The human rights group International Christian Concern, quoting Refugees International, estimated 14 million people are in need of assistance.

Refugees International said violence against citizens has increased since a military junta

overtook the government early this year.

Myanmar (also known as Burma) is No. 12 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Church holds prayer service for imprisoned Chinese Christian

TAIPEI CITY, Taiwan — A Presbyterian church in Taiwan organized an August prayer service for a Christian human rights lawyer imprisoned by China’s communist government.

Human rights group International Christian Concern reported Jinan Presbyterian Church organized the service for attorney Gao Zhisheng.

In his longtime practice, Gao represented Christians, coal miners and farmers.

He also assisted the Falun Gong, a group that combines the religious practices of Buddhism and Taoism and is scrutinized by the Chinese

Communist Party. Having been detained more than once, he sometimes suffered emotional and physical abuse. After his release in 2014, he was



IMB photo

under close scrutiny and subsequently had to move to a different province, according to China Aid.

Gao, who has been nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize, was arrested again in 2017. Imprisoned five years in an unknown location, he has not seen his children in more than a decade.

China is No. 17 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

NEWS

Alabama news

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville**, will host a “Revive Us Again” revival Sept. 25–27 with services Sunday at 11 a.m. and Monday–Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.



BURNS

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► Pastor **Rob Burns** retired from **East Pointe Baptist Church, Spanish Fort**, on July 31, after 17 years. He had previously served multiple churches in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. He and his wife, Rhonda, have two children.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Tarrant First Baptist Church** celebrated its 100th anniversary Aug. 14.

Carl Uptain, who was pastor 2008 to 2010, was the guest speaker.

Charles Click, who served as interim pastor three times for a total of about 10 years, congratulated the church for 100 years of missions, ministry and service. Bubba Hill, who was FBC’s minister of music from 1992 to 1995, was the guest worship leader. Don Moore, FBC’s current minister of music, sang a special song, and an instrumental special was provided by Kevin Grigsby and his two children.



Photo by Debbie Campbell/
The Alabama Baptist

Hellon Grigsby, pianist since 2004, played for the service, and Tom Grigsby, who served as interim pianist in 1984, was the guest organist. Lonette Berg of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate to deacon chairman Steve Kyzer.



DEAN

BUTLER ASSOCIATION

► **Danny Dean** retired Aug. 31 as director of missions of **Butler Association**. He has served in this position for 4 years. Previously he was pastor of Spring Creek Baptist Church, Honorville. He will continue

to serve as pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Georgia. He is married to Brenda.

CLEBURNE ASSOCIATION

► **Donnie Muse** is the new worship pastor of **Macedonia**



MUSE

Baptist Church, Ranburne. He previously served at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Carrollton Georgia, for 28 years. He and his wife, Tammy, have five children and eight grandchildren.

► **Bill Brown**, pastor of **Happy Hill Baptist Church, Heflin**, retired Aug. 28. During his 39 years in ministry, Brown served in various roles, including many years in music ministry at several churches in Georgia alongside his late wife, Carol. He had served Happy Hill as pastor 4 years. Previously he was pastor of Beulah Baptist Church, Muscadine, for 8 years, and Midway Baptist Chapel in Bremen, Georgia, for 5 years.



BROWN

He has five children, 17 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. He will be available for pulpit supply (470-214-7381).

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **John Granger** retired as director of missions of **Coffee Association** July 31 after 22 years. He will continue to serve as pastor of Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise. He served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Mobile, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary and doctor of theology from New Orleans Seminary.



GRANGER

Granger has taught New Testament, Greek and theology at UM, Baptist College of Florida, New Orleans Seminary and Samford University’s Ministry Training Institute.

He and his wife, Kathy, have three children and eight grandchildren.



SMYSER

LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

► **Keith Smyser** retired as executive pastor from **First Baptist Church Athens** on June 30 after 9 years of service. He served 46 years in ministry in five states. Smyser served at FBC Alabaster from 1979 to 1989. He was a graduate of Eastern Kentucky University and Southern Seminary. He and his wife, Teresa, have two children and four grandchildren.

OTHER

► **Lucas Dorion** is the new coordinator for the **Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship coordinating council**. This appointment comes after Dorion’s eight years of service as associate coordinator and spending the last 10 months as interim coordinator. The Samford University graduate has served in several churches, including Southside Baptist, Birmingham, and Riverchase Baptist, Hoover. He and his wife, Emily, have two children. They are members of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church.



DORION

Bivocational ministers fellowship offers online support, annual retreat

Bivocational ministers in Alabama have a tremendous resource to help in their work — other bivocational pastors and leaders.

That’s why Tim Henning, president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Fellowship, wants more people to know about the fellowship and all it has to offer.

ABBF’s online small group is geared toward ministers with all sorts of needs and interests. Those wrestling with loneliness and discouragement will find supportive friends. Those who want to connect with other bivocational ministers to ask questions and share experiences also will find a receptive audience.

The conversational nature of the group provides a safe space to discuss challenges and get

advice from others who may have experience with the same issues.

The fellowship hosts virtual meetings each Monday night at 7 p.m. to provide support, encouragement and general conversation about ministry issues and concerns.

The fellowship hosts an annual retreat at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. The next retreat is scheduled for Feb. 24–25, 2023.

Join the conversation

To find out how to join the weekly online conversation or to get connected with other events, contact Henning by phone at 205-613-7235. The fellowship also has a Facebook page at [Facebook.com/groups/bivoministries](https://www.facebook.com/groups/bivoministries).

Pastor Bradley McVay studies for a sermon series on Revelation. Though many preachers avoid the book, its central message calls unbelievers to repentance and believers to faithfulness and gospel witness, McVay said.

‘THE MAIN THING’

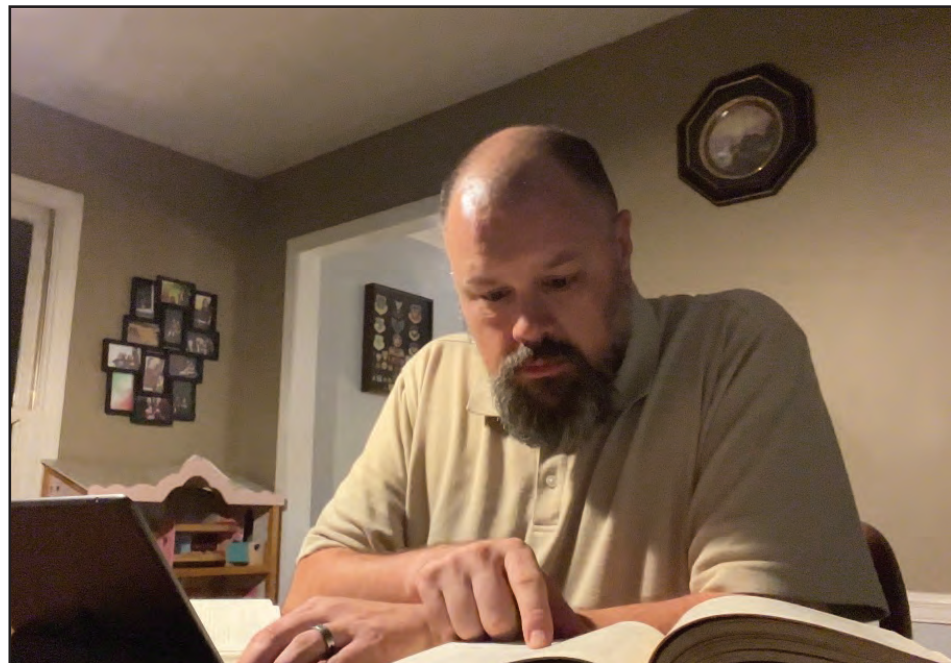


Photo by Jadah McVay

Resurgent Revelation interest focuses on ‘greatness and the glory’ of God

By David Roach
The Alabama Baptist

When a recent online biblical studies course experienced record international enrollment, Birmingham-area instructor Barry Cospers was confident he knew the reason: It focused on the Book of Revelation.

Christians around the world long to study Scripture’s final, mysterious book, Cospers said. Twenty-four international students from the Philippines to the United Kingdom enrolled in a class based at Grace Covenant Worship Center in Birmingham (see story, page 9). The course is part of Samford University’s Ministry Training Institute offering non-degree ministry classes.

“The students had previously viewed Revelation as a book of fear and judgment,” said Cospers, Bessemer regional director for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association. “When we got through with the study, they discovered God’s grace was still active and God’s love was still contagious. They had a far greater appreciation related to that.”

New curiosity

The class is part of a wave of curiosity about the Bible’s concluding book, notably focused on its main themes rather than speculation about the nuances of end-times

events, as has often been the case when Revelation is mentioned.

Without question, the study of Revelation has a rich and diverse past. For the first 500 years of church history, some early interpretations anticipated a bodily second coming of Christ followed by His 1,000-year reign on earth, known as the millennium. Later that view gave way to amillennialism, the belief that there will be no literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth following His return.

“[Revelation] really is the story of God redeeming His good but broken creation.”

**Bradley McVay
Beulah Baptist Church
Muscadine**

More recently, the premillennial view, though with conflicting takes on the rapture, gained popularity after books like Hal Lindsey’s “The Late Great Planet Earth” and the “Left Behind” series were published.

With so much disagreement about Revelation, some preachers and teachers have wondered if it’s a productive book to study with their congregations.

Bradley McVay is among those who have answered recently with an emphatic “yes.” Pastor of Beulah Baptist Church in Muscadine, McVay sensed God’s leading in March to preach through Revelation. He started immediately and said it has been “a journey of faith.” He has found it striking how infrequently the contested points of interpretation arise and how frequently several main themes recur in the book.

“As I’m preaching through Rev-

elation, there’s very little” talk of the millennium and the rapture’s timing, he noted. “The nuts and bolts of Revelation aren’t really in those things. It really is the story of God redeeming His good but broken creation.”

The book calls unbelievers to repentance and believers to faithfulness and gospel witness, he said.

Danny Akin agrees. President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, Akin arranged for this spring’s chapel speakers to preach through Revelation. Several potential preachers declined the invitation when they learned their sermon text would be from Revelation. Those who accepted presented a range of views on the rapture and the millennium. Yet the series formed a coherent whole.

‘What is essential’

Akin said his goal was for students to see in Revelation “what is essential for us to understand the book is saying and where there are areas for legitimate disagreement among faithful, Bible-believing brothers and sisters,” Akin explained. “And I think we accomplished that.”

He has preached through Revelation in three churches and authored the volume on the book in the Christ-Centered Exposition commentary series published by Lifeway Christian Resources. Akin offered two pointers for pastors and teachers considering a Revelation series: “Acknowledge

consciously your own perspective” and “read widely” among commentators of various perspectives.

“The main thing about Revelation [is] the greatness and the glory of the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is Jesus Christ,” Akin declared.

Pre, mid, post or a-

Douglas Wilson, dean of the University of Mobile’s Center for Christian Calling, said preachers should not “get so caught up in discussing the timing of the rapture that we fail to consider the Master who calls us to Himself.”

“Discussions of pre-, post- and amillennial interpretations as well as pre-, mid- and post-tribulation (and pre-wrath) rapture approaches lead many to miss the point of Jesus Christ’s preeminence in the book of Revelation,” Wilson said. “Jesus is the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega. The seven churches are His churches. He alone is worthy to break the seals.

He is the Lord of Hosts, with Michael and his angels defeating the accuser and his demonic army. His is the final victory.”

The current interest in Revelation, including the refocus on its

Christ-exalting theme, ultimately is a work of God, Cospers said. He’s certain that was the case for his class.

“For them to want to study [Revelation] right now, to me was an interesting impact of the Holy Spirit,” he said.

For more about Samford University’s Ministry Training Institute, visit samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute.

EQUIPPING STUDENTS WORLDWIDE

Samford program sees international influx, interest in Revelation study

By David Roach
The Alabama Baptist

Samford University took a major step forward this spring in an effort to diversify and globalize its Ministry Training Institute.

When MTI offered a course on the New Testament Book of Revelation, enrollees mirrored the crowd gathered around God's throne in Revelation 7:9, hailing from nations, tribes and people groups across the world.

"We have never had as many internationals in one class," said MTI director Kevin Blackwell. "There's no precedent for that."

MTI is a "non-degree academic program equipping ministers and lay leaders to live out their calling to serve Jesus and His Church," according to Samford's website.

The program offers eight-week courses at nearly 40 extension sites across three states, mostly in Alabama.

Students also can earn certificates by completing online courses in a variety of ministry fields.

Pandemic-related boost

For nearly a decade, MTI program leaders have desired to equip students all over the world, but international enrollment at the extension centers was limited.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed that, driving classes onto Zoom and allowing broader participation. At first a trickle of students from outside Alabama entered the program.

When Birmingham-area associational leader Barry Cospers taught a class on Revelation in January, the worldwide floodgates opened.

Of 42 students enrolled in the course, taught at Grace Covenant Worship Center in Birmingham,



Photo by Jessica Ingram/The Alabama Baptist

Samford University's Ministry Training Institute offers many classes, like Paul's Letters taught by Richard Maddox (above). MTI offers 8-week courses at nearly 40 extension sites across three states. While most of the classes are hosted in Alabama, an online option is available. Students can complete certificates for particular fields of study.

24 were internationals, from India, Pakistan, Uganda, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the Virgin Islands, among other locales.

It was "the first time" such an international rush "had occurred in my teaching," said Cospers, Bessemer regional director for the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

"But I get a lot of communications from people internationally because they see [MTI] on our website or Facebook. Then questions just arise."

Starting and finishing

After the initial flood of enrollment, leaders wondered whether students from across the world would remain engaged through the entire course.

They did. Twenty of the international students participated in

Zoom sessions live; four viewed them afterward because of time zone differences. The course's four Pakistani students attended Zoom sessions at 5 a.m. local time, then at 4 a.m. after the U.S. began daylight-saving time.

Ministry help

All the students took a deep dive into Revelation, covering how scholars of different millennial views (premillennial, amillennial and postmillennial) interpret key passages.

They said the class aided their ministries and their walks with Christ.

International participation in MTI continues even after the Revelation class — 20 of the 24 international students enrolled in Cospers' next course, covering Paul's letters.

"My heart still overflows," Cospers

said, because of the international students' participation, writings, questions and dialogue.

A local student wrote, "Thank you for your wonderful teaching. My eyes have been opened and I have learned much."

One Pakistani student emailed Cospers saying, "These eight classes have been via Zoom, but your very effective teaching and very pleasant interaction have made me feel that I'm learning from you in a face-to-face classroom situation.

"Thank you so much for addressing my questions and queries during the class in such a way that it has made this learning process so plausible. Thank you so much for your consistent appreciation and encouragement of your students. ... I believe we will keep on enjoying and being blessed in coming classes as well."



Myers-Mallory

State Missions Offering

State Goal: \$1,200,000

A WORD FROM OUR STATE LEADERS



Rick Lance

*State Missionary and Executive Director
Alabama State Board of Missions*

From its inception, the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering has presented Alabama Baptists with a challenge and an opportunity to provide targeted support for Great Commission Ministries. Many congregations within our family of churches have responded with the same kind of generosity and passion that characterizes their steady and strong support for missions through the Cooperative Program. This has been the case during the height of the pandemic, as well as before and beyond. I pray and believe that Alabama Baptists will continue to be faithful in supporting missions and ministries outside the four walls of the church. Gifts to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering truly make a difference in our home state and beyond. As you participate in the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the offering, please prayerfully consider encouraging others to do so also.



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

So much in our world has changed in recent years. I have found great comfort in focusing on the One who stays the same. Our faithful God has proven time and again that He has a plan and a purpose for every season. It has been such a joy to watch how He has used the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering to accomplish His life-giving work in the midst of all that has transpired over the past seven years. Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for being unchanging in your faithful and generous support of the Great Commission Ministries that benefit from our prayers and offerings. Your help in spreading this information is absolutely vital. Never doubt for a minute that your time and influence are not only needed, but greatly appreciated.



Candace McIntosh

*Executive Director
Alabama Woman's Missionary Union*

Myers-Mallory.org



ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

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DAY
1

Boldly Uniting in Prayer
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5

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PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS



DAY
2

Sharing Hope with the Hurting
DISASTER RELIEF



DAY
6

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CHURCH REVITALIZATION



DAY
3

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ALABAMA WMU



DAY
7

Doing More for More People
DISASTER RELIEF



DAY
4

Reaching People in Huntsville
CHURCH PLANTING



DAY
8

Hearing God's Call at WorldSong
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Visit Myers-Mallory.org for downloadable print and video resources, including the full prayer guide and accompanying Week of Prayer videos, the 2022 Missions Study, and social media graphics and announcement slides.



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Bible study leaders must set example in evangelism

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Those who lead Sunday School classes have a responsibility to encourage and train members to bring the unsaved to Christ.

That was the charge Jay Gordon, adult and small groups minister at the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, brought to leaders gathered at Pinnacle Alabama, an annual conference for Sunday School and small group leaders hosted recently by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

“We must lead our groups to maturity,” Gordon said. “I use six ‘G’ words for this. We gather for worship and group to study. Then we must grow in faith. These three things can be internal. But the externals include giving or serving, going [on missions] and guiding or discipling.”

Showing passion

“If we stop with the first three, we’re only halfway to the prize.”

Gordon said it’s hard for a group to be passionate for the lost if the leader doesn’t show that passion.

He gave examples of ways he tries to lead by example.

“I often ask the server before a restaurant meal how I

can pray for them when we have a blessing,” Gordon said. “And I often ask people, ‘What’s your spiritual background?’ This question is non-threatening and has opened doors for me.”

Sharing gospel

When sharing the gospel, Gordon uses the 3 Circles diagram, which he tries to do at least once a month. He also asks a group member if they will present it the following month, and someone else the next.

“That way [they] get familiar with this fairly simple gospel presentation,” Gordon noted.

He also asks his group members to write down on index cards the names of those for whom they’re concerned, promising to take the cards and pray.

“I often take two or three cards in the morning and pray for these,” he said.

“And I will text group members to tell them that I prayed for their son or their co-worker that morning. This reminds them to pray as well.”

Witnessing might be uncomfortable for believers, but when “we’re obedient,” we “share in the blessings” of God’s work, he said.

Gordon explains the 3 Circles diagram at lifestories.me. He co-hosts “The Great Groups” podcast, available in app stores and at greatgroups.org.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Huntsville Park Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor with an emphasis on a missions-minded ministry to the members of HPBC and the surrounding community. Candidates must have the qualifications given in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and a college or seminary degree in a field of ministerial or theological studies. Interested candidates should send resumés and correspondence to: hpbsearchteam@gmail.com.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Jackson, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumés to: terrihenley1995@gmail.com or mail to: Terri Henley, P.O. Box 744, Jackson AL 36545.

PASTOR

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

PASTOR

Sweet Home Baptist Church in Guntersville, Alabama, is in search of a pastor. Interested candidates may send a resumé to: sweethomesearchcommittee@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Union Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Resumés will be received through Sept. 30 by mail at: Pastor Search Committee, Union Baptist Church, 5251 Grand Bay Wilmer Road S, Grand Bay, AL 36541 or by email at: admin@ubcgrandbay.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Concord Highland Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: CHBC2672@bellsouth.net.

WORSHIP PASTOR

FBC Fairhope is searching for a full-time worship pastor to lead corporate worship, including choir, praise team, orchestra and praise band. The worship ministry also includes administrating children, youth and senior adult choirs and leading several special events during the year. For more information, contact Kerry Flowers at kerrybflowers@gmail.com.

MUSIC MINISTER

Pine Grove Baptist Church, Heflin, Alabama, is a small congregation prayerfully seeking a part-time music minister.

Please email resumé to: pinegroveheflinal@gmail.com.

YOUTH AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz, Alabama, is now accepting resumés for a full-time youth and recreation minister. Please send resumés to: Sardis Baptist Church, 1501 Church Street, Boaz, AL 35956 or to Mike Goforth at megoforth@yahoo.com. We are a growing, missions-minded church who is very active in sharing the gospel at home and abroad. Contact Mike Goforth at 256-506-2875 with any questions.

OTHER POSITIONS

EDITOR/PRESIDENT

The Baptist Courier, the oldest ministry partner of the South Carolina Baptist Convention (153 years), is seeking a full-time editor and president. The position requires oversight of the print and electronic editions of the monthly magazine, the website, weekly podcast, social media, Courier Publishing (books), tours and fundraising. Qualifications include significant experience as a Baptist communicator/writer who adheres to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message; active member of a Southern Baptist church; resumé with at least three references; and at least a master’s degree. Deadline for receiving resumés and letters of reference is Sept. 30. Please email resumés and letters of reference to: tarafreeman@fbccola.com.

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

FBC Tallassee’s PreSchool Academy has job openings for teachers for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. Send a letter of interest or resumé to: julie@fbctallassee.com. For more information, contact Denise Voss, dvoss@fbctallassee.com.

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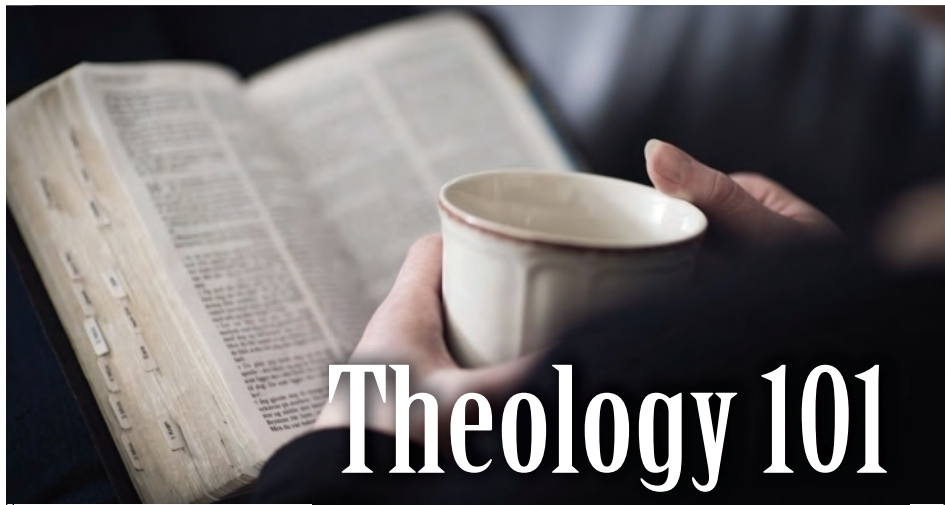
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MINISTRIES

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. It has exclusive content for the digital edition only, and can be accessed anytime as long as you have internet. To update your email address, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Spiritual Blessings

Christian Warfare

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Last week, Theology 101's common image of the uncommon life God intends for us was walking. This week's image is fighting or warfare.

The Christian life has battles that must be engaged, and of course the desired outcome is victory. Standing in the way of a victorious Christian life is an unholy trinity that must be engaged daily: the world, the flesh and the devil.

The world around us with its temptations, untruths and unworthy goals is an influential enemy. Too often the desire to be accepted by others can lead to adopting an ungodly attitude or engaging in ungodly activities, not to mention being silently influenced by worldly standards or expectations.

Romans 12:2 admonishes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." A solemn plea is given in 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Another member of the unholy trinity is what the Bible calls the flesh. The reference is not to the physical body but to our natural tendencies to value and chase after sinful things that have their origin in our sinful nature.

The Bible warns "those who live according to the flesh set

their minds on the things of the flesh," before setting forth the horrible outcome of such living: "To be fleshly minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the fleshly mind is enmity against God," and concluding, "so then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

Galatians 5:19-21 gives a detailed list of the works of the flesh: "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelleries and the like." This indeed is a formidable army of enemies to be faced.

Roaring lion

A third member of the unholy trinity is the devil himself. The Bible speaks with deep seriousness: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Christian hope lies in the truth that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



Someone You Should Know

DANNY SCOTT

By Leigh Pritchett
The Alabama Baptist

Danny Scott, 73, of Randolph, has been a member of his church since he was 5 or 6 years old. Between then and now, he has held many responsibilities and sees his mission as "being available wherever I can be used to serve." Scott retired 12 years ago after working 45 years for Moore-Handley in Pelham. He and Nancy, his wife of 55 years, have a son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: Trying to be a servant. Leading others to know who Christ is. Doing whatever needs to be done. Serving with other deacons and the pastor to meet the needs of the church and the community.

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

A: Elizabeth Smitherman. She has gone on to be with the Lord. We had a lot of young married couples, and she took on that class. [Nancy and I] were newlyweds and starting a new part of our lives. [Smitherman] was telling us and teaching us how we needed to make Christ the forefront of our lives, to seek Him first. Also, I think our pastor Tony Reynolds has had a great influence on me and our church. He is a young guy, and he is way beyond his years as a pastor.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

A: Patience. The pandemic changed almost everything we do in normal life. It changed our worship, our time of worship, our place. It affected me and other people. I had to learn to be patient. We have to be patient and wait on God to work.

MINISTRY: Deacon; co-leader of adult men's Sunday School class; outreach team member



CHURCH NAME:

Randolph Baptist Church in Bibb Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33)

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

A: That would be to study the Word more. I wish in my early years I would have dug in deeper. It's something new every time you do. You find something new to apply to your life. I would really impress on younger people to study the Word while you're young. Of course, it is something to do all your life.

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

A: We have a couple that come to mind. One is what we call Harvest Day; some churches call it Homecoming. We can get together with people who have gone their separate ways and enjoy fellowship. Another thing started in the past few years is All Things Outdoors. It is a men's ministry. It is a day of outdoor activities of shooting sports. We have a speaker and lunch. It's an all-day thing. We have found that to be a good outreach for men who wouldn't go to a normal church service.

Eyes and ears on the ground

Alabama couple serving in Moldova sought retirement 'to something, not from something'

By **Caroline Anderson**
International Mission Board

David and Shannon Brown's connections in Moldova stretch across time and borders.

These connections include Baptist pastors in western Moldova who operate a cheese factory, a Baptist medical clinic in the capital and a seminary centered on ministry in Central Asia.

The Browns are also in close contact with seven villages that have no known believers.

David recently retired from Blue Cross Blue Shield.

"I wanted to retire to something, not from something," David said.

While David made his first connections in Moldova in 2008 through a trip with a friend, the Browns can look back now and see how the Lord started calling them to serve in Moldova beginning in 2014.

Various events and trips through the years connected to their home church, Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham, built up to the moment they surrendered to the call.

Now that serving in Moldova has



IMB photo

International Mission Board missionaries David (right) and Shannon Brown (left) pray with Dumitru Cravcencu, senior pastor of Dancu Baptist Church. The group met in Dancu Tabita, a cheese factory that supports the church.

become a reality, they plan to live there for 18 to 20 months.

The Browns said they are glad to be serving with IMB missionaries Ryan and Jenni Meredith, who are now the team leaders for IMB ministry in Moldova. This team is the first IMB presence the nation has had in many years.

Moldova was deemed "reached" in terms of the Christian population and church autonomy and ownership in the missionary task, but most pastors in Moldova are bivocational and could benefit from more resources.

Brown said he and IMB regional leader Lamar Schubert recognized the potential for a powerhouse part-

nership with the Moldovan Baptist Union in reaching non-Christians in Moldova and sending Moldovan missionaries to the nations.

The team has a three-part ministry focus.

Ministry goals

► The first is to expand disciple-making efforts, reach many others for Christ and eventually plant new churches in the Hincesti district.

The team is working with Emanuel Baptist Clinic in Chisinau and coming alongside Eugenia Podoleanu, the executive director of the clinic, and Gusac Liviu, the clinic's president, as their staff meets both physical and spiritual needs in the capital and other cities.

Meadow Brook Baptist, which has a partnership with Dancu Baptist Church, provides funding for medical supplies used in community health outreaches.

Send Relief, a compassion ministry collaboration between the North American Mission Board and IMB, is providing funds to the clinic to assist refugees.

► The second focal point of the team's ministry is the Orhei region of Moldova. The Browns are partnering with a local pastor to reach the region's population of 50,000 with the gospel.

David estimates there are seven villages in the area where this pastor lives, with a combined population of 10,000 people and no known Christians.

► Their third focus is building relationships with a Baptist seminary in Chisinau. The seminary is involved in sending missionaries to Central Asia.

David said they also are the "eyes and ears on the ground" for Send Relief projects aimed at helping Ukrainian refugees through the local Baptist churches.

The Browns' days are full, but so are their hearts. Their retirement looks different from the average American's — and that's just what they wanted.

Russians welcome Ukrainians to U.S.

Russians and Ukrainians may be at war in Europe, but in the U.S. they're forging strong friendships.

At the Russian-speaking Lighthouse Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia, people who immigrated years ago from the former USSR were waiting with open arms to welcome Ukrainians who have fled the war zone.

Russians and Ukrainians worship together at the Lighthouse Church and pray together for an end to the war.

Lighthouse Church pastor Max Lisovskiy, a native of Russia, said

his congregation has been helping to provide basic needs for new arrivals and helping them acclimate to a new country and culture.

"This church gave me everything I need," said Ukrainian Andrii Bradarskyi, who arrived in metro Atlanta in June. "I have a car. I have a place to live. I even have financial support."

In the latest show of affection, the congregation arranged for free dental care for Ukrainians through the Georgia Baptist Mission Board's Mobile Health Ministry.

A large RV, retrofitted with dental chairs and equipment, rolled

into the parking lot outside the church Aug. 26 for a two-day stop. Dentists and hygienists who serve aboard the dental van are equipped to do a wide array of exams and procedures.

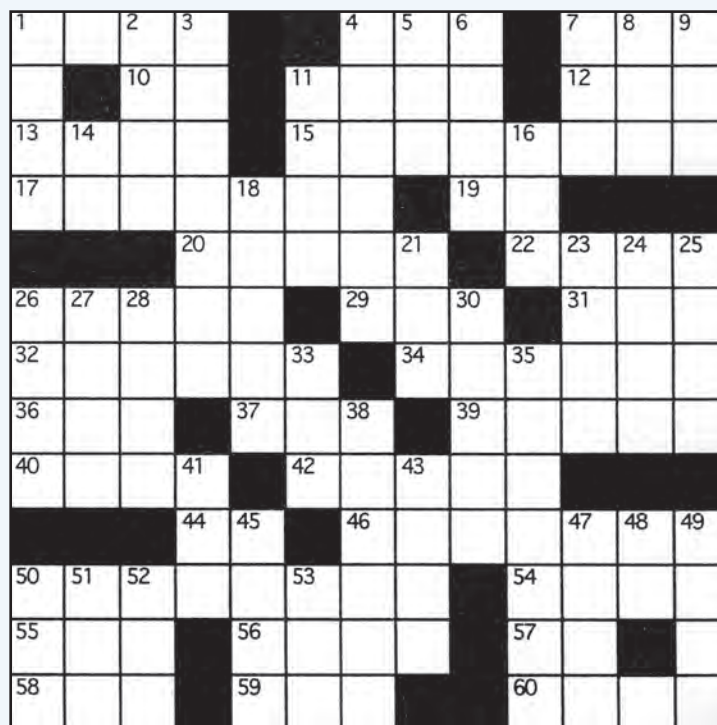
Lisovskiy said his congregation is now about 60% Ukrainian, with the remainder from other Russian-speaking countries.

Those who have been in the U.S. the longest come alongside newcomers to help them with a litany of needs. The church also is providing English as a second language classes for the Ukrainians. (The Christian Index)

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. "And if a son, then an ___ of God." (Gal. 4:7)
4. Energy.
7. Printer's measures.
10. Eastern U.S. state.
11. "For there is hope of a ___, if it be cut down." (Job 14:7)
12. Churchill gesture.
13. High school ___.
15. Nard.
17. Twelve lions stood around his throne. (1 Kings 10:20)
19. Vowels in chorus of children's song.
20. Carter cabinet member.
22. North Atlantic fish.
26. Deborah accompanied him.
29. They travel through the Loop.
31. Year. (Sp.)
32. "And the king of the south shall be moved with ___." (Dan. 11:11)
34. "The ___ pot is for silver." (Prov. 17:3)
36. Small bit.
37. "Eat not of it ___ ... but roast it with fire." (Ex. 12:9)
39. To tend.
40. Father of Peleg and Joktan. (Gen. 10:25)
42. Sister of Absalom.
44. Preposition.
46. "___ shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." (Ps. 91:10)
50. After dusk. (poet.)
54. Congolese river that forms Ubangi.
55. Light touch.
56. Sanction.



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57. Egyptian sun deity.
58. Tropical bird.
59. Son of. (Heb.)
60. Fencing implement.
25. Venetian magistrate.
26. Alphabet sequence.
27. Jezebel's "better" half.
28. The ___, Douglas novel.
30. "The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of ___." (Num. 3:14)
33. Rodent.
35. "Bring them up in the ___ and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)
38. "Your children shall ___ in the wilderness." (Num. 14:33)
41. Tore.
43. "And if it be ___ that I go also." (1 Cor. 16:4)
45. Puncture.
47. Amass.
48. The (Spanish).
49. To advise; counsel.
50. Greek letter.
51. Actor Johnson.
52. Spire ornament.
53. Philippine tree.

DOWN

1. Rose seedcases.
2. "An ___ is nothing in the world ... there is none other God." (1 Cor. 8:4)
3. Dismissal.
4. "The ___ of the power of the air." (Eph. 2:2)
5. Even. (poet.)
6. St. ___. (Florida city)
7. Palindromic name.
8. "Quit you like ___." (1 Cor. 16:13)
9. Arrange.
11. Saturday TV fare. (colloq.)
14. Recto. (abbr.)
16. Wrong. (prefix)
18. "Woe unto him that striveth with his ___." (Isa. 45:9)
21. Mischievous one.
23. Absalom's defining feature.
24. Yearbooks. (abbr.)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

WORD search

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| ADVICE | INSIGHT |
| ANSWER | INSTRUCTION |
| CAREFUL | JUST |
| CHASING | KNOWLEDGE |
| CHERISHES | LONG LIFE |
| CONSIDERATE | MERCY |
| CONVERSATION | PURE |
| COST | REBUKES |
| DISCERNING | RIGHTEOUS |
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| FOOLISH | SILENT |
| FOOLS | SILVER |
| GOLD | SINCERE |
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| HAPPINESS | VAPOR |
| HIDDEN | WIND |
| HUMILITY | WISDOM |
| IMPARTIAL | WISER |



The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to focus on encouraging one another

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Robert Mullins said he saw a tweet recently that probably hit home for a lot of pastors. “It said, ‘It’s Monday. Don’t resign today,’” related Mullins, president of the 2022 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference and pastor of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore. “It resonates with a lot of folks right now.”

It’s been a tough season for pastors, he said, noting the workplace trend that has been called the Great Resignation.

“There is a massive turnover, massive shift in churches right now,” Mullins explained.

“Looking at demographics, we knew there would be a point where many pastors left the pulpit. But we didn’t know COVID-19 was coming.

“We didn’t know churches

would get frustrated like they did, that they would cut [pastors] with no severances, or that pastors would stand up in a pulpit on a Sunday and say, ‘That’s it; I’m done.’”

That’s why this year’s Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference theme is “In Courage, Encourage: Loving and Leading the Body of Christ.”

“In these crazy days pastors seem to need encouragement more than ever before,” Mullins noted.

“Encouragement is essential for pastors particularly, not only to give out, but to receive. It takes courage sometimes to do that. It takes courage to get up when you feel depressed, to press on when you feel beat down.”

The conference is set for Nov. 14 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham.

“We want to encourage pastors where they are in ministry to press on and keep

going and just be an encouragement to them,” Mullins added.

“We want them to be able to relax, to be able to feel encouraged and equipped. It’s about pastors getting encouragement from the Holy Spirit from some other pastors out there.”

Scheduled speakers

▶ **Ken Adams**, pastor of Crossroads Church in Newnan, Georgia

▶ **Mark Clifton**, senior director of church replanting and rural strategy for the North American Mission Board

▶ **Jeff Iorg**, president of Gateway Seminary in Ontario, California

▶ **Sterling Lee**, pastor of First Baptist Church Pearl City, Hawaii

▶ **Fred Luter**, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

The conference will be structured with long breaks to give pastors time for fellowship.

For more information, visit albaptistpc.com.



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Participants gather for fellowship during the lunch session of the 2021 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

Lunch featuring a panel on pastoral leadership and encouragement for the “daily grind” will be provided. A special supper for bivocational and small church pastors also will be available.

Registration is required for both meals. Pastors can register at albaptistpc.com.

“We want guys to come in who are tired and be refreshed so they can press on,” Mullins said.

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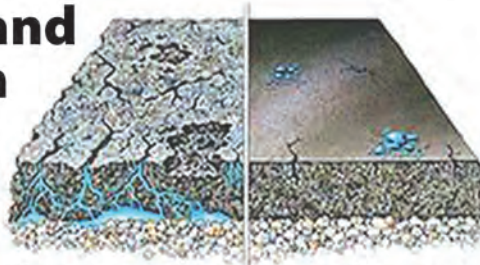


Fred Luter

Visit albaptistpc.com for more information, to RSVP for the conference and to register for the lunch or supper sessions.

Registration for the conference is separate from the meal registration. You must register for the luncheon and supper if you wish to attend.

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Nursing graduates in high demand nationwide

(continued from page 1) we just received another \$2.6 million from the [federal] Health Resources and Services Administration,” she added. “Students don’t have to pay anything out of pocket while they are in school.

“Once they get out of school, after 12 months they are asked to provide four years of education services,” Wynn said.

Job prospects for nurses are very promising.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics’

Employment Projections 2019–2029, registered nursing is listed among the top occupations in terms of job growth through 2029.

The RN workforce is expected to grow from 3 million in 2019 to 3.3 million in 2029, an increase of 221,900 or 7%.

Employment outlook

The Bureau also projects 175,900 openings for RNs each year through 2029 when nurse retirements and workforce exits are factored into the number of

nurses needed in the U.S.

Many of those jobs come with generous hiring bonuses and assistance for continuing education.

But in the short-term, “the nursing shortage is at an all-time critical level,” Barnes-Witherspoon noted.

“Various journal articles and other entities have documented the predicted needs in all areas — bedside, academia, school health, public health, etc.”

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing said the national nursing deficit is related to four main things:

1. Nursing school enrollment is not keeping pace with projected demand and the increased need for nursing services.
2. There is a shortage in the number of nursing school faculty. Given this lack of teachers, thousands interested in joining the



Photo courtesy of Samford University
“Samford is addressing the issue by preparing nurses to become educators,” Stephanie Wynn says.

nursing workforce cannot do so without degrees.

3. The retirement rate for nurses is growing rapidly, as more than half of the RN workforce is older than 50.

4. An aging population in the United States continues to drive demand for nursing services.

For those interested in pursuing a nursing degree, Alabama Baptist colleges

are providing options, Barnes-Witherspoon said.

For example, the University of Mobile recently launched a new two-year associate degree program.

“One of our vital stakeholders provided funds for 15 scholarships to assist these students financially,” she said.

The UM School of Nursing and enrollment services continually recruit for its nursing programs, Barnes-Witherspoon said.

“We have increased our efforts to recruit more males, first-generation and underserved and diverse populations. In the May 2022 accelerated class, six female and six male students graduated,” she said.

“I’m thankful and inspired by our progress in the School of Nursing. It takes a team, but we are much more than a team — we are family.”

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Sydney
Cancer Survivor

Inspiration happens **here.**

Sydney was diagnosed with osteosarcoma at 13 years old. Through her treatment and recovery, she bonded with the doctors and nurses saying, “they became like family to me.” She was so inspired by her care team, she decided to become a doctor and help other children going through a scary and similar situation. She also wanted to show that people with physical challenges can and should pursue medicine, too. She believes her journey to becoming a doctor was inspired as a patient here at Children’s of Alabama.



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 11

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



TURN TO GOD Amos 4:1–13

Indulge (1–3)

As a prophet of God, Amos was required to state God's message, and in Chapter 4, he reveals God's judgment upon the northern kingdom. His first criticism is aimed at the wealthy women of Israel, whom he calls cows of Bashan. These women were wealthy and healthy, just as the cows were in this fertile region. However, these women were wealthy because of their exploitation of the poor and needy.

God always expresses His care for the poor, and these women were taking advantage of their place in society by oppressing those beneath them. God states these women will be punished for their behavior and explains they will be taken away with fishhooks. Many ancient armies would take their captives back to their homeland by putting fishhooks in the captives' lips or noses. Connecting the captives by rope created a line of captives who were virtually unable to run away. It was painful and embarrassing. This is exactly what happened to the northern kingdom when it was taken by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

Worship (4–5)

After detailing what would happen to the oppressive women of Israel, Amos mocks the worship of the Israelites by calling it "sin." He tells them to go to Bethel and Gilgal, two sites where worship took place, and to bring their tithes and offerings. Only these tithes and offerings were not true worship. They were sinful.

The people were sacrificing and bringing tithes, but not for the right reason. Instead of truly worshipping God, they were doing it for show. They were giving more than was required, but they were doing it to show off their wealth and "righteousness."

When we read the Gospels, we see Jesus dealing with the same issue. For example, in Mark 12:41–44, Jesus reveals that the poor woman who gave only two small coins gave more than the rich people who gave larger sums of money because God

knew her heart. Worship is always a matter of the heart. If we worship — singing, reading Scripture, giving — without the right intention, God judges it as meaningless.

Refuse (6–11)

Despite the impending judgment, God, through Amos, showed all the ways He had tried to get Israel's attention. While God is indeed holy and must punish sin, He is also loving and desires His people to return to Him. He had brought famine, plagues, invading insects to eat the crops, drought and more.

All of these judgments God brought on the Israelites so they would repent and turn back to God, but they refused.

God disciplines those He loves (Heb. 12:7), and we need to be mindful of God's discipline in our lives. It is easy for us to look at these people in the Old Testament and think about how foolish they were and how blind to what God was trying to do in their lives, but we are often guilty of the same. When bad things happen to us or around us, instead of blaming God for our misfortunes, we should pray and see how God is using those experiences for our sanctification.

Prepare (12–13)

Because the Israelites did not repent, God was bringing judgment, ultimately in the form of exile. God's patience is not endless. There will come a time when He will bring judgment. As Christians this reminds us we need to always be repenting of sin. As the Church we are Christ's bride, and we need to live as such. Christians living in sin are on a dangerous path.

God's judgment is coming on the unbeliever as well, and this reminds us we need to be living out the gospel. We need to preach the gospel to a lost and dying world so people can see their need for a Savior, come to Christ and thereby be saved. Otherwise they will face God's eternal judgment in the form of eternal separation in hell.

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



FAITH ON DISPLAY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS James 2:1–13

Don't play favorites based on outward appearances. (1–4)

In James' moral economy, the rich will eventually fade away, and the poor will one day be exalted and vindicated (1:9–11).

Later, James will give a prophetic warning against the rich who oppress the poor by holding back their wages (5:1–6).

Given the way James condemns the rich and portends their future humiliation, he is shocked that as the poor followers of Jesus assemble, they favor the very people who oppress them — the rich (2:6).

James reminds the believers such favoritism is inconsistent with their faith in Christ.

What kind of favoritism is this?

The setting in view may be a judicial scenario, one in which members of James' audience are judging cases with partiality and are perverting justice.

They see the fine clothing of the wealthy who come into their assembly, and they see the dirty clothes of the poor.

They do not seat them equally in the judicial assembly. Instead they seat them according to their wealth.

When they gather to judge specific cases, they favor the rich over the poor as they render judgments.

They are partial and corrupt judges.

Don't play favorites by discounting those God desires to use. (5–7)

James counters their partiality to the rich by emphasizing God's preference for the poor. Whereas they choose the rich, God has "chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the Kingdom."

This is precisely what Jesus says in Luke's Gospel: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20).

And it is like Jesus' statement that "it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23).

James' audience has dishonored those whom God has chosen — the poor — and instead has chosen those who scorn the name of Christ — the rich.

Don't play favorites because we are called to love others. (8–13)

James warns them that when they judge with partiality against the poor, they are breaking the law that requires them to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:18). When they judge cases with partiality, they break the law, and they themselves will be judged by the law. If they judge without mercy (i.e., with bias against the poor), they also will be judged without mercy.

"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Blind Boys of Alabama: We gotta bring the church to them

Being part of a worldwide athletic event might be a pinnacle for many acts, but for the internationally acclaimed gospel group Blind Boys of Alabama, performing at the closing ceremonies of the World Games in Birmingham was one of many highlights in a long and successful musical career.

Throughout their years of singing, they have performed all over the world. They have been to the White House three times and earned five Grammy Awards. More recently they were one of the groups performing at the World Games closing ceremonies in Birmingham.

Jimmy Carter, lead singer, group leader and the only original member left, remarked about performing there, “It’s kind of special, all right. I didn’t know we were going to be in it until it had already been decided. But I’m proud to be part of it. I can speak for the Blind Boys when I say they are proud too.”

How it started

The original Blind Boys met while singing in choirs at the Alabama School for the Blind in Talladega. The group officially started in 1939 and took their act on the road in June 1944. The formation of the group rose out of a competitive spirit.

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.



BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA

Photo courtesy of Jim Herrington

“At the time we were together, we had another quartet already on the roll called the Golden Gate Quartet. They were nationally known, and we thought that what they were doing, we could too,” Carter recalled.

The boys formed their own quartet, then called the Happyland Jubilee Singers. The name was changed due to an outside influence.

“There was another blind group out of Mississippi at the same time the blind group in Alabama came out. They were named the Jackson Harmonieres, from a little town in Mississippi called Pineywoods about 19–20 miles from Jackson,” Carter remembered.

“There was this promoter out of Newark, New Jersey, who had a gimmick that said, ‘We are going to have a battle of music between the blind boys of Alabama and the blind boys of Mississippi,’” Carter continued.

“The name drew so [many peo-

ple] that we both decided to keep the names. That’s how the Blind Boys of Mississippi came about, and that’s how the Blind Boys of Alabama came about — from this promoter and this battle of music.”

The early years were difficult, Carter said. Segregation was strong in the South, and there were many places they couldn’t perform.

“When we got a chance to sing to the white people, they wanted it all the time,” he said, “but we weren’t allowed to give it to them.

“Our audience now is mostly white just because we were finally allowed the chance to show the white people what we had. They accepted it, and they have been accepting it all this time.”

Doing God’s work

Carter identifies himself as Baptist, but traveling and singing on weekends throughout his adult life has meant he seldom is able to at-

tend church on Sundays. However, he knows he’s doing God’s work.

“If the people that we try to touch don’t come to church, then we gotta bring the church to them,” Carter declared. “That’s what we do.”

“Amazing Grace” is both Carter’s favorite and the Blind Boys’ signature song. They all know that, without amazing grace, they wouldn’t be performing.

Carter said fellowship with the other Blind Boys is another thing that keeps him going.

“They are dedicated, just like I am, and so we get around and we fellowship together and we talk,” Carter said.

“Our primary aim when we sing to people is to touch their lives. We’ve had people come up and tell us how we have touched them.”

Carter also has been moved by the awards and opportunities the Blind Boys have had.

“When we got our first Grammy in 2001, that was a historical moment to me,” he said. “We’ve sung for three presidents (George W. Bush, Clinton and Obama). All of them were very, very nice to us.”

But singing about hope — that’s the group’s mission.

“We’re glad to get accolades or something like that, but we want to touch a life. We want to cause somebody to turn around and go back. We like to talk about the hope. When people have life, there’s hope too.”

Looking back over the years of performing Carter said, “We made it because we are firm believers in God, and we promised Him that if He would help us out, we would serve Him until we died. I’m the only one that’s left [from the original group], but I’m going to stay here as long as I can.”

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Nothing is Impossible with God

BUT JESUS LOOKED AT THEM AND SAID, "WITH MEN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT NOT WITH GOD; FOR WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE." MARK 10:27 (NKJV)

You've been there. You've been to the place where you were ready to reach for a star, set your dreams in motion, get your life moving and then the unexpected happened. Clouds became so thick you could hardly see your star; your dreams went off kilter and your path was more than rocky. You looked at it all and declared, "It's impossible!"

In a culture that fosters fear, we long for peace. In a world of shocking headlines, we seek hope, and in a life that is continually changing, we seek something to hold on to.

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Teaching tips

By Michael J. Brooks
The Baptist Paper

3 focus areas for leading effective Bible studies

Ken Braddy believes an effective group Bible study is like a rocket with three stages. “Rockets have multiple stages that help get the capsule into space and make the mission successful,” the Sunday School director for LifeWay Christian Resources said in a recent webinar. “I believe there are three significant stages in Bible study as we lead groups to understand and live out God’s word.”

The “Three Stages In Creating Out-of-this-World Bible Studies” webinar was one of 10 set for a “Training Thru ’22” series.

Braddy noted the three stages are motivation, examination and application, and he asked participants to vote in a “chat box” for which one they thought was most important. He said nearly everyone selected either examination or application — but he believes motivation is the most significant.

“We cannot assume that people are interested in what we teach,” he explained. “We have to focus their attention on Bible study. The teacher has a role to play, and it’s to create energy in the beginning.”

1. Motivation

Braddy listed 10 possibilities for engaging interest including telling a compelling story, introducing a current event, playing a song, watching a video clip and relating the topic to the learner’s life.

“Recently I played John Denver’s ‘Take Me Home, Country Roads’ for our class, and we did it twice,” he said during the webinar earlier this year. “By the second time we were singing along.

“Then I turned to Ephesians 5 where Paul talked about rules for



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Christian homes. This was a good way to get everyone interested in that day’s theme about making our homes beautiful as God intended.”

2. Examination

The examination stage is the longest part of Bible study, Braddy related.

“We’ve not done an official study, but an anecdotal one, and teachers tell us the average time they have to teach is 30–35 minutes,” he said. “Some have a little more time and others have less. Whatever the case, this isn’t a long block, so we have to be very strategic with our time and devote most of our time to examining the text.”

Though biblical exposition time can be limited, Braddy encouraged teachers to resist the temptation to do all the talking.

“I explained this in last month’s seminar — ‘How to Ask Great Questions and Lead Engaging Discussion,’” he said. “I think a teacher must be a ‘guide by their side’ rather

than a ‘sage on the stage.’ Discussion enhances learning.”

Braddy distinguishes eight learning approaches: relational, verbal, visual, reflective, logical, physical, natural and musical. Teachers should use two or three in each session, he believes.

“I’m a logical learner,” he acknowledged. “I like PowerPoints and charts and handout sheets for the class to fill in key words. But teachers shouldn’t stick to only one learning approach.”

3. Application

Speaking about the application stage, Braddy suggested teachers “stop short” if there’s not good application to real life.

“This is the second-longest section of typical teaching time,” he noted. “In a 45-minute session, I think we’d give five minutes to motivation and 30 minutes to examination. This leaves 10 minutes for application to life.”

Braddy said he emphasizes appli-

cation by doing a “check-in” at the next session.

“I often ask, ‘How did it work for you last week when you tried to apply our lesson to your life?’” he related.

Lifeway’s Bible Studies for Life curriculum emphasizes application, Braddy said. The series was redesigned 10 years ago to facilitate discussion.

‘Walk, run and soar’

“One of the experts we consulted suggested we consider ‘walk, run and soar,’” he recalled. “So in the ‘Live It Out’ section of the lesson we have something ‘unchurched Harry and Mary’ could do, such as memorize a verse; something a maturing believer might do, such as encourage someone in the church; and something a mature believer might do, such as doing a Scripture search for specific needs in their lives.”

Churches can download four BSL lessons free at Biblestudiesforlife.com.

“This has been a difficult two years for our churches,” Braddy acknowledged. “No one asked for the pandemic. Earlier we heard in the range of a 60% return to church, but now we’re hearing about 80 to 90% return. We’re coming out of this trying time.

“We love you teachers for hanging in there. Only you and the pastor open God’s word and teach people how to live, so keep up this good work.”

The ninth webinar in the series, “7 Ways to Shrink Your Bible Study Group,” is scheduled for Sept. 15. Participants may register at Lifeway.com/training22.

Braddy also publishes articles about Sunday School and other group Bible study at kenbraddy.com.

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Multiplying

Caroline Anderson
International Mission Board

South Asian believers stepping into leadership roles

Seeds of the gospel have spread across South Asia, and new churches are being planted. Churches plant churches who plant churches, and each church's birth and subsequent growth requires local leadership. South Asian leaders are putting into practice what they've learned and are training others to do the same.

Aadya is one of many South Asians spreading the seeds of the gospel. Clark and Elizabeth Atwood serve with the International Mission Board in Aadya's South Asian nation. They have invested in the lives of local church leaders and trained and equipped them to take the reins.

During a training, the Atwoods were thrilled to hear how Aadya fit Scripture into her cultural context. Aadya wove in the New Testament story of how Apollos was taught by Priscilla and Aquila. The story wasn't originally part of the training material. This was proof of local ownership — a goal of church multiplication. Aadya looked for applicable Bible stories to weave into existing training material.

Clark said their goal is 2 Timothy 2:2: "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

The Atwoods and other IMB missionaries, both past and present, have trained believers to share the gospel, disciple Christians and start new churches. In many areas in this South Asian country, the gospel has been entrusted to local believers.

Some church networks have long-standing roots. An IMB missionary who served in the area for 20 years mentored a house church network leader. Fifteen years later, Clark mentored the house church leader's



IMB photo

son. Now, Clark's role with these networks is understanding what leaders say is working well and what isn't. Then appropriate action can take place.

One sizeable house church network that has seen third-generation church plants is ministering among what was an unengaged, unreached people group. Another church network is working with an unreached people group whose population comprises between 80% and 90% of the population.

Raahil and Sadiya are examples of a modern-day Priscilla and Aquila. The couple minister together and have started several groups of people who are interested in the gospel.

They also are learning to trust when the Holy Spirit leads them away from an area.

"That's part of the multiplication and exit process," Clark said. "That's a really cool story of local ownership happening, where he's willing to make that decision as the leader to turn a different way, based on being led by the Spirit."

Historically, some church networks have relied on Western missionaries and organizations for funding and direction. Modern-day Priscillas and Aquilas like Aadya, Raahil and Sadiya are leading local leaders to support their own churches.

Persecution follows

History has proven, when churches are planted in new areas, persecution often follows.

Persecution is attempting to batter the network of third-generation churches. This network champions

multiplication and leadership development, and many people are committing their lives to Christ and leaving the faith of their community.

One family required hospitalization after being beaten. The persecutors also burned their house. Clark said the persecution is intended to force reconversion, which in most cases, isn't successful.

Another example of persecution was the kidnapping of a prominent house church network leader, and Raahil's mother's house was burned down.

The roots of these churches are strong, and Christians are weathering the wind and the storms. The seed of the gospel continues to spread, and church multiplication has a ripple effect.

I WOULD HAVE BEEN IN CHURCH THIS MORNING, BUT I WAS LOW ON GAS AND BARELY HAD ENOUGH TO MAKE IT OUT HERE TO THE GOLF COURSE.

YEAH. THINGS ARE TOUGH ALL OVER.

