

# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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The percentage of Americans who identify as Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and other non-Christian faiths could double by 2070.



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## Religious future

### Fewer than half of Americans may be Christian by 2070, study shows

By Bob Smetana  
Religion News Service

America has long prided itself on being a country where people can choose whatever religion they like. The majority has long chosen Christianity.

By 2070, that may no longer be the case.

If current trends continue, Christians could make up less than half of the population —

and as little as a third — in 50 years. Meanwhile, the so-called nones, or the religiously unaffiliated, could make up close to half of the population. And the percentage of Americans who identify as Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and other non-Christian faiths could double.

Those are among the major findings of a new report from the Pew Research Center regarding America's religious future — a future where Christianity, though diminished, persists while non-Christian faiths grow amid rising secularization.

Researchers projected possible religious futures for the United States using a number

of factors, including birth rates, migration patterns, demographics like age and sex and the current religious landscape. They also looked at how religion is passed from one generation to another and how often people switch religions — in particular, Christians who become nones, a number that has been increasing in recent years.

#### Unaffiliated growing

They projected four different scenarios, based on differing rates of religious switching, from a continued increase to no switching at all.

“While the scenarios in this report vary in the extent of religious disaffiliation they

project, they all show Christians continuing to shrink as a share of the U.S. population, even under the counterfactual assumption that all switching came to a complete stop in 2020,” according to the report. “At the same time, the unaffiliated are projected to grow under all four scenarios.”

Currently, about a third (31%) of Christians become disaffiliated before they turn 30, according to Pew Research. Twenty-one percent of nones become Christian as young adults. Should those switching rates remain stable, Christians would make up 46% of the population by 2070, while nones would make (See ‘Migration,’ page 12)

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With Hosted Church, a service provided by TAB Media Group, getting a website up and running has been “a good experience for us,” says Jeff Fuller, pastor of Rockford Baptist Church. “It has been very easy to work with.”

## Rockford Baptist pastor testifies to benefits of Hosted Church

Jeff Fuller said his church didn't have a website before they tried Hosted Church. They had given another web hosting company a shot, but it hadn't worked out.

With Hosted Church, a service provided by TAB Media Group, getting a website up and running was “a good experience for us,” said Fuller, pastor of Rockford Baptist Church. “It didn't take long for them to put together a template for me and send me something to approve.”

At the beginning, James Hammack, digital services manager for TAB Media, personalized Rockford Baptist's website with the colors, information and images they chose and continued to update it for them as needed — all part of the services offered by Hosted Church.

### User friendly

But along the way Fuller also got Hammack to teach him how to update the site himself, so now he can handle weekly changes on his own.

“I'm able to go in and edit whatever I need to,” Fuller related. “It has been very easy to work

with, very easy to manipulate.

“James has been great. He has shared his expertise with me and helped me put things together.”

Someone from TAB Media also emails Fuller every month to check in and make sure he's got everything he needs.

### Secure and protected

Fuller said he appreciates the relationship and is grateful that Hosted Church is run by TAB Media.

“I'm glad we do it through TAB

Media because I can trust it. I know that it's secure, protected and everything,” he noted, adding the church website now offers an online giving option.

Hammack said Hosted Church takes good care of the sites it creates as well as the people who create content for them.

Hosted Church can make changes or teach church staff how to do it. Either way someone is always on call to help in an emergency.

With Hosted Church, a low annual cost covers those services plus the purchase of a domain name. It also offers regular security scans and backups to keep data safe. (Grace Thornton)

For more information about Hosted Church, visit [hostedchurch.com](http://hostedchurch.com) or call 205-870-4720, ext. 108.

## 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



[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)



@RashionalThts



## Praying for our friends in Missouri with death of editor Hinkle

A fellow state Baptist paper editor died Sept. 22, less than a month after he announced his upcoming transition to editor emeritus in January.

Don Hinkle founded The Pathway newspaper 20 years ago following conflict within the Missouri Baptist Convention — conflict that included the state's original Baptist newspaper, Word & Way.

While he took a different approach as editor from many of his counterparts across the nation, past and present, one thing about Don is that he loved being in the mix of discussing and reporting on what was happening denominationally and culturally.

In fact, he had two roles: editor of the state convention-owned Pathway publication and public policy adviser for the convention.

His plans were to dedicate his full attention to the public policy position beginning in January. His longtime associate editor Ben Hawkins would become editor at that time.

However, Ben woke up Sept. 23 as editor and what would have been a three-month hand-off happened immediately. He's prepared and will step into the position gracefully and confidently, even as he mourns the

death of his dear friend and mentor. Much of that preparation is because of Don's investment in Ben.

While I only saw them from afar most days, I could tell the mentoring relationship existed.

I'm so glad I had the opportunity to catch up with Ben while we were both in Nashville covering the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee meeting last week. We chatted about Don and his coming transition, having no idea the type of transition was much bigger than we anticipated.

I'm also grateful I reached out to Don in recent weeks to con-

gratulate him on his retirement from the editor role and receive back his typical "Thanks, Jen, best wishes!" response.

We didn't chat often, but when we did, he always encouraged me in my journey as an editor and seemed to enjoy our brainstorming about how best to stay fresh in our work.

Don had lots of training in the newspaper and media world. He was a former reporter for The Daily Press in Newport News, Virginia; The Tennessean in Nashville; and The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Kentucky. He also served a stint as editor of The Daily Herald in Columbia, Tennessee.

He was a graduate of the WORLD Journalism Institute and was a fellow at the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

Don earned a bachelor's degree in English from Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia, and master's degrees in Christian education and theology from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Don loved investing in young journalists and held an annual journalism retreat for communication students in the Missouri Baptist universities, the correspondent team for The Pathway and others in the area.

Shawn Hendricks on our TAB Media Group team had been a presenter in years past, and I had my first experience with it in 2021. In fact, my first action as a guest presenter last year took place exactly one year to the date I learned of Don's death last week, Sept. 23.

Don took pride in the workshop and always wanted the topics to focus on practical tips and lessons learned.

The retreat was certainly a highlight for him each year. He got to lead the 2022 journalism retreat a week before his death and shared a final word as editor. What a blessing for the staff and retreat participants to have that moment with Don.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist  
Jennifer Davis Rash captures a selfie with Don Hinkle during The Pathway's September 2021 journalism retreat in Jefferson City, Missouri. Rash was invited to share about TAB Media's new national publication, The Baptist Paper.

# Your Voice



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

## Christian fellowship crucial for young adults' faith walk

By Jessica Ingram  
the-scroll.com

Let's ask ourselves some honest questions: How am I doing? How are you doing?

Are you drowning in the face of life's challenges? Are you emotionally drained? Are you wondering whether following Christ is really "worth it"?

If so, when did you last spend significant time with people who pour into you? When did you last spend time with fellow believers in close, intimate discipleship?

Fellowship with other believers is vital for our Christian walk — for

fun and laughs, and for encouragement, accountability and learning.

We ought to surround ourselves with people who will hold us accountable, call out our sins, encourage us, pray with us and talk with us about hard topics or passages of Scripture.

Without that support, I believe it is incredibly difficult for anyone to be actively growing in faith.

Many young adults are leaving the church, and a recent analysis by Pew Research suggests a decline in U.S. Christians over the next 50 years (see story, page 1).

Could the lack of genuine Chris-

tian fellowship be a contributing factor to this exodus?

### Seeking peace

Having deep friendships has encouraged me in my faith. When I have doubts about something happening in my life or questions about God, I know who I can go to.

In my experience, sitting alone, dwelling on doubts and questions is never beneficial. It always seems to lead to deeper doubt, more questions and an increase in anxiety.

It also tends to push me to find "peace" on social media or to ask my questions via a Google search box. Those platforms are not concerned with my spiritual well-being.

Twitter doesn't know me and my struggles like my friends do. Facebook doesn't love me and want the very best for me. Google is not a reliable theological sounding board.

Personal fellowship isn't important because of the easy, fun times. Fellowship among believers is most important in the hard times, in the times when I'm struggling.

Those deep relationships have shaped my faith walk.

They keep me connected to God even when He feels distant. They encourage me and lift me up when I've had a hard day, week or season. They walk alongside me as I make the faith of my grandparents and parents my own.

I've never had this level of deep Christian friendship in my life before. I've also never felt connected to God in the way I do now — desir-

ing to grow, commune with Him and see His glory reflected in the world.

I am sure that is not a coincidence. Staying connected with fellow believers has been integral for my staying connected to God.

Maybe you're thinking, "But I'm an introvert. I'm really happy to be by myself and with my own thoughts. Being around people can exhaust me."

Me too.

But let me tell you what I've learned over the past year or so. When I'm with my closest friends, and we're just spending time together talking — about God, our struggles, the funny thing that happened to us — I never feel drained. Quite the opposite actually. I leave spiritually and emotionally energized, knowing I have intimate fellowship with people I know I can trust.

### Meaningful friendships

This deep, personal fellowship cannot be found in corporate gatherings, and often I think it also requires something beyond a Bible study group. Both are important forms of fellowship urged to all believers, but meaningful one-on-one fellowship offers something different.

So this is my encouragement to you: Don't settle for just going to church on Sundays and joining a Bible study or Sunday School class.

Be intentional and seek out friendships that encourage you and energize you in your faith. Nurture those friendships and don't shy away from asking hard questions or having hard conversations.

I believe deep relationships with fellow believers will only deepen your love and knowledge of God.



INGRAM

## Perspectives on Gen Z

Reaching the next generation is doable, but it can be difficult. It is obtainable, but it can be agonizing. It can be compelling, but it can be costly.

When you put your money where your mouth is and you take strong action to reach the next generation, you will find out who truly wants to and who truly doesn't.

**Pastor James Merritt**  
Cross Pointe Church  
Duluth, Georgia

I'm personally encouraged by this generation of students.

According to a recent Wall Street Journal survey, 30% of Gen Z says, "religion is very important to them" (lowest in U.S. history).

But 78% say, "living a self-fulfilled life is very important to them." This should be extremely eye-opening to us.

That's the threshold to cross in communicating to Gen Z — help them see that a fulfilled life only comes from Someone outside of self.

**Shane Pruitt**  
"7 common traits of Gen Z in their own words"  
shanepruitt.com

Share online or email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

“Eternity is at play, and we have the privilege to be part of the greatest story ever told.”

JEREMIAH WORTEN

Senior at William Carey University and student summer missionary serving in Guam

“God just directed my path. Somehow He always knows best and gets us where we need to be.” said **Chris Harper**, who has received two kidney transplants in his life — one from his mother and the other from his wife.

“Our generations now are not looking at God ... and we’ve got to give our kids something to hang on to,” said **Charlotte Gray**, who has led **Bible Drill** ministry for more than 50 years and is a member of **First Baptist Church West Memphis, Arkansas**.

“Food is a tool to reach people and tell them about Christ. We have more people who need food, [which] means we have more

opportunities to tell people about Jesus and what He can do for them,” said **Jim Jones**, who with his wife, **Linda**, founded **Alabama Childhood Food Solutions**.

“When we pray alone, the Lord is with us ... but there’s an additional encouragement when we pray with others. As Paul said in Ephesians 3, we have ‘power with all the saints,’” said **Claude King, former discipleship and church specialist at Lifeway Christian Resources**, who has been helping people and churches make disciples for 30 years.

“God moved in many miraculous ways on this trip, from seeing lives changed to a new outlook on how

hard work should be done” said **Taylor Robinson, a missions team member of Thomasville Baptist Church in Thomasville**, of three weeks of ministry in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

“What I learned is there’s nothing more exciting than telling somebody about Jesus.”

“Even today, many people think if they go to church or if they read their Bible, then they are in good standing with God. This is the foundation of legalism, the idea that if I do the right things outwardly, then I am right with God. Instead, God is concerned with the condition of the heart,” said **Robert Olsen, associate professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile**.

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @brocraige

Been preaching for 35 years. To this day, every time I stand behind a pulpit I realize afresh and anew, that I could never do it without God’s call. That God called me still amazes me.

### @scottsauls

If reading the Bible causes me to scrutinize others more than I scrutinize myself, I am not reading the Bible correctly.

### @DanielDickard

Disciple-making is not a solo act with your favorite online preacher, podcaster or author. It is a localized journey with other believers that requires an opened Bible, consistent gatherings, honest dialogue and mutual accountability.

### @johnmarkclifton

Don’t be so quick to say “some churches need to die.” ... This

110-year rural community church dwindled to 3 active members. Two years later, more than 60 gathered for worship. They’ve baptized 10 people including a (recent) lake baptism. Linwood Baptist is only one of 150 replants this year.

### @nathanfinn

When Christians neglect to regularly read, study and meditate upon the Scriptures, other words from other gods inevitably begin to fill that discipleship void.

### @preacherchuck96

“But I believe the greatest enemy of the Bible is the so-called Christian who simply ignores the Bible or disregards it.” #AdrianRogers

### @LysaTerKeurst

God is faithful even in the midst of disappointment. No matter what we feel is being taken from us right now, we can place it in the hands

of God. Give it to Him as our sacrifice. For whatever we willingly place in the hands of God, He will redeem.

### @jasonkeithallen

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” —C.S. Lewis

### @\_CSpurgeon\_

When asked, ‘What is more important: prayer or reading the Bible?’ I ask, ‘What is more important: breathing in or breathing out?’

### @mhenslee

There’s no insignificant service in the kingdom of God. Whether you’re rocking babies in the nursery, folding dozens of bulletins (some will totally ignore), or preaching the good news to thousands, it all matters, and is all used by God for His good purposes.

## Begging for the Bread of Life

I served in South Asia. I saw a lot. But something I’ll never forget is this:

“Woman,” she said. Eyes desperate. Skinny girl. Tattered dress and matted hair.

“Woman,” she said with her hands held out, body shaking.

She looked back as if someone was watching her.

“Woman!”

Poverty is real. It’s heart-wrenching. This was my first encounter with begging.

Children who have nothing are forced by their elders to get money from anyone they can.

My team was only allowed to give candy if this happened, so we would often have candy to give children in these situations. But hearing her call to me over and over and over again, it spoke to me in a deeper way.

This is what South Asia is like. This is its heart ... begging. Begging for something to hold on to. Begging for truth and new life. Begging for Jesus. If only they knew that it’s a free invitation.

If only they knew Isaiah 55! Come! Buy and eat, without money and without cost. It’s free! Here! Accept it!

We need laborers. We need believers, who have been entrusted with the greatest news of our lives, to go and give this news to them.

**L, a student who served in South Asia this past summer**  
[onemissionstudents.org](http://onemissionstudents.org)

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to Me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

**Isaiah 55:2**

# 3 stories you should know



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

Willie McLaurin, interim president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, issues a plea to Southern Baptists for unity during the EC's Sept. 19-20 meeting in Nashville. "As a network of churches, we have a mission. We are called, commanded and commissioned to carry out the Great Commission," he said. "Even though we have navigated and are still navigating some stormy waters ... God is at work in us and through us."

## *EC presidential search team provides update*

The search team tasked with recommending a candidate for president of the SBC Executive Committee has narrowed the field to 11, said search team leader and Illinois pastor Adron Robinson.

Robinson gave the update during the opening session of the EC's Sept. 19-20 meeting in Nashville.

Nominations for the position were accepted via an online portal through Aug. 26, according to the search team's website. Robinson said 14 of the 25 nominees declined to be considered.

"There is much work to be done, and God knows who the next EC president is," Robinson said. "All we have to do is stay in tune and walk with Him until He raises that candidate up for us. We will continue to process. Keep praying for us." (TAB Media)

## *Lifeway summer camps give to IMB, NAMB*

Lifeway summer campers and staff members gave more than half a million dollars in 2022 to support missions efforts in North America and across the globe.

During the SBC Executive Committee meeting Sept. 19, Ben Mandrell, Lifeway president and CEO, presented a check for \$368,862.11 to International Mission Board President Paul Chitwood and a check for \$174,438.70 to North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell. The gifts were given by those who attended and served at FUGE Camps, CentriKid and Student Life Camp this year.

"We believe the focus on missions is an important part of discipling students," Mandrell said during the presentation. "I'm thankful we can partner with NAMB and IMB to spread the gospel." (TAB Media)

## SBC Executive Committee tackles several business items

Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee members addressed 11 motions referred from the annual meeting in June and dealt with budget matters during its Sept. 19-20 meeting in Nashville.

Along with approving the 2022-2023 EC and SBC operating budget of \$8,335,000, EC members also approved a transfer from investment accounts up to \$500,000 for expenses related to a Department of Justice investigation of EC and potential relocation expenses for incoming staff.

Arkansas pastor Archie Mason, chair of the Committee on Convention Finances and Stewardship Development, reported that Cooperative Program receipts are up 4.68% this year over the same period last year. However, the EC operating budget is behind due to expenses related to the Sexual Abuse Task Force and Guidepost Solutions investigation.

Among the motions handled during the meeting was one related to an abuse awareness em-

phasis. EC members approved a recommendation from the Committee on Southern Baptist Relations to establish Caring Well Sunday on the last Sunday in September each year. The first emphasis will be observed Sept. 24, 2023.

The same committee also created a work group to study whether Baptist Press should be made an editorially independent news source. Among the members of that work group is Dana McCain, an EC member from Dothan who writes for AL.com.

Members of the EC's Committee on Convention Missions and Ministry declined to suspend the work of the SBC Resolutions Committee but recommended resolutions be submitted by messengers "for review and consideration as early as April 1 but no later than 20 days prior to the next SBC annual meeting; the initial report of the Committee on Resolutions shall be released no later than 10 days

prior to the annual meeting of the Convention, and the final report shall be published in the first day's bulletin." The recommendation was approved.

A motion requesting EC to cease using executive sessions was deemed in conflict with SBC bylaws, but EC members reiterated a commitment "to limit the use of executive sessions to instances when deemed absolutely necessary."

Upon recommendation of the SBC Credentials Committee, the EC dis-fellowshipped two churches: College Park Baptist Church in Greensboro,

North Carolina, for reported "open affirmation, approval and endorsement of homosexual behavior," and Amazing Grace Community Church in Franklinville, New Jersey, due to the "lack of cooperation demonstrated by the church to resolve concerns regarding alleged discriminatory behavior."

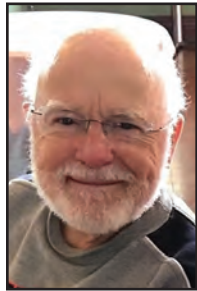
Read full coverage  
of the Sept. 19-20  
EC meeting at  
[tabonline.org/  
EC-fall-wrap](http://tabonline.org/EC-fall-wrap).

NEWS

# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

► **Ted Swann**, 89, of Athens, died Sept. 15 at Huntsville Hospital Hospice.



SWANN

Born in Etowah County in 1933, Swann gave his life to the Lord when he was a young boy. The day after he graduated from Cleveland High School in April 1951, he volunteered for the U.S. Air Force. He used the GI bill to attend Samford University. For 25 years Swann led churches in north Alabama. He was the pastor at Sherwood Baptist Church, Huntsville, for 16 years. After going to Southeastern Seminary, he served as pastor to churches in Virginia and North Carolina and as a prison chaplain for the N.C. Department of Corrections at Foothills Correctional Facility and in Burke County where he ministered to young offenders. He also was chaplain at Burke Hospice and Palliative Care for 12 years in Morganton, North Carolina.

Although he was a member of First Baptist Church Morganton, around 2010 he was asked to teach a Sunday School class at Glen Alpine United Methodist Church. He continued to teach this class even after becoming disabled in 2019 and moving to assisted living in Morganton.

He is survived by four children, seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

## AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION



EASLEY

► **Jeremy Easley** is the new associate minister of music and children of **East Memorial Baptist Church, Prattville**. He attended Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, and University of North Alabama, Florence. He traveled with his family 42 weeks out of the year for 17 years in full-time evangelism and spent 5 years with two

southern gospel groups. He also led worship at two churches in Tennessee.

He and his wife, Deidra, have two children.

## BETHEL ASSOCIATION

► **Grant Guyer** is the new minister of youth of **First Baptist Church Demopolis**.

A native of Pierson, Florida, Guyer grew up attending FBC Seville, Florida. He was saved at age 9 while attending Vacation Bible School and was baptized the following year.

He played football at Crown College in St. Bonifacius, Minnesota, but after one year, Guyer was ready to move back South.



GUYER

He was sensing God's call on his life to serve in full-time ministry. He enrolled at William Carey College, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in Christian studies. Guyer is now enrolled at New Orleans Seminary. While in college, he was an intern in the youth and college ministry at Petal-Harvey Baptist Church, Petal, Mississippi. He served summers at Fuge Camps.

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Susan Forehand** retired recently after 43 years of ministry at **Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills**. Her most recent role was minister to adults and women, and she was Shades' first women's minister. When she first joined the staff, she served as an associate in recreation on the inaugural team that opened the then-Christian Life Center. She is a graduate of Samford University. She has been married to David for 41



FOREHAND

years, and they have one child.

► **Sandi Glenn** recently celebrated her 30th anniversary working with preschool and children at **NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville**. Her current title is preschool and children's ministry associate, although she has served in several different roles over the years. She also works with senior adults and plans events for the Fun Setters Ministry. She and her husband, David, have three children and one grandchild. Bill Wilks is pastor.



GLENN

## CHOCTAW ASSOCIATION

► **Red Springs Baptist Church, Gilbertown**, celebrated its 50th anniversary Sept. 11 with Terry

Long (left), director of missions for Choctaw Baptist Association, serving as guest speaker. Pastor Joey Gambrell (center) shared the church's history. Congregational singing was led by Joe Knight, with Marilyn Williamson playing the piano. Richard Ferguson and Second Mile provided special music. Jerrol Hare (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate. "We had a wonderful time,"



Photo courtesy of Jerrol Hare

said Williamson, who also serves as the church's clerk and treasurer. "It was great seeing many people come back for the celebration. We are happy to have been here for 50 years."

## SULPHUR SPRINGS ASSOCIATION

► **New Temple Baptist Church, Dora**, celebrated its 100th anniversary Aug. 28 with its former pastor, Ken Mostella, as guest speaker. Videos shared included prayer and the history of the church.

Special music was provided by the Vaughn Family, the interim minister of music Steven Aderholt and pianist Judy Andrews.

Joyce Peters (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate recognizing the anniversary. A quilt made by New Temple WMU was on display.



Photo courtesy of Joyce Peters

"It was good to reemphasize the importance of the church as a family," said pastor J.J. Creel (left). "It was a reminder of God's faithfulness to a people who will be faithful to Him."

## University of Mobile to hold Homecoming 2022

The University of Mobile will welcome alumni and friends to Homecoming 2022, a three-day event that will feature a 60-foot Ferris wheel, fair foods, vendors, sports competitions and the Miss UM competition.

Homecoming 2022 is set for Oct. 20–22 on the UM campus. The First Fifteen luncheon is open to the first 15 graduating classes of Mobile College, now the University of Mobile.

This luncheon, open to the classes of 1967–

1982, will be held Oct. 20 at 11:30 a.m.

The Homecoming Fair will be Oct. 22, from 4 to 7 p.m. on the Dr. Fred and Sue Lackey Great Commission Lawn in front of Weaver Hall. There will be a minimal concession fee for alumni and guests.

Other events include a jazz concert, a disc golf tournament, an art exhibit and volleyball and soccer games.

Details are at [umobile.edu/homecoming](http://umobile.edu/homecoming). (UM)



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

# It 'is like a cycle of grief'

## Waiting in Hope ministers to couples experiencing infertility, miscarriages

By **Laura Lee Leathers**  
The Alabama Baptist

**M**any ministries have been birthed out of personal experience. Hannah Sasser's infertility journey led her to find others who also were "waiting in hope."

Sasser's story began a year or so after her marriage in 2018. Hannah, a well-baby nurse, and her husband, Levi, were ready to start a family, yet months passed with no positive pregnancy test. They consulted with their doctor and started infertility medications.

Once again pregnancy tests were negative. The couple decided to take the next step — consultation with an infertility doctor and the beginning of a process that is emotional, time consuming and expensive. Most insurance plans don't cover certain costs related to infertility treatment.

### Disappointments

The disappointments related to longing for a baby and the pressures related to making decisions can bring heartbreak and depression, Sasser shared.

"Infertility is like a cycle of grief," she said. "Yet



Photo by Gustavo Fring from Pexels

Levi and I are learning the importance of prayer and trusting God, desiring His plan."

The Sassers also felt the isolation that can come with the infertility process. No one in their families had dealt with the issue, and in their circle of friends they felt left behind as new babies arrived for the other couples, but not for them.

"I found myself returning to the question, 'What else do I need to do?'" Sasser admitted.

During this time she participated in a Bible study at her church titled, "It's Not Supposed to Be This Way" by Lysa TerKeurst. The author asks, "Why would God allow me to

go through this particular burden?"

Sasser asked herself the same question.

It sent her on a quest to research Christian organizations that assist couples struggling with infertility and miscarriages. In October 2021, Sasser found Waiting in Hope.

### Personal experience

The Texas-based ministry hosts local Waiting in Hope groups that offer support, Bible study and an online community. Waiting in Hope was founded by Justin and Kelley Ramsey, whose own experience led them to start a ministry connecting other couples dealing with infertility. They currently have sites in Texas, North Carolina, New York, Alabama and Nebraska.

After Sasser learned about Waiting in Hope, she and Levi approached their pastor, Kyle Adams, regarding the possibility of starting a group at Mill Creek Baptist Church in Andalusia. A launch event was held earlier this year.

There are six books in

the Waiting in Hope start-up kit for group leaders, with a focus on what the Bible says about waiting, not passively but actively seeking God and desiring His plan.

Mill Creek church members are supportive of the new ministry, which Sasser called a "shower of love behind the scenes."

While hoping and waiting, the Sassers decided to contact the Alabama Department of Human Resources regarding the process of becoming foster parents.

In January they enrolled in classes and were approved in March. Today they are loving and providing care for several babies.

"There is a huge need for foster parenting for sibling sets," Sasser said she has learned. "Levi and I encour-

age others to look into the potential ministry opportunities found through foster care and adoption."

### Trusting God

The Sassers are honest that they are like many couples who find their expectations not turning out as they had hoped. Yet they are learning to trust and submit to God's plan.

"Leading a support group for Waiting in Hope has increased my faith in the Lord and taught me to trust His timing," she reflected. "We

have established a community in a time of isolation, hope in a time of desperation and a love for the Lord that surpasses all earthly desires.

"I plan to continue leading Waiting in Hope as long as there are couples in our area needing love and support during these heart-breaking times."

For more information about *Waiting in Hope of Andalusia*, contact **Hannah Sasser** at **334-804-9172**.



Pastor Charles Lewis recommends Jimmy Dixon

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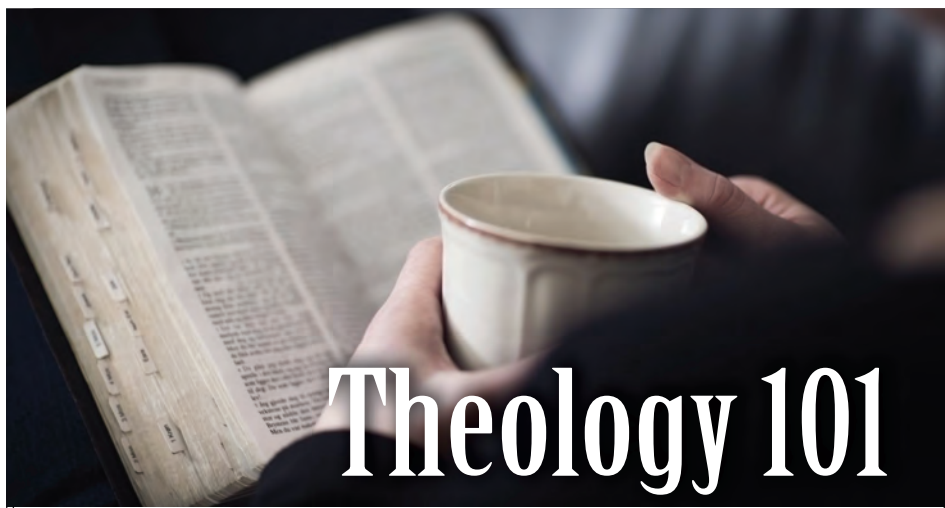
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Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

*"We have established a community in a time of isolation, hope in a time of desperation and a love for the Lord that surpasses all earthly desires."*

Hannah Sasser  
founder of Waiting in Hope of Andalusia



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Spiritual Blessings

### The Christian Fellowship

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
The Alabama Baptist

This week we continue thinking about biblical images that furnish insight into various aspects of the Christian life. Having previously considered such images as a walk, warfare, a race and a pilgrimage, this week we think about the Christian life through the imagery of fellowship.

The idea of fellowship immediately suggests we do not walk alone. God's presence is with us, and fellow believers are around us.

#### Vertical dimension

Basic to the thought of Christian fellowship is its vertical dimension. At its heart and its best, a Christian life is one of fellowship with God: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Only through the saving work of Christ do we enter fellowship with God.

This truth is also declared in 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Philippians 2:1 speaks of the reality of the "fellowship of the Spirit." This divine dimension to fellowship is one that involves the fullness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

On our side, this fellowship with God is enjoyed and enhanced through such disciplines as Scripture reading, meditation and prayer. We must regularly open our Bible and read it. Not

only must we read it, but we also must think and ponder its truth and its application to our lives.

Furthermore, we must engage in conversation with God about how with His help we can embody His truth in our practices and relationships.

#### Horizontal dimension

Christian fellowship also has a horizontal dimension. After declaring that "God is light," the Bible promises, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:5, 7).

This dimension of fellowship was part of the prayer burden of Christ during the days of His flesh. Jesus prayed for all who believe in Him, saying, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21).

The Christian life at its biblical best is one of both divine and human fellowship. To neglect either dimension is to cripple the other dimension.

*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.*



## Discipleship pastor offers tips for small group leaders

By Tracy Riggs  
The Alabama Baptist

Kris Henderson, discipleship pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church in Ranburne, doesn't believe in change for change's sake, but he does believe some intentional adjustments to the structure and curricula of small groups can be transformational.

"You cannot stay where you are and go with God. Change has to happen," Henderson said, speaking during a breakout session at Pinnacle Alabama, an annual conference for Sunday School and small group leaders hosted by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "We can reinvent. We can change stuff and make it fresh ... without completely abandoning everything we've been doing."

One option is to place chairs in a semicircle instead of rows.

"Now everybody's on the front row," Henderson joked.

Chairs aren't moved simply for the sake of change. With them in a semicircle, everyone can see each other and communicate better, he explained.

#### Willing to share

Another option is to have the leader sit instead of stand.

Henderson noted that when he sits down, people seem more willing to share. There tends to be a lot more conversation, perhaps because everyone is on the same level.

Curriculum also needs to be purposeful. It should be changed as needed.

The structure of a small group is also important. Participants often feel more comfortable if they know the basic agenda of a class.

#### Community

Henderson recommended Jay Gordon's Five Looks model, a way to structure small groups that focuses on the class becoming a community of believers.

► **Look around.** Make sure connections are made.

► **Look up.** Pray for God to provide opportunities for others to join.

► **Look back.** Reflect on the challenge provided in last week's lesson and have people share its impact.

► **Look down.** This step examines the idea of being called into Christian community by asking questions.

► **Look ahead.** Provide challenges such as asking someone new to join the group next week.

Henderson said he feels it's important to keep groups small because it's easier to reach people in small groups than in large ones.

Henderson reminded group leaders to keep their priorities at the forefront: keeping God's word first and foremost and helping grow mature disciples of Christ.

"The center of the whole thing," he said, "has to do with us all becoming disciples of Christ."



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Kris Henderson, discipleship pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church in Ranburne, leads attendees during a breakout session at this year's Pinnacle Conference.

# 'Practice prudence'



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## Consumers to feel financial strain for months, GuideStone adviser says

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**S**ept. 13 was the worst day of the year for the overall U.S. equity markets (as of press time), marking another bleak milestone on the nation's current economic path.

The U.S. is likely on a long road toward financial recovery with most anticipating a recession on the horizon, but the news is not all bad, said David Spika, chief investment officer at GuideStone Financial Resources.

"Recessions are a normal and healthy part of the economic cycle," Spika said.

The national economy usually experiences some form of a recession every five to seven years, but there hasn't been one since 2008, he said.

"We haven't had [a recession] in 14 years," he said. "That means we're overdue."

### 'When' not 'if'

A recent CNBC survey of CFOs found a majority (68%) of respondents believe a recession will occur during the first half of 2023. None of the CFOs surveyed believe the U.S. economy will avoid a recession in 2023.

Spika agrees.

"We believe the likelihood of a recession in the U.S. is more of a

question of 'when' than 'if,'" Spika told The Alabama Baptist.

The last several years of fiscal and monetary policy have resulted in excessive growth and several imbalances in the economy, Spika said, citing issues such as "runaway inflation, a too-tight labor market and exorbitant housing prices."

### Healthy cycle

Though the outlook might be bleak in the short term, Spika believes the current financial cycle is healthy and needed for future growth.

"Historically, the most effective 'pruning' of excessive economic growth occurs during a recession,

which slows consumer demand and reduces inflation and other imbalances to a more tolerable level," he said.

As long as the recession is a minor one, it will "put us in much better shape for the future," Spika said.

What does this outlook mean for U.S. consumers, who are stressed by the environment and don't have the cash needed to meet all of their needs?

"It's a good time to practice some financial prudence," Spika told Baptist Press, adding that he encourages consumers to be cautious when spending money on big ticket items.

People should be asking if they really need a new TV or car before purchasing things that might not be needed.

And for those worried about their retirement funds or other investments, Spika cautions against allowing dramatic headlines to prompt impulsive decisions, even as the news of the day can appear alarming.

### Positive outlook

Investors should appreciate how a recession can have a positive long-term impact on the economy and markets, Spika told TAB.

"Despite the pain felt leading up to and during a recession, the economy is in a better position afterward to produce normalized economic growth," he said.

"Ultimately, making investment decisions based on a disciplined, long-term strategy and not as a reaction to headlines is the key to riding out times of economic uncertainty."

## Young adults, including Christians, have complicated relationship with money

**W**hen it comes to financial decisions, Christian young adults are influenced by their faith, but giving is the main area where they differ from their secular counterparts.

An AdelFi study conducted by Lifeway Research found that having a Christian worldview impacts the way young adults (ages 25-40) manage their money.

Nearly half of young adults surveyed said their parents influence their financial decisions. But they are also frequently influenced by their friends, financial publications or websites and financial advisors.

Just over one-third of young

adults agree their religious faith influences their financial decisions. But exactly how one's faith impacts the way they manage money varies.

The typical Christian young adult donates more than three times as much as a non-Christian over the course of a year (\$1,820 vs. \$556).

This is aided by the fact that more Christians give to a local church and religious organizations than non-Christians do.

"Christians are much more active in donating their finances and no less active in trying to do good with their spending," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research.

When it comes to spending, just

under half of Christian young adults agree Christians have a responsibility to try to spend their money with companies that are owned or operated by Christians.

### Making a difference

"Young adults are very conscious about trying to make a difference in society with their purchases," said McConnell.

"Christian young adults are no exception. Most of them approach spending decisions with a desire to honor Christ and to be good stewards of their finances all while seeking to do business with companies that help others." (Lifeway Research)

# When our idols fail us

## Contemporary social challenges present opportunities to share hope of Christ

By Scott McConnell  
Lifeway Research

So far the 2020s have offered society a reality check. Many are recognizing the truth that our idols have failed us.

Daily we see “the sorrows of those who take another god for themselves will multiply” (Ps. 16:4a). People are looking for answers in:

► **Money**

Money hasn’t prevented a pandemic or natural disasters, and the money we have today is worth much less than it was a year ago.

► **Sexual pleasure**

Daily news stories and headlines show how perverse our nation has become. Before the pandemic, the U.S. set records six years in a row for the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases, and now monkeypox has begun spreading most rapidly through sexual contact.

► **Power**

People live in constant fear of losing political power, and political divisions have sparked constant incivility on social media and in other communication in society.

► **Knowledge**

War, natural disasters, pandemics, societal strife and death itself are not being solved by the immense



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knowledge we’ve accumulated and continue to expand.

► **Fun experiences**

Lockdowns and quarantines during 2020 reminded us how much we enjoy sports, arts, travel and restaurants. We are grateful to be enjoying these activities again, but they often fail to measure up to the hopes we had for them.

► **Work**

Changes remind us not even this is worth our ceaseless pursuit.

None of these things are inherent-

ly evil. But the evil tendency inside every one of us is to raise up one or more good aspects of life to be the ultimate thing.

### Missional moment

The church’s message would be much more difficult to share if the idols of our day were actually satisfying people’s needs. But they’re failing miserably. Maybe the church is missing this missional moment because we are also reeling as we realize our idols are lacking what we hoped they would provide.

As the church begins to share the benefits that the one true God offers, we must have the same conversation within our churches. Pastors notice followers of Christ in their congregations turning to the same gods the world is turning to: comfort, control or security, money, approval, success, social influence, political power and sex.

On any given weekend, some church members are absent from worship services. A few are homebound, caregiving or sick. But the majority of them are simply doing something else they believe will bring them more comfort: sleep, sports, sailing on the lake or having a family gathering.

Some who are not present in

weekly worship services are working instead. Some of these jobs serve our society. Others are simply trying to get ahead, believing more money will satisfy their longings.

Our society tells us that whenever you decide to pursue something, you are expected to not just enjoy it but max it out. You need to have the best or latest or most, or else you’re really not into that hobby, fashion, sport or décor at all.

### Why?

The question “why?” cuts to our hearts. It’s the question God asks about everything we do. He cares about our hearts. Too often our hearts (or our social media posts) reveal we are seeking approval on society’s rating system.

As we consider the many things we hold dear, consider a pair of short parables Matthew recorded where Jesus communicates there is a treasure that satisfies. Whatever it is we think we want to pursue, He offers something so much better.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matt. 13:44–46).

### Worth pursuing

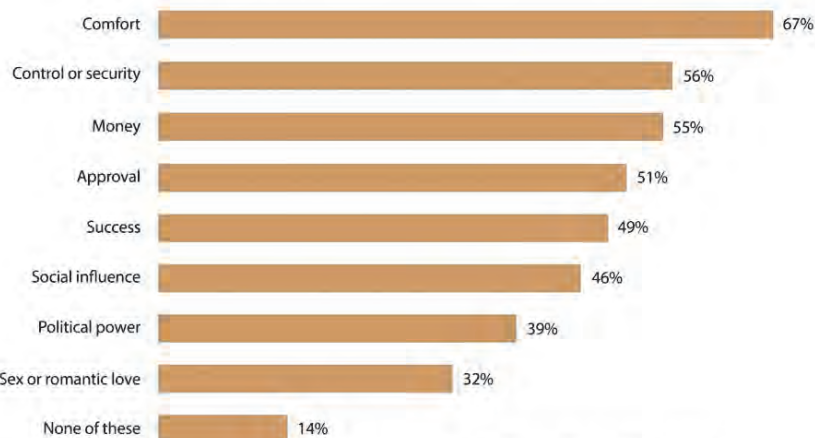
Some in our congregations may need to be reminded that the free gift of salvation is to be grasped with both hands, not with one hand still holding our idols.

Now is the time for our congregations to choose whom they will serve.

Now is also the time for us to introduce our neighbors to someone worth pursuing with abandon, worth selling all you have to acquire, worth maximizing your time with and worth making the focus of your affection. Our other pursuits have fallen short, but Jesus Christ will not disappoint.

### What modern-day idols have significant influence in U.S. churches?

Among U.S. Protestant pastors



Notes: Respondents could select all that apply, 2% say not sure.

Source: Lifeway Research phone survey of 1,000 U.S. Protestant pastors conducted Sept. 1-29, 2021

Lifeway research

Lifeway Research graphic

# Migration, family size, aging may affect future of Christianity in US

(continued from page 1)  
up 41% percent of the population.

If disaffiliation rates continue to grow, but are capped at 50% of Christians leaving the faith, then 39% percent of Americans are projected to be Christian by 2070, with 48% percent of Americans identifying as nones.

With no limit placed on the percentage of people leaving Christianity and with continued growth in disaffiliation, Christians would be 35% of the population, with nones making up a majority of Americans (52%).

If all switching came to a halt, then Christians would remain a slight majority (54%), while nones would make up 34% of Americans, according to the projection model.

In each scenario, non-Christian faiths would rise to 12–13% of the population, largely due to migration.

Migration does affect the percentage of Christians, as most immigrants coming to the U.S. are Christians, said Conrad Hackett, associate director of research and senior demographer at Pew Research Center.

“Still the greatest amount of change in the U.S., we think currently and in the future, will come from switching,” he said.

Researchers stressed the report contained projections based on data and mathematical models, not predictions of the future.

## ‘Uncertain’

“Though some scenarios are more plausible than others, the future is uncertain, and it is possible for the religious composition of the United States in 2070 to fall outside the ranges projected,” they wrote.

One reason for the decline among Christians and the growth among the nones in the models is age. While



“The unaffiliated are having and raising unaffiliated children,” says Stephanie Kramer, a senior researcher at Pew.

Christians have more children than nones, they are also older. Pew estimates the average Christian in the United States is 43, which is 10 years older than the average none.

“The unaffiliated are having and raising unaffiliated children, while Christians are more likely to be near the end of their lives than others,” Stephanie Kramer, a senior researcher at Pew, told RNS in an email.

The current report takes advantage of the amount of data collected about the U.S. religious landscape.

Researchers also looked at intergenerational transmission for the first time, Kramer said.

“The variables we use to study that were: What is the mother’s religion? And what is the teen’s religion,” she said. “If that was a match, we consider the mother’s religion transmitted.”

Researchers also looked at a relatively new trend of disaffiliation among older Americans. Sociologists have long focused on younger people, who are most likely to switch religions. But in the U.S. and other countries, older people are also starting to switch at growing rates.

“It’s not as large scale, but it’s still significant,” Hackett said. “And it’s contributing

to the religious change that we have experienced and that we expect to experience in the years ahead.”

Hackett said the projections do not show the end of Christianity in the U.S. or of religion in general, which he expects to remain robust. And most nones, while claiming no religion, do not identify as atheists.

## A pattern

Kramer said the U.S. appears to be going through a pattern of secularization that has happened in other countries, though “we may be a bit behind,” she added.

Other factors outside the model, such as changing immigration patterns and religious innovation, could lead to a revival of Christianity in the United States, according to the report. But none of the models shows a reversal of the decline of Christian affiliation, which dropped from 78% in 2007 to 63% in 2020, according to Pew Research.

In the report, researchers note “there is no data on which to model a sudden or gradual revival of Christianity (or of religion in general) in the U.S.”

“That does not mean a religious revival is impossible,” they wrote. “It means there is no demographic basis on which to project one.”

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

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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](mailto:hpbsearchteam@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](mailto: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](mailto:admin@ubcgrandbay.org).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Dunns Creek Baptist Church in Echola, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: [jaanderson@live.com](mailto:jaanderson@live.com).

#### MUSIC DIRECTOR

East Gadsden Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a part-time music director. Please send resumé and/or experience to: [eastgadsdenbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:eastgadsdenbaptist@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](mailto:pinegroveheflinal@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP ARTS PASTOR/LEADER

Grant First Baptist Church, Grant, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational worship arts pastor/leader for our blended worship service. To apply, submit your resumé with links to worship services that you led to: [musicsearch@fbcgrant.com](mailto:musicsearch@fbcgrant.com) no later than Oct. 7.

### OTHER POSITIONS

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First Baptist Church Union

Grove is seeking to fill the staff position of pianist. Interested parties may send resumés to: First Baptist Church Union Grove, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

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### MINISTRIES

#### TAB DIGITAL

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



  
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

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FUELING THE GREAT  
COMMISSION



October is a great time to raise awareness of the Cooperative Program in your congregation. You might consider using a CP bulletin insert, showing a video in your service or inviting a state missionary to come speak about the Cooperative Program. Then have a time of prayer for the Great Commission Ministries supported by the Cooperative Program.



For FREE RESOURCES to help you have a Cooperative Program emphasis in your

church, visit [AlabamaCP.org](http://AlabamaCP.org) or contact State Missionary Jay Stewart, [jstewart@alsbom.org](mailto:jstewart@alsbom.org), (334) 613-2283.



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**OCTOBER 2022**

- COOPERATIVE PROGRAM MONTH**, Jay Stewart, ext. 2283
- Minister Appreciation Month**, Reka Baker, ext. 2263
- 9/30-1 International Friends Retreat**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Chris Mills, ext. 2379
- 3 Ymlink Youth Ministers' Golf Tournament**, RTJ Golf Course Capitol Hill, Prattville, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262
- 4 Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
- 7-8 Fall Missions Festival for Children**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 11 Abundant Living**, (an event for senior adults) Hunter Street, Hoover, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312
- 11 Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org)) Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
- 14-15 Fall Missions Festival for Children**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 16 A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Lake Martin, Dadeville, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 16 Being Human—An Apologetic for Human Life**, UAB BCM, Birmingham, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 17 Being Human—An Apologetic for Human Life**, University of North Alabama BCM, Florence, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 18 Being Human—An Apologetic for Human Life**, University of Montevallo BCM, Montevallo, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 20 Fall Missions Festival for Adults**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 22-28 Christmas Backpacks Collection Week**, Pat Ingram, ext. 2292
- 28-29 Conexión: Conferencia de Adoración**, Shocco Springs, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244

**NOVEMBER 2022**

- 1 Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
- 5 North Alabama Church Library Conference**, Central, Decatur, Eva Nell Hunter, ext. 2255
- 7 Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 8 Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org)) Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
- 13 ALCAP Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 13 Alabama Church Planter Network Dinner**, Raleigh Avenue, Birmingham, Dawn Watkins, ext. 2315
- 14 Unite**, Shades Mountain, Birmingham, Ben Edfeldt, ext. 2276
- 14 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference**, Shades Mountain, Birmingham, [albaptistpc.org](http://albaptistpc.org)
- 15-16 Alabama Baptist State Convention**, Shades Mountain, Birmingham, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231



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# 'GOD'S WITH ME'

## Alabama's Bryce Young puts faith first, strives to 'represent God through football'

By Michael Foust  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**labama starting quarterback and defending Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young says his Christian faith has kept him grounded amid victories and trials, knowing that no matter what happens in life, "God's with me."

The junior preseason All-American captivated the college football world in 2021 by passing for 4,872 yards and 47 touchdowns to lead the Crimson Tide to another SEC Championship and College Football Playoff appearance.

### Top awards

Those eye-popping stats helped him take home the Heisman Trophy and the Maxwell Award as college football's top player and the Davey O'Brien and Manning Awards as its top quarterback.

Young, though, says his accolades and preseason hype — Alabama was No. 1 heading into the

2022 season — are not the driving force in his life. That role belongs to his faith.

"I work to be the best version of myself that I can be and to embody Christ in all that I do," Young said in an interview with Sports Spectrum, a media company that spotlights Christian athletes. "So for me, regardless of how someone else views me, whatever award [or] accolade, what someone may say, negative or positive ... at the end of the day, what motivates me and pushes me is to model myself after the Lord."

Young has made faith part of his public identity since signing with Alabama as a five-star quarterback out of Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, California. The bios on his Instagram and Twitter accounts — which have a total of 250,000 fans — read "follower of Christ."

In December he began his Heisman Trophy acceptance speech by referencing his faith.

"First and foremost, I'd like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without Him, I couldn't be here, and through Him all things are possible," he said on ESPN with millions of fans watching.

### 'From the heart'

He said last December on his podcast, the Bryce Young Podcast, that he was "just speaking from the heart" during his Heisman speech.

His faith, he told Sports Spectrum, was instilled in him by his parents, Craig and Julie Young.

"It definitely goes to my roots. I've been based in faith. I'm

In 2021, Bryce Young captivates the college football world by passing for 4,872 yards and 47 touchdowns.



Photo by Kent Gidley/The University of Alabama

Bryce Young has made faith part of his public identity since signing with Alabama as a five-star quarterback. The bios on his Instagram and Twitter accounts — which have a total of 250,000 fans — read "follower of Christ."

blessed to have the family that ... introduced me," he said.

"Throughout my life, my relationship has grown with the Lord and my faith has improved."

That relationship includes a pregame prayer with his parents. During high school, that pregame ritual often took place on the sidelines. In college, it often involves a phone call, sometimes on the Friday before a game.

Prayer with his parents, he said, helps him calm anxious nerves.

"Emotions are high. You're focused. And there's a lot riding on you — you're trying to lock in," he said. "But (it's critical) for me to kind of reassess, be grounded and be able to come together with my parents to kind of ground me and put me back in the mindset that I need to be."

On the field this season, Young

wants Alabama to iron out the flaws that he says a handful of teams "exposed."

Alabama easily beat Utah State and University of Louisiana Monroe but barely won its second game against Texas. Alabama was scheduled to meet Vanderbilt in its first Southeastern Conference matchup Sept. 24, which was after press time.

### Getting better

Off the field, though, Young wants to mature in his faith and to become a better leader.

"God flows in everything that you're doing, everything that you're thinking, everything that goes on," he said.

"I work hard and try to do my best to represent God through football. Whether it's small things, big things, whatever it is, I understand that God's with me."



Photo by Kent Gidley/The University of Alabama

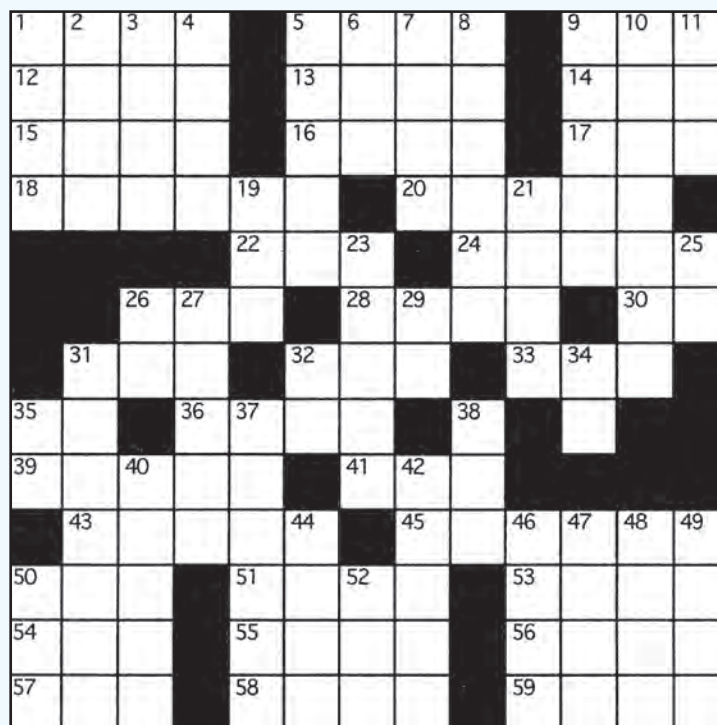


YOUNG

# CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

1. "The \_\_\_ above the liver, with the kidneys." (Lev. 3:15)
5. Gasp.
9. Mordecai the \_\_\_.
12. A king of Israel. (1 Kings 16:16)
13. West African tribe.
14. Japanese apricot.
15. Disfigure.
16. "We spend our years as a \_\_\_ that is told." (Ps. 90:9)
17. Uproar.
18. Make possible.
20. Aka Araunah the Jebusite.
22. "Do ye not therefore \_\_\_ because ye know not the Scriptures." (Mark 12:24)
24. Makes less difficult.
26. Summer drink.
28. Actor Robert.
30. Ancient Thebes. (Jer. 46:25)
31. Middle Eastern country. (abbr.)
32. \_\_\_ Grande.
33. Witty remark.
35. I \_\_\_. (God)
36. "Shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching \_\_\_." (2 Tim. 4:3)
39. Judah's daughter-in-law. (Gen. 38)
41. Compass dir.
43. Hosea's wife.
45. Area of Judea that included Beersheba.
50. "All they are brass, and \_\_\_, and iron." (Ezek. 22:18)
51. Appear indistinctly.
53. Kaiser \_\_\_.
54. Chemical suffix.
55. "God \_\_\_ \_\_\_ respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34)



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25. Egyptian king. (2 Kings 17:4)
  26. Preposition.
  27. "Your old men shall \_\_\_." (Acts 2:17)
  29. Biblical interjection.
  31. "The people \_\_\_ a vain thing." (Ps. 2:1)
  32. B & O, e.g.
  34. \_\_\_ a roll.
  35. Preposition.
  37. A bright, truthful girl.
  38. "Take up thy \_\_\_, and go unto thine house." (Matt. 9:6)
  40. French impressionist.
  42. "\_\_\_, called Peter." (Matt. 4:18)
  44. \_\_\_ of Sharon. (Song of Sol. 2:1)
  46. "The breastplate of judgment the \_\_\_." (Ex. 28:30)
  47. Less is \_\_\_. (fashion dictum)
  48. Zeal.
  49. "That thine \_\_\_ may be in secret." (Matt. 6:4)
  50. Musical part. (abbr.)
  52. Chemical. (suffix)
- DOWN**
1. "\_\_\_ unto Me." (Matt. 11:28)
  2. "Will \_\_\_ \_\_\_ rob God?" (Mal. 3:8)
  3. Auk genus.
  4. Arm, for example.
  5. Cephas.
  6. Alias. (abbr.)
  7. \_\_\_ contendere.
  8. Layered.
  9. \_\_\_ tree.
  10. "Thou buildest thine \_\_\_ place in the head of every way." (Ezek. 16:31)
  11. Benign skin tumor.
  19. Actress Grant.
  21. Son of Caleb. (1 Chron. 4:15)
  23. "I will \_\_\_ me up a faithful priest." (1 Sam. 2:35)
  56. Duke \_\_\_. (Gen. 36:43)
  57. What fishermen use to catch fish.
  58. "Justified in the Spirit, \_\_\_ of angels." (1 Tim. 3:16)
  59. \_\_\_ room.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

**Famous Christians from previous centuries**

## Heroes of the Faith

### Burns was the English Presbyterian Church's first missionary to China

William Chalmers Burns (1815–1868) was a great Scottish preacher, evangelist and missionary. This marks the 175th year of his appointment as the English Presbyterian Church's first missionary to China.

Sent to China in 1847 as the first missionary of the English Presbyterian Church, Burns studied the Chinese language on his journey. His first stop was Hong Kong, where he trained Chinese Christians to be evangelists.

In 1850, Burns set out for Canton and then Xiamen, continuing to learn dialects and translating "Pilgrim's Progress" and hymns into Chinese.



**BURNS**

He was born April 1, 1815, to William and Elizabeth Burns in Duns, Scotland, where his father was a local minister.

After his conversion to Christ in 1832, Burns earned a master of arts degree from Aberdeen University in 1834. At a revival meeting he felt God calling him into the ministry and studied at Glasgow University's divinity school.

At the age of 24, Burns received a license to preach from the Glasgow Presbytery. In 1843, along with 450 other evangelical preachers, Burns left the Church of Scotland and joined the Free Church of Scotland. He went to Canada and preached for two years.

Burns and two Chinese assistants went to Pechua on a preaching tour in 1854. They rented a house, and locals crowded the ground floor every night for two months listening to the gospel. As people accepted Christ, Burns left them with the Chinese Christians, believing God had called him to be an evangelist. He would sow and others would reap the harvest.

In 1855, he met Hudson Taylor, who founded the China Inland Mission and ministered in China for 51 years.

Burns preached in the villages near Shantou for two more years. In 1858, he returned to Xiamen and labored five years. He went to Beijing and translated "Pilgrim's Progress" into Mandarin. Then at Nieu-chwang, Burns caught a cold and died April 4, 1868.

Hudson Taylor said after Burns' death that he led a "holy, reverential life."

#### By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M-Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).

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# Samford, UM see growth in enrollment

**B**oth Samford University and the University of Mobile exceeded freshmen enrollment expectations for fall semester 2022.

For UM, the enrollment was the largest increase in seven years, and residence halls are near capacity as the fall 2022 semester gets underway.

The university enrolled 273 first-time freshmen, making this the largest class of new freshmen since 2015. Currently, 622 students live in residence halls declared the No. 1 Best Dorms in Alabama by the ranking site Niche.

## Nursing expansion

In addition, UM's new associate degree in nursing program met its goal of 30 students for its first class. The five-semester nursing degree program aims to address the local and na-

tional nursing shortage by preparing nursing students to enter the workforce quickly.

UM President Lonnie Burnett said new scholarships and partnerships contributed to the university's gain in new student enrollment, an area that nationally has shown a decline.

"Our corporate partners and donors see the University of Mobile and the Christian higher education we offer as an excellent investment in our community. We are continuing to develop new partnerships that will expand opportunities for even more students," Burnett said.

Charity Wittner, vice president for student affairs, said preliminary census figures show UM mirrored national trends in some areas, while bucking trends in others.

"We went into the fall



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile  
First-time freshmen at the University of Mobile number 273 — UM's largest class in seven years, and residence halls are near capacity as the fall 2022 semester began.

following national trends and anticipating anywhere from a 4-to-7% decline in new students. We ended up being 8% higher in new student enrollment for our traditional on-ground program," Wittner said.

Overall, preliminary census numbers show that UM was part of a national trend

as total enrollment of 1,851 for fall 2022 fell 3% below fall 2021's total of 1,911.

Undergraduate enrollment for online programs increased by 18%, while enrollment declined for graduate programs. Final enrollment numbers are not yet available for dual enrollment and early enroll-

ment, but officials expect a slight decline from last year.

Samford enrolled 972 first-year students. The total enrollment, which includes undergraduate and graduate students, is 5,683 students, with 3,672 undergraduate students and 2,011 graduate students. The students represent 47 states, Puerto Rico, Guam and 19 countries.

"We are excited about a year of record enrollment for our freshman class," said Jason Black, vice president for enrollment management. "We are thankful for the trust our students and their families have in our institution."

Most recently, Samford was recognized as one of the best universities in the nation for undergraduate teaching. It is also ranked first nationally for student engagement. (UM, SU)

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 2

## Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### NO ESCAPE Jonah 1:15–2:10

#### God Calms (1:15–17)

The Book of Jonah begins with God telling Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach against its wickedness. However, instead of being obedient, Jonah traveled on the sea in the opposite direction, trying to avoid God's will by traveling to Tarshish. God sent a great storm to keep the boat from making any headway, and the pagan sailors on the boat cast lots to determine whose fault it was that God sent the storm.

The lot fell to Jonah. He explained he was running from God, and if they threw him overboard God would end the storm. The sailors were appalled at the thought of murdering Jonah, so they tried their best to weather the storm.

When it became evident there was no way to get out of the storm, they asked God's forgiveness for their action and threw Jonah overboard. Immediately the storm stopped, and the pagan sailors worshipped the Hebrew God.

The irony of this situation is the one who serves the true God is disobedient, but the pagans recognize the one true God and act appropriately by offering a sacrifice to God.

The main theme here is God and His love for all people. Not only is Jonah commanded to go to the Assyrians, the pagan enemy of Israel, but God also uses the prophet's disobedience to reach the pagan sailors. The Book of Jonah clearly shows how God loves all people, not just the Israelites.

When Jonah was thrown into the sea, God sent a giant fish to swallow him, and Jonah stayed in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

#### God Hears (2:1–4)

While in the fish, Jonah prayed to God, realizing God was his only hope. In the midst of his despair, Jonah realized only God could save him.

The lesson for us is clear: No matter the circumstance, God hears us. The Bible is full of verses that

encourage us to pray. For example, James 5:13 says, "Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises." In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul tells us to "pray constantly."

Our lifeline is to God, and our means of communication is prayer. We can be confident that even when we have been disobedient, God hears us when we repent.

#### God Saves (2:5–10)

The final portion of Jonah's prayer recognizes and shows thankfulness for who God is. Jonah chastised those who worship idols because idols are unable to do anything. Instead, Jonah thanks God, who is able to do something. God alone brings salvation, whereas idols sit there and achieve nothing.

In spite of Jonah's disobedience, he actually teaches us a lot. First, he shows us it is impossible to run from God. God will ultimately get His way, as shown when He provided a storm to prevent Jonah from running and a large fish to get Jonah going in the right direction.

Second, Jonah shows us God always hears our prayers. Despite Jonah's disobedience, God hears and saves him rather than punishing him outright for his attitude and actions.

Third, Jonah shows us idols are worthless. For many Christians in the U.S., the idea of idols is one that brings to mind Eastern religions like Buddhism or Hinduism. But an idol is anything that takes the place of God, be it a wooden statue, money, a job or a hobby.

We need to place our hope and trust in God and not in things we can see around us. It is a difficult lesson in our material culture. God alone can save us.

We need to continually reorient our hopes and affections toward Him rather than toward our circumstances and the things we see around us. Trusting in God alone brings us hope and joy because nothing can take that away from us.

## Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



### FAITH ON DISPLAY IN FACING THE ENEMY James 4:1–10

#### The sinful nature is self-centered and keeps us in conflict. (1-3)

James 3:13–16 contrasts the wisdom that comes from above (i.e., from God) with the wisdom that is from below. Whereas the wisdom from above is "peaceable, gentle" and is characterized by peace (v. 17), the wisdom from below is "earthly, unspiritual, devilish" (v. 15), is characterized by "bitter envy and selfish ambition" (v. 15) and results in "disorder and wickedness of every kind" (v. 16).

This wisdom from below that generates disorder in the community is picked up again in chapter 4 when James asks about the origin of the "wars and fights" (v. 1).

The wars and fights in the community erupt from the passions that are warring in their bodies. In other words, the conflicts in the community begin from the wars within each person. This is a problem of passion or unbridled desire that takes people captive and subjugates them. This results in "murder" (i.e., conflict in the community) since they prioritize fulfilling their passions, even if it means and requires conflict with others.

#### The world is hostile to God. (4–5)

Perhaps it is spiritual adultery that underlies the passions that dominate us. We see this in James's accusation, "Adulterers!"

When we are fixated on satisfying our pleasures and getting what we desire, we ally ourselves with the world. In the language of James, we pursue "friendship with the world." To pursue our desires and become friends with the world is to make ourselves hostile to God.

We cannot be friends with both God and the world. To be friends

with one is to be at odds with the other. And to be friends with the world is to be unfaithful to God. Hence, the charge of adultery.

The charge of "murder" (v. 2) and of "adultery" (v. 4) are not accusations of literal murder and adultery in the audience, but get to the root of Israel's law which prohibited both murder and adultery (Ex. 20:13–14).

When we persist in conflict with each other, we are violating the spirit of the prohibition against murder since underneath murder is the attempt to secure what one desires. And by friendship with the world and desiring the things of the world, we commit adultery against God.

#### You can stand against Satan only as you submit to God and draw near to Him. (6–10)

The antidote to our hostility to God and friendship with the devil is to pursue the opposite: "draw near to God" and "resist the devil." We see here that when we heed our passions and seek them out, we are not only friends with the world, but we are also listening to the wisdom of the devil. James calls us to resist our passions, the wisdom of the world and the devil. Instead, we are to draw close to God.

James calls us to repentance and humility. And we put on this humility by heeding his exhortation to "lament and mourn and weep." James sounds like Israel's prophets in his appeal.

While we might think we need to feel remorse before we can act in repentance, James exhorts his audience to weep as an act of repentance of humility. We are not to wait until we feel sorry. Rather, we are to lament and grieve and draw near to God. This is our act of repentance.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God.  
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

JAMES 4:7

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs  
The Alabama Baptist

## Anthony Evans shares mental health journey in new book

Playing injured. That's how former professional football player and Christian author and speaker Anthony Evans describes living with major depression and anxiety, a personal journey he shares in his newly released book, "When Faith Meets Therapy."

In the introduction to the book, Evans, son of pastor, speaker and author Tony Evans, writes, "I began a long, downward spiral into functional depression and anxiety."

He soon realized what he was taught in church about mental health wasn't quite enough to deal with his issues, so he decided to seek help.

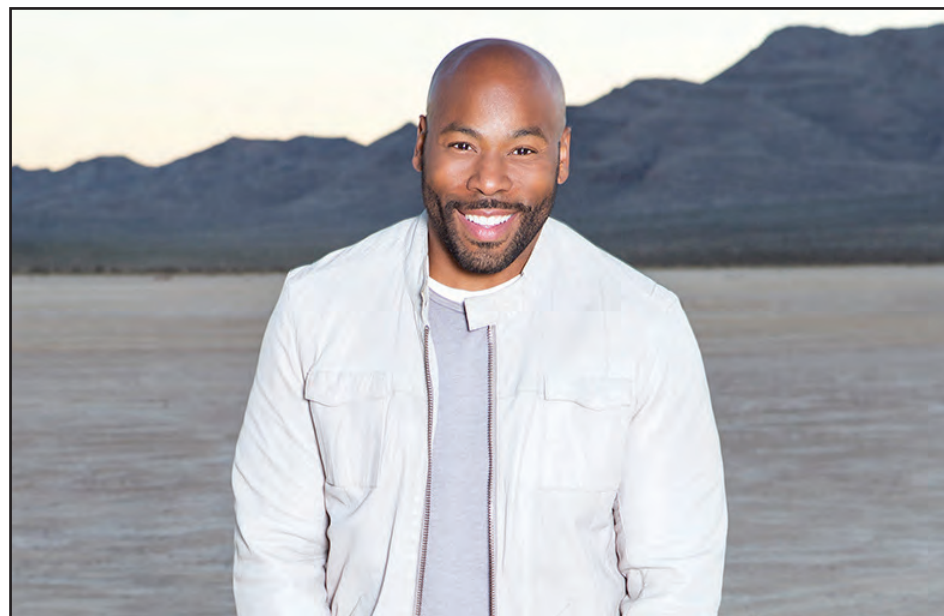
After working with Stacy Kaiser — a nationally known licensed psychotherapist — Evans decided to share his experience and the practical solutions she taught him.

### Practical solutions

Therapy helped his faith, showing him practical solutions for difficult areas, he said, and he wanted to share his experience in order to help others in the same situation.

"'Be anxious for nothing.' For some of us reading that, we need tools to not be anxious," Evans said.

Even before the COVID-19 pan-



ANTHONY EVANS

Photo courtesy of Anthony Evans

dem, mental health was a widespread issue. Since then, with the impact of financial and social complications, mental health struggles have only increased.

However, many Christians are hesitant to seek help because they feel it suggests something negative about their faith.

"There seems to be this stigma about therapy in some circles," Kaiser said. "Our intention is to try to break that stigma and tell people that you really can find a counselor who can give space for your faith and anything else that's important to you, while also finding practical tools to improve your life and overall happiness."

And, she added, a person doesn't have to tell anyone they're seeking counseling.

When Evans first realized he needed help, he was one of those hesitant to seek therapy.

"I just had to get to the point where it was like, OK ... what oth-

ers think about you has gotten you to the point where you're functional, but your heart is heavy constantly, and you can barely handle yourself anymore because you're worried about what others think," Evans reflected. "So, how about

you try a new pathway, because that's not working."

Another barrier to seeking therapy can be shame from feeling like a Christian should have it all together, Evans said.

"Shame sabotages grace," he declared. "So allowing certain scenarios that make you feel very, very shameful will sabotage grace and stop you in your tracks."

"There is no shame in admitting you need help. There is no shame in the blind man saying, 'I can't see Jesus. Can you do a miracle?' There was no shame with the woman with the issue of blood reaching out and touching Jesus — there was no shame with that."

Believers too often let their wor-

ries about what other people will think of them get in the way of self-care, Kaiser said.

"People get caught up in, 'Oh, I'm supposed to pray it away' or 'Oh, my family will judge me,'" Kaiser said, and as a result, "they don't attend to meeting their needs."

That's how Evans initially responded to his depression and anxiety. He continued working in public, sharing the hope of Jesus, even while he felt he was dying inside.

"There are athletes that can tape up an ankle and get out on the courts to play," Evans said. "Eventually I [realized] that there would be a larger injury if I kept playing injured. If I kept playing and patchworking my issues, there was going to be a major breakdown."

In hindsight, Evans said he wishes he had gone to therapy earlier and added its helpful tools to his faith toolbox.

That's one reason each chapter of the book ends with a reflection prompt from Kaiser. The prompt gives the reader something to think about or use as a starting point for journaling.

The book is "not just story time," Evans said.

### 'Wise counsel'

To those who say therapy has no role in the church, Evans offers a different perspective. Scripture addresses seeking wise counsel and keeping good company, he said.

"I don't think there's any rule against finding practical help from somebody who's been trained the way the mind works and acknowledges faith to figure out a way to work that out. ... I have seen God multiply the efforts that I have made in therapy by adding practical tools to His word."

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.



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# Persecuted church

## Islamists kill 12, targeting Christians

KINSHASA, Democratic Republic of the Congo — Islamists killed at least 12 people earlier this year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in an ongoing assault against Christians.

Allied Democratic Forces, which are aligned with the Islamic State, raided Masambo village in North Kivu province. At least a dozen were slain, reports the relief group Barnabas Fund.

The attack is part of a continued onslaught against Christians in North Kivu and Ituri provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Allied Democratic Forces' leader has pledged the group's alliance with the Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL and Daesh). The organization also is called Islamic State Central Africa Province.

Democratic Republic of the Congo is No. 40 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

## Evangelist ambushed in Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda — An evangelist scheduled to be in a debate on Christianity and Islam

earlier this year was beaten unconscious on his way to the event, according to Morning Star News. The report gave Charles Kamyá's account of the attack by Islamic extremists.

As Kamyá was on his way to Kampala's Bwaise area for the debate, two men stopped his car, the report said. Then, six other Muslims ambushed Kamyá, beating and cutting him.

Kamyá was unconscious for about two hours after being struck on the head with an iron bar. A passerby found him and called police.

Kamyá had previously told Muslims in Jinja, "God wants all people to be saved, including Muslims." That day, "many ... converted to Christ," he said.

Uganda's laws and constitution allow freedom of religion, including propagating one's faith.

Muslims make up no more than 12% of Uganda's population, Morning Star reported.



MS photo

## Pastor in India killed outside his home

NEW DELHI, India — A pastor was slashed and shot to death in front of his family by suspected Maoists earlier this year.

Yalam Shankar was killed outside his home in Angampalli village in India's Chhattisgarh state. The six masked assailants slit his throat and shot and stabbed him in the chest, according to Morning Star News. His wife and daughter-in-law witnessed the attack.

According to a note left on his body, the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army, which is part of the Communist Party of India (or Maoists), was responsible for the murder. As is a common method for Maoists, the note accuses the pastor of being a police informant.

A previous correspondence to Yalam and 21 other Christians warned them to "leave pastorship of the Christian faith" or suffer the consequences. The Christians were told to return to worshipping tribal gods, Morning Star News reported.

India is No. 10 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY CARRIE MCWHORTER AND LEIGH PRITCHETT



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# Short supply

By David Roach  
The Alabama Baptist

## Youth pastor shortage leaves churches scrambling to fill key role

**P**astors in general are in short supply these days, and the data proves it. But some youth ministry experts suspect the student pastor shortage is even more severe.

“We tell churches when they call looking for recommendations on student pastors that it could be a year or two to find a good candidate for your church — especially if you’re looking for a full-time student pastor,” said Larry Hyche, an associate in the office of global missions with a focus on men’s spiritual development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The Southern Baptist Convention has acknowledged an overall shortage of pastors, seeking to address it with a 2021 initiative to “call out the called” for vocational ministry. Yet hard data on the youth pastor shortage is difficult to come by.

“I don’t have any data or even a guess” on whether the lack is more severe than the overall pastor shortage, admitted Len Kageler, chair of the youth ministry department at Nyack (NY) College who has written more than 10 books in the field.

An increasing chorus of experts suggests research is in order.

### Several factors at play

First Baptist Church Hendersonville, Tennessee, illustrates why. The suburban Nashville congregation averages 3,250 in worship and is thriving by numerous metrics. But it has sought a high school minister unsuccessfully for two years.

“Several factors have impacted the search,” said senior associate pastor Bruce Raley, including the pandemic, an overall lack of pastors and the proliferation of new staff positions that attract the type of young ministers formerly drawn to youth minis-



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try — family, NextGen, campus or executive pastor, to name a few.

FBC Hendersonville isn’t alone in suspecting a youth pastor shortage. Baptist Press reported on the apparent lack in March, as did the UK’s Premier Christianity magazine last year. At least four experts voiced their suspicions of a shortage to The Baptist Paper.

Raley sees a convergence of factors at work, including the fact that youth are facing more intense challenges at younger ages, precipitated by the smartphone.

“Struggles with gender identity, same sex attraction and issues like these were never discussed just a few years ago,” he noted.

Those new challenges often demand a youth pastor “with a little more life under their belt” than the 22- and 23-year-olds churches hired in previous generations, Raley added.

But economic challenges have made it difficult for older ministers to relocate their families for the

modest income of youth pastorates.

Plus, the overall pastor shortage has led some potential youth ministers to move directly into lead pastorates without first utilizing student ministry as a training ground.

A reduction in programs focused on youth ministry has perpetuated the shortage, added Richard Ross, senior professor of student ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

“Adding rather than reducing professors and leaders will lead to more and better trained student pastors,” he suggested.

### Problem with pornography

The proliferation of pornography also may fuel the shortage.

According to the ministry Covenant Eyes, 57% of teenagers search out pornography at least monthly.

One in five youth pastors — and one in seven senior pastors — use porn on a regular basis.

Those who recruit young adults to student ministry say porn addictions

make many feel unworthy to answer the call to ministry.

Remediating the shortage of youth pastors will require work by churches, leaders say.

Ben Trueblood, director of student ministry for Lifeway Christian Resources, said the solution includes “investment by local churches in the role of student pastor.”

### Expanding involvement

That means larger salaries for youth pastors and more involvement “in the greater strategic planning and vision for the overall church.”

Senior pastors must refocus on developing student pastors, Trueblood said.

“Many student pastors are not sought out for development by those who lead them,” he noted, “which results in them leaving for other churches, to pastor their own church or leaving ministry entirely.”

Prayer is another key to raising up more student pastors, said Allen Jackson, senior pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in Georgia and former professor of youth ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Prayer should be supplemented by frequent talk of “the wonderful opportunity of being called to full-time ministry,” he encouraged leaders.

A hefty investment in “next generation” ministries also is helpful.

“If the culture of a church does not place priority on preschool, children and youth, calling a youth or children’s pastor will not solve the problem,” Jackson asserted.

“A culture that supports the next generation supports them financially, allows participation in meaningful ways, facilitates interaction with other generations and enlists top quality leaders to ‘next gen’ areas.”

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE BOOK OF THE YEAR

goodnight,  
sweetheart.

*"Love bears all things ... hopes all things ... endures all things ...  
Love never ends." 1 Corinthians 13:7-8*

BY ALAN JOHNSTON

When life is suddenly and dramatically interrupted, what do you do? React in fear, despair, become overwhelmed with anxiety, just give up?

"Goodnight, Sweetheart" tells the story of how Alan Johnston dealt with the 16-year illness and eventual death from Alzheimer's of his beloved wife, Judy.

*Johnston says, "... none of the negative thoughts and emotions improved our situation, nor did they solve any problems. Perhaps the best advice is that which comes from the Apostle Paul "... stand firm in your faith."*

*Chapters include, "When a Man Loves a Woman," "The Twilight Zone," "Bad Things Happen to Good People," "Man of Sorrow," "Paradise Found," "Those That Mourn," "Joy Comes in the Morning" ... and more.*



**Alan Johnston** is a retired pastor living in Chattanooga, Tenn. During his 54 years of ministry, he pastored churches in Alabama and Tennessee, and during 34 of those years he was also a certified financial planner. He is founder of Path2Truth Ministry and spends much of his time teaching and writing.

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