

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Richard, pictured here with his two children, came to parenting classes at Sav-A-Life Vestavia and found a supportive community through its fatherhood program. He and the children's mother, Jasmine, are now married and committed to being the best parents they can be. "Coming to classes taught me what a man, what a father, should be," Richard said.

Photo courtesy of Kristen Lee Creative

Generational **impact**

Pregnancy resource centers' fatherhood programs help dads engage

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When Richard found out his girlfriend, Jasmine, was pregnant, he was nervous — he'd been a husband and a dad before, and he didn't feel like he'd done very well.

Then one day Jasmine asked him to come with her to parenting classes at Sav-A-Life in Vestavia. He said yes and found quickly that he loved

the fellowship with other men who came there for the fatherhood program. He realized the group was a safe place — there was no judgment, and the other men were very similar to him. After a while, he and Jasmine decided to marry.

"As a guy, it's hard to find a place where you can be yourself and talk with other guys," Richard said. "Coming to classes taught me what a man, what a father, should be. ... The

greatest gift I received from coming to class is my knowledge of being more of a father for my kids and more of a husband for my wife."

God at work

In north Alabama, Chad Cronin said he sees God at work in similar ways through the fatherhood program at Huntsville Pregnancy Resource Center.

"We're able to meet with men in a

one-on-one setting, share Christ, advocate for life and encourage them in the adventure and privilege of fatherhood," he said.

Cronin said one couple who came to HPRC last year had faith in Christ as part of their story in the past but had drifted away. As the mother began attending classes, the father also joined fatherhood classes with Cronin, learning practical
(See 'Learning,' page 9)

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Father's Day

QUOTES & VERSES

Compiled by Annette Brown and Carrie McWhorter

“The purpose of life and the purpose of our families is to experience God and glorify Him now and forever.”

Gary Fenton,
retired pastor



FENTON

“What a boy can use, and too often doesn't have, are the heart of his

father and the fellowship of men. A boy needs at least one man who pays attention to him, spends time with him, and admires him. A boy needs a role model, a man whom he can regard as a mentor.”

Dennis Rainey,
author



RAINEY

“I really do believe, as the spiritual leader of my family, I am trying to instill in my children a true belief in the presence of God. I want the gospel and Christ Himself to be real to these kids.”

Andrew Peterson,
author and songwriter



PETERSON

“The father of godly children has cause for joy. What a pleasure to have children who are wise.”

Proverbs 23:24 (NLT)

“The secret of a happy home is that members of the family learn to give and receive love.”

Billy Graham, evangelist

“Train up a child in the way he should go — but be sure you go that way yourself.”

Charles Spurgeon,
theologian



SPURGEON

“There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues are created, strengthened and maintained.”

Winston Churchill



MOODY

“A man ought to live so that everybody knows he is a Christian ... and most of all, his family ought to know.”

Dwight L. Moody,
evangelist

“Children are fortunate if they have a father who is honest and does what is right.”

Proverbs 20:7 (GNT)

“Dad, no matter where you are in the fathering journey ... keep investing wholeheartedly in your kids as you discover how each one is uniquely gifted and find ways to prepare them for life beyond your home.”

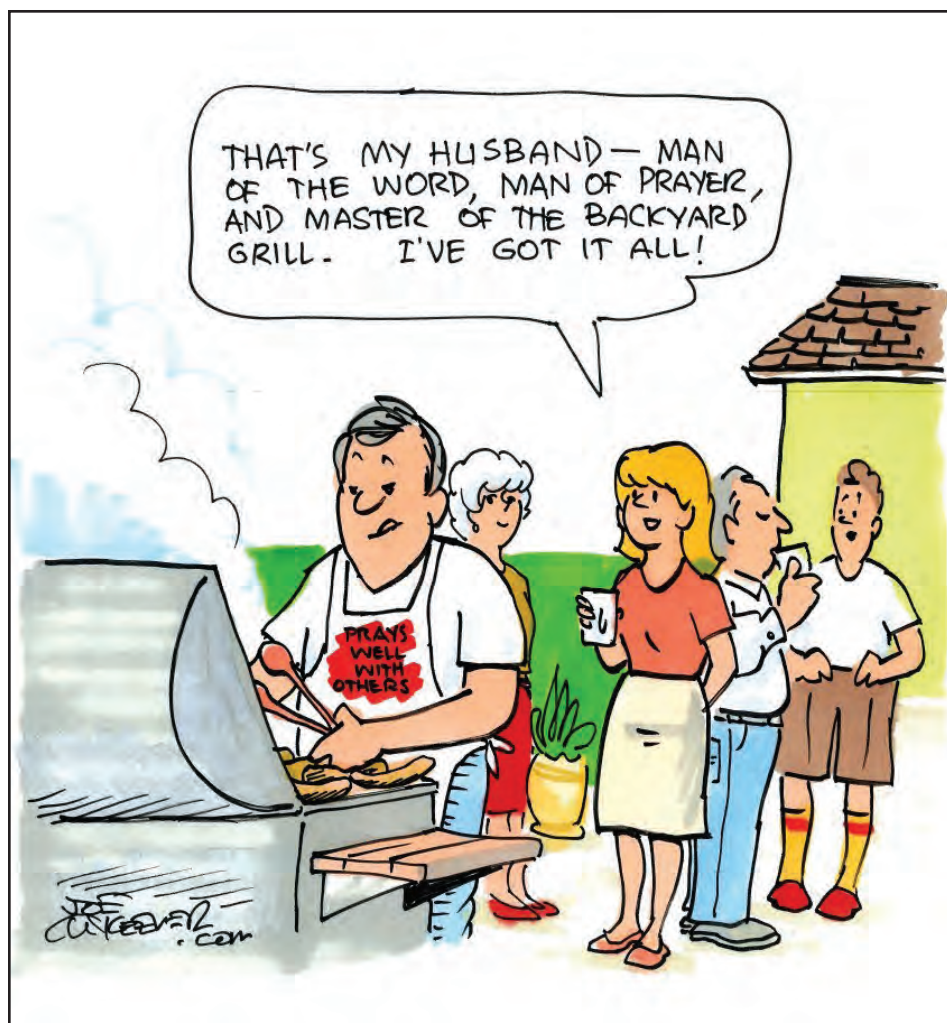
Ken R. Canfield, Ph.D., The National Center for Fathering



CANFIELD

“My father didn't tell me how to live; he lived and let me watch him do it.”

Clarence Budington Kelland,
author



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.



GUEST EDITORIAL

for this week's issue of **The Alabama Baptist**

By Grace Thornton, Special Assignments Editor

Two decades later, still love telling Alabama Baptists' stories

It wasn't my first assignment at The Alabama Baptist, but in my head it was in the early days, because I still felt pretty new to the area the day I drove out to the church.

I'd come to Birmingham right after college in 2003, desperate for a job and so grateful when Jennifer Rash — now editor-in-chief, then managing editor — offered me the chance to come fill in for a couple of weeks for someone who was out recovering from surgery.

That two weeks in the summer turned into a six-month internship, which turned into a job in the advertising department (a fake-it-til-you-make-it situation for me, for sure) that still allowed me to take some writing assignments.

I was out on an assignment that day I met Mrs. Sharon. She was the church secretary and the obvious mama/grand-mama to everybody there. Even though I was there to interview two pastors, before I left she had learned my life story and invited me to come back for a church service and lunch at her house.

I went. How could you say no to that? Especially as fresh as I was to adulthood and to the area. I'd loved Alabama so far, but I didn't have any roots.

For the next year, maybe more, I spent a good number of Sunday lunches with her family, something I will always treasure. I made some good friends at that church (including a second Sharon). Over time, I got to a point where I began to feel like I needed to be a part of a church closer to where I lived, but I would always be more grateful than I knew how to say for my time there — those precious friends had given me a home in a place where I didn't have one.

That's what I have felt like in the 20 years since I first came to TAB — that all of you that I get to talk to every day, some on the phone, some at your churches

or homes — have made Alabama home.

I'll never take for granted the privilege of getting to know you, TAB's readers, and you entrusting me with your stories. I've eaten your pie and gotten to hear about your grandkids. I've had the privilege of hearing about your joy, your grief, your struggles and the way God has worked in the middle of all of it, for your good, for His glory and for the spread of the gospel.

I haven't been here the whole two decades — in the middle, I left and went overseas for a few years. But even over there, I still found some of you, even

had a roommate who was from Alabama at one point.

Y'all's reach is everywhere. I love it. And I'm blessed to get to hear over and over and over what God is doing in and through you.

A few months back, I got to see Mrs. Sharon again for the first time in a few years. We met out at the property of that church I went to on one of my first assignments, the one that became one of my very first homes here in Alabama. It was great to hug her neck and catch up.

Lord willing, I'm looking forward to many more conversations like that still to come — more stories to hear and more stories to tell.

I'm so thankful to be a part of the Alabama Baptist family.

"I'll never take for granted the privilege of getting to know you, TAB's readers, and you entrusting me with your stories."

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

E P H E S I A N S 6 : 4

Your Voice



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

Jesus knows loneliness and identifies with yours

By David L. Chancey

McDonough Road Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Georgia

Administrators at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Texas, one of the largest hospitals in America, researched the reason for their overcrowded emergency rooms.

They analyzed data and found 80 patients who went to four emergency rooms 5,139 times in a 12-month period, visits costing the system more than \$14 million.

They sent teams to meet with the patients and determine the reason.

Their conclusion? The cause for most of the repeat visits was isolation. They were lonely.

Poverty and food shortages contributed, but “the No. 1 determinant of high emergency department utilization is relationships,” according to Dr. Esmail Porsa, executive vice president and chief strategy and integration officer for the hospital system.

Human connection

The ER provided attention, kindness and compassionate care.

The Harvard University Graduate School of Education surveyed approximately 950 Americans in fall 2020. The report suggests that

36% of Americans deal with “serious loneliness,” including 61% of young adults and 51% of mothers with young children.

Those results came in the thick of the pandemic, but three years later, loneliness continues to afflict our society.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He experienced a moment of intense loneliness. He felt completely abandoned by God and, quoting from Psalm 22, cried out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34).

Have you ever felt that way?

Jesus understands everything we face. Think about His life: He was conceived before Mary was married, misunderstood by His family, rejected by the religious establishment, disappointed by His closest followers and betrayed by one of His disciples.

One time Jesus stated, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20).

Think about His death: Matthew 27:47 records some people stood nearby. Where were His

family members? His mother, His mother’s sister and Mary Magdalene stood with Him (John 19:25).

So did one disciple, John (John 19:26).

Where were the other disciples? Where were the crowds who heard Him teach and saw Him perform miracles?

In these days of having more social media followers than real friends, when emailing or texting is easier than sitting down

and having a meaningful conversation with someone in person, how do we confront loneliness?

The Lord’s example

What did Jesus do with His loneliness?

First, Jesus turned to His heavenly Father. He cried out. He prayed. Though God turned His face away from sin, He never left Jesus. In that moment, even as this cry was leaving His lips, God was present with Jesus.

God is always present with us. You are never alone, no matter what you are facing or what you are dealing with.

Second, Jesus turned to God’s Word. Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1. Jesus knew God’s Word because He spent time in God’s Word. So must we.

When we find ourselves fighting the feeling of forsakenness, open the Bible and find passages that bring comfort.

Out of curiosity, I did a search for “Scriptures that bring comfort,” and the first thing that came up was a piece in Southern Living from July 2022, “50 Bible Verses that Bring Peace and Comfort.”

Here are a few examples:

- ▶ Psalm 145:18–19.
- ▶ Matthew 10:29–31.
- ▶ John 16:22.
- ▶ 2 Corinthians 4:16–18.
- ▶ Proverbs 3:3–6.
- ▶ Matthew 11:28.

What if you wrote these verses on 3-by-5-inch cards and posted them on your mirrors or kept them in your pocket so you could read them again and again?

What if you memorized 10 of them? What a difference that would make!

Billy Graham said, “I am never lonely when I am reading the Bible. Nothing dissolves loneliness like a session with God’s Word.”

Third, Jesus trusted His heavenly Father. Jesus knew He was right in the middle of God’s perfect plan to bring salvation to the world.

Even as He endured the cruelty of the cross and the pain of forsakenness, He knew God was in control and was still writing His story. And the story wasn’t over. This was Friday and resurrection Sunday was coming!

God is still writing your story, also. Do you trust Him?

EDITOR’S NOTE — David L. Chancey serves as pastor of McDonough Road Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Georgia. Check out his other columns at davidchancey.com.



CHANCEY

“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Matthew 8:20

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.”

P S A L M 1 0 3 : 1 3

Self-denial is something I struggle with in country music, where instead every night I'm getting up on the stage and seeking glory, seeking applause, seeking people to exalt me. That's just not what we're called to do as followers, and I could not reconcile those two things together.

Granger Smith

Longtime country musician, who recently announced his 2023 tour will be his last

God has called me into ministry. I'm not here to build this crazy music career.

Patrick Mayberry
Singer, songwriter

When we put God's Word out there, it doesn't return void. You

never know the impact it's going to have on the people around it.

Vickey Weathers, organizer
Cleburne Baptist Association
Bible reading marathon

God is the one who can speak into each heart and each life and each place far beyond what any of us can do. And we need His help. Let's ask God to do what only He can do to be able to heal our nation and to redirect our lives and our families.

Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla.

We found out that 80% of all amputees live in developing countries. Amputees are treated like second-class citizens. They become shadows in the community. They can't work, so they have to beg for a

living and the suicide rate goes up. That's when my students decided we needed to step in and make a difference — change some lives.

Brian Copes
Career tech instructor
Chickasaw Middle/High School

We need a groundswell of people turning back to God. Jesus, show us the Way.

Bryant Wright
President, Send Relief

There is a growing passion in our churches for deeper scriptural understanding and intentional equipping for ministry.

Josh Knierim
Pastor, The Church at Old Town in Helena and MTI instructor



Chitchat

What people are sharing on social media

@jonninicole

It is inconsistent not to have time for God and to wish to spend eternity with Him.

Instagram

@ricklance

What is our greatest challenge? It is to stay focused on missions and evangelism. When we are distracted by other things, we become unfocused leaders trying to lead unfocused ministries.

Twitter

Matter. It's the stuff that everything is made of. $E=mc^2$ and all that. That is the science/physics definition. There is another kind of matter that is a powerful force in the

universe. Consider three ways that this matter matters.

First, pay attention to people and notice them. People matter and need to know that. Yes, it is easier to see what is on the surface and avoid or ignore them. It is easy to be too busy to acknowledge that people — a person — matters. Make it a point to let people know.

Second, it is nice to discover occasionally that you matter. It is powerful to find out that you have been able to help someone along in this life and it mattered because you matter.

Last, each of you matters because you are created in the image of God. It may be a messed up image, but because you matter to Him, He can

make you matter more than ever. Read John 3:16. Mattering matters.

Mark Wakefield
Facebook

@christianmomprenuers

Skipping family time to work on business is destructive, not productive.

Instagram

@deaninserra

Thinking a lot about Christian unity. Theological triage is something that needs to be taught over and over again. Especially to incoming college freshmen with an interest in theology and ministry. Could be some of the most important discipleship you give them.

Twitter

Targeting Christians

Earlier this month, Target removed provocative Pride Month products from its stores after facing a significant backlash and losing a reported \$9 billion as shares dropped by 12.6%.

It's a significant setback for the retailer who is no stranger to controversy.

The most egregious offerings were designed by drag queens and "nonbinary" creators, including "Bible-girl666" and Erik Carnell, whose other work promotes both Satan worship and LG-BTQ themes.

Don't be surprised

Christians are rightfully shocked at the in-your-face mockery of Christian values, but they shouldn't be surprised.

What should a Christian response be to the suffocating proselytizing by our favorite brands? We should be intentional about resisting the sexual revolution with both courage and civility.

There is a temptation to yield to the spirit of the age in order to avoid conflict. But God has designed a better way for our flourishing.

He has declared maleness and femaleness to be good and for sexuality to be a gift expressed only in a covenant marriage relationship between a man and a woman. We can be confident that the Christian vision for what it means to be human is more robust than the dualism and neo-Gnosticism of the present moment.

We are called by God to live in in this world, but not be of it, to seek the welfare of our cities (Jer. 19:7) while also joyfully serving as signposts to that city whose "builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

Dan Darling
Author and director
of the Land Center for
Cultural Engagement
at Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of The Christian Index

Fayette County, Georgia, manager Steve Rapson on June 5 said he would not levy a fine against Flat Creek Baptist Church after it hosted a car show on its campus June 3. The event attracted more than 1,200 people. Rapson had warned the church it would face a fine for zoning violations if it went through with the event. Rapson instead issued a warning. Church supporters called the decision a "clear victory for religious freedom." (The Christian Index)

Lifeway announces 2024 VBS theme

Standing firm on God's rock-solid truth is the idea behind Lifeway's 2024 Vacation Bible School theme, "Breaker Rock Beach."

Melita Thomas, VBS and kids ministry specialist for Lifeway Christian Resources, said the Pacific Northwest setting provides "a visual representation of what God's unshakable truth is like in a world of cultural crashing waves and shifting sands."



The lessons in "Breaker Rock Beach" flow from the motto "God's truth never changes!" and the theme verse, Romans 12:2.

More information can be found at vbs.lifeway.com. (Lifeway)

CSB Children's Bible earns top ECPA honor

The "CSB Explorer Bible for Kids" by Holman Bibles of Lifeway Christian Resources was named Bible of the Year at the recent Evangelical Christian Publishers Association's Christian Book Awards.

This marks the first time in 18 years the ECPA has named a children's resource Bible of the Year.

Only two children's Bibles have won the award since the ECPA introduced the category in 1988.

Andy McLean, publisher for Holman Bibles, said the award "affirms what we set out to accomplish — creating a compelling way to help kids engage with the history, culture and meaning of the text of Scripture."

More information about the "CSB Explorer Bible for Kids" can be found at lifeway.com. (Lifeway)

Persecuted church

Pastor, wife detained after police raid of house church in China

YONGZHOU, China — A pastor and his wife were interrogated May 14 following a raid upon a house church in China's Hunan province.

The human rights group ChinaAid reports that Zeng Zhaotai and his wife, Wan Juan, were taken to the police station. Wan was released soon thereafter. Zeng, however, called his wife at 9:30 p.m. to tell her he was being detained.

Quoting information from police, ChinaAid stated Zeng ultimately received a 15-day administrative detention, as well as a fine of 1,000 yuan (\$140). His cell phone and computer were also confiscated. Police issued Wan a copy of her husband's subpoena and the "decision of administrative punishment." The ChinaAid article says Wan refused to sign the documents.

The Hunan province is also where evangelist Chen Wensheng was arrested last year because of his ministry, notes ChinaAid.



IMB photo

China is No. 16 on Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

7 fined in Belarus for telling others the meaning of Easter

MINSK, Belarus — Seven Protestants in Belarus have been punished for telling people on a city street in Minsk the meaning of Easter.

Forum 18 News Service said the seven were arrested, handcuffed and detained for about eight hours on April 15 by the city's Central

District Police Department. They were charged with "violations of the procedure for organizing or conducting a mass event or demonstration."

On April 28, judges for the Minsk court found them guilty and imposed fines equaling about two months of wages for each of the seven Protestants.

Five of the seven attend New Life Pentecostal Church in Minsk, said Forum 18, quoting a statement from the church. The statement says the seven shared about Easter only with those who seemed interested.

The seven were speaking with passersby in a park on Nemiha Street in Minsk. They had with them a wooden cross 78 inches tall. After explaining the meaning of Easter, they would give the listeners the opportunity to write their sins on a piece of paper and attach the paper to the cross as a symbolic act.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

▶ **Willie Byron Parker**, a longtime hospital chaplain in the Dothan area, died June 3. He was 85.

Parker was the full-time chaplain at Southeast Alabama Medical Center (now called Southeast Health) in Dothan for 35 years until he retired in 2016.

He received his formal education at Florida Baptist Theological College (now the Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville.

He was pastor of South Lena Baptist Church, Dothan; First Baptist Church Gordon; and Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, Gordon. He also was on the board of directors for the Dothan Rescue Mission. He was named the Alabama Baptist Minister of the Year in 1993.

Parker was a member of Dothan's Southside Baptist Church.

Parker was preceded in death by his wife of 49 years, Patricia Kay.

He is survived by two sons and one grandson. (TAB)



PARKER

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Fellowship Baptist Church, Birmingham**, will host its 60th homecoming celebration June 25, 11 a.m., with Jay Stewart, director of the office of Cooperative Program and church financial resources of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, serving as guest preacher. Allen Davis is pastor.

▶ **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will host a special senior adult event June 27, noon, featuring gospel singer Bob Sellers, formerly with the Kingsmen. There is no charge. Lunch will be served at 11 a.m. Bill McCall is pastor.

DEKALB ASSOCIATION

▶ **Gravel Hill Baptist Church, Fort Payne**, recently honored **Betty Fike** (left), church clerk, and **Shannon Childress** (right), church secretary, for their years of service. The pastor is Chris Murdock (center).



Photo courtesy of Gravel Hill Baptist Church

LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Tim Anderson**, pastor of **Clements Baptist Church, Athens**, retired in May after 29 years of service.

He had served as pastor since October 1994. During his ministry, the church grew from 30 to over 1,500 members.

More than 1,250 people were baptized at Clements during Anderson's ministry.

He attended Samford University, New Orleans Seminary and Andersonville Baptist Theological Seminary.



ANDERSON

Anderson serves as president and director of the International Conference on Revival in Johannesburg, South Africa; Zimbabwe; Argentina; Paraguay; Canada; and Haiti.

He also serves on the board of regents for the University of Mobile.

The church celebrated the Andersons during its May 21 service. A reception was also held in their honor.

He and his wife, Sherry, have three children and six grandchildren.



GOOCH

▶ **Caleb Gooch** is the new pastor of **Clements Baptist Church, Athens**, where he has been serving as associate pastor since February 2020. Prior to that, he had served as student pastor at Clements since January 2014.

He holds a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and is pursuing a master of arts degree in Christian ministry from Liberty University.

He and his wife, Kayla, have one child.

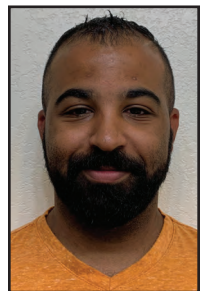
SOUTHEAST ALABAMA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Danny Love** is the new worship pastor of **Selma Baptist Church, Dothan**.

He is pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in music education through the Baptist College of Florida.

He previously was director in the performing arts department of Chipley (Fla.) High School, and choir director and assistant worship leader of Blue Lake Baptist Church, Chipley, Florida.

He and his wife, Amber, have two children.



LOVE

BIGBEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Siloam Baptist Church, York**, recently had a weekend full of celebrations. On Saturday, May 20, the Siloam Cemetery Association and the 1970s era Coffee House youth group held reunions. The cemetery association's reunion was its first meeting since 2019.

On May 21, the church celebrated its 185th anniversary. Actually begun in 1832 as Siloam Primitive Baptist Church, a split created the Siloam Missionary Baptist Church in June 1838, the date the church celebrates. Tim Craddock preached the homecoming message, and music was shared by former Siloam music director, Darren Williams.

Additionally, the church celebrated two specific women — Lynda Harwell and Ruth Tew (pictured here).

The women have been playing the piano and organ, respectively, for 40 years at the church.

Also pictured are Tom Taylor, music director, and Brad Campbell, Siloam's pastor who also serves as director of missions of Bigbee Baptist Association.



Photo courtesy of Siloam Baptist Church

FBC Montgomery arsonist convicted

The woman arrested and charged in the 2021 arson attack at First Baptist Church Montgomery has been convicted by a federal jury.

Xiaoqin Yan, a 29-year-old Chinese national, was found guilty of committing arson and possessing a firearm by an illegal alien on June 7, according to the office of U.S. Attorney Sandra J. Stewart. Yan faces up to 20 years in federal prison when sentencing is handed down in the coming months.

The Sept. 30, 2021, fire caused extensive damage inside the historic church. Security video footage, eyewitness testimony from sev-

eral church members and other evidence led to Xiaoqin's arrest and conviction.

In a Facebook post prior to the verdict, FBC Montgomery pastor Mark Bethea urged prayer for Yan, who he referred to as "Alice."

"I don't know the ins and outs of the legal system to know what will happen after the trial," he wrote. "But let's pray the Lord would open wide her heart to receive the gospel. ... If He can save a sinner like me and like us, I know He can save a church arsonist. Let's continue to believe and pray for her salvation." (The Alabama Baptist)

More than a sporting event

Christian athletes face difficult decisions as sports teams host Pride nights, other pro-LGBTQ events

When the Los Angeles Dodgers announced plans to honor a pro-LGBTQ group that lampoons Christians, Dodgers pitcher Blake Treinen took a stand.

“I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins,” he said in a statement released on Twitter. “I believe the Word of God is true, and in Galatians 6:7 it says, ‘Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked; a man reaps what he sows.’ This group openly mocks Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of my faith, and I want to make clear that I do not agree with nor support the decision of the Dodgers to ‘honor’ the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.”

Other Christian players take a more subdued approach when their teams express support for homosexuality and transgenderism. Some have strong convictions but don’t feel confident enough to articulate them in a manner that will draw national media spotlight, said Don Gordon, a former Major League pitcher who ministers to professional baseball players through the organization Score International.

Bottom line

“The average fan who is 40 to 50 years old should probably cut some slack to a 23-year-old who happens to be a Major League Baseball player,” said Gordon, who pitched in the Detroit, Toronto, Cleveland and Milwaukee organizations. “They’re 25 years old. They don’t know everything. Who knows what their level of maturity is. They’re going out there to play baseball. They don’t realize that they’re now a spotlight for these issues that come and go in our culture.”

The bottom line: Speak against baseball organizations’ pushing unbiblical agendas, but give Christian players freedom to respond accord-



Wikipedia photo

ing to their consciences. That’s the conclusion of believers who minister to professional players, coaches and front office personnel.

LGBTQ Pride displays have been in the cultural spotlight in recent seasons.

Dodger pitcher and Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw also spoke against his team’s decision to honor the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a satirical LGBTQ organization.

The Dodgers rescinded their decision to honor the group in mid-May but reversed course less than a week later. Kershaw pushed the Dodgers to reinstate Christian Faith and Family Day as a counter-emphasis. At press time, the Dodgers’ Pride Night was scheduled for June 16 and Christian Faith and Family Day for July 30.

“This has nothing to do with the LGBTQ community or Pride or anything like that,” Kershaw said. “This

is simply a group that was making fun of a religion,” and “I don’t agree with” it.

Washington Nationals pitcher Trevor Williams opined as well, tweeting that to honor a group which “makes a blatant and deeply offensive mockery of my religion ... undermines the values of respect and

inclusivity that should be upheld by any organization.”

With Pride days scheduled at stadiums across MLB this summer, more faceoffs between players and management seem inevitable.

A similar faceoff occurred in the NHL this season when a handful

of professional hockey players opted not to wear rainbow-colored jerseys on their teams’ Pride nights. And last year, five Tampa Bay Rays players opted out of wearing a rainbow-accented jersey during the team’s annual Pride night event, citing religious beliefs.

“Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked; a man reaps what he sows.”
Galatians 6:7

For Christian athletes, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the culture wars, Gordon said.

Kershaw “is taking a stand, which I admire and I respect,” he said. “I’ve been praying for him.” At the same time, “there are factors the average fan will not understand because it’s unique to the culture of playing baseball professionally.”

Teams promote the LGBTQ agenda for financial gain, according to Christians involved with MLB. They seek to draw fans, avoid bad publicity and stay clear of litigation.

Responding to the financial pressures of baseball can involve calculations more nuanced than baseball fans realize, said Jeff Iorg, who ministered directly to MLB players for 10 years.

Contracts and collective bargaining agreements may require players to wear a certain uniform on a specific day while other activities, such as making a gay pride video, may be optional, said Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary.

Christian witness

Sometimes the best Christian witness may be to play well and not assume the role of a media spokesman for Christian ethics, Iorg said.

“All fans need to be patient and understand that players are making agonizing decisions about what to do and how to do it,” he said. “Those decisions often have ramifications within the team and within the workplace that fans would never see.”

In Los Angeles, Treinen continues to find the controversy an occasion for gospel focus.

“I understand that playing baseball is a privilege, and not a right,” he said. “My convictions in Jesus Christ will always come first.” (Baptist Press, TAB contributed)



Photo courtesy of WRC

(L to r) Deanna Montieth, clinic director of Women's Resource Center; Carlotta White, placement coordinator for the ERLC's Psalm 139 Project; and Marty Carrell, CEO of WRC, gather around an ultrasound provided by the Psalm 139 Project for WRC's Saraland site.

Women's Resource Center opens Saraland site

Women's Resource Center in Mobile celebrated the grand opening of its site in Saraland in a new facility June 8.

The previous Saraland center had closed in late 2019.

"We want to be all over Mobile County for life," said Marty Carrell, CEO of WRC, which also has a site on Downtowner Boulevard in Mobile across from Planned Parenthood, a site in Semmes and a mobile unit.

She said the new center was made possible by generous supporters such as the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's Psalm 139 Project, which provided the grant for a new ultrasound machine.

'Fierce' battle

Even with Roe v. Wade being overturned in 2022, the battle for life "is fierce," Carrell said, noting that WRC staff and volunteers need churches to come alongside them to help love and serve the community well.

"The more we work together, the more we can see the work of God," she said.

To read the full story on WRC's work in the Mobile area, visit tabonline.org/wrc-cares. (Grace Thornton)

LEARNING TO LEAD

Fatherhood programs provide bridge between men, church

(continued from page 1)

tips but also how to be a man who leads his family well.

"They came to go through our classes, reconnected with the Lord and ended up coming to my church, and we baptized them last summer," said Cronin, who in addition to his role at HPRC serves as pastor of Providence Fellowship in Madison. "It was cool to see them come to the classes and get the material blessings but really be challenged on family discipleship."

Stefanie Miles, HPRC executive director, said she believes that investing time, money and effort into building relationships with fathers "is going to change the future."

"The cycle of fatherlessness is devastating. Statistically it is so much better for a child to have a male presence in their life," she said, noting that a father's influence can help a child make better choices.

"If we can keep guys in the lives of their children, maybe we keep those children from growing up and not graduating from high school or ending up in prison."

Lisa Hogan, who serves as executive director of Sav-A-Life Vestavia and two other Sav-A-Life centers in the Birmingham metro area, said a dad's involvement is important at the pregnancy stage too.

She cited a Life-way study in which mothers reported that the most influential person on their pregnancy decision was the father.

"We've learned over the years how important it is to engage dads," Hogan said.

She said Sav-A-Life was an early adopter of the Care Net ministry's fatherhood program in 2010 when they received a grant from National



Photo courtesy of Huntsville Pregnancy Resource Center

Fatherhood classes at Huntsville Pregnancy Resource Center offer men a chance to experience practical help and deep discipleship.

Fatherhood Initiative and Care Net to help them get started.

"We went from serving 20 dads to 182 dads that first year, then it more than doubled, and from that it's continued to grow," Hogan said. "We now serve about 1,000 dads a year through education, medical services and encouraging them to come for pregnancy test appointments."

Programs like it are growing in other parts of the state too, like the one at HPRC. Their program started in 2019 but found its footing in 2021 after COVID-19. By 2022, it had doubled, reaching hundreds of men.

Raequane Jones, Sav-A-Life's fatherhood ministry coordinator, said the vision has been to create an environment where there is love, education and a chance to see what it looks like to be a family that's whole.

His wife and children have been involved in the ministry too, building relationships and modeling what

a healthy family looks like.

"When I think about a father in a family, it's not just dad, mom and baby, it's this father who is a cousin and a brother, who eventually will be a grandfather or great uncle," Jones said. "When he's the man he needs to be for his family, it impacts way more than his partner and his child. When he gets exposed to the right things, he can be a model. You really can't even see how far it reaches."

Mentorship program

In Huntsville, Cronin is working to build a similar environment. He's hoping to enlist men from area churches to be a part of a mentorship program that can help impact these fathers for the long run.

HPRC is also finishing up renovations on the building next door with plans for it to be a place where men can feel comfortable playing basketball or pool and spending time with each other.

Miles said ultimately they "want it to be a place where mentors come in and walk side by side with these guys and be a bridge to local churches."

Fathers everywhere need to be supported, she said, and though HPRC "can't do something everywhere, we can try to do something here."



Facebook photo

A father celebrates earning a new crib for his family through attending parenting classes at Women's Hope Medical Clinic in Auburn.

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OF ALABAMA BAPTIST MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

Alabama Baptists' SBC story one of working toward greater cooperation

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Danny Wood said during his 24 years as pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, he's known one thing for certain about the church's budget.

The first 10% was spoken for. "A lot of it started with Charles Carter with a commitment to the Southern Baptist Convention," Wood said of his predecessor, who served at the church for 26 years. "Our church was always committed to the SBC and looking for places of leadership and ways to be a part."

He said the Shades congregation believed in the work of the North American Mission Board and International Mission Board, Southern Baptists' unified means to get the gospel to their continent and the world. When Wood was a member of Shades before becoming pastor, the church was "always supportive" of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions, he said.

Then when Wood became pastor, he wanted to set a standard of giving at least 10% through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' way of funding missions and ministries together.

"We felt like out of the operating budget, we wanted to do a tithe of that back to the convention. We believed in it," said Wood, who retired and was named pastor emeritus in



In June 2019, Terry Long (center), DOM for Choctaw Association, prays over a couple with his team during Crossover, an evangelistic event held before the SBC annual meeting. That year, Alabama hosted the SBC meeting for the first time since 1941.

2021. "We did it because we believed in the work of Southern Baptists, and we wanted to support all of the work — the seminaries, the agencies, the boards, all of those things."

'Strong' in giving

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said that spirit has been a part of Baptist life in the state for a long time.

Alabama Baptists have been "strong" in giving through the Cooperative Program ever since it was started in 1925, he said.

In recent months, Alabama Baptists exceeded the \$1.5 billion mark

in total giving through the CP.

"We remain the No. 1 contributor to SBC causes," Lance said.

Alabama Baptists have seen the need to work together as a larger convention since the beginning, though not everything about that past has been as beautiful a picture of cooperation as the work they do now around the world together.

When the Alabama Baptist State Convention was founded in 1823, the SBC didn't exist yet. The ABSC became a part of the larger national Triennial Convention, or General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States, recognizing early on that they could do more

together missionally than they could do by themselves.

But two decades later, Baptists in the Southern states were struggling with their Baptist family in the North over the issue of slavery. Northern Baptists didn't agree with slavery, and they took a stand by choosing not to appoint and support missionaries from the South.

Rocky start

Eventually that led to a split, and 300 Baptists from the Southern states — 33 of those from Alabama — voted to start the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845. It was a rocky start, and through the Civil War, many Baptists in the South defended slavery. Afterward, the struggle for racial reconciliation continued for decades.

But along the way, some Alabama Baptists began to rise up and lead the effort to bring unity. One of those was Carter, who in the mid-1950s — before his time as pastor at Shades Mountain Baptist — began preaching sermons on the radio about how God is "no respecter of persons" and loves everyone equally.

Carter continued that effort alongside the efforts of others, and over the decades, the landscape of Alabama Baptist churches and the individual viewpoints of their members began to change.

In 1995, Carter chaired the Resolutions Committee that urged the SBC to pursue racial reconciliation and denounce racism. It was a significant milestone, and he encouraged every-

one to live by that philosophy when they got back to their home states and churches.

It was another important way for Alabama Baptists to live out the unity Jesus talked about in John 17 — to give through the CP, yes, and work together to reach the world, but also to love their brothers and sisters right next to them.

"Alabama Baptists have more ethnically diverse congregations than ever before," Lance said. "The overwhelming majority of our new church plants involve various ethnic groups. This corresponds to the trends in the larger SBC family."

Those church plants and others are "all possible because of the faithful giving of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program," he said. "The 'C' in Cooperative Program makes all of these and other ministries a reality. Without the Cooperative Program, our collective efforts would be vastly diminished."

Over the years through their giving, Alabama Baptists have been a part of sending missionaries to unreached peoples and planting churches across North America. They've helped provide seminary training for pastors who have scattered to all those places as well as served in Alabama.

And Alabama Baptists have served in SBC leadership roles. Four SBC presidents have had Alabama ties. Jonathan Haralson, an associate justice on the Alabama Supreme Court, served from 1889 to 1898.

Herschel Hobbs, an Alabama native who was serving as pastor of First Baptist Church Oklahoma City at the time he was elected, served from 1961 to 1963.

Prominent in Baptist life

Jaroy Weber, who was serving in Texas when elected but had recently served at Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile and been prominent in Baptist life in the state, was SBC president from 1975 to 1976.

And Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, led the SBC from 2021 to 2022.

"Although only four Alabama Baptists have served as the SBC president, others have been called upon to serve in various capacities," Lance said. "The strategic places of service such as the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Nominations involve Alabama Baptists every year."

Because of the "sizable influence" of Alabama Baptists in the SBC, many from the state's churches have served on SBC entities' boards, he said. "Alabama Baptists have chaired many of those boards through the years, and others have been engaged in leading the entities in carrying out their mission."

Currently, Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, is serving as chair of the search team for the new president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, a role Lance described as "of utmost importance in Baptist life."

Melissa Bowen, a member of First Baptist Church Prattville, serves on the SBC's Abuse Response Implementation Task Force, which offers churches assistance with preparation in dealing with sexual abuse prevention and sexual abuse response.

"Their work among us cannot be overstated as we all seek to effectively respond to the challenge of helping those who are survivors of abuse and to give guidance to churches as they endeavor to prevent such heinous acts of harm,"

Lance said. "They need our prayer support in the days ahead." Lance said Alabama Baptists have "served the Lord in SBC life humbly and faithfully."

"They have done so without much fanfare but always for the glory of God," he said. "They represent the best of the best in SBC life. Their labors of love are deeply appreciated by those who know of their work for the cause of Christ."



BP photo

Alabama Baptist pastor Charles Carter (center) served as chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee in 1995 when the SBC adopted a resolution apologizing for its racist past and asking African Americans for forgiveness. Here, he discusses the resolution at a press conference alongside SBC second vice president Gary Frost (left) and Christian Life Commission executive director Richard Land.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, was elected SBC president in 2021 — only the fourth president with close Alabama ties since the convention's founding in 1845. To read more of his story and watch a video, visit tabonline.org/litton.



Photo courtesy of Samford Special Collection

Three SBC presidents with Alabama ties served before Ed Litton (top): Jaroy Weber (above), who served 1975–1976; Jonathan Haralson (above, right) who served 1889–1898; and Herschel Hobbs (right), who served 1961–1963.

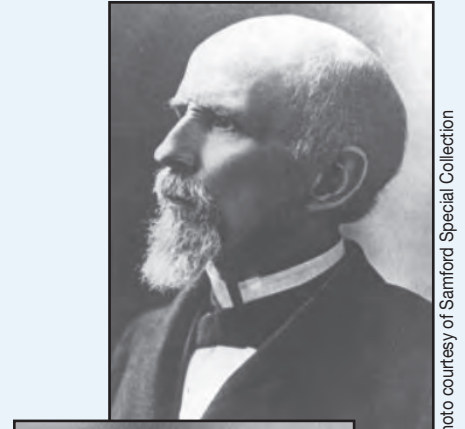


Photo courtesy of Samford Special Collection

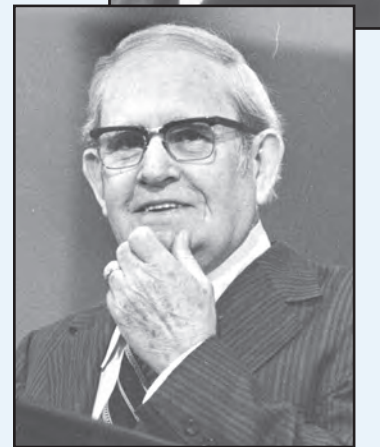


Photo courtesy of Samford Special Collection



TAB photo

Jimmy Jackson (left, shaking hands), retired pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, serves as an SBC parliamentarian, a role he served in for more than 20 years. In 2006, he was also elected SBC first vice president.

Missionaries use recording studio to advance gospel

Since Ben Murray and his wife Jessica began serving in Southeast Asia last year, he's helped build a recording studio at a community center run by believers. The studio has opened opportunities to reach minority people groups with the gospel.

In the country the Murrays serve in, there are many minority people groups. Their languages are distinct from the country's national language. Many are only oral languages. Without a written language, it is difficult to teach others the language or to create resources to share the gospel with them.

One helpful resource is recordings of Bible stories, and the studio at the community center has provided a way to create those. Approximately 20 Bible stories have been recorded for one people group who previously had no known gospel resources.

Reaching the remote

Not long after, two national believers came to the community center with a visitor from one of the country's most remote unreached people groups. The visitor was willing to teach them his language, but they were struggling to communicate and understand each other.

Workers at the center taught all three of them a simple language learning method that didn't require a shared common language. Additionally, they were also able to use the studio and make recordings of stories the believers can continue to listen to as they learn.

Ben said it has been very humbling to see how God is at work drawing those in even the most forgotten corners of the country to Himself.

"Those two guys, they don't have much, but they've given it up to learn this new language and go to this remote village, all for the sake of the good news," Ben said. "It's just really cool to see the Father working in that way."

Communicating the faith

Jessica, a musician, also worked with the two believers to record translations of two worship songs in the people group's language. They also began working on an original worship song.

She remembers it being a messy, unique process as the group sat around trying to figure out the best way to communicate words like "God" and "heaven" for an unwritten language of a people group with no gospel presence among them.

Jessica said it was thrilling to hear verses being put together.

"Tears filled my eyes and hope filled my heart as we heard what was likely the first lyrics of worship to our God in this language," she said.

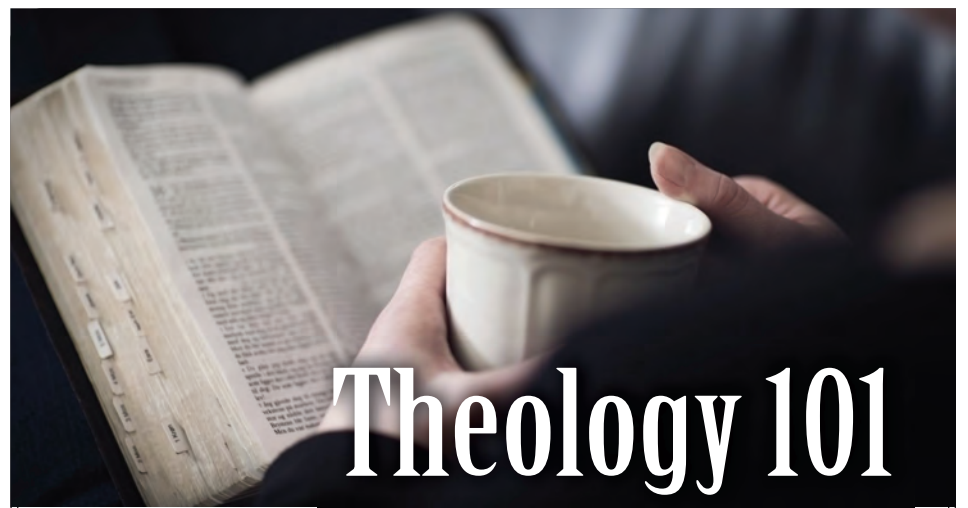
The studio is just beginning to get off the ground, but Ben is hopeful for its potential to continue furthering gospel spread among the country's diverse people groups. (IMB)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Some names may have been changed for security reasons.



IMB photo

Ben Murray was able to help build a recording studio that his wife, Jessica, uses to help national missionaries in Southeast Asia record worship songs.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christ's Ascension

Sending the Holy Spirit

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Christ's ascension was the intermediate stage of His exaltation. The initial stage was His resurrection. The completing stage was His enthronement at the Father's right hand.

When the Apostle Peter was questioned before the Sanhedrin, Peter pointed to the fact of Christ's resurrection, saying, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree" (Acts 5:30).

Peter moved immediately to the enthronement of Christ, saying, "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior" (v. 31). We know from Scripture that the connecting link between Christ's earthly resurrection and heavenly enthronement was the ascension. All three stages of resurrection, ascension and enthronement together constituted Christ's exaltation.

Living water

In John 7:37-39, we read the account of Jesus seizing a moment during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles to issue a thirst-quenching invitation to all who would listen by telling them of living water.

The descending of the Spirit awaited the ascending of Christ. As Peter proclaimed in his message at Pentecost, from Christ's exalted position in heaven He "poured out" the promised Spirit (Acts 2:33). We might say that the sending of the Spirit was Christ's ascension gift to His followers.

Prior to the sending of the Spirit,

Christ had spoken to the disciples about the Spirit's coming by pointing to the Spirit's work of convicting the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11).

Spirit's conviction

Elaborating briefly on each aspect of this convicting work, He addressed the aspect of conviction concerning righteousness by referring to His ascension (v. 10).

How does Christ's going to the Father — His ascension — relate to righteousness? Let's begin with the incarnation. The divine Son of God became fully human. Among other things, this allowed Him to suffer death.

In His resurrection, Jesus did not divest Himself of His humanity. Rather, He elevated it by expressing humanity in a resurrection body. His resurrection appearances were in that body.

Forty days after the resurrection, human eyes saw Him being caught away from their sight. He did not later reappear bodily because He had been accepted back into heaven, taking a full humanity into the Father's presence. That people saw Him no more witnessed to that acceptance.

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.



Give Dad the gift of your presence this Father's Day

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

When I was a child my father often called me to help him with a task. Sometimes it was holding a board he was sawing. Another time, he wanted me to help plant corn in the family garden. And I recall numerous times I was requested to sit on the ice cream freezer, holding it down, while my father turned the hand crank as the custard hardened.

Looking back, I realize he could have accomplished all these things by himself. But with his daughter nearby we could talk and laugh together. During these times, he shared stories from his parents and grandparents that I still recall today. It wasn't my skills he needed; it was my presence.

This Father's Day, instead of the fancy package with

beautiful paper and ribbon, how can we honor those men in our lives who have given us so much? By giving them our time; give experiences, not things. You are blessed if your father is still with you; otherwise, honor his memory. Could some of these ideas work for your father?

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

Exodus 20:12

▶ **Plan a mini-vacation or getaway weekend.** Does your dad enjoy the outdoors? Would a fishing trip to a beautiful lake or stream be of interest? Catch an early sunrise. Marvel at the setting sun. Forget about time and just enjoy being together.

Hit the road

▶ **Rent an RV or travel trailer and hit the road.** Cook your food over an open fire and spend hours talking. Plan a daily devotion time and thank God for



Freepik.com

giving you this Christian dad. One father said, "Hearing my son pray for me was one of life's greatest blessings."

▶ **Sign up for a class you would enjoy together.** Learn a new craft. Local colleges and universities offer non-credit classes on a variety of topics. If you're planning to travel to another country, enroll in a language class together.

▶ **Volunteer with your dad to help those in your community who have special needs.** Do you know someone who needs a

wheelchair ramp so they can become more independent? Are there people who need transportation to church? Jesus tells us to serve one another. Matthew 20:28 says, "... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve ..."

▶ **Attend church this Father's Day and sit in a family group.** Enjoy a potluck meal or meet afterward at a favorite restaurant. Reminisce and tell family stories so the younger generation will know their ancestors. Thank God for giving you a dad who has made a positive impact on your life.

▶ **Write a personal letter, thanking your father for the hard work he has done in giving you a good life.** Thank him for providing a Christian home and setting an example of what God expects from a husband and father.

Photo collage

▶ **Make a collage of photos from his life.** Include early pictures from his childhood, your father and mother with your siblings, and

other relevant memorabilia. Place in a frame and hang in a place of honor.

▶ **Adopt a pet.** Research shows that people who own a pet are happier and have a greater interest in life. Help your dad choose a pet from a local shelter and give a furry friend a forever home. Select one that meets his physical requirements: Does he enjoy hiking or walking and a dog would be a good companion? Or would he prefer a dog or cat that wants to curl up in his lap for an afternoon nap?

▶ **If your father has gone on to be with God, honor his memory through a service project in your church or community.** Or give a donation in his memory to your church or his favorite charity. In doing so you will keep his memory alive so others will know him too.

'Valuable asset'

In praise of fathers, Billy Graham once said, "A good father is one of the most unsung, unpraised, unnoticed and yet one of the most valuable assets in our society."

Often our dads do not receive the praise they have earned, yet a Christian father can be instrumental in teaching his children to walk with God. One of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12) says, "Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

Giving the gift of your presence is the best way to wish dad a "Happy Father's Day." Your time is your most precious gift!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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relationships they establish and the patterns they develop.

Help lay the groundwork for Christlike college experiences by connecting your students with collegiate ministers at Baptist Campus Ministries on campuses around our state.

Ben Edfeldt, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said

collegiate ministers would "love to help your college student get connected with a local Christian community."

"While the BCMs exist to see the lost saved, the saved disciplined and the disciplined sent, BCMs are also set up to be great connectors to fellow

Christian students and local churches," he said.

Get started by connecting with us at bcmlink.org/connect.



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To connect with a campus minister, visit bcmlink.org/connect or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Children's Music Summit

It's back — a hands-on training event for pre-school and children's music leadership to get you excited about teaching these precious children about God through music.

The Children's Music Summit, set for July 7–8, is designed to motivate, inspire, educate and prepare you to lead effectively in your churches, schools,

Mom's Day Out or week-day education programs. Watch the love for worship come alive in your pre-schoolers and children!

The Children's Music Summit will be July 7, 2:30 p.m., until July 8, 3 p.m. at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. For more information or to register, visit alabamaworship.org.

To register, visit alabamaworship.org or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Church Administrative Guidelines workshop to be held June 20

It's important for a church to know the need for and benefit of proper legal and operating documents. Church Administrative Guidelines covers the pro-

cess for developing your church's articles of incorporation, church constitution, bylaws, policies and procedures.

This workshop will be held

June 20, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., at the SBOM office facility in Prattville. The cost is \$15 and includes lunch.

To register, visit alsbom.org/churchadmin.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 200. To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Newbridge Missionary Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, prayerfully seeks a man who will preach the inerrant Word of God and has a heart for missions. Email resumé to: NewbridgePST@gmail.com by Aug. 31.

PASTOR

Good Hope Baptist Church, Eclectic, Alabama, is in search of a full-time pastor. Interested applicants can email resumé to: tonymacec13@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking resumé for bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to church address, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee or to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN

NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville, Alabama, is looking for a full-time minister to children. The minister will lead programming and events for children, mentor young families, and train and oversee volunteer children's ministry workers. Email your resumé and questions to team@NPonline.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

FINANCIAL CLERK

Financial clerk needed. Part time average of 15 hours weekly. Payables, payroll, contribution entry, etc. Send resumé to: tplant@sbcandalusia.com.

PREGNANCY CENTER

DIRECTOR — FULTONDALE, ALABAMA
Sav-A-Life, Inc. is looking for a full-time center director for its Fultondale location (just north of Birmingham). This team member will manage all routine operations of the pregnancy center in an efficient, effective and professional manner. The center director trains and manages all staff and volunteers in the implementation of necessary programs, scheduling and meets with clients. Applicants need a bachelor's or master's degree, preferably in a helping field, or need related equivalent experience if no degree. To learn more or to apply, please send a cover letter and resumé to info@savalife.org. No phone calls please.

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THE WELLNESS KITCHEN

The Wellness Kitchen is a blog and e-newsletter focused on healthy living, ingredients and recipes. The Wellness Kitchen was started by Pat Terry, a registered dietitian and nutrition professor at Samford University for 30 years. Visit her website at thewellnesskitchenrd.com to read more and subscribe to her monthly e-newsletter.

PENNPPOINT COUNSELING

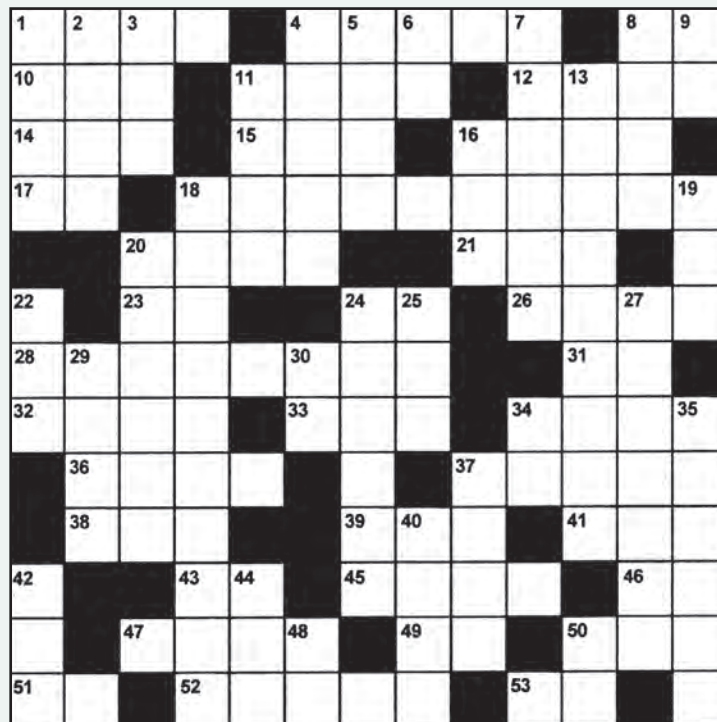
Dr. Romeo Penn is a licensed clinical pastoral counselor/therapist. He serves those in need of pre-marriage, marriage and relationship counseling as well as those struggling with grief, depression, anxiety, fear and anger. Visit pennpointcounseling.com to learn more about Dr. Penn and his resources.

CHRISTIAN CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Outer covering of a fruit or seed.
4. Thou and all thy _____ shall be saved. (Acts 11:14)
8. Mom.
10. A vessel ... meet for the master's _____. (2 Tim. 2:21)
11. Made upon the _____ of the robe. (Ex. 39:24)
12. That the _____ men be sober, grave, temperate. (Titus 2:2)
14. _____ thee hence, Satan. (Matt. 4:10)
15. To make a mistake.
16. Ear _____.
17. Suffix used to make a comparative word.
18. Let his _____ be desolate. (Acts 1:20)
20. Felines.
21. National Hockey League. (abbr.)
23. The men went up and viewed _____. (Josh. 7:2)
24. There is none other but _____. (Mark 12:32)
26. We have seen his _____ in the east. (Matt. 2:2)
28. _____ be Thy name. (Matt. 6:9)
31. Pound. (abbr.)
32. Woes, troubles.
33. Behold, it _____ very good. (Gen. 1:31)
34. Sound a cat makes.
36. New York City baseball team.
37. _____ thee, escape thither. (Gen. 19:22)
38. Standing Room Only. (abbr.)
39. A period of time.
41. _____ hath washed my feet with tears. (Luke 7:44)
43. Negative.
45. It is a _____ thing that the king requireth. (Dan. 2:11)
46. Children of Gad



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13. Ye would not have condemned the _____. (Matt. 12:7)
 16. _____ is a lion's whelp. (Deut. 33:22)
 18. I will rain ... great _____. (Ezek. 38:22)
 19. Neither/ _____.
 20. One who calls.
 22. 22nd letter of Greek alphabet.
 24. I will not be an _____. (Isa. 3:7)
 25. Eddie, Teddy, Edward.
 27. A pain in the neck. (2 words)
 29. Do not your _____ before men. (Matt. 6:1)
 30. World War. (abbr.)
 34. _____ and Pa.
 35. One who cultivates a garden.
 37. Is any thing too _____ for the Lord? (Gen. 18:14)
 40. A sneak attack.
 42. _____ that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)
 44. One type of grain.
 48. Master of arts. (abbr.)
 50. _____ angel.
2. One who uses.
 3. _____ me not wander from Thy commandments. (Ps. 119:10)
 4. Ye tithe ... all manner of _____. (Luke 11:42)
 5. Athaliah, the daughter of _____. (2 Kings 8:26)
 6. We.
 7. Belonging to our planet.
 8. Note sent as a reminder.
 9. Anno Domini. (abbr.)
 11. _____ the furnace.
 13. called the altar _____. (Josh. 22:34)
 14. A group of people working together for a common goal.
 15. _____, ego, superego.
 17. That they may be one, as we _____. (John 17:11)
 19. Your children ... received _____. (Jer. 2:30)
 21. My covenant shall _____ fast with him. (Ps. 89:28)
 23. _____ angel of the Lord.

DOWN

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Connect provides training for missions, ministry leaders

Refreshing. Tremendous fellowship. Powerful worship. These are a few of the words that those who attended Connect last year used to describe their time together at Alabama Woman's Missionary Union's enrichment and leader training weekend.

"It's much more than a training conference — there's something for everyone," said Candace McIntosh, Alabama WMU executive director. "It's a really sweet time of connecting, fellowshiping, learning and preparing ourselves for God to work."

And this year, you're invited to get involved. Connect, set for July 21–22 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, is open to everyone.

The Friday and Saturday gathering features:

- ▶ Bible study with gifted teacher and leader Page Hughes.
- ▶ Engaging breakout ses-

sions on a variety of current topics.

▶ Missionary testimonies from North American and international missionaries.

▶ Outstanding leadership training opportunities for new or seasoned leaders of WMU, women's ministry or adult, youth or children's missions groups.

▶ Fun times of fellowship with other missions-minded believers.

"I think the beauty of Connect is the fellowship as we gather with other missions-minded and ministry-minded adults," McIntosh said. "We enjoy learning from each other, having conversations and making friends in this unique setting."

Training conferences for new missions discipleship and Women's Ministry leaders also will be offered at Connect.

To register or to learn more about how to make reservations at Shocco for the event, visit alabamawmu.org/connect.

Emerging Leaders

Do you have girls in your Acteens or youth group who have demonstrated leadership ability? Do these girls have a passion for knowing God more and serving His people?

You, as a leader of girls in grades 9–12, can nominate candidates to participate in the Emerging Leaders forum organized by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union

July 21–22 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. The forum is by invitation only.

Girls are eligible to attend two years of Emerging Leaders Forum.

The cost is \$60, which includes accommodations, three meals and a T-shirt.

To nominate a teen girl, visit alabamawmu.org/emergingleaders.

6 ways to instantly assess your church website

By **Mark MacDonald**

BeKnownforSomething.com

Websites are the primary way most people pursue information these days.

Your ultimate goal is for your church website to be up to the standard of most other sites.

This is not the time to be creative! Give people information as quickly as possible in the manner that they expect to receive it.

Here are seven ways to instantly know if your church website needs help:

1. The web address (URL) is difficult to say and remember. People find websites by either searching the church's name or by remembering your URL.

Make sure Google is pointing to your website on its first search results page. To find out, search for your church name with the city

name. If it doesn't, ensure your domain is easy to remember (e.g., www.yourdomain.org) and that it's easy to say from the stage too.

2. You're not proud of it. If you're not proud of your church website, chances are your congregation and community won't be either. Your website reflects your church; invest in its design and content.

3. You don't use the website yourself. When was the last time you used the website? If you don't use it, you won't suggest your congregation use it either.

4. Your physical address isn't on the homepage. Approximately 90% of first-time guests will start with your website. When they decide to attend, is it easy to find your address? Consider placing it prominently on



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the homepage — near the top — and make it clickable so visitors can use map apps for directions.

5. Headlines don't match URL slugs. Each page should have one key word or phrase that defines the theme of the page. Clearly identify this theme as the largest headline at the top of its page. Additionally, ensure that the keyword(s) are

included in the URL slug after your main domain.

The slug becomes the unique identifier for the page's content. (For example, your location page might be www.yourchurch.org/location).

6. People say, "I can't find what I'm looking for." If people frequently express their inability to find what they're looking for on your

church website, it's easy to know your church website needs help. Start by improving the organization of your website's main menu. Ensure each page fits logically under the relevant menu item. Limit the number of items in your main menu and drop-downs to five or six, facilitating a faster and more intuitive navigation experience for visitors.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Need a new church website or an evaluation of your current site? *Hosted Church* is an extension of TAB Media Group and is dedicated to helping small to medium churches and nonprofits grow their web presence.

Hosted Church is a premium one-stop shop for your church or organization to quickly get a well-designed and effective website. Go to hostedchurch.com for more information.

Will you take
five minutes
to pray for the Jimmie Hale Mission?

On **Wednesday June 21**, the Mission will celebrate the first day of summer with 24 hours of prayer. Our goal is to have 288 prayer warriors each pray for five minutes to cover our ministry for a continuous 24-hour period. Please pray for our Mission, the people we serve, and our dedicated staff. You can pray from anywhere—the beach or lake, your home, work, or car. To select your prayer slot, scan the code or go to the website page below.

Thank you for joining us in
the power of prayer!



"Then you will call
on me and come
and pray to me, and
I will listen to you."
Jeremiah 29:12



Scan the QR code or visit JimmieHaleMission.com/Prayer
to sign up for your slot on June 21.



EQUIPPING THE CHURCH TO ENGAGE THE DEAF

Meadow Brook Baptist Deaf ministry unites believers in worship, outreach

Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

The first Sunday in July will mark one year since Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham officially launched a Deaf ministry, an effort to unify hearing and deaf believers in worship and outreach.

The ministry kicked off July 3, 2022, when members of Birmingham Community Deaf Church joined Meadow Brook with the goal of establishing a Deaf ministry. The distinction between Deaf ministry and Deaf church was intentional.

“There was a vision from the Lord to start a Deaf ministry at a hearing church for quite some time,” explained Cromwell Josey, former pastor of BCDC and current Deaf ministry leader at MBBC. “I had been praying and seeking His will and guidance. In November 2021, the Lord had shown me a church with the possibility of a Deaf ministry or a Deaf church there.”

Meanwhile, MBBC had started American Sign Language classes. Pastor Chris Jones’ wife, Ashley, had begun learning ASL at Southeastern Bible College and had fallen in love with the language. Knowing the need for Deaf ministry in Alabama, she started the classes in Birmingham to “raise awareness and equip church members to begin to engage the Deaf.”

Shared vision

After hearing about MBBC and its heart for the Deaf community, Josey contacted Jones and shared his vision. The two men emailed frequently and met several times, praying for God’s guidance and discussing practical issues related to reaching this largely unchurched group in Alabama.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Deaf and hearing worship together in unison the first Sunday of the month at Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham. The ministry started last year when members of Birmingham Community Deaf Church joined Meadow Brook with the goal of establishing a Deaf ministry.

Initially Josey’s vision was to partner with a hearing church but have a separate church for the Deaf. Jones’ idea was to add a Deaf ministry. They prayed about the possibilities, and with time, Jones said, “it became apparent that beginning a new Deaf ministry was the right way to go.”

With a broad vision in place, Jones and Josey continued to strategize and think through potential challenges.

“We wanted God to lead, and [we wanted to] honor His timing,” Jones said. “We discussed various scenarios — separate worship, joint worship, facility use, budget, etc. — and considered the pros and cons of each. In addition, we each sought

counsel from leadership teams within our churches as well as guidance from outside mentors.”

There were many discussions and much prayer as the leaders sought the Lord’s guidance, Josey said.

“The more I listened to the members of the Deaf church ... it became clear that the Lord was speaking to me alone about starting a Deaf ministry, not bringing the whole Deaf church to MBBC.”

Those discussions led to the kickoff last July, and both leaders say it has been a productive year ministry-wise.

“The members there are so sweet to the deaf [members],” Josey said. “Not everyone can communicate to the deaf in sign language. But

the most important part is that they show their kindness to the deaf with their smiles and using their hands to wave at them. Some would stop by our Sunday School class and say ‘hi’ to us which means a lot to the deaf. It will take some time to get to know the members there, but it will be worth the time.”

Still learning

Jones said he still wants to learn more about the way deaf believers came to faith — how they “heard” the gospel, who taught and disciplined them.

That information, he said, “would have shed more light on the need.”

For Josey, defining the vision was the big issue. It took time to discern that the Lord was telling him to start a Deaf ministry instead of partnering a Deaf church with a hearing church.

“I have had the experience working with the Deaf ministry at a hearing church for 25 years ... [and] I have had the experience of being a pastor to a Deaf church for more than eight years,” Josey said.

Both are valuable, he added, and his desire is to be obedient to God’s call to reach the lost and unchurched in the Deaf community, in His timing and plans. Jones agreed.

“Trust the Lord’s timing,” he said. “Beginning this ministry took about nine months from my first conversation with Cromwell. At times the process felt long, but this happened in the Lord’s time.

“If others are considering beginning a new ministry, start with prayer,” Jones urged. “Seek the Lord before ever making plans. If it potentially involves another leader, spend time together seeking the Lord. If He is leading it, the way will open in His time.”

For more information on Deaf ministry in Alabama, contact Kristy Kennedy at SBOM at 334-613-2311 or kkennedy@alsbom.org.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 18

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Mobile



PERSONAL Jeremiah 7:1–15

Many scholars believe this sermon is the same as the sermon in Jeremiah 26. If it is, then it can be dated to the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim (26:1), perhaps 608 B.C.

This was a time of crisis. The Assyrian Empire had fallen. Babylon was maneuvering its military for a showdown with Egypt. Judah was still in shock over the death of King Josiah in battle against the Egyptians (2 Kings 23:29–30). The Egyptians were in control of the land and appointed Josiah's successor and son, Jehoiakim. In these uncertain times, the people turned for reassurance to the temple as a visible symbol of God's presence and protection. Jeremiah took his life in his hands by speaking against the temple. It was considered blasphemous to announce that God's presence in the temple would not protect his people.

Listen (1–2)

Standing at one of the temple gates, Jeremiah commanded the people of Judah to listen carefully and obey the Word he had received from God.

Jeremiah preached as the people of Judah came to worship the Lord. The word "worship" means to bow down before someone to acknowledge his or her high position and demonstrate your allegiance. In this context, it could be used sarcastically due to the people's hypocritical acts of worship, or it could be a reminder to the people of the proper attitude as they come before the Lord to worship Him.

Correct (3–8)

Jeremiah engaged in the language of the courtroom. He said that false prophets were deceiving the people to trust in the temple rather than in God. They believed that God's covenant with Abraham guaranteed that they would dwell in the land

forever (Gen. 15:18; 17:7–8). At Mount Sinai, God had made them His chosen people (Ex. 19:5–6).

He had made a covenant with David that his kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:16).

Had not God spared them from the Assyrians in 722 B.C.? Had he not spared them again from destruction in 701 B.C.? The temple had become a good luck charm, like the Ark of the Covenant at an earlier time (1 Sam. 4:3). They had forgotten that God requires obedience as a condition for enjoying His blessings.

God commanded the people to change their ways. They must practice justice with one another, not oppress others, shed innocent blood or worship other gods.

If they would correct their ways and actions, He would allow them to live in the land. Unfortunately, Judah trusted in worthless words and claimed the privileges of a covenant relationship without assuming its responsibilities.

Stop (9–11)

Jeremiah indicted the people for breaking God's laws, specifically mentioning six of the Ten Commandments. They felt no shame about breaking the laws of God and then coming to the temple and declaring they were rescued. Like a band of robbers seeking refuge in a cave, the people came to the temple seeking God's refuge while planning to continue their detestable acts.

Repeated (12–15)

Jeremiah reminded the people to remember the fate of Shiloh, which had been the location of the tabernacle. If God had allowed the Philistines to destroy Shiloh and capture the Ark, then why would they think Jerusalem and the temple would be spared? God repeatedly warned the people, but they would not listen.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place."

Jeremiah 7:3

Bible Studies for Life

Roy Ciampa, Ph.D.
Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



ELI AND SAMUEL 1 Samuel 2:22–26; 3:7–10, 15–18

It is important not to despair or give up when or if someone we mentor does not turn out to be seriously committed to growing from opportunities provided.

In Eli's life and work, his own two sons proved to be unresponsive to his attempts at godly mentoring, while young Samuel seems to have caught Eli's own commitment to honoring the Lord.

Not everyone listens to wise counsel. (2:22–26)

The contrast between Eli's sons (Hophni and Phinehas) and the son of Elkanah and Hannah (Samuel) could not be any starker. In verses 12–17, the wickedness and contempt Eli's sons have are summarized, including how they treated the holy sacrifices as their personal food rather than offerings belonging to the Lord. They were also sleeping with women who assisted with the sacrifices.

Samuel is then introduced as an innocent young boy dedicated to serving the Lord, after which Eli reprimands his sons for their wicked behavior and points out the seriousness of sinning not only against the Lord's people but also directly against the Lord Himself by desecrating God's holy offerings.

Still, Eli did find a faithful disciple in the person of Samuel, who became like an adopted son to him.

We are expected to notice the contrasting responses to the wise counsel of a godly leader and to see that some will not receive wise counsel when it is given to them, while others will respond well and show their hearts are eager to learn from a wise and godly mentor.

Help others discern when God is speaking to them. (3:7–10)

The amusing story of Samuel not recognizing God's voice and think-

ing that Eli must have been calling him reminds us of our own potential to mistake the voice of God for someone else's voice or to mistake someone else's voice for the voice of God.

Eli had been serving the Lord for many years, and yet it took him a while to recognize what Samuel was experiencing.

We are supposed to understand that those with prophetic gifts, like young Samuel, came to recognize the voice of God even if it took some experience.

While we should not completely identify the experience of most Christians with that of the prophets

"And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant hears.'"

1 Samuel 3:10

of the Old Testament, we also learn to recognize God's voice as we grow in our knowledge of Scripture and as the Holy Spirit convicts us concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (see John 16:8) and impresses a concern for God's holiness and Kingdom purposes on our hearts.

Young or spiritually immature believers, and sometimes even more experienced believers, may need help from others who have learned to discern God's voice over years of walking with the Lord.

God's Word, however painful it may be to hear, must be shared. (3:15–18)

There are times when God calls us to share truths of God's Word that might be hard for someone to hear. When we have a relationship with someone and God gives us the words and the opening to share hard truths with them, we need to be prepared to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

Samuel had a close relationship with Eli, and Eli himself invited Samuel to tell him what God had said. Even when done in love, this can be a very difficult part of faithful discipleship but is one that must not be neglected.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz

The Alabama Baptist

'The Parent's Battle Plan' encourages those burdened for their children

Best-selling and award-winning author Laine Lawson Craft has three children who were all prodigals. In her latest book, "The Parent's Battle Plan: Warfare Strategies to Win Back Your Prodigal," she describes what she did in addition to prayer to see her children come home — and what others can do in the same situation.

"I began to look back and put the dots together of what I felt brought each one of my children uniquely healed, whole and free," Craft said. "The biggest thing when I looked back was that I realized that I was not at war with my kids. I was in a war with the enemy after my kids."

While Craft was fighting the battle for her children, she was on top of the world professionally and in ministry. She produced and published WHOAwomen Magazine that featured well-known women of faith such as Dolly Parton and Kathie Lee Gifford and was in every bookstore in America and Canada.

Battling the enemy

"Here I was doing what I thought as a mother of three teenagers — what God called me to do — and at the very same time, my



Photo courtesy of Laine Lawson Craft

LAINE LAWSON CRAFT

kids were in the pit of hell in different ways."

Her oldest son, Steven, abused drugs and alcohol for more than 15 years. Her younger son, Lawson, was heavily into music festivals and also drugs and alcohol.

Her daughter, Kaylee, had extreme depression and had thoughts from the enemy that life would be better without her.

Even though Craft knew she was serving God and obeying Him to the best of her ability, she still wondered what she had done wrong for her children to end up in these situations. Craft was sacrificing a great deal to serve God, but the battle against the enemy never lessened.

"A lot of people think if you live right, do right, then everything else turns out right. That's not true," she said.

It took years, but the break-

throughs eventually came. Each child experienced the power of God in his or her life without direct intervention by Craft.

Though all three stories of coming home were miraculous, Steven's story was the most remarkable.

He was high on cocaine and trying to get a ride to yet another bar when he encountered an Uber driver who was also a pastor. The driver felt led to pray for him.

'Presence of God'

"My son said that the presence of God was so heavy in the Uber that he fell face forward to the floorboard. The presence of God enveloped the car. So Steven at that moment knew he had been touched by God, and it forever changed him," she said.

Similar encounters with God occurred with her other son and her daughter and each one's life was completely changed in a moment.

Though it was a happy ending for Craft's family, she recognizes that for whatever reason, some

parents don't have the same outcome.

"One of the tragic parts of the spiritual war over our children is that there will be casualties of war," she said.

"Losing a precious child is the most difficult part of this journey. My heart breaks with every parent I meet [who has] lost his or her child in these battles. I can't imagine how incredibly strong they have to be to carry on."

She also recognizes that her book isn't a magic bullet.

"I wanted to make sure that I did not miss this for parents who have faced this and may be raising another child who may be struggling. I did not want to come across that if you do these things, the outcome you're wanting happens. God's will and God's ways are often not ours," Craft said.

She knows from experience the hopes and expectations parents hold for their children. No parent anticipates a child becoming a drug addict, or a rebel or a thief.

Though her children have come back to God, Craft isn't done fighting. She recently found out that she is going to be a grandmother for the first time.

"We must stay on guard for this next generation. We must be in hope and put all of these same principles [in place] for our grandchildren and our grandchild-

ren's children. These are principles that we can use as warfare against the enemy and find victory every day. But we will have to work at it. It is a battle and we will have to be warriors," she said.

'Never too far gone'

Craft is frequently asked, "Is my child too far gone to come home?"

"My answer always is, 'You're never too far gone. We have until our last breath, and one touch from God can change everything instantly.' That's the hope I give every parent today," she said.

"Be sure and remember that no problem is bigger than God and that God can bring your prodigal home and heal your family."



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.

"The Parent's Battle Plan" is available at lainelawsoncraft.com or on Amazon. A bonus gift bundle is included with website orders.

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