

# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Photo by Madison Jennings Photography

Kyle Hodges, pastor of West Blocton First Baptist Church, baptizes another passionate believer in the Cahaba River.

## ‘Across the aisle’

### Revival is ‘getting right with God, getting right with each other,’ leaders say

By **Lizzy Haseltine**  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hen Rob Jackson was taking a group of pastors to a retreat center, he received a phone call that sent chills down his spine.

“Have you heard what’s happening at Asbury? Chapel has been going on for hours,” his friend said. “Do you think [revival] could be happening again?”

Jackson, director of the office of church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions who received Christ during the 1970 revival at Asbury College (now Asbury University), prayed it was so and headed to Wilmore, Kentucky, to see for himself.

The spontaneous event spurred from the fervent prayers of a small group of college students resulted in more than 50,000 people flocking to

Asbury to encounter God’s Spirit.

It contrasts with Southern Baptists’ historically scheduled revivals with preaching and singing services.

#### What is revival?

Five months later, is it still possible to catch this sweeping wind of the Holy Spirit?

And how can Alabama Baptists truly experience revival?

To start, it’s important to know the

word “revival” is often misused or confused among churches.

“I hear people say, ‘We want real revival,’ but they’re not even sure what that term means,” explains Sammy Gilbreath of Gilbreath Ministries. “The very word ‘revival’ is addressing believers, calling for them to have a new commitment, a new passion and zeal to serve the Lord.”

(See ‘Revival,’ page 8)

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# What trends in church music are you seeing?

A recent article by Religion News Service exploring church music trends caught our eye. Here's an excerpt from the article, written by Bob Smietana:

Step into a big Baptist church on Sunday morning and chances are you'll hear the same popular songs played at other big churches around the country. But show up in a small church, and you never know what you'll find.

"Smaller churches are like the Wild West," said Will Bishop, associate professor of church music and worship at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. "Anything goes."

Bishop's recent research project seeks to better understand the music used in local churches, especially smaller Baptist congregations.

## Tracking selections

He said companies like Christian Copyright Licensing International — better known as CCLI — do a good job tracking the most popular songs used in churches. But they often miss out on some of the details in local congregations — including when churches sing out of hymnals or other songbooks rather than projecting songs on a screen.

The charts can leave the impression the only songs being sung are from well-known megachurches.

That's true in big churches, Bishop said, but not everywhere. Music at big churches is often put together by full-time staffers who have time to track down all the latest songs and follow the latest trends.

## Hymns vs. modern tunes

Bishop's research suggests about 1 in 5 churches sing more hymns than modern songs, while a third sing as many hymns as modern tunes.

Almost every church (89%) projects lyrics on a screen.

Bishop asked churches to list their favorite hymns, then compiled a list of the most popular contemporary songs. The top song was "Living Hope," co-written by Phil Wickham, followed by the modern hymn "In Christ Alone," and then three older hymns: "It Is Well with My Soul," "Amazing Grace" and "How Great Thou Art."

Bishop said secular songs also have been sung in church, including "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" and "Take Me Home, Country Roads." (Religion News Service)

You can read the full article at [tabonline.org/music-trends](http://tabonline.org/music-trends).

What songs do you enjoy singing? Why are they your favorites? What unexpected songs have you heard sung in churches?

Send your stories to us at [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).

We would love to hear your thoughts and stories on church music trends. Email us at [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).

## 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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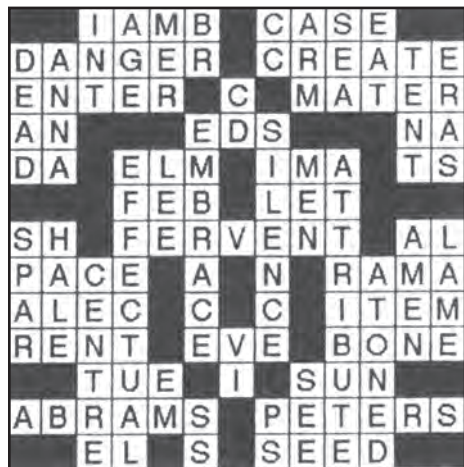
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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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



@RashionalThts

## Partnering with you in prayer a privilege — and keeps us close to you

**O**ur team of skilled professionals handles their responsibilities beautifully and are continually seeking ways to polish their efforts and work more efficiently.

However, it's their compassion and genuine love for the Lord, each other and you that truly makes them stand out.

They continually strengthen these relationships alongside the commitment they put into their specific roles.

One way we've enhanced this connection is by diving in deeper to know you better.

Your willingness to share your stories and trust us with your prayer requests have transformed this process.

It's been incredible to get to know you more through what you share with us.

Several of our team members have partnered with you in prayer, and hearing the burdens you carry along with the reports of God's faithfulness is humbling.

We have a bulletin board in our community room, and we place the prayer requests we receive there so we can see them when we grab our lunches or snag that midafternoon coffee — or hot tea, in my case.

We also share your messages of encouragement and notes of concern with each other as they arrive.

I regularly stand in front of the bulletin board, warm mug in hand, and pray as I read your messages.

Know that we are with you in the valley. We'd love to hear your updates and new requests as you feel led to share.

Give us a call or send us a note or an email — we so appreciate getting to labor with you in this way.

We have also felt your prayers these past months and are so thankful for your petitions on our behalf. You are why we exist, and you are a vital piece of the puzzle that will allow us to exist for future generations.

As you finish reading your copy of The Alabama Baptist each week, would you consider sharing it with a friend or family member who might enjoy it?

Would you sign up a friend or family member for a gift subscription of either The Alabama Baptist or The Baptist Paper — or better yet, both?

Perhaps you could share with your Sunday School class about the media ministry offered through the pages and digital platforms of TAB Media Group, which produces both The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper.

You are an important part of our circle of support, and there is no one we trust more to share who we are with fellow believers.

We also have resources your church can share with its members — things like quick messages to include in the bulletin, slides to include in Sunday morning announcements, copies of the newspaper with stickers on them about how to subscribe.

If any of these resources would be helpful for you or your church as you share, please reach out to us.

Your support means the world to us, and we are incredibly thankful for you and how you understand the importance of advocating for the ministries, services and efforts making a difference for the Kingdom.

### Why connecting matters:

*1. As dedicated followers of Jesus Christ, we understand how prayer is the lifeblood of all we do.*

The vulnerability you show by trusting us with your prayer needs strengthens us in our own faith journey. It's truly a privilege to pray for and with you.

You also keep us accountable regarding prayer and seeking the Lord. You give us the courage to share our prayer concerns in return.

*2. We need you.*

While we are absolutely confident and at peace with where God has us and what we are to be about, we need His guidance on the various aspects of the work every single day.

Knowing you are holding the ropes in prayer and overall support gives us a sense of security.

*3. Connecting with you keeps us in tune with what's really happening in day-to-day life — and how we can best help.*



Photo by Susan Stevens/The Alabama Baptist  
Staff members of The Alabama Baptist regularly read over and pray for situations shared with us. Thank you for connecting with us in this way. It's an honor to partner with you on the journey.

# Your Voice



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

## Your church on social media: 5 tips for summer

By Mark MacDonald

[Beknownforsomething.com](http://Beknownforsomething.com)

Social media is a great way to maintain contact with your congregation during the summer. It's also a great way to get the attention of anyone seeking a church to attend when they're on vacation.

Here are some social media tips for the summer:

### 1. Embrace seasonal content.

Be mindful of creating content that aligns with the spirit of summer. Share tips for family activities and highlight ministry events that are relevant to the season. Be sure that your posts are understanding to what your families are doing. Engage by showing fun summer images.

2. **Leverage user-generated content.** Encourage your followers to share summer experiences with your church by using hashtags or creating contests. User-generated content adds authenticity to your social media presence and helps build a sense of community. It can also provide you with a variety of content to share while increasing engagement and reach.

3. **Be responsive and interactive.** Summer is a time when people are often more active on social media, so make sure to be responsive to comments, messages, and mentions. Engage with your social media audience by asking questions, running polls or hosting live Q&A sessions

too. Use features like Instagram Stories, Facebook Live or Twitter Spaces to foster real-time interaction and keep them engaged. Maybe a pastor can give a short devotional video that coordinates with the sermon series.

4. **Optimize for mobile.** With people being on the go and using their smartphones more during summer, ensure that your social media content is optimized for mobile viewing. Keep posts concise and easy to read, use eye-catching visuals that are mobile-friendly, and don't use small fonts. Ensure that your web pages are mobile-responsive for a seamless user experience. Don't say it all in your post — instead, refer them to your web content if they choose to want more information.

5. **Provide video-on-the-go content.** Sure, you'd like everyone to return on the weekend to attend service on Sundays. But consider what the next best option is: perhaps watch the sermon online? Social media content is the best way to remind them to listen or watch. Post a short (less than a minute) edited video from the service that leads into a critical main point. Then provide a link to the rest of the service. Ensure that the short video gives them a reminder of what they're missing so they'll return after the summer is done.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant and author.*

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

**Laura L. Lawson Craft**

Author, "The Parent's Battle Plan: Warfare Strategies to Win Back Your Prodigal"

Today, we invest more time and effort training volunteers for parking lot ministry than challenging church members to launch out on their own to reach the lost.

**Phil Cook**

Media consultant, writer

There's no neutral sphere of influence. We're being influenced by the forces of sinful society, or we're being influenced by the Word of God.

**Jerry Bridges**

@bridgeswisdom  
via Twitter

Sometimes we get so close to the religious work that our hearts can be far from the heart of Jesus, and we don't mourn what Jesus mourns.

**Phil Waldrep**  
Evangelist

## Letters to the Editor

The June 29 Rashional Thoughts editorial is one that many people need to read and take to heart. It seems too easy to demonize those with whom we don't agree 100%.

"Those old Bama fans (or) Auburn fans," "Those old Catholics/Presbyterians/Methodists/whoever" aren't our enemies.

Let's face it. Practically anybody we can think of just wants to live their lives the best they can. But it's too easy to use differences as an excuse to push people away. How are we supposed to witness that way?

Christ taught us to treat others with courtesy, dignity and respect and let an opening for conversation develop.

How easily we forget.

**Don Shipp**  
Birmingham, Ala.

I hope people did not read the June 29 Rashional Thoughts hurriedly. It is filled with philosophical bents, psycho-social inroads and biblical twists which should twist the minds and hearts when engaged in the noted endeavors.

**Morris Murray Jr.**  
Jasper, Ala.

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

“You will encounter storms even when you’re obediently traveling with Jesus.”

MARK CLIFTON

Senior director of replanting for the North American Mission Board

When you go back and trace your spiritual markers it’s amazing how God guides you exactly where He wants you to be.

There are so many pieces in the puzzle of life but God fits them all together and the outcome is a beautiful picture.

**Pastor Sammy Taylor**

Mountain View Baptist Church  
Phil Campbell, Ala.

If you are lacking clarity and confidence, go back to the Source. Connection is crucial.

@mydaughterarise

Instagram

Five reasons why those serving in ministry must have a daily devotional time with God:

1. If your well is dry you have no living water to give. Before you can minister to others, you have to care for your own soul.

2. In spiritual battles you have one weapon, and you must master it (Eph. 6:17).

3. Without spiritual growth you are susceptible to moral failure. Your times with God are key to maintaining moral purity.

4. You will not be able to discern God’s will for your life and ministry without meeting with Him regularly.

5. You cannot preach, what you do not practice. The most hypocritical thing you can do is to train people through God’s Word while you neglect it.

**Kevin Blackwell**

The Station Church, Bessemer

As children of God, we represent Him wherever He has us. What should be our response in times when living out our calling is risky?

It’s true that a certain resignation is required if we would be faithful stewards at our post, like Queen Esther’s resolve, “If I perish, I perish.” But wisdom is profitable to direct. The prophet Nathan, for

instance, did not go charging in, brandishing King David’s sin. I doubt, though, that that would have been prophet Elijah’s approach.

Today, we walk in the authority that Jesus gave us, to use His name.

We can change situations just by calling His name. We have been given weapons for this warfare that we have been called to. And these weapons work. What is our excuse?

What should be our response? Heaven is counting on us. May we not fail.

@theapriljournal

Instagram

Do you ever wonder if God can provide? God created water, fruits, vegetables and even meat before

He created the first person who would need those things to survive.

Before the foundation of the world, God sent His Son, Jesus, to redeem us from the curse of the law.

**Pastor Andy Frazier**

FBC Jasper

The Cooperative Program is one of the most unique funding programs ever devised. Others are shocked and envious in how we fund missions, seminaries, church planting and more.

Southern Baptists can be divided on so many things, but CP should be an easy one that unites.

**Brian Harris**

Pike Road, Ala.

## Seeing the Father in each of us

In 1954, I became a freshman at Howard College (now Samford University). That’s where I met my roommate, Danny Burke from Andalusia. We became friends and shared a common bond in Christ.

Our biggest difference was, Danny wanted to ace every college test, while I merely wanted to pass.

Danny became a minister and educator, but his life was cut short. He met the Lord at an early age. I never stopped cherishing the days we spent together.

### Special connection

About a decade ago, I discovered Danny had a son, Kelly Burke from Tallahassee, Florida, and soon got to meet Kelly and his lovely wife Nancy.

As Kelly walked toward us that day, I recognized traits of his father, most notably he walked like his father. I saw the father in the son.

Kelly is a retired police captain and has served as a minister and first responders chaplain.

The first time I saw Kelly, I saw the son and then I saw the father stand up in him.

### Walking like Him

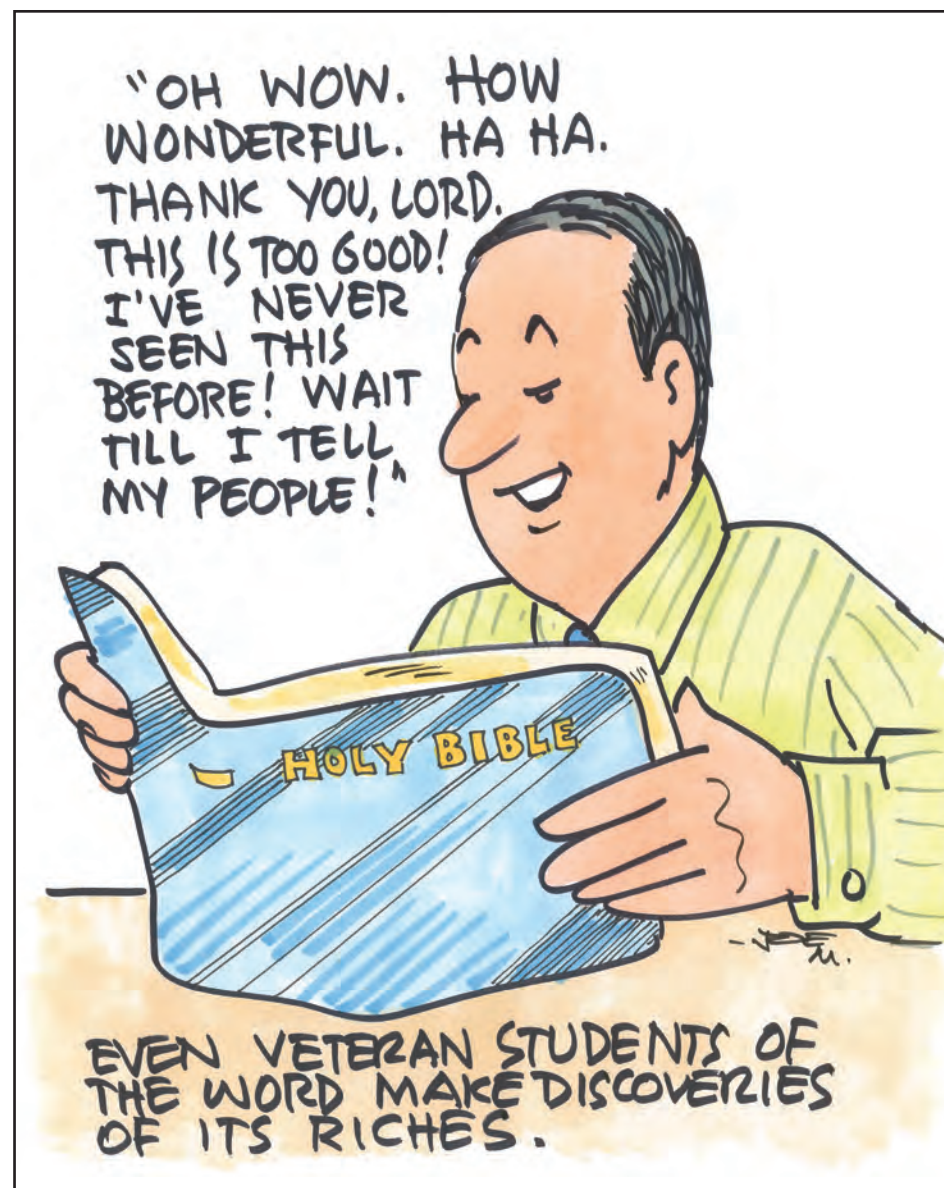
I saw the father at that first meeting, as we cried and rejoiced. The father was present as he spoke at church and served in troubled areas.

It reminded me how our heavenly Father stands up in the Son and, as God’s children, we also can walk like the Father.

We are planning another reunion with Kelly soon, but if we don’t make it there’ll be a “glad reunion day” and Danny will be there, too. Until that day, let the world see the Father stand up in all of us.

**Don Stephens**

Childersburg, Ala.



# 3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Don Wilton, pastor to the late evangelist Billy Graham, says he “will forever be grateful to the Lord” for time spent with his friend. As the pastor of FBC Spartanburg, South Carolina, Wilton, now retired, regularly met with Graham to discuss the Bible and pray. In a recent episode of the Think Eternity podcast hosted by Matt Brown, Wilton shared thoughts on Graham’s humility and servant’s heart. Read more about their conversation at [tabonline.org/wilton](http://tabonline.org/wilton). (TAB)

## Alabama leads states in faith-based protections

A report released by the Napa Legal Institute in June puts Alabama at the top of the list of states where freedoms for faith-based groups are best protected.

The “Faith and Freedom Index” ranks the 50 states and the District of Columbia on how their laws protect both the religious freedom and the regulatory freedom of faith-based, tax-exempt nonprofits.

Alabama and Texas are at the top of the list because “both states require government burdens on religious freedom to pass the most rigorous legal tests,” according to NLI. Michigan and Nevada rank the lowest due to “weak and ambiguous protections for faith-based nonprofits’ religious freedom.”

No state received a positive ranking of 80% or higher in both categories, according to the report. (TAB)

## NAAF leader questions future of cooperation

Gregory Perkins, president of the National African American Fellowship, SBC, issued a letter July 3 asking SBC President Bart Barber for “vigorous, yet constructive dialogue” on the issue of pastoral titles for women in leadership roles.

Perkins, a California pastor and head of the fellowship that includes more than 4,000 Black congregations, said the SBC’s decision to disfellowship churches with women in leadership, combined with a proposed amendment to the SBC constitution that would allow only men to be affirmed, appointed or employed as any kind of pastor or elder, “undermine ... the autonomy of the local church” and “may disproportionately impact NAAF affiliated congregations.”

Read the full story at [tabonline.org/naaf-letter](http://tabonline.org/naaf-letter). (TAB)

## Persecuted church

### Man in Belarus detained, fined for holding evangelistic event

DRAHICHYN, Belarus — A Baptist man in his 70s was detained overnight, then fined a month’s pension for holding an outdoor evangelism event in Drahichyn.

Police halted the June 1 event, in which Vladimir Burshtyn and a group of Baptists shared their faith and musicians performed.

Burshtyn was the only individual detained. Forum 18 News Service reported that the judgment against Burshtyn was delivered in a closed hearing June 2 in Drogichin District Court.

A government official said permission from local authorities is necessary for events such as the one Burshtyn coordinated, and thus the event was “illegal.”

Burshtyn is reportedly part of a group of Bap-

tist churches that exercises its freedom of religion without seeking state permission. In 2008, Burshtyn was fined in excess of two months’ wages for telling people outside a market in Ushachi about Jesus. Three years before that, he was fined for leading what the government called an unregistered congregation in Malorita, which is where Burshtyn lives, according to Forum 18.



Photo courtesy of Forum 18

### Nigerian violence in May and June leaves more than 340 dead

ABUJA, Nigeria — More than 340 Nigerians in the country’s Nasarawa and Plateau states

have been killed in weeks of violent clashes. Muslim Fulani herdsmen and other terrorists are suspected in the May and June attacks, reports Morning Star News.

In the predominantly Christian villages of Takalafiya and Gwanja in Nasarawa state, 43 people were killed. A survivor said two of the dead are Daniel Danbeki, pastor of Evangelical Church Winning All, and his wife.

In Plateau state, about 300 Christians have been killed since mid-May. On June 4, Shadrack Ayuba, pastor of an Assemblies of God, Nigeria, church in Ntin Kombun village, and Mangmws Tangshak Daniel, pastor of Nigeria Baptist Convention in Kantoma village, were killed, Morning Star reported.

Nigeria is No. 6 on Open Doors’ 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

# Alabama news

## BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

▶ **Rick Ellison**, director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association, was recognized during the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders meeting in New Orleans June 11–12 prior to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting. SBCAL President Ray Gentry presented Ellison with a certificate recognizing him for 10 years of service with the association.



ELLISON

## BETHEL ASSOCIATION

▶ **Margaret Anne Gilchrist** is the new director of preschool and children's ministry for **First Baptist Church Demopolis**.

A graduate of Auburn University, Gilchrist also serves as the executive director of the Demopolis City Schools Foundation. She and her husband, Justin, have two children and have been FBC members since 2017.



GILCHRIST

## CLARKE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Ulcanush Baptist Church, Coffeerville**, will host its revival July 31–Aug. 2 with nightly services at 7 p.m. Randy Abston will preach. The church will also have its homecoming Sunday, Aug. 6, 11 a.m. with lunch to follow.

## DEKALB ASSOCIATION

▶ The Times-Journal readers released its 29th annual Best of DeKalb earlier this year. Several Southern Baptist churches made the list:

▶ **Mountain View Baptist Church, Fort Payne**, was voted best church choir.

▶ **Guest Baptist Church, Fort Payne**, was voted best church sign.

▶ **Fyffe First Baptist Church's** Brenda Mince was named best choir director.

▶ **Darryl LaGrande of Broadway Baptist Church, Rainsville**, was voted best Sunday School teacher.

## GENEVA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Les Hughes**, who has served as pastor of Hartford Baptist Church since 2016, has accepted a new position as pastor of Chilhowee Hills Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee.

He previously served at Providence Baptist Church, Jayess, Mississippi, and holds degrees from the University of Montevallo, Southern Seminary and New Orleans Seminary.

Hughes and his wife, Lacey, have five children.

## MADISON ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville**, recently welcomed **Mike Nolen** as the interim

senior adult minister. Nolen has served churches in Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi and Tennessee. He and his wife, Jackie, have four children. Kevin Moore is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Tommy Fike** is the new pastor of **Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery**.



FIKE

He has served Dalraida for nearly nine years in various roles including music and senior adult ministry and has served churches for 30 years in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia.

Fike holds an associate degree in music from George C. Wallace State Community College, Selma, and a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Montevallo.

He is pursuing a master of theology degree from Andersonville Theological Seminary, Camilla, Georgia.

Fike and his wife, Melissa, have one child.

▶ **Joseph Falcione** is the new student minister for **Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery**.

He previously served at Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery, since 2019.

He holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Auburn University at Montgomery where he served the Baptist Campus Ministries as president. He helped start and lead the college ministry at Gateway Baptist Church, Montgomery. He and his wife, Carly, have one child.



FALCIONE

## MUD CREEK ASSOCIATION

▶ **David Hobson**, director of missions for **Mud Creek Baptist Association**, was

recognized during the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders meeting in New Orleans June 11–12. SBCAL President

Ray Gentry presented Hobson with a certificate recognizing him for five years of service.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

## ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

▶ **Brian Harris** is the new executive pastor of **CrossPoint Church, Trussville**.

Harris holds a bachelor's degree in education focusing on church recreation from Samford University and a master of arts degree in Christian education from New Orleans Seminary.

He previously served as minister of recreation.

He and his wife, Angie, have two children.

▶ **Lauren Sonntag** is the new associate minister of children of **CrossPoint Church, Trussville**. She previously served on staff (2011–2013) before moving to South Korea for missions work. She also previously taught Bible at a middle school in Texas and is married to Michael.



HARRIS



SONNTAG

## Lawsuit filed over medical marijuana

The rollout of Alabama's medical marijuana industry could be delayed due to a lawsuit challenging the licensing process.

On June 12, the Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission awarded 21 licenses to companies applying to participate in the state's medical marijuana program. Those 21 were chosen from a pool of 90 applicants.

But some companies that didn't receive licenses are challenging the commission's decision process. A lawsuit filed June 22 asked for a temporary restraining order on the licensing, according to AL.com. A judge granted the order on June 23.

The commission had previously acknowledged the issues over licensing, suspending the process June 16 over "potential inconsisten-

cies" in how applicants were scored. Earlier this year, three companies sued the commission claiming the logistics of its online portal led to the denial of their license applications, Alabama Daily News reported.

The more recent legal challenge takes issue with the commission's use of third-party evaluators to score license applications and with the commission's use of executive sessions to make significant decisions, rather than meetings open to the public.

The state's medical cannabis bill was approved by Alabama lawmakers and signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey in 2021. Medical cannabis products had been expected to be available late this year or in early 2024, but the lawsuits likely will change the timeline. (TAB Media)

# Revival brings 'new life' to the believer, church

(continued from page 1)

Kyle Hodges, pastor of West Blocton First Baptist Church, believes his church has been experiencing revival for the past eight months.

A July 2 baptism service at the Cahaba River, where 12 people were scheduled to be baptized and three more made decisions on the spot, affirmed the Holy Spirit is moving people to renewed commitment, Hodges said.

"I like to say that revival is an unrivaled hunger and pursuit for the heart and presence of God," Hodges said. "When a person has that passion and hunger to pursue God's presence above all else, it's infectious."

Terry Long, SBOM spiritual renewal and evangelism specialist, clarified that evangelism and revival are different.

"We always think about whether a revival is successful or not successful based on how many souls got saved," Long said. "(But) revival is for the Church. It's for believers. It's a fresh pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God."

## Air of excitement

"Evangelism is bringing new life to lost people. Evangelism is down the aisle," Long said. "Revival is bringing new life to the Church. Revival is more across the aisle. Revival has a lot to do with Christians getting right with God and getting right with each other."

Hodges said a good example of that is an 85-year-old deacon who was baptized in the river.

Initially baptized at age 12, the man said he had changed a lot in seven decades and wanted to publicly acknowledge his journey.

"I've never seen this kind of excitement for what Jesus is doing," Hodges said.

Genuine revival can break out at any time, emphasized



Photo courtesy of Camden Baptist Church

Children from Camden Baptist Church and the local community arrive at Shocco Springs for CentriKid camp. The church needs more volunteers, thanks to answered prayers for growth.

Long, author of "When the Fire Falls: Ten Characteristics of Genuine Revival."

"We were locked in for decades and decades that [revival has] got to happen on a Sunday morning through Wednesday night or a week of meetings, but when genuine revival breaks out, it could be anytime," he said.

He's taught more than a dozen Alabama Baptist associations on the subject.

"Most of the time, [revival] comes out of prayer," Long said.

Daniel Wilson, director of SBOM's office of evangelism, agrees.

"Revival is saturated in prayer, governed by the Word, brought through the Holy Spirit and expressed in worship," Wilson said.

When this occurs, believers often excitedly tell others what's happening.

"There's a saying in revival groups that the flame of revival is spread by the fame of revival, or the revival spreads on the wings of testimony," Long said. "People hear about it, and they want to be a part of it."

The early Church is the gold standard for what ought

to be happening, Long said.

"Then we look at our churches. And it's not happening; it's never happened," Long said. "There's a big gulf between what we see in the Bible and what we see in our own personal experience. That begins to create a

hunger and a desperation for the real thing. That's where revival begins."

## Lasting effect

Although revival may be temporary, it has a lasting effect.

"When revival has genu-

inely been experienced, it's not just an emotional response or a time of worship; it affects the way that we live," Wilson said. This results in a "spirit of repentance and a renewed commitment to obedience."

Although the news and social media have been seemingly quiet about revival currently in the nation, Jackson believes it's still taking place.

"The way revival usually happens in a great awakening is that there will be a downpour and a little puddle, and then another puddle over here and another puddle over here. Those begin to rush together and form a river. It's a process."

Jackson is seeing that process in pockets of Alabama Baptist churches.

About a year and a half ago, Camden Baptist Church in Camden had zero children in the nursery.

"People were in desperation. They began to seek the face of God and the senior adult ladies would go and kneel down in the nursery,

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begging God for children [to be in the church],” Jackson recalled. “The first answer to their prayer was that a 40-something-year-old lady got pregnant.”

### Rapid growth

Now that nursery is filled with children, and they’re asking for more volunteers. Church attendance has more than tripled, and people are accepting Christ as their Savior.

Jackson also described how another church, First Baptist Church Florence, only had one college student. The church prayed, “God, would You help us reach more people?” In the past several months, 13 college students have been baptized and more than 70 college students attend.

“I’m just praying we’re going to continue to see these puddles of God’s grace and pray they will unite into a major river,” Jackson said.

Despite how bleak the world may appear, Wilson believes revival is always possible.

“We’re people of hope,” Wilson said. “The old saying is, ‘The deeper the dark, the brighter the light.’”

“The darkness of the world that we’re living in is just a wonderful backdrop for God to display His glory and to shine His light. ... Because Jesus is alive, there’s always a reason to have expectancy that He’s going to break through.”

Are traditional methods still worthwhile? Jackson and others say if you’re second guessing whether your church should have a planned revival meeting this year, the answer is “Yes!”

Any time to focus on God

is better than none at all.

“I do believe churches ought to have revival meetings because whether you experience true revival or not, revival meetings are like Vacation Bible School,” Long said. “It’s a fertile time for believers to talk to their neighbors and invite them to church. It’s a fertile time for sinners to be saved. It’s a fertile time for the Word to be preached.”

Gilbreath encourages churches to prepare and pray for revival ahead of the scheduled meetings.

He believes the reason many churches aren’t ex-

periencing revival is because their members are out of fellowship with God.

They may be obediently serving in various capacities, but if they haven’t opened their hearts to Him, revival won’t occur.

“God is looking for those who are hungry for

Him,” Long said. “People today need to understand the dissatisfaction that they feel in their hearts is not meant to drive them away from God in the sense of, ‘I’m a failure or disappointment or I can’t seem to get it all together.’ It’s to drive them to God for more revival. We need to seek God, not seek revival. You won’t ever hear the Bible say, ‘Seek after revival.’”

“You seek God in a spirit of humility and repentance, and as you seek God, revival comes,” Long emphasized. “You don’t get revived by seeking revival; you get revived by seeking God. Revival is intrinsically Christ-centered, God-focused. That’s the heart of it all.” (Carrie B. McWhorter contributed)



Photo courtesy of Camden Baptist Church  
Camden Baptist Church has experienced growth since praying for more children and families at the church.



Photos by Brian Blackwell/Louisiana Baptist Message

Mark Perry (above), pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Brantley, and other volunteers (below) assemble a playground at Vintage Church in Metairie, Louisiana.

## Alabama volunteers help build playground during Crossover

By Brian Blackwell  
Louisiana Baptist Message

Fifteen members of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Brantley teamed up with Vintage Church in Metairie, Louisiana, in early June to build a playground that not only will serve as a recreational gathering place for their community but will become fertile ground to develop relationships for Christ.

The playground will feature slides, a small merry-go-round, stepping-stones and alligator and frog spring riders, plus shade trees, benches and picnic tables.

Vintage Church generations director Nick Perret said his church was encouraged that the Alabama team gave up a portion of their summer vacation to assist in building what will become yet another outreach arm.

### Larger mission

The church, averaging 200 in Sunday worship, also participates each month in food distribution in Metairie and hosts a Hispanic worship service.

“For several years we have been wanting to complete this playground so we could have another way to connect with our neighborhood, and when we found out the Alabama team would help us, our church was very excited,” Perret told the Louisiana Baptist Message.

“Having them join us really is a shot of encouragement to our church and even our neighbors who are seeing this being built.”

The playground was one of 51 projects associated with the June 9–10 Serve Tour, an effort held prior to the SBC Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

Mark Perry, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist, said the team of mostly teenagers was among 55 from his church who participated in 13 Serve Tour projects throughout the weekend in New Orleans.

“Our church is heavily invested in missions, and these types of trips reinforce the passion we have for reaching others with the gospel,” Perry said. “Much like in Brantley, there are needs here and our church will do what-

ever it takes to serve those who need Jesus.”

Jackson Mitchell, a 10th grader from Mount Zion, said the trip fulfills a calling to be on mission for Christ.

“The Lord has called me to help and

serve those not just in my own community, but others like New Orleans who need Jesus,” Mitchell said. “Everyone needs His love, and it’s so cool to go to the different areas of the city to share His love.”

See more photos of the team’s work at [tabonline.org/crossover-vintage-church](http://tabonline.org/crossover-vintage-church).



# Award-winning

## FOR WORK DONE IN 2022

from Alabama Press Association, Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association and Religion Communicators Council

### ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

▶ **Best use of video, more than 2 minutes — 1st place, Division C:** “Moving the TAB story to the next season” — Sam Evans, Jennifer Rash and TAB Media staff

▶ **Best newspaper website — 1st place, Division C:** thealabamabaptist.org — James Hammack and TAB staff



### ASSOCIATED CHURCH PRESS

▶ **Best in class newspaper — Award of Excellence:** The Baptist Paper



**BEST IN CLASS NEWSPAPER — AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**

▶ **Best in class newspaper — Award of Merit:** The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Best in class news service — Honorable Mention:** tabonline.org

▶ **Podcast series — Award of Merit:** Stories, Season 5: Missions Widows — Grace Thornton and Hannah Muñoz

▶ **Newspaper front page — Award of Excellence:** The Baptist Paper March 3 cover — Lauren Grim

▶ **Newspaper front page — Award of Merit:** The Alabama Baptist July 21 cover — Lauren Grim

▶ **Newspaper design, spread or story — Award of Excellence:** “A love for pickleball” — Lauren Grim, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Newspaper design, spread or story — Honorable Mention:** “Top 5 apps your kids are using” — Lauren Grim, The Baptist Paper

▶ **Newspaper design, spread or story — Award of Merit:** “Endangered Youth: Fentanyl is killing America’s teens” — Lauren Grim, The Baptist Paper

▶ **Newspaper design, entire issue — Award of Excellence:** The Baptist Paper March 31 issue — Lauren Grim and TBP staff

▶ **Newspaper design, entire issue — Award of Merit:** The Alabama Baptist Dec. 15 issue — Lauren Grim and TAB staff

▶ **Publication website — Award of Merit:** tabonline.org — James Hammack and TAB staff

▶ **Publication website — Honorable Mention:** thebaptistpaper.org — James Hammack and TBP staff

▶ **Single photo — Honorable Mention:** “Executive fist bumps” — Van Payne, The Baptist Paper

### BAPTIST COMMUNICATORS ASSOCIATION

▶ **Overall newspaper publication — 1st place:** The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Overall newspaper publication — 2nd place:** The Baptist Paper

▶ **Website, 25 pages or more — 2nd place:** thebaptistpaper.org — James Hammack and TBP staff



**OVERALL NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION — 1ST PLACE**

▶ **Website, 25 pages or more — 3rd place:** thealabamabaptist.org — James Hammack and TAB staff

▶ **Newspaper design, single issue — 1st place:** The Alabama Baptist July 21 Issue — Lauren Grim and TAB staff

▶ **Newspaper design, single issue — 2nd place:** The Baptist Paper Oct. 27 issue — Lauren Grim and TBP staff

▶ **Design, newspaper spread — 1st place:** “Endangered youth: Fentanyl is killing America’s teenagers” — Lauren Grim, The Baptist Paper



**DESIGN, NEWSPAPER SPREAD — 1ST PLACE**

▶ **Design, newspaper spread — 2nd place:** “In the know” — Lauren Grim, The Baptist Paper

▶ **Website design, news website — 1st place:** thebaptistpaper.org — James Hammack and TBP staff

▶ **Website design — 2nd place:** thealabamabaptist.org — James Hammack and TAB staff

▶ **Feature article, more than 1,500 words — 2nd place:** “‘Lady Moses’ healed by God, now involved in gospel work to Navajo Nation” — Grace Thornton, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Feature article, less than 750 words — 3rd place:** “Jake Rude of Birmingham Legion FC strengthens faith alongside Christian teammates” — Tracy Riggs, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **First-person column, single entry — 2nd place:** “First person: Reflections on the life, testimony of Queen Elizabeth II” — Grace Thornton, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **News article, less than 750 words — 2nd place:** “Retired Mobile pastor falsely tied to SBC abuser list by local news outlet” — Jennifer Davis Rash, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **News article, less than 750 words — 3rd place:** “State convention, other defendants seek dismissal in lawsuit related to Judson College bonds” — Jennifer Davis Rash, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Podcast, overall show — 1st place:** Stories, Season 5: Missions Widows — Grace Thornton and Hannah Muñoz



**PODCAST, OVERALL SHOW — 1ST PLACE**

▶ **Podcast, individual episode — 1st place:** Stories, Season 5: Episode One: Ripple Effect — Grace Thornton

▶ **Portrait photo, field — 1st place:** “Pastor Bob Jordan marks 50 years of ministry from North Carolina to Ukraine” — Pam Henderson, The Baptist Paper



**PORTRAIT PHOTO, FIELD — 1ST PLACE**

▶ **Portrait photo, field — 2nd place:** Eva Nell Hunter — Tracy Riggs, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Event coverage photography, series — 2nd place:** “Turkey Day 2022: Phoenix ministry meets needs with turkey, stuffing & love of Christ” — Pam Henderson, The Baptist Paper

▶ **Feature photo, single — 2nd place:** “Full of joy” — Sam Evans, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Feature photo, single — 3rd place:** “Joe McKeever: Six decades as preacher and cartoonist” — Pam Henderson, The Baptist Paper

▶ **News photo, single — 3rd place:** “The messengers vote” — Tracy Riggs, The Alabama Baptist

### PARTNER AWARDS

▶ **Website, organization or company site, small site (2–24 pages) — 2nd place:** LeaderCareAL.org — Dogwood Media Solutions and Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Website, organization or company site, small site (2–24 pages) — 3rd place:** ChurchHealthAL.org — Dogwood Media Solutions and Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Web, event or promotion, small site (2–24 pages) — 1st place:** Empower. ChurchHealthAL.org — Dogwood Media Solutions and Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Web, event or promotion, small site (2–24 pages) — 2nd place:** TheGospeltoEveryone.org — Dogwood Media Solutions and Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Video, promotion, 1–3 minutes: 2nd place:** Thank You — Communications Services, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Video, instructional, more than 3 minutes — 3rd place:** Hodges Chapel: A Special Christmas Beeson Podcast — Kristen Padilla, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **Video, other — 1st place:** 2022 Memorial Video — Communications Services, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Audio, broadcast/podcast, individual episode — 2nd place:** Beeson Magazine: Conversation with DeVonta Anderson — Kristen Padilla, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **Scripts — 3rd place:** A Tribute to State Executive Directors — Doug Rogers, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Opinion/editorial — 3rd place:** Sing On — Kristen Padilla, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **News photo, single — 1st place:** A Chaplain’s Prayer — Doug Rogers, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **Print collateral design, speciality item — 1st place:** 2023 CP Desk Prayer Calendar — Communications Services, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

### EVANGELICAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

▶ **Newspaper, print — Award of Merit:** The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Newspaper, print — Award of Merit:** The Baptist Paper

▶ **Newspaper, online — Award of Merit:** The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Newspaper, online — Award of Merit:** The Baptist Paper

▶ **Article series — 2nd place:** “Leading and Loving Children” — Julie Donovan, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Photography use, print — 5th place:** The Baptist Paper — Lauren Grim and TBP staff

▶ **Two-page spread design — 5th place:** “Know what apps your kids are using” — Lauren Grim, The Baptist Paper

### RELIGION COMMUNICATORS COUNCIL

▶ **Newspapers, single work — Category Winner:** The Baptist Paper

▶ **Newspapers, single work — Award of Merit:** The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Newspaper, article single work — Award of Excellence:** “Retired Mobile pastor falsely tied to SBC abuser list” — Jennifer Davis Rash, The Baptist Paper



**NEWSPAPERS, SINGLE WORK — CATEGORY WINNER**

▶ **Newspaper, article single work — Award of Merit:** “State convention, other defendants seek dismissal in lawsuit” — Jennifer Davis Rash, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Website — Certificate of Appreciation:** thebaptistpaper.org — James Hammack and TBP staff

▶ **Editorial — Certificate of Appreciation:** “What if we see ‘once in a lifetime’ as opportunity and challenge?” — Carrie McWhorter, The Alabama Baptist

▶ **News story — Certificate of Appreciation:** “Auburn’s Dylan Cardwell says ‘God is clearly moving’ in basketball career, life” — Carrie McWhorter, The Alabama Baptist

### PARTNER AWARDS

▶ **Periodicals — Best in Class:** Singing the Faith — Beeson Magazine — Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **Magazines, single work — Category Winner:** Singing the Faith — Beeson Magazine — Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **Editorial, single work — Category Winner:** “Sing On” — Kristen Padilla, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **Video: documentary/educational, single work — Award of Merit:** Hodges Chapel: A Special Beeson Podcast — Kristen Padilla, Doug Sweeney, Rob Willis, Joshua Hedrick, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

▶ **Podcasts, single work — Award of Merit:** Beeson Magazine: Conversation with DeVonta Anderson — Kristen Padilla, Beeson Divinity School of Samford University

# Bible translations in rare languages aided by AI

Out of the 7,100 languages that exist, the Bible has been translated into more than 700, making it the most-translated book in the world. Yet those remaining languages — many of them extremely rare — have vexed Bible translators for decades. Two scientists are looking to new advancements in artificial intelligence to help close the gap.

“We want to reach all the languages on earth; the goal is to reach everyone,” said Joel Mathew, a research engineer who alongside Ulf Hermjakob recently launched the Greek Room, an AI-powered technology to help streamline the process of biblical translation.

Combining Hermjakob’s long experience with natural language processing technologies and Mathew’s field knowledge of Bible translation, the two USC Information Sciences Institute researchers developed the technology with an aim to target “very low-resource languages that are not even in the top 500,” said Mathew.

The Greek Room includes three main tools: spell-checking, world alignment that ensures consistency in translation and Wildebeest, used to detect improper characters in a script.

## Passion for languages

The two scientists met in 2015 when Mathew joined USC to complete a master’s degree in computer science. There, he met Hermjakob in the AI division of the Information Sciences Institute. They bonded over a shared passion for languages and their Christian faith.

Mathew, the son of two Bible translators, has observed firsthand the difficulties that come with manual translation by local church members. In his hometown, New Delhi, he took notes of all the tasks that technology could accomplish.

Spell-checking usually requires many people and time, he explained.

In the context of translation into rare languages, only local church members are qualified, and they don’t have technology to help.

When Mathew shared with him some of the problems Indian translators faced on the ground, Hermjakob jumped at the occasion.

## Workplace skills

“I always had this feeling to know how ... I could apply my skills to my faith,” said Hermjakob, who earned a Ph.D. in computer science from the University of Texas.

With their project, Mathew and Hermjakob want to work on languages that do not even have a written system, grammar codes, dictionaries or spell-checkers.

Recently, they have been approached by an Indian consultant specifically interested in the spell-checking and world-alignment tool for Bible translation in Kolami, a language spoken in western India that counts 130,000 native speakers.

The Greek Room also hopes to change the traditional model of Bible translation. Historically,

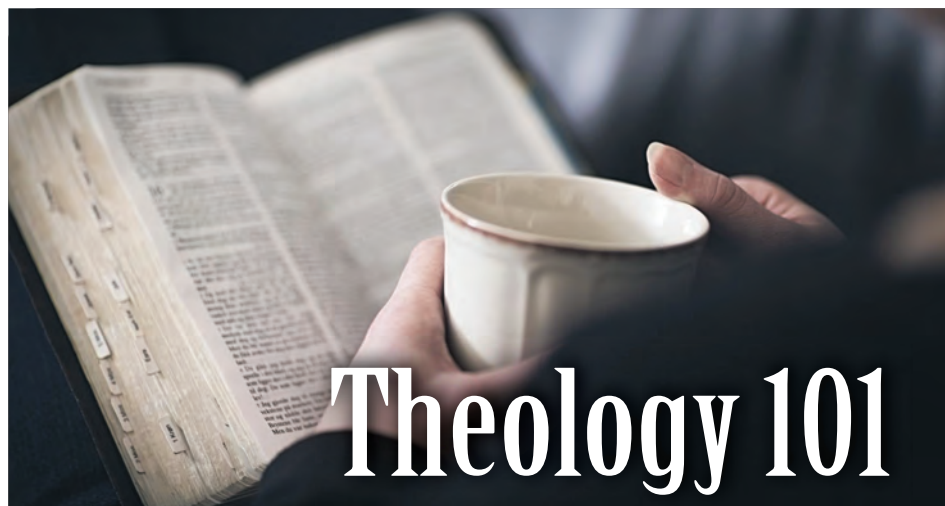
translations were done by Western missionaries, who could only work on two languages at most in their lifetime, Hermjakob said. The Greek Room concept encourages a local church-driven model.

“Local churches and local language communities are asking for translations of the Bible in their heart language,” explained Mathew, adding that in a multilingual context, the heart language is the one in which people express their deepest feelings and is usually their native language.

Their initiative, supported by the Wycliffe Bible Translators USA organization, is part of a broader program directed by Every Tribe, Every Nation that hopes to make the Scripture available in every language by 2033. (RNS)



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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Christ’s Ascension

# Enabling Effective Service

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
The Alabama Baptist

The significance of Christ’s ascension includes being the precursor to the sending of the Holy Spirit, the inauguration of Christ’s high priestly ministry and the enablement of victorious Christian living for His followers.

In this concluding look at this climactic event, we give attention to how His ascension results in the gifting of maturing believers for effective Christian service. For this, we return to the Book of Ephesians.

In the epistle’s opening chapter, we read how Paul prayed for the believers in verses 15–23. As often happened when Paul prayed for others, his prayers almost imperceptibly transitioned from intercession to instruction.

## ‘Head over all’

Having mentioned the greatness of divine power, the apostle describes it as the power that raised Christ from the dead and “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (v. 20) and “gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body” (vv. 22–23).

We begin with considering Christ’s headship over the Church. From that exalted position, Christ wants to fill His body, the Church, with all the fullness of God. In Ephesians 4, we read that the ascended and enthroned Christ apportions grace to each member of His body (v. 7), to all believers and also to leaders to serve the church (vv. 8, 11).

Let us think the divine intention is to leave all ministering to the gifted leaders, the passage goes on to say that the purpose for gifted leaders is to build up the body by equipping “the saints for the work of ministry” (v. 12).

## Divine intention

The divine intention is that the whole body, members and leaders alike, engage in effective service so that “all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13).

As our heavenly Head watches over His body, the Church, He delights to see us grow up spiritually in all things so that we do not remain “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (v. 14). One important mark of spiritual maturity is that we all come to speak the truth, careful that we do that speaking “in love” (v. 15).

From His heavenly position, the ascended Christ is looking for the whole body to be “edifying ... itself in love” (v. 16). May our collective growth warm the heart of Him who reigns in heaven at the Father’s right hand.

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.



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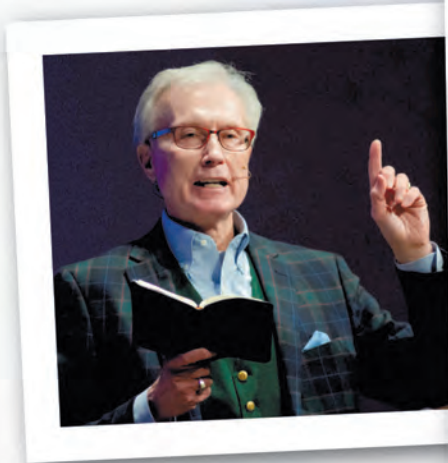


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# CONGRATULATIONS



# UPCOMING EVENTS

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## SPEAK Tour set for four more locations, dates around Alabama

**W**ant to build up the students in your church and reach their friends with the gospel? Plan to bring them all to SPEAK Tour.

“It’s a night of worship, but it’s more geared toward students bringing their friends so that they can hear the gospel and have an opportunity to respond to the gospel,” said Josh Meadows, student ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “We also will challenge followers of Jesus to take the next step and identify the person they want to begin praying for

**For more information, visit [ymlink.org/speak-tours](http://ymlink.org/speak-tours) or scan the code below with your smartphone’s camera.**



and ultimately reach with the gospel message.”  
SPEAK Tour will have fun outdoor games and worship. Upcoming dates and locations are:

- ▶ Aug. 9 at Mount Pisgah Baptist Church in Cropwell with speaker Jay Stewart and Rush of Fools.
  - ▶ Aug. 9 at FBC Haleyville with speaker Brent Finchum and the Jared Shepard Band.
  - ▶ Aug. 20 at Friendship Church in Athens with speaker Gary Permenter and the Marc Lewis Band.
  - ▶ Sept. 27 at Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Ozark with speaker Brent Finchum and One Step Closer.
- Admission is free, and no preregistration is required. For more information, visit [ymlink.org/speak-tours](http://ymlink.org/speak-tours).

## Reach others through kindness

**K**indness can go a long way. That’s the philosophy behind REACH Evangelism Training — helping your church members share the gospel by cultivating relationships through acts of hospitality and service. “A lot of people need to



**WILKINS**

see that the church genuinely cares about them before they’re willing to listen to what we have to say,” said Daniel Wilson, director of the SBOM office of evangelism. “This training will present a strategy for your church to work together to develop caring relationships with unbeliev-

ers that can result in gospel conversations.”  
REACH Evangelism Training — set for Aug. 15, 10 a.m.–noon, at the SBOM in Prattville — will be led by Scott Wilkins, president of REACH Evangelistic Strategies. The cost is \$5 per person, which includes lunch. Register at [evangelizeal.org/reach](http://evangelizeal.org/reach).

## Called Conference for young people considering call to ministry

**F**or a teenager or young adult, the call to ministry can seem like a complex decision. The Called conference, which will be held Aug. 5 at Samford University, is a one-day event designed to help young men and women,

high school through college, who are considering the life-changing call to ministry. The speaker will be Jamie Dew, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Ryan John Band will be the worship leader. There will be breakout

sessions led by ministry leaders from fields including age-graded ministry, missions, church planting, discipleship and more. The cost is \$30. Lunch will be provided. To register, visit [alabamamen.org/called](http://alabamamen.org/called).

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit [thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds](http://thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds).

### CHURCH POSITIONS

**PASTOR**  
Mt. Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, Alabama, located in a growing rural setting near Lake Martin, is in search of a full-time pastor. Please email inquiries/resumés to: [mhebc1896@protonmail.com](mailto:mhebc1896@protonmail.com).

**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](mailto:NewbridgePST@gmail.com) by Aug. 31.

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
South Hamilton Baptist Church in Hamilton, Alabama, is prayerfully accepting resumés, for a God led bivocational pastor. South Hamilton Baptist Church has a traditional Sunday morning Sunday School and worship time as well as a Bible study on Wednesday evenings. To submit a resumé please email: [southhamilton@gmail.com](mailto:southhamilton@gmail.com).

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
New Providence Baptist Church, 53080 Rabun Road, Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 503, Bay Minette, AL 36507 or email to: [arlene@pfefferflooring.com](mailto:arlene@pfefferflooring.com).

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumés to: [sonyahumber@gmail.com](mailto:sonyahumber@gmail.com).

### OTHER POSITIONS

**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](mailto:info@savalife.org). No phone calls please.

### TEACHERS

Marion Academy Early Learning Center is urgently seeking full-time teachers to fill positions for their toddler and pre-k classrooms. If you are interested and would like more information regarding these positions, please contact the main office by phone at 334-683-8204 or email at [maoffice@marion-academy.com](mailto:maoffice@marion-academy.com).

### SIGNS

**CHURCH SIGN**  
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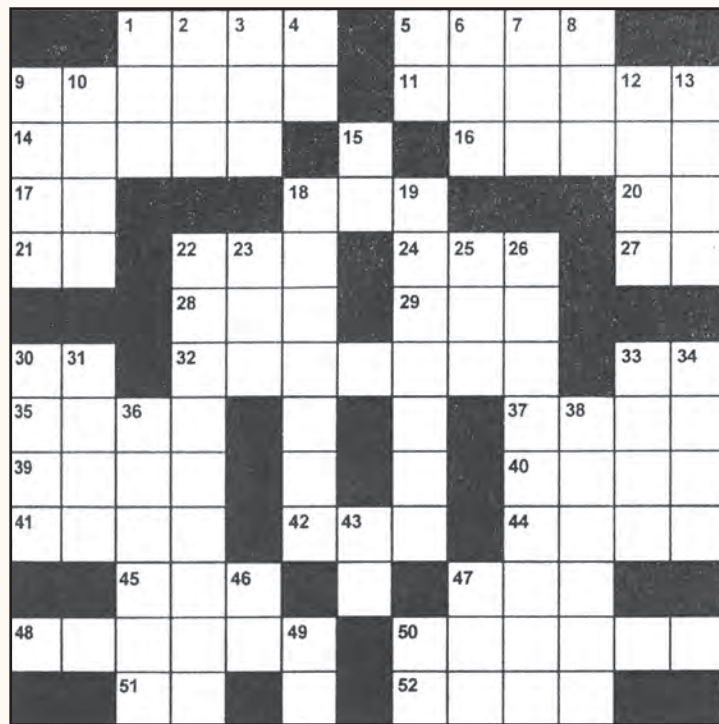
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# CHRISTIAN Crossword



## ACROSS

1. Poetic foot.
5. I looked through my \_\_\_\_\_ment. (Prov. 7:6)
9. Shall be in \_\_\_\_\_ of the judgment. (Matt. 5:21)
11. Thou hast \_\_\_\_\_d all things. (Rev. 4:11)
14. By me if any man \_\_\_\_\_ in. (John 10:9)
16. Alma \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Indefinite article.
18. Belonging to the talking horse.
20. Continent. (abbr.)
21. Baby's first word.
22. Shade tree.
24. Let us make man in our \_\_\_\_\_ge. (Gen. 1:26)



By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

27. Poet Eliot's initials.
28. The shortest month. (abbr.)
29. He who now letteth will \_\_\_\_\_.
30. Quiet, please.
32. Effectual \_\_\_\_\_ prayer. (James 5:16)
33. Alabama. (abbr.)
35. When they ... had gone six \_\_\_\_\_s. (2 Sam. 6:13)
37. In \_\_\_\_\_ was there a voice heard. (Matt. 2:18)
39. Form of Alex.
40. Part of a list.
41. The Lord hath \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom. (1 Sam. 15:28)
42. Adam called his wife's name \_\_\_\_\_.
44. Neither shall ye break a \_\_\_\_\_ thereof. (Ex. 12:46)
45. Day of the week. (abbr.)
47. The Lord God is a \_\_\_\_\_ and shield. (Ps. 84:11)
48. Belonging to Sarai's husband.

50. Belonging to Cephas.
51. "Strength" or "strong one." (Hebrew)
52. In Isaac shall thy \_\_\_\_\_ be called. (Gen. 21:12)

## DOWN

1. Money earned on account. (abbr.)
2. He is of \_\_\_\_\_, ask him. (John 9:21)
3. Sea. (French)
4. One in a monastery. (abbr.)
5. Medicine measure.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ yourselves likewise. (1 Pet. 4:1)
7. The wicked are like the troubled \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Ye shall \_\_\_\_\_ no manner of blood. (Lev. 7:26)
9. Quickened, who were \_\_\_\_\_ in trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2:1)
10. There was one \_\_\_\_\_, a prophetess. (Luke 2:36)
12. The father of such as dwell in \_\_\_\_\_s. (Gen. 4:20)
13. Historical periods.
15. Savings document.

18. Paul called unto him the disciples, and \_\_\_\_\_d them. (Acts 20:1)
19. Let the woman learn in \_\_\_\_\_.
22. The \_\_\_\_\_ fervent prayer. (James 5:16)
23. Southern general.
25. Not with eyeservice, as \_\_\_\_\_ pleasers. (Eph. 6:6)
26. Characteristic.
30. To practice boxing.
31. Lest he \_\_\_\_\_ thee to the judge. (Luke 12:58)
33. To whom be glory for ever. \_\_\_\_\_.
34. Jonathan ... had a son ... \_\_\_\_\_ of his feet. (2 Sam. 4:4)
36. Midpoint. (British var.)
38. Will never be \_\_\_\_\_ for by sacrifice. (1 Sam. 3:14, NIV)
43. Roman numeral for 6.
46. Printer's measure.
47. We shall \_\_\_\_\_ him as he is. (1 John 3:2)
49. Naval vessel insignia.
50. Thought added to letter.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

## All Nations Camp to equip youth

It's not too late to sign up for All Nations Youth Camp, a discipleship and missions-focused camp for students who have completed 7th through 12th grade.

The focus of the camp — which will be held July 26–29 at WorldSong Missions Place — is to encourage, equip and mobilize our students to live for the Great Commission.

We invite you to send your students to this four-day, three-night event full of discipleship, missions testimonies from International Mission Board missionaries, swimming, hik-

To register, visit [alsbom.org/anyc](http://alsbom.org/anyc) or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



ing, games and much more. The cost is \$200 per student. For more information or to register, visit [alsbom.org/anyc](http://alsbom.org/anyc).

## GroupLife workshops equip group leaders

Daniel Edmonds said in his experience, group leader training is vital.

"Untrained leaders tend to burn out and go their own direction," said Edmonds, director of the SBOM office of Sunday School and discipleship.

That's why GroupLife Equipping Workshops are coming to your area this summer to encourage and equip your church's Sunday School and group leaders to love well and focus on God's Word.

Join an event near you:

- ▶ First Baptist Church Prattville — July 29.
- ▶ Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals — July 29.
- ▶ Hunter Street Baptist

- Church, Hoover — Aug. 5.
- ▶ Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens — Aug. 19.
- ▶ First Baptist Church Dothan — Aug. 19.
- ▶ West Mobile Baptist Church — Aug. 19.

The training is for all types of groups, from Sunday School to weekday small groups in homes, from adult to youth to preschool.

A video and workshop guide also will be available for individuals who would like to train on their own or train their church's leaders.

There is no cost to attend the event. Registration is required.

Visit [makingdisciplesal.org/grouplife](http://makingdisciplesal.org/grouplife) to register or find out more about GroupLife training.

NINTH IN A SERIES

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## 200 YEARS

OF ALABAMA BAPTIST MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

## Alabama Baptist church planting journey gains strength

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

In 2018, Lamar Duke pulled together a report he'd been asked to compile, and when he finished it, he sat at his desk and wept.

The numbers showed that in the five years prior, Alabama Baptists had planted 85 churches, representing 785 people who had been baptized.

Those churches were "reaching the unchurched," said Duke, then-church planting strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "I tell people all over Alabama that if we have one church that can baptize 30 a year for the next five years, that's significant. But if that church can also plant churches that do the same thing, how many more people will come to know Jesus that way?"

Finding the answer to that question was the goal for Duke, who died in 2020 after a battle with cancer, and it remains the goal for Rick Barnhart, who directs the SBOM office that includes church planting work.

"If we're going to reach Alabama, we're falling behind," Barnhart said, noting that the state needs many more churches just to keep up with the population growth. "We have to plant new churches if we're really going to make a difference here."

Brian Harper, who now serves in the role Duke served in, said that's been the vision behind the state's church planting effort, which has



Dewayne Rembert (right), pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm, baptizes a new believer in June. Flatline was planted in 2018 in building space given to them by Chisholm Baptist Church in Montgomery.

grown more vibrant in recent history.

In the past decade, Alabama Baptists have planted more than 100 churches and continue training new church planters through cohorts and residency programs.

**'God is working'**

They're also helping with a collegiate church planting network that's planting churches near campuses across the state.

"We're seeing a lot of response. God is working in the details," Harper said. "From Alex City all the way to Phenix City and all across the state, God is calling people to start churches."

willing" to come alongside church planters, buying properties and mobile units for them to meet in.

But at that time, "there was no training," he said. "It just wasn't out there yet."

Over time, the SBOM's help grew to include more resources, like financial assistance for new congregations. When Barnhart left the pastorate and came over to the SBOM side of things in 2012, he wanted to take the effort to the next level.

**Strong support**

"I knew what needed to be done because I had been a planter, but I didn't know how we needed to go about doing it," he said.

Around that time, he crossed paths with Duke and, after some prayer and conversations, brought him on staff.

"Lamar brought us from doing OK to really becoming one of the premier states in church planting and introduced Church Planting Journey, which was all that was available to us at that point," Barnhart said.

Today, the SBOM helps by walking potential planters through a robust preparation process. First, they make sure the planter is well connected with a sponsor church and with their local Baptist association.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, said that connection is vital.

"Our new church plants enjoy a healthy longevity and viability rate because we are purposely working with local churches and through the local associations," he said. "This

Facebook photo

collaborative strategy has been most effective. We are all partnering together to advance the Kingdom.”

From there, planters are assessed by SBOM staff through a North American Mission Board portal to find out more about their leadership potential and experience. Then they move through an 11-week training cohort that meets online and is conducted in both English and Spanish.

Harper said this setup has given them a lot of flexibility — for instance, when the next cohort meets in August, one planter-in-training will be going through the coursework from Honduras before moving to the United States.

And after the cohort is over, planters are assigned coaches who meet with them monthly.

They also receive financial assistance from the SBOM to cover things like rent for facilities, AV equipment for the church and health insurance for the planter.

“All in all, we’re investing about \$100,000 in each plant,” Harper said. “We’re trying to be good stewards.”

He said in the same way that the state has some areas that are “food deserts” — places with limited access to affordable and nutritious food — it also has some areas that are “gospel deserts,” or places where people aren’t easily hearing the gospel in a way they can understand and connect with.

Because of that reality, many existing churches around Alabama are getting involved with church planting in order to make the gospel accessible to every person who calls the state home.

### ‘A lot more to do’

“We have a lot more to do (and) if every church in Alabama would think about church planting, that would help us take some steps in that direction,” Harper said. “If we look at the world outside of those who would go to our church, it moves us to be obedient to do missions in our communities. If we don’t, we miss the opportunity of making disciples and growing disciples.”

What are some ways established churches can step up to help?

One of the most common ways is to partner financially, Harper said. Church planters need financial support and so do church replanters, or

those helping a declining church get a fresh start.

Another way to partner is for legacy churches to offer their facilities either by sharing them with a new church plant or gifting them to the new congregation.

In 2018, Chisholm Baptist, an aging church, opened its doors to Flatline Church at Chisholm, a plant that’s now thriving inside its walls.

The two were connected by Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, and the SBOM supported them through the process.

### Continuing legacy

A detail not lost on Hughes is that the churches’ building is within a two-minute walk of Old Elam Baptist Church, a congregation planted in the 1800s by Caesar Blackwell, a prolific African American church planter serving in the days when Alabama had no churches.

“He was used by God in a great way in the frontier days of Alabama Baptists and the Alabama Baptist Association, the front runner of Montgomery Baptist Association,” Hughes said.

“He was the first Montgomery Baptist Association church planting strategist, serving the River Region in the 1830s and 1840s.”

Before Blackwell’s death in 1845 — the same year the Southern Baptist Convention was founded — he planted at least seven churches.

“We owe him a great debt of gratitude,” Hughes said, noting that Blackwell’s work lives on.

Within five miles of Old Elam are legacy congregations that were planted in the 20th century — churches like Chisholm, Highland Gardens, Yarbrough Street and Open Acres Baptist, all of which had some seed lineage to Caesar Blackwell’s 19th century faithfulness as a church planter, Hughes said.

Now in that same area has come the next generation of church plants, like Flatline, he said. “The legacy continues.”

Barnhart said that’s the hope as he, Harper and others steward this ministry through the 21st century.

Church planting has been a journey for Alabama Baptists, he said, “and we’re not finished with the journey.”

For more information, visit [plantalabama.org](http://plantalabama.org).

To read more about church planting among language groups in Alabama, visit [tabonline.org/language-groups](http://tabonline.org/language-groups).



Facebook photo

**Above:** Area children take part in Vacation Bible School activities at The Church at Old Town in Helena in June. The church, formerly FBC Helena, was replanted as The Church at Old Town in 2021 as part of a partnership with Valleydale Church. The formerly declining congregation now runs several hundred in worship. **Below:** Lamar Duke leads a church planting meeting in 2017.



Facebook photo

**Above:** Brian Harper, church planting strategist, stands outside Church at the Oaks, a church planted strategically to reach college students in Tuscaloosa as part of The Well Network.



Photo by Ashleigh Hicks

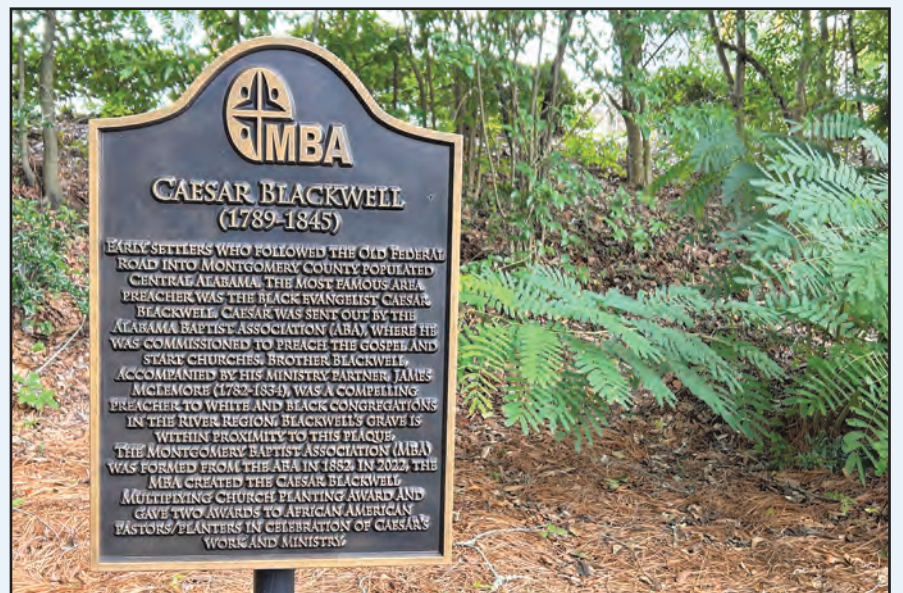


Photo by Robin Crowe

A plaque in the new Caesar Blackwell Memorial Gardens at the Montgomery Baptist Association office honors Blackwell’s legacy of prolific church planting in Alabama’s early years as a state.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 23

## Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Mobile



### REDEEMS Jeremiah 31:23–34

#### Blessings Promised (23–26)

The Lord of Armies — the God of Israel — promised to restore His people to the promised land. God booked His people on a round-trip passage to Babylon.

The Lord — the faithful, covenant-keeping God who had used Babylon to defeat them and send them into captivity — would also defeat the Babylonians and return His people back home. The people of Judah could trust the Lord to do exactly what He had promised to do.

The time will come when the people of Judah will return to their land, and they will call on God to bless them in their land. The compassionate God will satisfy the thirsty and feed the weak. He will meet both their physical and spiritual needs.

The same God is faithful to provide for His people's physical and spiritual needs today. Are you trusting in Christ?

#### Restoration Sought (27–30)

Jeremiah wrote to encourage the people to trust in the Lord even though times were difficult and the situation looked impossible.

The Lord declared that “the days are coming” when He would repopulate Israel and Judah with people and their flocks. This declaration from the Lord acknowledged the destruction that both Israel and Judah had suffered. Both had their populations reduced and their agricultural production diminished.

God, however, promised to restore what had been lost.

In verse 28, we see that all that had taken place occurred according to the sovereign plan of God. It was God who had uprooted and torn down His people because of their unrepentant sin. He used foreign nations as His instrument to execute His righteous judgment. But the Lord who had uprooted and torn

down His people would also build and plant them back in their land.

The people of Judah were unwilling to accept the fact that their own sins were bringing God's judgment on them. They shifted the blame by insisting that previous generations had committed sins for which they were being punished.

A popular proverb of their day stated that “the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.” It would be strange to bite into a green persimmon and hear a person standing nearby say that his teeth felt the acid of the sour fruit.

Many of the people of Judah believed they had been unjustly punished for the sins of previous generations. The Lord made it very clear that each person was held accountable for his own sins.

#### Covenant Established (31–34)

The exact phrase “new covenant” is not found anywhere else in the Old Testament, although the ideas associated with it are frequently expressed.

The five “I wills” in the passage indicate that God is taking the initiative in this covenant. The days were coming when the Lord would change the hearts of the people so they could obey Him. He would put his teaching within them and they would all know the Lord. They would understand what it means to live for God and have a God-given desire and ability to do so.

God promised that He would “forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.”

When Jesus initiated the Lord's Supper, He told His disciples that His blood would establish the new covenant Jeremiah had foretold. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Call on the name of the Lord today and be saved.

***“This is the Lord's declaration. ‘For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.’”***

Jeremiah 31:34b

## Bible Studies for Life

Roy Ciampa, Ph.D.

Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



### SET APART BY CHRIST Romans 6:5–14

Believers are frequently called “saints,” which means people set apart, not because we live perfectly holy lives but because Christ has set us apart from the rest of the world to serve and follow Him.

But in setting us apart as His people, God has also promised us power over sin in this life and an eternal inheritance with Christ in this life and the next.

#### In Christ, we are set free from sin's grip. (5–7)

In verses 1–4, Paul describes baptism as a picture of how Christ brings us from death to life through our union with Him by faith, which explains why we cannot continue to live lives governed by sin.

We have been “united with Him in the likeness of His death,” which is depicted when we are baptized, and that union endures so that it extends also to our experiencing “the likeness of His resurrection.”

Our union with Christ's death is described as having “our old self ... crucified with Him,” and that is so that we might “no longer be enslaved to sin” as we had been in the past.

Sin's reign extends only to the border established by death, and no further.

#### In Christ, we are set apart with the promise of eternal life. (8–11)

Paul now looks forward to our ultimate experience of new life in our physical resurrection, modeled on Christ's own resurrection.

Christ has died and come back to life, and having been united with Him through faith, we also died with Him and will experience resurrection with Him as well.

Resurrection life can never be overcome again by death. It is proof that death has been finally defeated. Death ruled over Christ

temporarily but can do so no longer.

By dying to sin and then being resurrected to “live to God” — completely immersed in God's presence and beyond the reach of sin and death — Christ established the ultimate defeat of sin and death.

We must now “consider [ourselves] dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

#### In Christ, we are set apart to live in righteousness. (12–14)

Our union with Christ through faith has brought us into new life already, a new life that will be fully consummated when we experience the resurrection of our bodies like Christ's resurrection.

Therefore, we must already live lives marked by the righteousness that will be the hallmark of our resurrection experience.

Sin will not be able to reign in our resurrection bodies, and we

must not let it reign in these mortal bodies even though they are subject to both death and the temptations of moral life.

We feel the pull of sin's desires but must not obey them. When we read that we must not offer any parts of our bodies as weapons of unrighteousness, we are expected to remember Romans 3:13–18, where Paul quoted biblical texts that describe body parts that the wicked employ as weapons of unrighteousness.

Our throats, tongues, lips, mouths, feet and all the other parts of our bodies should be employed as “weapons for righteousness” instead.

We are under the reign of Christ and His righteousness and grace, and sin cannot be allowed to reign over us or to use the law against us. Christ has eternally set us apart to be people marked by His righteousness.

***“For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace.”***

Romans 6:14

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust  
The Alabama Baptist

## Johnny Cash documentary spotlights his road to Christian redemption

Few stars in American entertainment history have successfully crossed the line between mainstream and Christian music as much as Johnny Cash.

His music is loved by Saturday night barhoppers and Sunday morning church attenders. That's because he sang at whiskey-serving saloons and, later, at Bible-preaching Billy Graham crusades.

If you want wall art depicting him making an obscene gesture, they're available. And if you're wanting a CD of him reading the entire New Testament, that's available too.

A new documentary, "Johnny Cash: The Redemption of an American Icon," tells the faith-centric story of the music legend by following his rise to fame and then his destructive fall. He nearly died from alcohol and drug use. He nearly died in a car crash. God, though, had other plans for his life.

The film, now on home video, is the first one to spotlight his faith.

### 'So much influence'

"Johnny Cash transcends genres," said Brent McCorkle, who wrote the music for the film and co-directed this year's box office hit "Jesus Revolution."

"You're looking at a guy who was



Photo courtesy of Kingdom Story Company

### "JOHNNY CASH: THE REDEMPTION OF AN AMERICAN ICON"

a Christian and was really outspoken about his faith, and yet was so ubiquitous and had so much influence and was able to speak into so many people's lives."

The film includes interviews with those who knew him and follows his trajectory from a young boy in rural Arkansas to worldwide fame. His life was shaped by tragedy, his brother having been killed in a horrific accident when he was young. On multiple occasions, Cash nearly died from recklessness and drug addiction. It was during one of those brushes with death that he had a spiritual transformation.

### Proclaiming the gospel

As the star of ABC's "The Johnny Cash Show" (1969–1971), he proclaimed the gospel to millions. He did the same during appearances at Billy Graham crusades.

The film includes interviews with Johnny's sister Joanne Cash Yates and his son, John Carter Cash, as well as Marty Stuart, Wynonna

Judd, Sheryl Crow, Alice Cooper, Greg Laurie and Tim McGraw. It was made by the same company — Kingdom Story Company — that produced "Jesus Revolution" and "I Can Only Imagine."

It's uplifting and gripping.

Also worth watching this month:

► **His Only Son** (home video) — Abra-

ham is told by God to travel to a distant location in order to sacrifice his son Isaac. This excellent Angel Studios film surprised Hollywood observers by opening at No. 3 at the box office and is the first in a planned multifilm series about Bible characters. It was released on home video, for free, June 25. Visit Angel.com for more information.

► **Chupa** (Netflix) — A Mexican family takes in a mythical creature — a baby "chupacabra" — and hides it from a greed-filled explorer. It's a fun film that has elements of the award-winning movie "E.T.," with enough plot twists to make it unique. (The elderly man in the film was formerly a luchador.) Rated PG for some action, peril and thematic elements. VidAngel and Clearplay offer filters.

► **God's Country Song** (Pure Flix) — A rising country artist sees his life changed forever when he learns he has a son he has never met. Adding to the plot is the revelation that the boy's mother recently died. Real-life musician Justin Gaston portrays the country singer who agrees to raise the boy. It's the latest original film from the Christian streaming service Pure Flix, which is one of the best faith-based alternatives to Netflix and Disney+. Visit PureFlix.com.

► **Nate Bargatze: Hello World** (Prime) — Bargatze, who is one of the funniest comedians in America today, gives his unique take on life. The best part: He keeps his show family friendly. He told Fox News, "I just can't imagine cursing in front of your parents. ... So that's how I write. ... I want them to be proud and be like, 'Oh, come watch my son do comedy,' and not be offended by it." If you've ever wanted to watch clean comedy with your kids, this is your chance.

### 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.

### MEET THE REVIEWER

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

# The Alabama Baptist

## Helping Baptists understand each other — and sharing how God is working through them

### The Alabama Baptist

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December 8, 2022

#### INSIDE



Missionary couple recognized for decades of service  
→ Page 9



Pastors working as Santas bring joy, extend ministry to others during holidays  
→ Page 11



### 'Something

#### Ice cream truck dreams turn into ministry

By Grace Thornton  
Michelle Norwood says on a much smaller scale, she might know what South felt like. For her it wasn't an ark — it was an ice cream truck. "I had seen one for maybe three minutes in my life," she recalled. "I was visiting my sister in Memphis one summer. We walked out, and I bought the kids an ice cream." But in 2017, Norwood said she woke up night after night at 2 a.m., and God started to speak to her about how to build one. "I'd wake up, and little by little there would be another idea of what I needed to research or figure out," she related. "I made notes and started making connections." It was a new thought, but the purpose behind it had been in Norwood's mind and heart for

Tips for growing small groups, making most of time  
→ Page 13

### The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-823-5201  
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February 16, 2023

Vol. 188, No. 7  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Volunteers unload boxes of frozen chicken at the ministry house of FBC Alabaster. The church has run a food ministry for 20 years.

## Food insecurity

### Alabama Baptist churches help put food on the table for people in their communities

By Grace Thornton  
Michelle Weaver said people used to associate hunger with homelessness, but from where she sits, she feels that just isn't the case anymore. As community ministry director at First Baptist Church Alabaster, Weaver sees people from all walks of life wait in line every second and

fourth Monday to get food from their drive-thru food pantry. "In this day and in this economy, there are families we have met who are nurses, bankers, teachers and college students," she said. "It's a diverse population right now needing food assistance because groceries have gone sky high, medical bills aren't being covered, or they can't afford medical insurance or their hours are being cut at work."

And not only are the lines full of a broad spectrum of people, they're also getting longer, Weaver said. Their ministry has tripled in the last three years and takes between 30 and 40 volunteers to run.

#### Growing ministry

"We used to start out with 15 to 20 cars in our drive-thru and can get 100 cars now, some with multiple families in the car," she said. "We

feed between 500 and 600 people every Monday we do our food ministry." FBC Alabaster's food pantry started 20 years ago with boxes of food stored in a closet and has grown over the years and adapted to meet people where they are. In years past, people could come to the ministry, talk to the volunteers about their financial need and then receive food. (See 'Hunger,' page 13)

#### SPOTLIGHT SPONSOR ...

Unforsaken Ministry — Walking with those in addiction and their families through the journey of recovery.

### The Alabama Baptist

February 23, 2023

Vol. 188, No. 8  
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### College students focus of Feb. 23 prayer emphasis

By Carrie B. McWhorter  
An annual day of prayer for college students is coming at a pivotal time in the spiritual lives of students throughout the nation and across Alabama. The Collegiate Day of Prayer, which falls this year on Feb. 23, has garnered renewed attention as news reports chronicle the revival happening at Ashbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky.

#### Livestream

This year's 200th anniversary prayer service will be livestreamed from Ashbury on Feb. 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. Central time.

On Feb. 24-25, hundreds of college students from across Alabama will gather at First Baptist Church Montgomery and student ministries for Pursue, an annual missions and discipleship conference.

Ben Edfield, director of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he is excited to see how God will use the convergence of the day of prayer, Pursue and the Ashbury revival. "I hope that our Alabama Baptist churches will join the office of collegiate and student ministries on Feb. 23 in asking God to move in an unmistakable way — calling students to repentance, inviting students (See 'Missions,' page 9)

### Jesus

#### Gifts to Annie Armstrong

In Alabama there are churches everywhere. That started the couple on a journey toward realizing God was calling them to plant a church there. They started a church planting residency in early 2020, were affirmed in the summer and started growing their launch teams in 2021. "We launched The Local Church officially in February 2022," McKay said. "We started in one location, meeting on Sunday afternoons at 4 p.m." (See 'Ministry,' page 10)

#### LIGHT SPONSOR ...

Training Institute at Samford University — Equipping students to be leaders in their churches and communities through education and practical ministry training.

# The Wellness Kitchen

*“Nature is God’s Wellness Kitchen where Food is Medicine.”*

By Pat Terry  
The Wellness Kitchen

## GRILLED SAVOY CABBAGE SALAD WITH BUTTERMILK DRESSING

Makes 4 servings

### INGREDIENTS:

1 head savoy or napa cabbage	1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	2 tablespoons lemon juice, fresh preferred
1 tablespoon kosher salt	1 tablespoon chives, finely chopped (more if desired for topping)
2 jalapenos	1/3 cup crumbled blue cheese or Gorgonzola
1/2 cup buttermilk	4 slices cooked bacon, crumbled (optional)
1/3 cup plain Greek yogurt, full fat	
1/4 cup mayonnaise	

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Remove any damaged outer cabbage leaves. Cut the head of cabbage in half through the stalk and then cut each half into 3 even wedges for a total of 6 wedges. Lay wedges on a sheet pan. Pour olive oil over wedges, then sprinkle with the kosher salt. Leave on counter for up to 12 hours, but at least 1 hour — the longer the better.
2. Preheat or prepare grill to medium-high, including an area for indirect heat. (Heat to one or both sides but no heat on food.)
3. For the dressing, grill jalapenos over medium-high heat until blistered and black, turning often. This takes about 5 minutes. They will begin to soften. When done, let cool slightly. Wearing disposable gloves, stem, peel, seed and chop the peppers. Place in a medium bowl.
4. To the peppers, add the buttermilk, yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon zest, lemon juice and 1 tablespoon of chives. Mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Chill until ready to serve.
5. When the grill is ready, place the cabbage wedges over medium-high heat, turning several times until charred on the edges as desired. Move to indirect heat to finish cooking. Wedges should be crisp and tender in 15–20 minutes.
6. Pour dressing over each wedge and sprinkle with crumbled cheese. Add more chives and the bacon if desired.

Adapted from hummingbirdthyme.com

## What’s in season right now? Savoy cabbage!

By this time of the year, farmer’s markets are in full swing all over the country. One of the early favorites is savoy cabbage. If there were a cabbage beauty contest, savoy would win hands down! With dark green frilly and crinkled leaves, loosely bound around the small head, this cabbage is milder, sweeter and more tender than its cousins.

The savoy variety seems to have been developed in the Savoy region of France in the western Alps along its borders with Italy and Switzerland. Because of the darker green of the leaves, this cabbage is higher in beta carotene than either red or green head cabbage. As with all cruciferous vegetables, this cabbage is also very high in other vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients.

**Peak time:** Year-round, but fresh from gardens in late spring, early summer and fall.

**Average price:** \$1.13 per pound

**Nutritional highlights:** Because of the darker green color of savoy cabbage, it is higher in vitamin A from beta carotene. In addition to beta carotene, this cabbage is rich in lutein and other phenolic compounds.

These compounds, in addition to a high amount of vitamin C, make savoy cabbage an excellent source of antioxidants and other anti-cancer properties. It is an excellent source of vitamin K and a very good source of vitamins B6, folate and other B vitamins.

It is a good source of calcium and magnesium. The unusual webbing of the leaves makes savoy cabbage an excellent source of dietary fiber.

Because of the nutrient and phytonutrient density of this cabbage, it is anti-inflammatory, helps boost the immune system, improves digestion, protects your heart, lowers cholesterol and maintains bone health.



Unsplash.com

Pat Terry started The Wellness Kitchen as a way to share the knowledge she’s acquired over the 30 years she served as a professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to her work at Samford, Terry was the first nonclinical dietitian appointed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve overseas. Visit her website at [thewellnesskitchenrd.com](http://thewellnesskitchenrd.com).



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# Influential

By Myriah Snyder

International Mission Board

## IMB reaching thousands of coaches in Central Asia

**G**rowing up, sports were a huge part of International Mission Board worker Wes Blakely's world.

In high school he lettered in three sports. He continued to play at the collegiate level. After college, he was a volunteer coach.

Now, sports play just as big of a part in his ministry on the missions field.

Blakely has been coaching sports in a school and a few clubs in Central Asia where he serves. Through this, he's seen a number of people become curious about the Christian faith and some even turn to Jesus.

But Blakely couldn't foresee the far reach of his ministry in this Central Asian country where he lives with his wife and kids. Recently, he received the opportunity to influence thousands of coaches at all levels around the country.

### Expertise in athletics

Desiring better performances after the latest Olympics, government leaders heard that American athletes were living in the region.

They figured this might be their solution.

The invitation was extended for Blakely and friends in the U.S. to bring their expertise in athletics and training. They'd be given influence over thousands of coaches. Whatever curriculum they developed would be passed on and others would follow it.

### Biblical worldview

Blakely never hides the fact that he is a Christian and that his faith shapes what he teaches and how he coaches.

He shares that sports, coaching, athletics — all of it — should be seen from a biblical worldview.

In sports, an athlete pursues excellence, has a competitive spirit and aims to win, but people are to be valued above all else.

Most importantly, as with everything in life, it should all be used for God's glory.

Training that will eventually reach thousands of coaches has already begun. The prayer is that this teaching influences coaches, who



IMB photo

Kids play football in the streets of a small neighborhood in Konya, Turkey. Once known as Iconium, Konya, it was one of the missionary destinations of the Apostle Paul.

in turn influence athletes, who then influence society.

"We weren't looking for this opportunity," Blakely said. "We were praying for the Lord to use sports to influence people, but we had no idea that this door was going to be opened. We realized, 'OK, God you are way bigger than we realize, and you're seeking to reach this whole society.'"

### Open door

He had been praying for God to move among the people where he and his wife live and work. They

planted their lives there, and Blakely has been praying for a harvest for nearly 20 years, the entire time he's been serving in the area.

While Blakely has other big dreams, like seeing one church planted for every 1,000 people in a city where hundreds of thousands reside, he's taken heart that this opportunity for gospel access has been opened, especially after so many years of waiting for a harvest.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by the International Mission Board.*



Outside the town of Astara, Azerbaijan, a group of Talysh men spend an afternoon enjoying a game of soccer in an empty field.

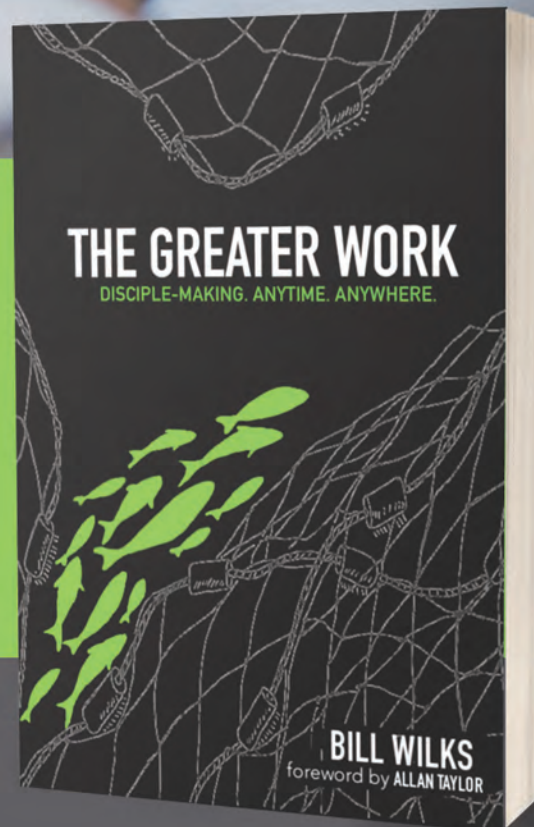
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“WE REALIZED, ‘OK, GOD YOU ARE WAY BIGGER THAN WE REALIZE, AND YOU’RE SEEKING TO REACH THIS WHOLE SOCIETY.’”

WES BLAKELY  
INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD WORKER

# d+life

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# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz  
The Baptist Paper

## Christian artist JJ Weeks reflects on music, life

When news of the spiritual movements on college campuses earlier this year started spreading, Christian recording artist JJ Weeks felt a burden to not take it lightly.

Touring with Justin Warren on the “My Porch Tour,” Weeks decided to include a worship set chosen from songs that were personally speaking to him and the other band members.

The set became the main emphasis of the tour, a powerful part of the concert and affirmation of following God’s will, even when it isn’t easy, Weeks said.

“I think if I were in any other space, I would really lean on what [I] can do and [my] abilities,” Weeks said. Instead, the musical selections have refocused him on “who [God] is and the faith that I have in Him.”

“I can say, ‘All right, God. You control it all.’ I still struggle with trying to pick up the mantle and carrying it myself instead of leaving it in God’s hands. I think that’s probably what this whole thing has taught me the most — is to just learn to trust Him.”

Born in Birmingham and spending his early childhood in Fulton-



JJ WEEKS

Photo courtesy of JJ Weeks

dale, Weeks had always felt called to the ministry. However, while he was studying to be a youth pastor, an encounter with God changed his life’s trajectory. The call came during a night he was leading worship for the youth at his uncle’s church during a college break.

“We started (with) an upbeat song at first (but) I felt the presence of God so strongly that I just ended up shutting the music off and saying, ‘Hey, we’re going to play some soft music, and I’m going to spend some time with the Lord at the altar. You’re welcome to do that with me.’”

### Difficult path

Weeks ended up lying on the floor at the altar. That was when he felt God call him to do this full time.

Even with the support of friends and family, Weeks’ path in music hasn’t always been easy. He did

music independently all over the Southeast for 12 years until, while playing at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, a record label took interest in his work. He soon signed with them.

TO LEARN  
MORE ABOUT JJ  
WEEKS AND HIS  
MUSIC, GO TO  
JJWEEKS.ORG.

The first single released by JJ Weeks Band, “Let Them See You,” exploded. The second did well, but then the record label he was with broke apart, leading to a new record label. The next song didn’t gain much traction.

“For the next seven years we were just fighting to get any radio play,” he said. “Just looking at it from the world’s eyes, there’s no reason for JJ Weeks to keep going if you just look at it from radio play, etc.”

“Long story short, when I really stepped back and said, ‘God, is this what You still want me to do?’

“I had a moment that I felt like God was telling me it was time to close the doors.”

During the same time, Weeks was invited to become the worship director of a big church in his hometown. This seemed like confirmation he was heading in the right direction. One night he was praying about how to end his Christian music career well.

### Change of direction

“I said, ‘In Jesus’ name. Amen,’ and I’ll never forget it — it was probably 3 a.m. (I was) doing some balancing on a spreadsheet — how I could sell this and pay this off to close the ministry and have it end on an even spot financially. As soon as I said, ‘Amen,’ I heard God say, ‘You may be through, son, but I’m not. Just put one foot in front of the other,’” Weeks said.

About a week later, he was reading a devotion that highlighted how the greatest victory of all time happened in a graveyard.

“God works His best miracles in our deepest, darkest moments,” Weeks said. “I think that us Christian folks think that we share Jesus better on the mountaintops.

“But the truth is, we show people Jesus better in the darkest valleys when we don’t know what in the world God’s doing. He pulls things from the dead and brings them back to life.”

After these experiences, Weeks knew he needed to keep going.

He changed his name from JJ Weeks Band to simply JJ Weeks, and after using the time off during the pandemic to reconnect with his family, he had a busy 2021 and 2022 writing and touring.

He is releasing those songs now, starting with the single “Graveyard,” based on what he learned when he almost gave up.

Weeks also plans to release a new album this fall.

### EDITOR’S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in *The Baptist Paper* 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 Group.