The Alabama Baptist

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SCAN ME

Opinion

Rashional Thoughts from last week's Baptist Paper: 'Law' of unintended consequences

Watching and covering aspects of the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting the past few years reminds me of the law of unintended consequences.

Supposedly penned in 1936 by American sociologist Robert K. Merton, the phrase is clear in what it describes, and most of us have experienced it at some point in our lives.

As far as the SBC meetings go, I think back to 2019 when messengers approved the creation of an official Credentials Committee and wonder how the conversations around SBC life would be different today without its creation.

It was the Credentials Committee, sharing from the convention platform in a vulnerable moment in 2022, that led to Virginia pastor Mike Law taking on the challenge of helping the group define "pastor."

You can read more about Law and his proposed amendment to the SBC constitution in past editions of The Alabama Baptist or online at thebaptistpaper.org/sbc2024.

Decisions from the past

But going back decades prior, could it have been the trendy movement among church staff to upgrade ministers' titles to include a version of the word "pastor" in them that got us to this latest moment?

Until that trend, a person with the title "pastor" was clearly the official top seat on the church staff and the main shepherd over the congregation.

When Law's motion was presented for its first vote of the messengers in 2023, the presiding chair could have requested a ballot vote rather than going with the raised ballot method.

Voting method

Would the results have been different in 2023 if messengers had been able to vote by secret ballot rather than raising their hands high in the air for all around to see? Maybe but maybe not.

More important, however, is the concern that a large convention hall of messengers can make a major change so quickly without time to read and understand the nuances of the words and phrases within a motion that is presented.

When this happened with the addition to the Baptist Faith & Message proposed by Alabama pastor Jared Cornutt last year, it caught most people by surprise.

And, as you might expect, a safeguard is now being put in place for changes to the BF&M.

Even Cornutt said he was surprised and was among those advocating for a more stringent process in these cases.

It took years, but a similar upgrade finally happened in another area of SBC life — the system for each year's messenger body as they consider resolutions.

Messengers to the 2024 meeting were able to review the resolution wording in advance of the meeting rather than being handed a stack of resolutions a few hours before the vote would take place.

The system is still far from perfect, but it's a good first step.

Another solid step would be to find a way to keep all business coming to the floor focused on the specific work of the convention.

Sometimes an individual will use the business structure of the annual meeting to present motions, resolutions or rhetoric on personal agenda items.

While the right to focus on whatever we choose in our ministry journey is a treasured part of local church autonomy, it hurts my heart to watch brothers and sisters in Christ turn on each other over differences of opinions.

How far is too far?

If we become immune to hurtful and potentially manipulative barbs from those in our faith family, then how much easier is it for us to either start participating and carrying it with us to other places or lose our sensitivities and compassion for others overall?

Choosing absolute dedication and a whatever-it-takes determination to win at the expense of personal relationships brings its own set of unintended consequences.

Readers respond to 'unintended consequences' editorial

Those last two paragraphs sum up issues within our churches and lives today. Thank you for stating this so well."

"This last sentence in your editorial is powerful. It really hits the nail on the head when we think not only of wanting our own way, but also the unintended consequences of sin. When people and relationships become inconsequential to personal preferences, we are headed completely away from Jesus, in my opinion."

"Thank you for the well written editorial ... (and) thank you for standing as an incredible woman in ministry who is working to inform, inspire and connect some of us who seemingly work overtime to mislead, discourage and disconnect."

"You forevermore nailed it with your 'law of unintended consequences' musings."

"I appreciate your diplomacy!"

—From TAB/TBP readers

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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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 19.

OPINION

Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief
jrash@thealabamabaptist.org @RashionalThts

Appreciating the 4th, family visits as we speed through summer

It's almost time to celebrate the 4th of July and take a moment to breathe in the reality of what a privileged life we have as part of an independent nation. More than two centuries of leaders, military personnel and a consensus among U.S. citizens have kept Independence Day intact on the calendar.

Along with a lifetime of gratitude and appreciation, I hope to always do my part by contributing positively and productively as a citizen and help guide others to do the same.

As we hit this halfway point of the year, it's a good time to pause to take inventory of the gifts we've been given and see how we are doing in the various areas of life.

Summer break brings endless opportunities for fun adventures, travel and a little down time — well, maybe not for the children's and youth ministers among us.

In church life, June and July are bustling times with Vacation Bible School, missions trips, student camps and lots of weekly activities for the kiddos.

In convention life, the SBC Annual Meeting consumes a good amount of time in May and June, followed by lots of regrouping in July. You'll find coverage from the recent meeting throughout this edition and can find our full report online at thebaptistpaper.org/sbc2024.

Outside of church and convention life, young families are moving through the season at a breakneck pace attempting to balance summer trips with camp experiences, sports activities and shuttling kids to friends' homes or the local pool.

Summer also provides an opportunity to catch up with extended family and friends, especially those we only see at the holidays and during the summer.

So far, Jason and I have spent time with family in Jefferson County, throughout Franklin County and in north Georgia. We also had a fun visit with family from Florida and Arkansas when they stopped by on their way through Alabama.

Looking ahead to the second half of summer, we are hoping to see our South Carolina crew soon and make our way up to Florence and down to the coast for time with other family members.

One thing I've learned is if I don't intentionally make the effort to protect my schedule for these visits, then time truly will get away from me. Each day brings a fresh opportunity to triage all we've jotted down on our to-do lists while balancing the unexpected moments that most certainly will surface.

It's also a time to show grace and understanding as those around us attempt to do the same.

Covering SBC 24

The TAB Media Group team on-site in Indianapolis consisted of (clockwise from bottom left) Jennifer Rash, Hannah Pruitt, Debbie Campbell, Trennis and Pam Henderson, and Van Payne. Also helping with coverage on-site were Richard Nations, Lonnie Wilkey, David Dawson, Reid and Jennifer Foster, Doug Rogers, Mitchell Bruce and the Illinois Baptist staff. The full slate of TAB Media team members back home all contributed in various ways online and with production as well.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Baptist Paper

OPINION

Your Voice

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

Stay on guard for the poison ivy in our lives

By Shirley Crowder
BMBA WMU executive director

With the coming of summer, it's time to be on the lookout for poison ivy. Several years ago, a friend said she had a red spot on her cheek that looked like it might be a bruise. Two days later, she called to say that although her eyes were swollen so badly she could barely see, she could see red splotches on her face and arms.

Headed to the doctor

I picked her up and took her to the doctor, guessing it was ivy or oak. Enroute to the doctor, she told me she had been working in her yard pulling weeds. I asked if she knew what poison ivy looked like — she didn't. The doctor confirmed it was poison ivy.

I went out in the yard with her to the side of the house she had not yet weeded and took a picture and showed her the poison ivy. She commented on what a pretty shade of green it was.

CROWDER

We are taught to recognize poison ivy by recognizing its three leaves. Our skin reacts to the poison ivy oil because it detects the oil as an intruder, thus causing the allergic breakout.

I heard a radio teacher compare poison ivy to sin. He talked about how beautiful and enticing sin can look to us when we're faced with temptation but how quickly the beauty fades once we give in to temptation and choose to sin. Our own lusts lead us to choose sin (James 1:14–15).

We must be diligently on guard and looking for things that seem to be good or harmless yet are toxic if we touch them.

Through prayer and knowing the Bible, we can be prepared to identify sinful temptations.

Thankfully the Bible tells us how we can resist temptation and choose to glorify God instead of sinning. We are to flee, run away from it and submit ourselves to God (James 4:7 and 2 Tim. 2:22).

Letters to the Editor

A resolution approved by messengers to the recent SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis about in vitro fertilization lamented that unused embryos are "frozen, stockpiled, destroyed and often subjected to medical experimentation."

The resolution affirmed "the value and right to life of every human being."

But the resolution didn't stop there. It went on to encourage Southern Baptists "to only utilize reproductive technologies consistent with that affirmation."

Brent Leatherwood, head of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said plainly, "We oppose the general practice of IVF."

Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary and the one who drafted the resolution, is well-known for his opposition to IVF.

Resolutions are not, in any way, binding on local churches or individual Baptists.

However, resolutions send a signal. And this signal is not welcomed by many faithful followers of Jesus, including many Baptists who are staunchly pro-life.

The value of IVF for infertile couples shouldn't be disregarded and disparaged despite the complexities of the conversation.

Although the resolution was not a wholesale rejection of IVF, it was an overreach and not a good resolution.

Travis Collins
FBC Huntsville

Find the full text of the resolution at tbponline.org.

"Regarding the simple question whether or not the implementation of the GCR Task Force reversed the decline of baptisms in the SBC, the answer is a clear and decisive no. However, to be sure, there is more than enough blame to go around for this continued downward trend," noted task force chair **Jay Adkins**, pastor of First Baptist Church Westwego, Louisiana.

"God is telling me we are here to facilitate the work of Southern Baptists ... to manage and minimize the administrative processes," said **Jeff Iorg**, president/CEO of the SBC Executive Committee. "We want to do our work quietly and efficiently so we can get on with the real work of winning more and more people to Jesus Christ."

"I believe that when people get far away from God, they discover there is an emptiness in their heart, and we [as Christians] are the ones who can point them to the truth," said **Bart Barber**, immediate past president of the SBC. "It's a huge task to embrace, but the more God blesses us, the more work we have to do."

To read a full report from the SBC Annual Meeting, visit thebaptistpaper.org/SBC2024.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

OPINION

> "I love the SBC, have a sense of indebtedness to it and ... count it a great honor to serve as president."
>
> CLINT PRESSLEY
> *North Carolina pastor and newly elected SBC president*

The Great Commission cannot be parceled and assigned to our boards. While the efforts of our boards are critical, it is incumbent on every Christ follower to proclaim the gospel, said national WMU executive director **Sandy Wisdom-Martin**. This responsibility cannot be abdicated. We have church members who get married in the church and get buried in the church and live their entire life without once sharing their faith, she noted. This is the greatest tragedy of our generation, that we would not personally take responsibility for the sacred task entrusted to each of us. It really doesn't matter what strategy we put into place if we don't change the culture of our community of faith. This has to be the foundation.

Reflecting on the recent SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, we can underscore the good news that came out of the meeting, said **Rick Lance**, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. A few notes:

1. Clear mission focus

Those in attendance witnessed the sending or commissioning of 83 new IMB missionaries. Our Lord continues to call out people and send them on mission to places where we cannot, for security reasons, identify either the missionary or the locale by name. The North American Mission Board brought updates on church planting efforts across the U.S. and Canada. These church planters represent those who are willing to answer God's call to do something new in the name of Christ.

2. Stellar leadership

Jeff Iorg, newly elected president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, set the tone for the future by transparently updating messengers on the current situation facing the EC.

His stellar leadership has come at the right time for this strategic committee. He is the right man for this moment to lead Southern Baptists.

Bart Barber presided over this year's meeting with a calm and steady hand. Even in the few moments of tension and confusion, you could sense that Bart was in control. His humility and dignity were evident during all sessions.

3. Alabama connections

A group of your state missionaries from Alabama was in the exhibit hall to connect with fellow Alabama Baptists in personal ways, and I thank God for them. I have never been so proud to serve alongside such dedicated people.

Our new SBC president has Alabama Baptist connections. From 2004 to 2010, Clint Pressley served Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile. He did a superb job of leading that congregation during his tenure. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know him when he was in Alabama. In 2010, he returned to his home church at Hickory Grove Baptist in Charlotte, North Carolina, serving the Lord there since.

LANCE

4. Our missional heartbeat

Southern Baptists are people who seek always to be faithful to the Bible, even concerning complicated issues. The Baptist Faith & Message 2000 represents a consensus of our biblical beliefs. This confessional statement has served us well through the years, and I think it will do so in the future as well.

Our hearts beat with a "clear mission focus." We are by far the largest missions-sending faith group in the world. That mission is fueled by our giving through the Cooperative Program and the approved special offerings. Next year marks the centennial celebration of the CP. That is a major cause for us to celebrate.

5. Difference makers

Do we have moments of conflict and confusion? Absolutely! The past several years have illustrated that for certain. We are not a perfect people, but we are only "clay in the Potter's hand." Indeed, I believe we have the hand of God upon us.

Let's remember to celebrate what God is doing among us. Let's also delight in the fact that God has used us even when we were not at our best. As a Southern Baptist and an Alabama Baptist, I am so glad we can join together to be difference makers for Christ in today's world.

I had the opportunity to serve as organist for Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile under Clint Pressley when he was pastor there.

He was enthusiastic about the Savior, the Church, the surrounding city and the people. Clint is personable, very biblically minded and wants to only do what God tells him.

Clint is driven ... and will work with all his heart for things he knows God is leading, but he will oppose whatever he feels is contrary to the Bible regardless of whoever is pushing him otherwise. He will serve the churches of the SBC well.

Iris Lundy Anderson
Mobile

I'm thankful to be part of the diverse SBC family. We worship. We study. We send missionaries. We share the gospel. We make disciples. We are far from perfect in our pursuits, yet today I am thankful that God continues to use us in spite of our weaknesses to build His Kingdom. May we grow in unity. May we remember that the mission matters most.

Jennifer Foster
Montgomery

State Board of Missions plans to exit X

As of July 1, all Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions accounts on X — formerly known as Twitter — will be deleted.

"Our exit is because of X's announced, formalized policy related to pornography," said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director.

"Beginning on July 1, we will begin deleting those accounts such as the SBOM corporate account and those of various SBOM offices."

Lance noted that his own X account will be deleted as well.

Incompatible values

Recently, X told its users, "You may share consensually produced and distributed adult nudity or sexual behavior, provided it's properly labeled and not prominently displayed. ... Adult Content is any consensually produced and distributed material depicting adult nudity or sexual behavior that is pornographic or intended to cause sexual arousal."

Lance declared that the new policy is incompatible with the SBOM's values of biblical fidelity and sharing the gospel of Christ which calls for repentance from sin.

In addition, Lance and his state missionary colleagues each affirm a confession of faith known as the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, which declares that Christians should oppose "all forms of sexual immorality," including pornography.

"As the SBOM along with other ministries and individuals declare our intentions to leave X, we hope that X may significantly change its policy regarding adult content," Lance said.

"If such a change occurs before July 1, the SBOM may well stay. ... Before now, X has been a place for often serious conversations on important topics." (The Alabama Baptist)

NEWS

3 stories you should know

Screenshot/The Weather Channel

As wildfires rage in south-central New Mexico near the village of Ruidoso, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are responding to the "rapidly developing" situation. New Mexico Baptist Disaster Relief reported at press time that the most immediate need right now is prayer for those caught in the path of the fire and others responding. A feeding team was expected to provide meals for evacuees in Roswell. They also shared a request for chaplains to work in a Red Cross shelter in the area. (TAB)

AL students reading proficiency improving

The percentage of Alabama second and third graders reading on or above grade level climbed by 8% this year when compared to 2023, according to new school-level data from the Alabama State Department of Education.

The latest reading proficiency data came just ahead of a key deadline at the end of the school year, where, due to the 2019 Literacy Act, students not reading at or above grade level at the end of third grade could be held back.

"It doesn't matter how you slice it, our students are doing remarkably better from year to year," said State Superintendent Eric Mackey in mid-June as he revealed details on the new data. "We were all shocked by the growth." (Alabama Daily News)

New overtime rules may impact churches

Effective July 1, the U.S. Department of Labor's new rule increases the salary thresholds for exempting salaried executive, administrative or professional employees from federal overtime pay. While pastors and ministers may remain exempt, churches and nonprofits could see payroll impacts for non-ministerial staff unless court challenges block the rule.

The salary threshold will rise from $35,568 to $43,888 annually, with another increase to $58,656 on Jan. 1, 2025. Churches should re-evaluate budgets, review salaries and job descriptions, ensure proper employee classification, keep time records and consult HR or legal experts for compliance. Litigation may alter the rule or its dates, so staying informed through legal and accounting resources is advised. (The Pathway)

Persecuted church

Police accused of aiding assailants in seizing Christian's land in Pakistan

PUNJAB, PAKISTAN — Police in Pakistan are reportedly refusing to arrest those who attacked a Catholic family and seized their farmland in Chak 694/36 GB village, Toba Tek Singh District, Punjab Province.

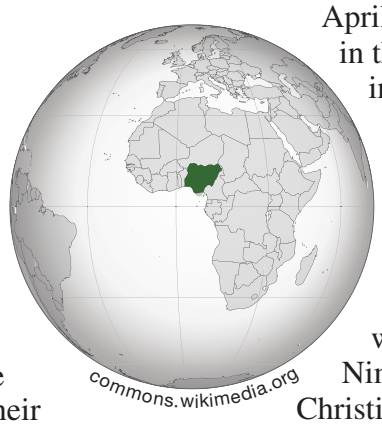
Shahnaz Yousaf stated that on April 16, armed men led by local landlords attacked her family while they harvested their wheat. Despite a court order allowing the family to retain their land, the attackers, allegedly supported by local officials, destroyed their crops and threatened them. Attempts to seek police help resulted in the police damaging the family's property and detaining Shahnaz.

Despite filing complaints, the police delayed action and did not arrest the attackers. The family has appealed to senior officials and Christian leaders for intervention. This incident highlights ongoing issues faced by Christians in Pakistan, which ranks seventh on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List of countries where Christians face severe persecution.

25 Christians in Nigeria killed in recent attacks

ABUJA, Nigeria — The relentless targeting of Christians in Nigeria has claimed at least 25 more lives as the country continues to be the deadliest place in the world for believers.

Nigeria has led the world in the number of Christians killed for their faith or kidnapped, states Open Doors, which tracks the persecution of Christians. Between Oct. 1, 2022, and Sept. 30, 2023, 4,118 Nigerian believers died for their faith.



commons.wikimedia.org

The following are recent reports from the news services Christian Daily International and Morning Star News:

April 19: Twelve Christians were slain in the community of Tilengpan Pushit in Plateau State.

April 27–28: Seven Christians died when Muslim Fulani herdsmen attacked three villages in Benue State, sources said. One Christian was critically injured.

April 28: At least six Christians were killed in a raid upon Ugwujoro Nimbo village in Enugu State. Seven Christians were injured.

Nigeria is No. 6 on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List.

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY THE ALABAMA BAPTIST STAFF

Allen stepping into Barnhart's director's role

By Tucker Massey
The Alabama Baptist

State missionary Ken Allen has been transitioning into the role of director of associational missions and church planting. He officially takes the position July 1 with the June 30 retirement of Rick Barnhart (see story, this page).

Allen, who has been serving with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions since 2019, previously served as a pastor and associational leader in Alabama Baptist life. His work at SBOM included directing the office of LeaderCare and serving in the area of church health.

ALLEN

While with LeaderCare, Allen worked to provide leadership training to pastors, deacons and other church leaders. The training often dealt with handling conflict, bivocational ministry, transitional pastor training and search committee training, among other topics.

"I am really looking forward to sitting down and listening to these guys ... really just working together on these critical issues that we face and how to find solutions," Allen said.

"The thing [we need] more than anything else is to create an environment where these associational leaders can thrive in what they do," he said. "That's what I hope to accomplish overall."

Barnhart has full confidence in Allen and his experience.

"He comes at his [new] position with the experience of having served in the capacity where these (associational leaders) are serving now," Barnhart said. "I think there is going to be some creativity brought to that office that probably needs some changes, and I know he'll be able to do that."

'Heart of gratitude'

Barnhart 'retreading' toward associational missions in rural contexts

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Rick Barnhart said when Gary Swafford first called him from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and asked if he would be interested in moving up from the coast to Montgomery, he didn't want to say yes.

"I was happy," said Barnhart, who at the time was the associational leader for Baldwin Baptist Association. "I knew Baldwin was a place I could retire, and my grandkids were really young."

But even though he didn't want to consider moving, he knew he absolutely wanted to be faithful.

"I asked the question, 'What is the last great impact God wants me to have before I retire?' And in that, the answer came that I was to come on to the State Board and help other associational missionaries as well as church planters to accomplish their work," he said.

It wasn't long before Barnhart started seeing those answers flesh themselves out.

"It was a hand-in-glove fit," he said. "The Lord just worked everything together to make it happen."

Now as he prepares to retire June 30, he feels like "these have been 12 of the best years of ministry."

Next steps

"And it's not really over," he said. "I'm retreading."

In December 2023, Barnhart finished his doctor of ministry, which focused on developing a way to help Baptist associations in rural contexts with strategic planning.

"Because of the graciousness of Cooperative Program giving, I'll be able to work one week per month to do this project across the state of Alabama," he said. "The diversity of responsibility I've had over the decades, all that experience has allowed me to have the layered learning that I have needed to accomplish this work."

RICK BARNHART
Photo by Doug Rogers

That "layered learning" has included not only his church planting, pastoral and associational missions work in Baldwin Association, but everything that's happened in his SBOM office in the past 12 years.

"We're one of the most diverse offices in the whole facility," Barnhart said. The office of associational missions and church planting encompasses those two things plus a variety of others.

'Solidly versatile leader'

"It's been such a joy to establish friendships with associational missionaries, men sold out for Christ who are doing the very best they can in the place where they are, and they just need encouragement," he said.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, said all of Barnhart's experience has made him a "solidly versatile leader."

"During his tenure at the SBOM, Rick has ministered to associational missions strategists in a pastoral way," Lance said. "He has always been there when he was needed."

Barnhart said he's grateful for the opportunity to keep serving associations and to be based in Baldwin County closer to his grandchildren in this next season.

"I want to express real gratitude to my dear wife, Marcy, and to the State Board and its leaders," Barnhart said. "I have a heart of gratitude that they would trust me to do this."

Bryan Blass joins SBOM team

Bryan Blass is the new director of the office of LeaderCare at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

He follows Ken Allen, who is shifting to a new role (see story, this page).

BLASS

Since 2011, Blass has served as associate pastor of Central Baptist Church in Decatur where he had a variety of duties ranging from missions pastor to an interim music minister to an administrative pastor.

Before his time at Central Baptist, he served as pastor of FBC Gadsden and New Home Baptist Church in Titus.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, called Blass a "difference maker for Christ."

"Bryan is uniquely qualified ... (and) brings a wealth of experience and a heart for the calling to assist leaders and churches to become healthier and stronger in their Great Commission efforts," Lance said. (TAB Media Group)

NEWS

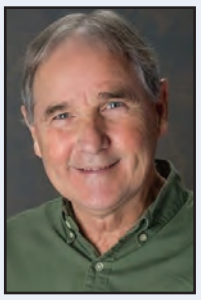
Alabama news

OBITUARIES

GENE L. CHESTNUTT

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor Gene L. Chestnutt died May 24 after a fight with pancreatic cancer. He was 72.

A native of Tifton, Georgia, Chestnutt served as a preacher for more than 20 years. He was most recently pastor of Pittsview Baptist Church near Phenix City.


CHESTNUTT

He was a graduate of Mercer University and also worked for the Georgia Department of Labor for 30 years.

Chestnutt is survived by his wife of 48 years, Lynn; son, Joshua; daughter, Carrie; and six grandchildren.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

▸ **Richard Donald "Don" Hatcher** will celebrate 50 years of ministry July 28, 3–8 p.m. at **Cross Baptist Church, Eufaula.** As a young man, Hatcher came face to face with his own mortality in a near-fatal motorcycle accident, causing him to evaluate his life choices and finally surrender to God's call on his life. The date was July 28, 1974, and he preached his first sermon the next Sunday. He began ministry in the American Baptist denomination, serving as pastor of a couple of Florida churches and Belle Fontaine Missionary Baptist Church, Theodore. In 1991, Hatcher became Southern Baptist. He served as the family life pastor of First Baptist Church Dawes, Mobile, and pastor of Hephzibah Baptist Church, Troy.

He retired from pastoral ministry in 2010 but came out of retirement to serve as pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Louisville, and then became director of missions for Barbour Baptist Association in 2013. He has served as a chaplain for the Pike County Sheriff's office and other groups and taught extension classes through Samford University's Ministry Training Institute.

HATCHER

Hatcher earned a bachelor of arts degree in English Bible from Gulf Coast Baptist Institute and Seminary (now Gulf Coast Baptist College), Theodore; a master of arts degree in theology from International Seminary, Plymouth, Florida; and a doctor of theology degree from what was then Florida Baptist College and Seminary, Lakeland, Florida. Hatcher and his wife, Trish, have been married almost 55 years and have three children and 12 grandchildren. To attend Hatcher's celebration, RSVP pahtroy@yahoo.com or 334-372-4420.

▸ **Jim Hill** is the new transitional pastor of **Cross Baptist Church, Eufaula.** He recently retired from the associational mission strategist role at Dale Baptist Association. He also previously served as a pastor in Alabama and Florida since retiring from a career in the Air Force in 1996.

HILL

Hill has a bachelor of arts degree in theology from Baptist College of Florida (Now Baptist University of Florida), Graceville, and has served in Disaster Relief ministry for more than 20 years. He also has served as a chaplain for the Ozark Police Department. He and his wife, Robin, have two children and six grandchildren.

▸ **Wayne Russell** is the new pastor of **Parkview Baptist Church, Eufaula.** He previously served as pastor of Sweet Water Baptist Church, Opp, and as administrative and education pastor of Ino Baptist Church, Kinston. He and his wife, Samantha, have three children.

Photo courtesy of Wayne Russell

BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

▸ **Hunter Bosarge** is the new pastor of **Little River Baptist Church, Uriah.** He previously served in Florida. Bosarge has a bachelor's degree in forestry from Mississippi State University and is currently pursuing a certificate in pastoral ministry from Baptist Bible Institute, Willoughby Hills, Ohio. He and his wife, MacLeod, have two children.

Photo courtesy of Donna Kirchharr

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▸ **Miss PattyCake** recently led a pajama party for children at **The Station Church in Bessemer.**

"It was well attended by our community as well as our church members," said Randy Norris, senior pastor of The Station Church. "They absolutely loved it!"

Miss PattyCake uses early childhood education techniques to teach basic beliefs in God through stories and song.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Alberton Baptist Church, Kinston,** will host a fun day June 29, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., featuring a Bible story, large water slide, kiddie pool, food, games and crafts. All are welcome. For more information contact the pastor, Will Jordan, at 334-308-7510.

McWATERS

▸ **Hubert McWaters** is the new pastor of **Newbia Baptist Church, Elba.**

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

▸ **First Baptist Church Center Star, Killen,** has paid off a $1.1 million note stemming from an unexpected rebuilding project launched a decade ago. In March 2014, a semi truck hit the sanctuary, causing extensive damage. The sanctuary was rebuilt soon after, and on April 14 of this year (2024), church members celebrated not only the goodness of God for His physical protection the day the accident happened but also His financial provision through the final loan payment.

Photo courtesy of Jackie Beavers

The church celebrated with a brunch during the Sunday School hour. Church leaders shared with The Alabama Baptist, "We continue to pray and thank Him as we are a light for Him in Center Star." Ronny Jones is pastor.

Pictured are (l to r) Ronny Jones, Ken Johnson, Ron Hall, Windell Hutcheson, Brad Brooks, Mike Dotson and Jonathan Johnson.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

MORRIS

▸ **Meg Morris** is the new nursery director for **First Baptist Church Sylacauga.** Rick Patrick is pastor.

▸ **Chuck Oliver** is the new pastor of **Hepzibah Baptist Church, Talladega.** He previously served as pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Fayette; education/children's minister of Centreville Baptist Church; youth minister of Brent Baptist Church, Bellview Baptist Church, McCalla, and First Baptist Church Remlap. Oliver holds a bachelor of arts degree in counseling and guidance from the University of Montevallo and a master of divinity from Samford's Beeson Divinity School. He and his wife, Tricia, have two children.

DEKALB ASSOCIATION

▸ **Minvale Baptist Church, Fort Payne,** will host Bro Billy Bob Bohannon (aka Bill King), for an evening of stories

Submitted photo

and songs Sunday, July 7, 6 p.m. Free admission. John Keefe is pastor.

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Jake Walker** is the new pastor of **Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic.** He previously served as youth pastor at Centerpoint Fellowship Church, Wetumpka; assistant pastor at Antioch Baptist Church, Weoka; and family pastor at Crestview Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Photo courtesy of Jake Walker

Walker holds a bachelor of arts degree in Christian education from Huntingdon College, Montgomery, and a master of arts degree in pastoral ministry from New Orleans Seminary. Walker and his wife, Keeley, have two sons.

▸ **Liberty Baptist Church, Tallassee,** celebrated its centennial anniversary May 5 with a special presentation at 10 a.m. preceding the worship service.

Photo by Mark Wakefield

Key events from the church's history were shared along with a slideshow of church photos depicting the past 100 years. Ralph Foster (right), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to pastor Lance Houlton (left). Mark Wakefield of the State Board of Missions and Ray McKenzie, director of missions for Elmore Association, also shared during the service.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Chris Sanchez** is the new executive pastor of **Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile.** He previously served as an education and evangelism pastor, administrative pastor, executive pastor and director of operations at several churches in Georgia. He also served in lay ministry in a variety of roles. Sanchez is currently an adjunct professor of business in the online school for Truett McConnell University, Cleveland, Georgia.

Photo courtesy of Chris Sanchez

He holds a doctor of philosophy in educational leadership and a master of theology in practical theology from Southern Seminary; a master of accountancy (in process) from Shorter University, Rome, Georgia; a master of religious education from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia; a master of business administration in finance from Keller Graduate School of Management, Atlanta; and a bachelor of science in management from National Louis University now based in Chicago. Sanchez served on the 2024 SBC committee on resolutions and has served in a variety of associational and state convention-level leadership roles in Georgia. He also was a leader in the Georgia Baptist Disciple-Makers Network. Sanchez and his wife, Melisa, have two adult children. Lee Merck is pastor.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

▸ **Fourmile Baptist Church, Wilsonville,** celebrated its bicentennial anniversary and homecoming May 4. Originally known as Bethesda Baptist Church, it is the charter member church of Shelby Baptist Association. In 1852, delegates gathered at this church to constitute the association.

Ric Camp, current lead mission strategist of the association, and Hugh Richardson, a former lead mission strategist, shared in the celebration. Mike Jackson, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was the guest speaker.

Photo by Amy Chambers

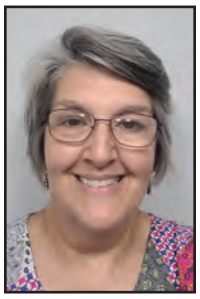
Guest pianist was Janet Parson. Special music was provided by the adult choir and a duet by Harold Roper, music minister, and Renee Wilder. Sarah Walters (left), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque commemorating this historical event to Roger Chambers (right), the pastor. Another highlight of the service was the opening of a time capsule dating back to the 175th church anniversary.

WINSTON ASSOCIATION

▸ **Robert "Bob" Cooper** is the new interim associational missions strategist for **Winston Baptist Association.** He previously served First Baptist Church Arley as well as churches in California, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado and Florida. He has served in Disaster Relief ministry since 2013 and currently is a chaplain instructor for the State Board of Missions. A retired lieutenant colonel in U.S. Air Force, Cooper holds a bachelor of science degree from the Air Force Academy; a master of business administration in aviation management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University; March Air Reserve Base, California; and a variety of other military studies and DR and chaplaincy training. Cooper and his wife, Cathy, have two children and eight grandchildren.

COOPER

▸ **Dawn Tucker** is the new ministry assistant and financial secretary for **Winston Baptist Association.** Tucker served as part-time financial secretary for the past three years and has almost 30 years of experience at the Winston County revenue office in Double Springs. She has two children and one grandchild. Robert Cooper is the interim associational missions strategist.


TUCKER

Coker celebrates 50 years at SBOM

When Mondene Coker was trying to get a job after business school, people kept turning her down, saying, "You're 19 — you're young, you'll leave."

They were wrong.

Once her Sunday School teacher — a switchboard operator at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — put in a good word for Coker and she got a job there, she never left.

COKER

She recently celebrated her 50th anniversary at the SBOM.

Coker said it's just been day after day of "doing what you're supposed to be doing, doing what you're assigned and seeing that through."

Over time, that added up to a half century. She's served in a variety of different roles, from the then-church training office to helping with Royal Ambassadors and men's ministry.

"It's been good people to work with and work for, and I've enjoyed what I get to do for the people who are involved in our ministries," said Coker, who currently serves as the ministry assistant for Disaster Relief in the office of global missions.

Scotty Goldman, director of that office, said she's a "walking encyclopedia" and the resident historian of the SBOM.

"Anytime we want to know about who did this or who was responsible for this, she's just a walking history book," he said. "She's forgotten more about Disaster Relief than I'll ever know."

Goldman said Coker is "one of the hardest workers."

"She is always committed to working, and she's got a routine and she's on task and gets it done," he said. "She never acts like she's behind; she's always just steady. She's like the hub of the office, the center of everything." (Grace Thornton)

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY KRISTI ENT AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL

ALABAMA BAPTISTS AT SBC

Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist

Above: Alabama DR's Mark Wakefield (left) spends time with a long list of Alabama Baptists visiting the SBOM booth, such as Spencer Bell, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Hartselle (shown above). **Above right:** Dewayne Rembert (left) of Flatline Church at Chisholm snags a hug from his friend Teman Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery.

Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist

Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

Rick Lance (right), executive director of SBOM, connects with John Thomas, mission strategist for Southeast Alabama Baptist Association, and his wife, Cindy.

Right: Sandy Wisdom-Martin (left), executive director of national WMU, chats with FBC Montgomery pastor Mark Bethea and his wife, Brittany.

Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Allen Singley, pastor of Pilgrim Home Baptist Church in Wicksburg, and his family explore the meeting halls at the Indiana Convention Center.

Photo by Doug Rogers/SBOM

Connor Francis (right) and Jaylyn Massinelli, UAH BCM students, assist messengers and guests attending the SBC by serving at the information desk.

Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist

Daniel Edmonds (left) of the State Board of Missions catches up with Jennifer Foster of Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery at the Samford University booth in the exhibit hall.

Photo by TrenPam Communications/The Baptist Paper

Jay and Rhiannon Clark of the University of Mobile visit with guests at the university's booth in the exhibit hall at the SBC in Indianapolis.

Photo by Doug Rogers/SBOM

Left: University of Mobile president Charles W. Smith Jr. (left) speaks with SBOM's Rob Jackson at the university's booth.

Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

Former Alabama pastor Dennis Culbreth and his wife, Marybeth, stop by the TAB Media booth in the exhibit hall at the SBC in Indianapolis. Culbreath is now the director of missions for Hamilton County Baptist Association, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Daven Watkins (right), pastor of FBC Pelham, enjoys a conversation with Derek Allen, pastor of FBC Tillman's Corner, and his wife, Lindsay, at the UM booth.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Above: Alabama DOMs Steve Loggins (left, North Jefferson) and Justin Olvey (West Cullman) meet up in the exhibit hall. **Below:** Steve Dunn, associational missionary for Bethlehem and Pine Barren associations, and his wife, Deborah, participate in the associational leaders national conference in Indianapolis.

Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

Photo by Doug Rogers/SBOM

Cody Clark (backwards hat), lead pastor of Living Faith Church Irvington in Indianapolis, talks with Scotty Goldman as collegiate volunteers from Georgia unload the furniture that would be donated at the conclusion of the annual meeting.

Alabama Baptists share booth furniture with Indy church plant

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Cody Clark said the new couch, chairs, end tables and coffee table that are headed to his church's lobby soon will be a "massive" help for him and his church.

"As a church plant in the inner city, we have a little bit of a different model. About 70% of our church lives below the poverty line," said Clark, lead pastor of Living Faith Church Irvington in Indianapolis. "Without partnerships — both one-off gifts and ongoing partners — we wouldn't be able to do ministry to the level that God has called us to do."

Seating space

The new furniture will offer some seating space for conversations and counseling in the lobby of the 100-year-old building they're renovating.

Clark said the gift came his way because of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' booth at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting at the conference center just down the street.

Doug Rogers, director of the SBOM office of communications and technology services, said the idea started back in 2019 when the SBC annual meeting was in Birmingham. During the meeting, Kathie Chute, who at the time served as communications director at California Baptist University, asked him if he knew of a church plant in Alabama that could use the furniture from their booth.

Economical and beneficial

"She said typically because of cost of shipping and renting, they design their exhibit where they can find a local ministry or church plant and work with them to buy furniture and then give it away after the SBC meeting," Rogers said. "She said it's just as economical plus has a benefit afterward."

He didn't forget that, and this year as he made plans for the SBOM booth, he realized they too could do better investing in an Indianapolis-area church plant than renting or shipping furniture.

Scotty Goldman, director of the SBOM office of global missions, said he felt the same way when he saw the prices.

"There's no need for us to pay $500 to rent a chair for three days when we can buy four chairs for that amount of money and leave it for a church plant," he said.

So he reached out to local partners to find a church that could put some furniture to use, then he connected with Clark.

"I told him, 'We'd like to purchase something and give it to you guys — something you can use,'" Goldman said. "We gave them a budget, and they went out and bought something that fit what they needed."

Clark and others at Living Faith then assembled the furniture and delivered it to the convention center for the SBOM to use during the meeting. Afterward, they picked it up and took it back to the church.

Clark said he's so grateful for the gift. As the church plant approaches its second anniversary this fall, Clark and his wife, Talor, are grateful to see all the big and small ways God has been at work in their lives and in the life of the church.

"We're insanely thankful," he said.

A blessing

Rogers said it's a blessing for Alabama Baptists to be a small part of that.

"I don't know if it's common practice or not (to share furniture in this way after the SBC meeting), but it's a neat idea and makes sense," he said. "It's nice to have an option where we could bless a local ministry."

PINEWOOD DERBY

CAR RACES AT SBC

With the Indy24 racing theme of the SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, it only made sense for national WMU to showcase its legendary Royal Ambassadors pinewood derby races at its booth in the exhibit hall.

Photo by Pam Henderson/The Alabama Baptist

Photo by Pam Henderson/The Alabama Baptist

Above: Denise Clymer, president of New Mexico WMU, displays her winning car and trophy for the WMU leaders pinewood derby race at the SBC Exhibit Hall in Indianapolis. Her car had a winning time of 2.5156 seconds.

Photo by Ben Jones/Illinois Baptist State Association

Photo by Pam Henderson/The Alabama Baptist

Photo by Pam Henderson/The Alabama Baptist

Photo by Ben Jones/Illinois Baptist State Association

Photo by Ben Jones/Illinois Baptist State Association

Above: Xander Tallman of FBC Patoka in Illinois was among a sea of kids joining the adults in the races.

Photo by Doug Rogers/State Board of Missions

Alabama WMU's Candace McIntosh (left) and Shirley Smith celebrate Shirley's second place finish in the state WMU presidents' race.

Photo by Pam Henderson/The Alabama Baptist

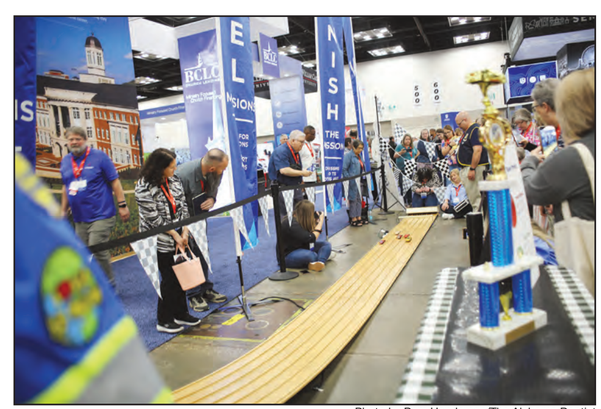


Photo by Pam Henderson/The Alabama Baptist

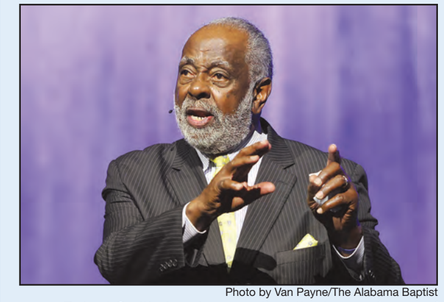


Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

Robert Smith Jr., who recently retired as professor of preaching at Beeson Divinity School, preached on "Faithful to the Nations" during the Monday afternoon session of the SBC Pastors Conference on June 10 in Indianapolis.

Smith challenges pastors to be faithful to the nations

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Robert Smith Jr. said the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is a "miniaturized fulfillment of the Great Commission" and a picture of Acts 1:8.

Preaching to the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference on June 10, Smith said God scatters them not with prosperity theology but with adversity theology. Persecution begins, and that drives them to move away from Jerusalem.

"God is saying to us (through this text), it's time to minister from the neighborhood to the nations, to move beyond Jerusalem to the nations," said Smith, who recently retired as professor of preaching at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University.

'Agents for Christ'

"When God scatters us, we are to scatter the Word of God wherever we are because we are undercover agents for Christ himself," Smith noted.

"Philip has done well; the Church has grown," said Smith, sharing the story from Acts 8:26–40. "Then God sends an angel to say to Philip, 'Go to the Gaza road.' "

What happens there is the same as what has happened so far on roads throughout Acts — people experience learning, burning and yearning. The men who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus felt it, then Saul did on the road to Damascus.

Learning, yearning

"Here on this Gaza road, there is learning," Smith said, referring to when Philip explains the passage to the eunuch and shares how it points to Christ. From there, the Ethiopian eunuch feels a burning to be baptized, and afterward he has a yearning to celebrate and take the gospel back home with him.

"When he came out of that water, he rejoiced and went on his way home," Smith said.

He asked pastors present at the conference if they too would be obedient when God calls them to preach to the one rather than to the masses.

"Can you be faithful with the one?" he asked.

TO SEE A GALLERY OF PHOTOS FROM THE SBC ANNUAL MEETING IN INDIANAPOLIS, VISIT TABONLINE.ORG/2024-SBC-PHOTOS.

Support your students, staff during camp week

Your group will be off to camp soon, and your support is vital. When students and adults feel supported, their experience will be even better. Here are some ways you as a church leader can undergird their experience and be seen as an enthusiastic supporter.

1. Be present.

Attend if you can, even if it's for a short time. It may be for just a day.

If you cannot make it, be present for the send-off to commission them and pray over them. Also, consider joining a church group meeting time via Zoom or FaceTime to let students connect with you.

2. Pray for them.

Pray for students and adults by name. Start this before they leave for camp but especially while they're at camp. Pray specifically for those who need to come to salvation in Christ or who are dealing with hard situations. Pray over your leaders for wisdom, discernment, words to say, rest and health.

Specific prayers

Pray for students and adults by name. ... Pray specifically for those who need to come to salvation in Christ or who are dealing with hard situations.

3. Send encouragement.

Write a personal note of encouragement to each student and adult attending and give it to them before they leave.

This step will speak volumes to your students and show them you really care. It may take time, but it will pay huge dividends.

4. Study along with them.

Follow along with the daily themes and study.

By doing this, you will know what your students are studying and hearing at camp, and you will know better how to pray for them. You'll also be able to connect with them once they're home about the things they learned and hold them accountable.

Photo courtesy of Thomas Garner

5. Support your student minister and adults.

Check in with your student minister and adults to see how the week is going. Text them encouragement each morning. Send them a treat. Camp is demanding and can be exhausting for adults. Your support will mean so much.

Vital connections

6. Be available.

Be on call in case a situation arises when your student minister needs you and your guidance.

This could range from a student reporting a situation back home that will need follow-up to behavior issues where help is needed in knowing how to handle it.

7. Invite others in your church to participate.

Ask church volunteers, maybe in the senior adult area, to prepare and send a care package of snacks, fun items and encouraging notes to camp to be given out mid-session.

Camp is designed to be a life-changing experience where students are away from the normal day-to-day so they can focus on God and their relationship with Him.

This experience is dependent upon congregational support and recognition, and it starts with the senior pastor and extends to the entire church family.

Don't miss this opportunity. Your students and adults will never forget that you were there for them during this significant time in their lives. (Lifeway Research)

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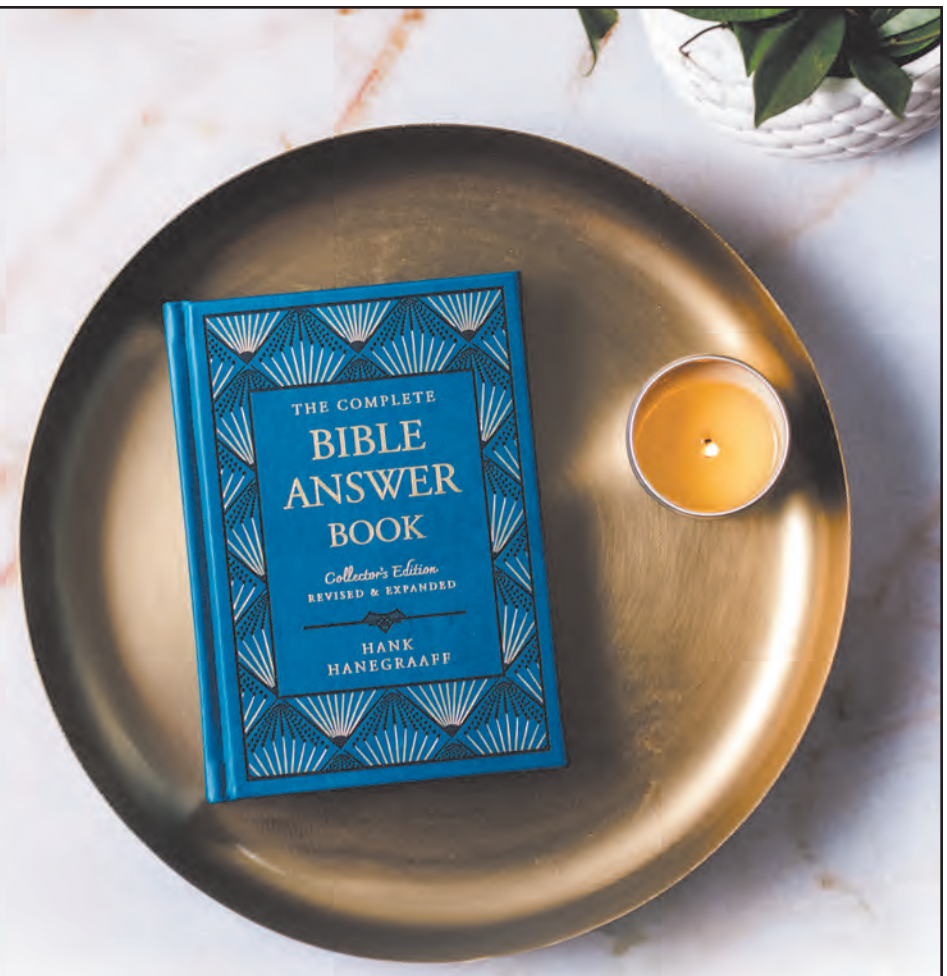

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AVAILABLE WHERE BOOKS ARE SOLD

Photo by Michael J. Brooks/The Alabama Baptist

Rick Fisher (left), vice president of Blackaby Ministries International, is pictured with Rob Pierce of Latta, South Carolina, at The Ways of God seminar.

PASSIONATE

The Blackaby legacy continues in new generation through seminars and variety of products

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Rick Fisher met Henry Blackaby in 2006, and the "Experiencing God" author became a friend and mentor.

"Henry had amazing insight," Fisher shared recently with The Alabama Baptist.

"He looked at Scripture with fresh eyes and showed me things I'd not seen before in cursory reading. And he had passion for God's Word and wanted others to share his passion too. He was never mean-spirited but spoke the truth of God as he understood it."

Fisher has been vice president of Blackaby Ministries International since 2012 after serving 18 years as a local church pastor. As part of his role, he assists and travels with Henry's son, Richard, who now leads the Blackaby ministry.

The elder Blackaby died earlier this year at age 88, leaving a legacy that impacted Baptists and members of many other denominations who profited from "Experiencing God."

For more information about Blackaby Ministries International, visit blackaby.org.

However, Fisher said Blackaby was not a writer like Richard.

"Henry taught these principles everywhere he spoke," Fisher noted. "Lifeway [Christian Resources] enlisted Claude King to follow Henry and commit his teaching to print. Henry reviewed and edited, and Avery Willis of Lifeway was instrumental in getting videos of Henry's teaching recorded. Over the past 30-plus years, this material has circled the globe."

Fisher said the workbook, published by Lifeway in 1990, was revised in 2007 and 2022, and Henry's grandsons Daniel and Mike wrote a new youth edition of "Experiencing God" in 2022.

But Fisher said the most often-heard comment from those who met Henry Blackaby was not about his teaching but his personal interest in them.

Taking time to listen

"Many have shared that they gained more from 10 or 15 minutes of conversation when Henry would look them in the eye, listen to them and pray for them," Fisher said. "Henry often said, 'The last person in line might be a divine appointment.' "

Fisher said Richard Blackaby also makes time for people, and the Blackaby team has produced a number of Bible study products including "The Blackaby Study Bible" in the Christian Standard Bible translation and "The Encountering God Study Bible" in the New King James version.

The ministry also sponsors a podcast, "Richard Blackaby on Leadership," and a younger-themed YouTube channel, "The Collision," that deals with apologetics and culture.

Henry's grandson Daniel produces The Collision and manages thecollision.org website.

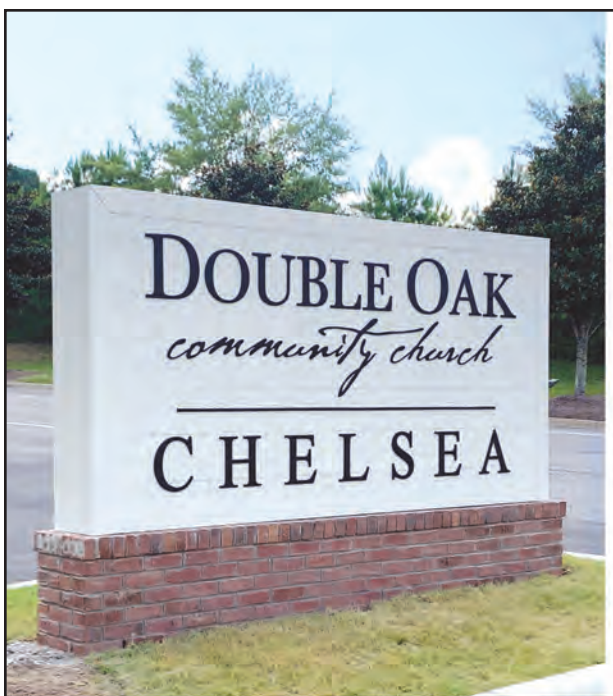
Alabamians elected to SBC boards, committees

One of the ways Alabama Baptists can actively engage with the Southern Baptist Convention is by serving on boards and committees.

The committee on nominations puts forth names for messengers to consider and approve during the SBC Annual Meeting, which was held in Indianapolis this year.

Below is a list of Alabama Baptists who were approved by messengers.

- ***2024–2025 Committee on Committees*** — Jim Graham, Coosada Baptist Church; and Mark Brown, Southside Baptist Church, Fayette.
- ***SBC Executive Committee*** — Dana H. McCain, FBC Dothan; term expires in 2028.
- ***International Mission Board*** — Donna L. Garner, Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence; term expires in 2028.
- ***Lifeway Christian Resources*** — Michael C. Gentry, FBC Decatur; term expires in 2028.
- ***Gateway Seminary*** — Daniel Atkins, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery; term expires in 2029. (The Alabama Baptist)



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Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Bishop and chaplain Hugh Latimer died a martyr

Hugh Latimer was Bishop of Worcester during the Reformation and Church of England chaplain under Protestant King Edward VI. Under Queen Mary, he died a martyr.

He was born into a family of farmers in Thurcaston, Leicestershire. The exact year of his birth is unknown. Contemporary biographers placed his birth somewhere between 1480 and 1494. Although little exists about his childhood, Latimer once recalled that he studied Latin grammar at the age of four. He attended the University of Cambridge beginning at the age of 14. He received both his B.A. degree and his M.A. degree at Cambridge.

LATIMER

After being ordained as a priest in 1515, he served as a university preacher and chaplain. He received his Divinity degree in 1524. He described himself as "obstinate a papist as any was in England."

In 1525 he heard Protestant Thomas Bilney speak. His words had a great impact on Latimer, and he experienced a conversion and accepted the Reformed doctrines. He joined a group of reformers and soon became a leading preacher, often giving sermons at St. Edward's Church at Cambridge.

Under King Henry VIII, Latimer was appointed Bishop of Worcester in 1535 and promoted reformed teachings. In 1539 he opposed Henry VIII's Six Articles which included the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, celibacy of priests and private masses. He was forced to resign as bishop and was imprisoned in the Tower of London two different times for his beliefs.

When Protestant Edward VI ascended as king in 1547, Latimer became his chaplain. He was a favorite preacher, who instead of speaking little of doctrine, emphasized the reading of Scripture, devoutness in prayer and upright living. He is believed to be the author of "A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading of Holy Scripture."

Charges of treason

After Edward VI died in 1553, his sister, Catholic Mary Tudor, became queen. She arrested Latimer on charges of treason. He was taken to the Tower of London until his trial the next year. When he refused to recant his views on Protestant doctrines, he was found guilty and sent back to the Tower.

On Oct. 16, 1555, Latimer and another Protestant reformer, Nicholas Ridley, were burned at the stake outside Balliol College, Oxford. Before his death, Latimer cried out to his companion, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out!"

By Joanne Sloan

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

Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Caring enough to stop

Sharon and I were enjoying a few days on the beautiful shores of Orange Beach. We spent hours sitting under our umbrella, peacefully watching the waves roll in. Eventually, we decided to take a stroll down the coastline.

The foamy surf flowed up and caressed our feet as we walked along a path of seashells, seaweed and small marine life left on the damp sand. We passed sunbathers of all shapes and sizes along the way, but one in particular drew our attention.

It was a young man, maybe in his 20s, lying on his stomach a few feet from the water. What made him unusual was that there was no towel or blanket underneath him. His sunglasses were lying on the sand about five feet away from his head. One of his arms was pinned under his body. His face was beet red and turned sideways. His eyes were closed, and he didn't move.

He didn't look like your average sunbather. He looked like someone who had collapsed and fallen.

'Just keep walking'

Several other shore-walkers walked right past him, either uninterested or unwilling to get involved. I confess: I was of like mind. "Just keep walking and mind your own business."

Sharon, the kinder and more caring member of this marriage, insisted on stopping to check if the man was all right.

"Just let him be," I said. "What if he's hurt?" she countered.

"What if he's had some sort of heart attack or stroke? Somebody's got to care enough to find out."

'Why me?'

But why me? Why not some other bold beach-walker? I'm not the hero type. Finally, at her persistent urging, I cautiously approached the man.

"Are you OK, sir?"

Nothing.

"Sir, are you OK?"

Suddenly, his eyes popped open and he sprang up on his forearms, scaring the lights out of us. After staring blankly a few seconds, regaining his senses, he gave us a groggy, "Yes, I'm fine." Then his face brightened, and he added, "But I really appreciate you checking on me."

Upon which he promptly plopped back down into the sand to resume his uncomfortable nap. I walked away thankful to have a godly wife who models the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." You never know when an opportunity for ministry will wash up at your feet. Don't bury your faith in the sand!

MEET THE AUTHOR

Ken Lass is a retired Birmingham television news and sports anchor, and an award-winning columnist for numerous publications and websites.

AGING WELL

Time — 'a precious gift from God'

Focus on the Family's Lisa Anderson offers hope, encouragement for caregivers

By Leann Callaway
The Alabama Baptist

Best known for her role as a spokesperson for Focus on the Family and her work with their Boundless publications and podcasts for young adults, Lisa Anderson is accustomed to taking on a variety of challenging assignments with deadlines and late nights.

However, when she took on the unexpected role of being a caregiver for her mom, Dorothy, battling dementia in the last three years of her life, Anderson admits it was the hardest — yet most rewarding — role of her life.

Walking through this emotional journey, Anderson never anticipated how the Lord was writing a story of hope and inspiration amid some very dark days.

Today, as Anderson reflects on her role as a caregiver, she clearly sees how the Lord's faithfulness and His grace was on display — allowing her to spend quality time with her mom and reminding her about the sanctity of life.

Photo by freepik

Have conversations early

With June being Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, Anderson shares her own experiences with others and offers insightful tips, practical resources, encouragement and support to those stepping into the role of caregivers for loved ones — as more than 55 million people worldwide suffer from Alzheimer's, which is reportedly the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month.

"It's so important for families to have conversations early on before something happens and be sure to state wishes such as financial and medical power of attorney," Anderson explained. "Those conversations will set you up for success instead of scrambling when an emergency happens. Talk with your siblings about how they can help with paperwork in advance, that way no one's emotions are coming into play."

Most importantly, Anderson emphasizes and urges that caregivers should not attempt this journey alone physically or spiritually.

"Think through practically what needs to be done, and make sure the spiritual side is prayed up because this journey will test your patience but provide spiritual fruit in the long run," Anderson noted. "God is faithful even in long suffering. This role of being a caregiver is one-directional, but remember, it is only a season.

"I learned that every city has some sort of center for the aging, a local resource program that provides training, respite and a kindred spirit and a network of people available to assist."

For those who are walking through similar journeys or are considering taking on this role for aging parents, Anderson reminds them that time is a precious gift from God and not to be taken for granted.

ANDERSON

"I came about caregiving when I was single and working full-time," Anderson explained. "I was praying about moving in with my mom and what that would look like. I was sharing with my Bible study group, and a friend offered to help. She quit her job and became Mom's daytime caregiver, and I took on the night shift. We were like the Christian Golden Girls — two single women living with my mom who was a widow.

"The caregiving role was much harder than I thought it would be, and I learned that you really have to walk it out and experience trial and error. It was such a role reversal of the parental role for me, but the journey of caring for my mom and drawing near the Lord during this time was a huge spiritual boost for me.

"As I adjusted to my mom's schedule, it was such a gift to lean into the Psalms looking at God as a source of comfort and provider and relatable when David was pouring out complaints to Him. It was a blessing and a gift to know the only person who only truly understood what I was going through was Jesus and made me completely rely on Him for strength."

Valuable insights

For those wanting to offer support for caregivers, Anderson also offers practical tips and advice.

"Some of the most valuable ways that people provided support was offering to provide a night out," she said. "At first, they thought they would need to be trained medically in how to provide care, but I told them that if they could just sit with my mom, talk with her and smile at her, it would provide a safe space for her. That was one of the biggest helps. Also, when someone would unexpectedly provide a gift card or dinner, that was such a blessing. Another time people offered to clean the house, no questions asked, just offering their services — that was an incredible way to help."

Anderson notes that Focus on the Family offers resources on caring for aging loved ones that are gospel-centered. She also gained valuable insights from reading "The 36-Hour Day" from Johns Hopkins University, which Anderson notes "is a secular book but provides an honest and attainable look to help people understand brain damage."

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

One-day event for teen guys

The world can be tough on teen guys. But they can find help at Fortify, a one-day event aimed at shoring up their faith.

Fortify, set for Aug. 24 at Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster, seeks to strengthen guys in 7th–12th grades with hard-hitting biblical teaching. The goal is to reveal their Christ-centered identity in response to the confusing messages of today's culture.

The speaker will be Andy Blanks, who has served in youth ministry for nearly 20 years and wrote the book "How to Be a Man."

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

The cost for Fortify is $20.

For more information or to register, visit alabamamen.org/fortify.

Empowering Church Revitalization: Aug. 13

Could your church use a boost? Join us for Empowering Church Revitalization on Aug. 13, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in Prattville.

Mark Clifton, a revitalization specialist at NAMB, draws from his rich experience as a pastor to impart invaluable, hands-on wisdom and proven strategies for breathing new life into any church.

Ray Jones from Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Dothan will be sharing along with Clifton. Jones is a proven leader with excellent experience in leadership, evangelism and church revitalization.

The cost is $10, which includes lunch. To register, visit evangelizeal.org/events.

Two Speak Tour dates

Want to build up the students in your church and reach their friends with the gospel? Plan to bring them all to Speak Tour.

Speak Tour will have fun outdoor games and worship.

Upcoming dates and locations are:

- Aug. 11 at Forest Lake Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa.
- Sept. 25 at Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Ozark.

Admission is free, and no preregistration is required.

For more information, visit ymlink.org/speaktour.

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For more information, call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.
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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR
FBC Shawmut, Valley, Alabama, seeking traditional pastor. Sunday and Wednesday services. Centrally located between Auburn, Alabama, LaGrange and Columbus, Georgia. Submit resumé to: sfbc.psc@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR
Northside Baptist Church, Selma, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: Northsidebaptist2021@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR
Fairview Baptist in Samson, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please email resumés to: fairviewbaptist.samson.al@outlook.com or via USPS to: 3159 N State Highway 87, Samson, AL 36477.

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

ASSOCIATE PASTOR
Community Baptist Ardmore, Alabama, seeking associate pastor. Link to upload resumé: http://cbcardmore.org/staffsearch.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR MUSIC MINISTRY
FBC of West Memphis, Arkansas, is actively seeking a candidate to fill the position of associate pastor for music ministry. We are seeking a theologically sound, competent musician, who will use his talents to serve our multi-generational congregation and culturally diverse community. Please submit resumés to: firstbaptistwmsearch@gmail.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC
First Baptist Church, Rogersville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music for blended services, directing choir, congregation and coordinating volunteer musicians. Request all interested candidates submit resumés to: tiedeinal@aol.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER/DIRECTOR OF MUSIC
New Market Baptist Church, NE, Madison County, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational worship leader/director of music. Request all interested candidates submit resumés to: newmarketbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER
Riddles Bend Baptist Church is located in Rainbow City, Etowah County, Alabama. We are praying for God's choice for a bivocational music minister. Please forward resumé to: Anita Bedwell, Bedwell3@aol.com, 256-312-3470.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER/CHOIR DIRECTOR
East Gadsden Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational worship leader/choir director. If interested, please email at eastgadsdenbaptist@gmail.com.

PASTOR OF STUDENTS AND EDUCATION
Pine Grove Baptist Church is seeking applicants for the position of pastor of students and education. This is a full-time position. Experience in this position is preferred but not required. Applicants should be enrolled in or have completed a program of higher theological education. Please send resumés to: dgreen@pinegrovebc.org. Applicants may contact the church office during normal business hours at 256-927-3214 for more information. Timeframe: June 1–July 31.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS
Bethlehem Baptist Church, Lacey's Spring. This position would have oversight and responsibility from K–12th grade students. Send resumés or request more information by email to: BethlehemLacey@gmail.com.

SIGNS

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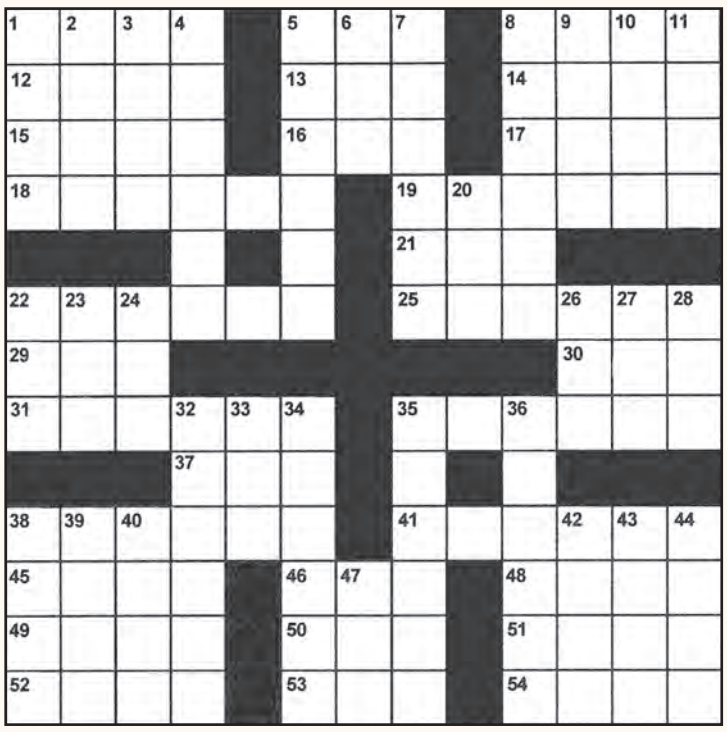
UNFORSAKEN MINISTRIES
Unforsaken Ministries walks alongside those in active addiction and their loved ones. Our mission is to offer hope. This is accomplished by guiding those in addiction and their loved ones through the recovery process. For more information, call 205-246-2030 or email glenn@unforsakenministry.org.

PENNPOINT COUNSELING
Dr. Romeo Penn is a licensed clinical pastoral counselor/therapist serving those in need of premarriage, marriage and relationship counseling, as well as those struggling with grief, depression, anxiety, fear and anger. Visit pennpointcounseling.com.

CHRISTIAN crossword



By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

ACROSS

1. God is ____ to graft them in again. (Rom. 11:23)
5. Arrest.
8. A light that shineth in a ____ place. (2 Pet. 1:19)
12. First king of Israel.
13. The self.
14. Great lake.
15. The sons of Appaim; ____. (1 Chron. 2:31)
16. Cat's hand.
17. Aromatic spice.
18. And ____, Hanan, Anan. (Neh. 10:26)
19. Tooth covering.
21. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of ____ tiles. (Gen. 25:34)
22. Let him ____ evil. (1 Pet. 3:11)
25. Become downcast.
29. Like the roaring of the ____. (Isa. 5:30)
30. "Much ____ About Nothing."
31. Better ... a man who controls his ____ than one who takes a city. (Prov. 16:32)
35. And I will give you ____s according to mine heart. (Jer. 3:15)
37. As the loving hind and the pleasant ____. (Prov. 5:19)
38. That we may ____ mercy, and find grace. (Heb. 4:16)
41. But I say unto you that ye ____ not evil. (Matt. 5:39)
45. ____ without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17)
46. Belonging to the King of Bashan. (Num. 21:33)
48. ____ was ___ son of Gad. (Gen. 46:16)
49. Ireland.
50. Court, pursue.
51. Military standing.
52. Thou art ____, O Lord. (Ps. 119:151)
53. Negative prefix.
54. Angel. (French)

DOWN

1. Continent.
2. Strike with a heavy blow.
3. For by the mounting up of ____th with weeping. (Isa. 15:5)
4. Tishbite prophet. (1 Kings 17:1)
5. Relation of Lot to Abraham.
6. Turkish ruler.
7. Put on ... ____ of mercies. (Col. 3:12)
8. For I will ____ of thee. (Job 38:3)
9. Esrom begat ____. (Matt. 1:3)
10. Chinese staple.
11. Main stem of a ship.
20. Teacher's organization.
22. Superlative ending.
23. We shall ____ him as he is. (1 John 3:2)
24. Machine part.
26. Dative. (abbr.)
27. Former name of Tokyo.
28. The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, ____ sinners in the congregation. (Ps. 1:5)
32. And the ____ of faith shall save the sick. (James 5:15)
33. Not "a" or "u."
34. Fame.
35. Who being ... the express image of his ____. (Heb. 1:3)
36. ____ fled away ... to the tent of Jael. (Judg. 4:17)
38. Put him to an ____ shame. (Heb. 6:6)
39. Type of cheese.
40. Fictional plantation.
42. Neighbor of Iraq.
43. Is any merry? Let him ____ psalms. (James 5:13)
44. Arise, and ____ up thy bed and walk. (Mark 2:9)
47. Sticky substance.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Church finances, preparing for retirement workshops

Throughout July and August, there are seven opportunities to attend the Church Financial Issues Check-Up and the Preparing for Retirement workshop at locations around the state. You also can attend both in the same day.

The Church Financial Issues Check-Up will be held at each location from 9 a.m.–12 p.m. and cover new tax and retirement legislation affecting the Church, policies about designated giving and other financial policies needed and how a church could get in trouble with the IRS including fundraising activities.

The Preparing for Retirement workshop will be held from 1–3:30 p.m. It's primarily for those ministers and employees in their 50s and 60s to begin to consider topics such as retirement income, Social Security income and Medicare basics.

Attend one or both at these locations:

- July 18 — State Board of Missions in Prattville.
- July 25 — Calvary Baptist Church in Scottsboro.
- Aug. 1 — Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.
- Aug. 6 — Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association.
- Aug. 13 — Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association.
- Aug. 15 — Calhoun Baptist Association.
- Aug. 20 — Northport Baptist Church.

To register, visit alsbom.org and search for "church financial issues" or "preparing for retirement."

Next Intentional Leader Series set for July 23

The next Intentional Leader Series, set for July 23, will focus on the Person aspect of the four Ps of leadership: Person, Pastor, Preacher and Pathfinder.

Ken Allen and Rob Jackson along with guest speaker Tim Coleman, pastor of FBC Winfield, will guide you through a transformative journey. During this training, we'll place special emphasis on equipping you to lead not only yourself but also your family and your church with excellence.

The event will be 9 a.m.–2 p.m. at the State Board of Missions in Prattville. The $10 cost includes lunch.

To register, visit alsbom.org/ils.

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

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

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

For June 30

EMBOLDENED
Acts 4:8–21

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God filled with the Spirit of God engaging in the mission of God. As we proclaim the gospel, we should expect to face opposition and persecution. Throughout its history, the Church has had uncounted number of martyrs die with a calmness and serenity that unnerved their tormentors.

Brothers and sisters, we need to be emboldened by the Holy Spirit as we seek to advance the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Truth delivered (8–12)

Here a humble fisherman, unaccustomed to public speaking until just a few days earlier, courageously addressed the highest authorities in the land. Jesus had promised such power and boldness for occasions just like this (Luke 21:14–15).

Christians with courage never have to stand alone when they stand for the Lord. Consistently in Acts, believers "filled with the Holy Spirit" shared the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter's message had not changed. He was not proclaiming a message about the Church or a new therapeutic technique to improve one's life. Peter was proclaiming salvation "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Luke used this phrase 33 times in Acts.

As we engage in the mission of God, we must be clear about what God has done in Christ to save sinners. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Stone the builders rejected but that God established as the cornerstone.

There is no other name by which sinners can be saved. Religion doesn't save. Philosophy doesn't save. One's eternal relationship with God doesn't rest in the Sanhedrin or in Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

Silence demanded (13–18)

The religious leaders were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John. These men had no official training from approved rabbis. These two fishermen who were rather rough characters stood before the Sanhedrin without fear and delivered the truth about Jesus with power and authority. Their powerful declaration surprised and angered the members of the Sanhedrin.

While Peter and John had not attended rabbinical schools, they had traveled with Jesus for over three years and experienced the best seminary training the world has ever seen. When they talked, they were so much like Jesus that the presence of Christ right then and there could not be denied.

The miracle also frustrated the Sanhedrin. They had no way of denying the miracle performed in the name of Jesus Christ while the healed man was standing with the apostles. His testimony was irrefutable. After conferring with themselves and admitting that an obvious sign had been performed that they could not deny, the Sanhedrin ordered the apostles "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

Testimony given (19–21)

The apostles responded by declaring that they could not obey the command to keep silent about Jesus. This passage raises the question of civil disobedience. What should Christians do when a government's laws contradict God's laws?

We learn from this passage and others that there are times and circumstances when Christians must disobey their government (Dan. 3, Dan. 6, Acts 5:29).

And because they obeyed God rather than men, they were used by God in launching a movement that has extended throughout the world and continues to this day.

May God fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we will boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

For July 7

ACCOUNTABLE
Acts 4:36–5:11

The growth of the early Church was incredible. A small group of unqualified people with no money, no power and no influence turned the world upside down and changed the course of history. These believers were completely devoted to the message of the gospel, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, which resulted in bold proclamation and sacrificial service. We will learn that God holds believers accountable for their motives in service.

Exhibit A: Barnabas (4:36–37)

Many of the new believers lost their jobs and were disowned by their families because of their new life in Christ. Motivated by their love for one another, they sold houses, land and other possessions to provide for the extreme needs in their community. The gospel had loosened their grip on their stuff and tightened their grip on each other. This sacrificial giving was not mandated by man's law; it was motivated by God's love.

Joseph is better known by his nickname Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." He was descended from the tribe of Levi, a son of Jacob. In the Old Testament, the Levites helped with the physical needs of the tabernacle and later at the temple. In the New Testament, they took turns serving in the temple.

Barnabas was born on Cyprus and migrated to Jerusalem. It's interesting that he owned land. Originally, the Levites were not allowed to own land because the Lord was their inheritance (Deut. 10:9). With the passing of time, this restriction was rescinded.

Barnabas "sold a field he owned" and gave the money from the sale of his field to the apostles to be used to meet the needs of hurting believers. These verses show us a Christian view of possessions that centers not on ownership but on stewardship, not in creed but in need and not in fad but in family.

Exhibit B: Ananias (5:1–6)

Luke introduced Ananias and Sapphira into the narrative to demonstrate the importance of our motives. Barnabas had sold his field and brought the money to the apostles because of his concern for his brothers and sisters. But Ananias, with his wife's knowledge, did not give all of the profit from the sale to the apostles.

Barnabas was filled with the Spirit and gave his money away to bless people. Ananias and Sapphira were filled with the love of money and the praise of people, so they lied about their level of generosity.

We're either filled with the Spirit, which leads to satisfaction and joy, or Satan is filling our hearts with the love of money and the praise of people, which leads to dissatisfaction, jealousy and lies.

Peter confronted Ananias about lying to the Holy Spirit and withholding some of the profit from the apostles. After hearing Peter's challenge, Ananias died suddenly and was taken out and buried. Great fear came on all who heard what God had done.

Exhibit C: Sapphira (7–11)

Three hours after the Lord judged Ananias, Sapphira came in and repeated her husband's lie. Peter pronounced judgment on her and she too died immediately. We learn in this passage that we cannot hide from God. The Lord knows our thoughts and our motives. We also learn that sin is a deadly serious matter to God. If we are offended by God's swift judgment here, we are ignorant of God's holiness, our sinfulness and the seriousness of our sin in relation to His holiness.

"'Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.'"

Acts 5:4

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Bryan D. Gill, D.Min.
Director of the Office of Faith, Learning and Vocation, Samford University

For June 30

PRAYING FOR OUR NATION
2 Chronicles 7:1–3,12–20

The United States has a history of great revivals sweeping the nation. During these times, thousands of people repented and gave their lives to God. Growing up in the deep South, revivals have historically been a big part of the local churches as well. I've preached at countless revivals across Alabama and other parts of the country.

When I was a child, I gave my life to Christ at a tent revival in Arkansas. What God has done before, He can certainly do again in this country. But what if the next great revival is one that starts in your own heart? What if the spark that ignites a fire that sweeps the nation began with you?

God's glory compels us to humble ourselves before God. (1–3)

When the glory of God filled the temple as noted in our passage for today, the people were struck with awe and wonder. Their response wasn't coy or unimpressed. Fire engulfed the offering and filled the temple, and they knelt with faces pressed to the pavement and praised God.

When was the last time you experienced God with awe and wonder? When was the last time you saw something so incredible and all you could do was fall to your knees and praise God? Maybe it was a beautiful sunset or a snow-capped mountain. Maybe it was looking into the eyes of your children or listening as waves crashed on the ocean. John Piper once said, "Nobody goes to the Grand Canyon to increase his self-esteem." The feeling of awe and wonder you get as you look over the edge of this incredible sight is, as Piper says, "what you were made for." True revival will begin in our hearts when we remove the noise and distractions and see the beauty of God's power and majesty around us.

God promises to hear our prayers when we turn to Him. (12–16)

Have you ever thought about what happens when you pray? When we pray, we surrender ourselves to God. We place ourselves in a posture that says, "I need you, God, because I can't do this with my own strength." It is no coincidence that this passage connects humbling themselves and praying in the same sentence.

Prayer requires humility. When we approach God in prayer, we are putting our hearts in a humble posture that then opens us to hear God more clearly.

Praying for our country to experience revival is important, but we should also humble ourselves to pray for our family, our neighbors, our enemies, those who look differently than we do, those with different political views and that God would expose any wrongdoing in our own lives.

God blesses those who faithfully follow Him. (17–20)

Actions have either benefits or consequences. In our passage for today, God told Solomon that obeying Him and walking faithfully with Him would lead to blessings. However, disobedience would lead to consequences.

When I look at our country, I see a lot of evil and disobedience. It's overwhelming to think about and seemingly impossible that people will repent and turn to God. But take heart! Luke 18:27 reminds us, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." What might seem impossible for our country is possible with the power of God. This revival will probably not start with a celebrity or a politician — but it could start with you. As Gypsy Smith once said about revival, "Find a piece of chalk and find an empty room.

"Go into that room and shut the door. Draw a circle on the floor with that chalk, kneel down in that circle, and ask God to start revival right there." God is faithful and will answer your prayer.

For July 7

GOD'S PROMISE OF A KING
2 Samuel 7:8–16

In 1997, Fred Rogers received the Emmy's Lifetime Achievement Award for his impact on the lives of so many children. In his acceptance speech, he said, "So many people have helped me to come to this night ... All of us have special ones who have loved us into being." Then he asked the audience to take 10 seconds to think about those who helped them become who they are. Audience members were in tears as they thought about the many people who prepared the way for them and those who loved them along their journey to stardom.

In every great person's life, there are people behind the scenes working just as hard or harder than the person in the spotlight. In our passage for today, we are reminded that the source of King David's greatness was God.

God is at work in our lives. (8–9)

God had a special appointment for David as King of Israel. In verses 8 and 9, God is reminding David that his past, present and future is in God's hands. God took him from being a shepherd boy and made him king. As king, God removed all of his enemies. And in the future, God would make King David's name great.

We often think highly of King David, and rightfully so. However, the only reason we know anything about David is because of the great work God did through him. David would not have become the king we all know about if it had not been for God preparing the way and equipping David to do great things.

God establishes His people. (10–11)

When God has a plan, He will provide the necessary resources so that the plan will be successful. For the Israelites, they needed a place to call their own and relief from their enemies. God promised that He would give these to David and his kingdom, and He did. God still works in this way today. I've heard countless stories of God providing resources for churches or missionaries who were praying for God's provision.

The benediction in Hebrews 13:20–21 is a prayer that God would "equip you with everything good for doing His will." Even now, God equips His children to accomplish His will. When we realize that God is working out His will in the background, we are able to see His hand more clearly when He provides for His people.

God will place His king over an everlasting kingdom. (12–16)

God promises two things in verses 12–16. The first is that David's offspring would establish a house for God. This is referring to Solomon and the temple he would build. God is promising David that his heir would sit on the throne in the house he would build. Secondly, God is reassuring David that he would not only have an earthly heir, but one who would rule eternally. This eternal king is Jesus, as He was born from the lineage of King David.

We often think of our tasks and our service to God as temporary and earthly in nature. However, God has an eternal mindset and works beyond what we can comprehend. God's will reaches far beyond what we will see with our own eyes, but our work for the Lord is eternal. God is always working in the background of those He calls to do His will. He equips and provides for them, and He sustains their eternal work.

"He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

2 Samuel 7:13

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R	M	R	N	N	Y	R	G	L	S	Y	L	J	L	S
J	A	R	N	A	N	N	A	E	L	L	N	A	S	K
P	R	M	X	T	M	N	O	E	S	K	A	E	N	F
A	B	M	P	I	F	B	W	M	F	I	N	V	A	D
S	A	P	Z	O	K	I	B	M	E	K	M	I	E	R
S	K	H	P	N	A	R	I	P	R	R	T	O	I	S
B	D	N	H	R	A	W	R	A	D	H	E	E	R	P
E	I	M	A	T	P	C	D	L	B	B	H	C	H	P
T	V	S	L	N	P	P	S	L	N	A	A	N	A	C
W	I	A	C	D	I	R	O	T	W	Z	T	N	J	T
E	D	P	V	E	E	O	G	N	L	T	O	F	M	N
E	E	K	C	V	D	S	L	A	P	L	P	H	L	E
N	H	E	R	K	I	S	C	N	Q	M	E	W	F	M
W	S	K	T	K	T	S	C	E	K	N	R	R	J	H
A	N	I	M	A	L	S	I	V	N	K	I	D	M	S
E	Y	Z	R	H	B	G	D	O	Q	D	F	B	T	I
K	F	S	R	P	B	R	M	C	N	V	A	N	J	N
K	D	I	D	E	C	E	P	T	I	O	N	N	K	U
D	B	B	W	P	E	E	L	S	P	E	E	D	T	P
V	H	N	I	N	H	E	R	I	T	A	N	C	E	S
X	H	L	H	C	R	O	T	S	E	U	G	A	L	P
T	P	H	A	R	A	O	H	N	T	F	M	L	K	V

"After these events, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great.'"

GENESIS 15:1

Finding humor in the everyday moments

'Tickled' prayer moment

The Bible tells us there is a time to laugh and that a merry heart is good for us. I believe that truth and act accordingly by laughing a lot. But I must admit that much of my merriment comes from laughing at myself.

Asking the blessing

I am accustomed to speaking and even praying in front of large crowds. It doesn't bother me a bit. But I am just not comfortable with asking the blessing before a meal in a small group. I know that seems crazy, but that's just me.

Recently my husband, Tim, asked me to pray before our meal. It was just Tim, my mother and myself at the table, but it unnerved me. I didn't want to refuse to do it, so I said, "Let's pray."

We all bowed our heads, and I started off the way most people do. "Father, we thank you for this food, and thank you for the hands that prepared it."

That's when I lost it because I was the one that had prepared it. It was my own hands I had just blessed. I got tickled and laughed aloud which threw me off track for the rest of the prayer.

I don't even remember what I said next, but none of us will ever forget the ending!

I said, "In the name of Jesus, BYE-BYE!"

Yes, I really did. I laughed. Tim laughed. My mother laughed, and I believe with all my heart that God in heaven laughed with us.

I am so thankful for the gift of laughter. It really is good medicine.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Debbie Childers is a speaker, humorist and author based in Moody. She finds great humor in the fact that all through her school years, she got in trouble for talking and now she gets invited to do it!

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Woman's ministry emphasizes identity in Christ, power of testimonies

Many women hesitate to tell their stories, feeling that they don't have anything to give. For Laney Rene, a season of loss was the catalyst to inspire her to share her own life with other women.

Laney Rene is the author of the new release "Daughter: Becoming Who You Already Are," and she is founder of The One He Loves ministry. Both the book and the ministry came about to point the way to Jesus and help each woman find her true identity in Him.

The phrase from Revelation 12:11 — "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" — had a major impact on the direction of Laney Rene's ministry.

"It hit me that you put the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony in the same sentence, so they both have incredible power. We build our whole life on the belief and knowing of the richness of the blood of the Lamb, but [often] we disqualify our testimony. I just believe our testimony has so much power with the blood of the Lamb," she said.

During The One He Loves worship nights, participants often share ways that God has impacted their lives. Many have walked through difficult times and can be very broken as a result. However, the women often come back later and talk about how God filled their hearts, and sometimes the women are now leading women's groups where they share their own stories.

LANEY RENE

Photo courtesy of C+C Creative

'What He came to do'

"Women are being healed by their testimonies. Obviously, it's not something I can produce on my own, but (it's a result of) the simple message of who Jesus is and what He came to do," Rene said.

The One He Loves began after a time when Rene felt closer to God than ever before — so much so that she couldn't put it into words.

One day, seeing tears in her eyes, Rene's mother asked what was wrong. She responded, "Nothing is wrong. I'm actually really good. I feel Him so close, and I know it's not just for me, but it's for other people to share what He's doing in my heart."

About a month later, Rene miscarried her baby boy after carrying him for 17 weeks. When she found out he no longer had a heartbeat, it was the "hardest and most shocking news" she had ever experienced.

But in that season, she found out what it truly meant to be a daughter of the King. Tangible love became real. She had shared her pregnancy on social media and decided to also share the loss. Women reached out with similar stories that broke her heart. Many shared that the pain never goes away.

"A big 'No!' rose up in me. No, that's not how we have to live — broken for the rest of our lives. We have a Father, a good Father who, even though we live in a broken world, has truly overcome this world.

"I just had an overwhelming feeling in my spirit that this was something that I needed to encourage other women with — that we have a God who can make us whole and heal our brokenness even though we walk through it," she said.

Though she grew up in a Christian home where she learned she was a daughter of the King, this knowledge didn't become real until her early 20s. Breaking up with her boyfriend after a four-year toxic relationship, she moved to a new city, quit her dream job and felt alone.

One day she asked God, "Who am I?" and remembered a video of herself as a little girl picking up a microphone and saying, "I love Jesus!"

"Seeing myself as a 3-year-old little girl, a daughter, [with nothing] to prove ... God used that moment to completely change my life and how I see myself," she recalled.

In the days following the miscarriage, God again showed Himself as her refuge and confidence.

It reminded her that the one thing each woman needs to hear is that she's a daughter of Christ, which led to writing "Daughter."

Everyone is 'welcome'

"Daughter" was written with both the believer and unbeliever in mind. It's for those who have heard all of the classic Bible stories throughout their lives as well as those who have very little knowledge of the Bible.

Everyone is "welcome on the couch beside her," either to gain a new perspective on Christ's love and how it shapes their identities or to meet the One who can provide that identity, that refuge, that confidence.

"I felt like growing up, I knew that I had eternal life in Jesus, but I didn't really know that identity that He had given me as a daughter. I saw the identity God was giving me in a mirror, more like, 'You're beautiful' — that kind of thing. But I didn't realize that it was an all-encompassing robe of righteousness and that I had His inheritance."

EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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