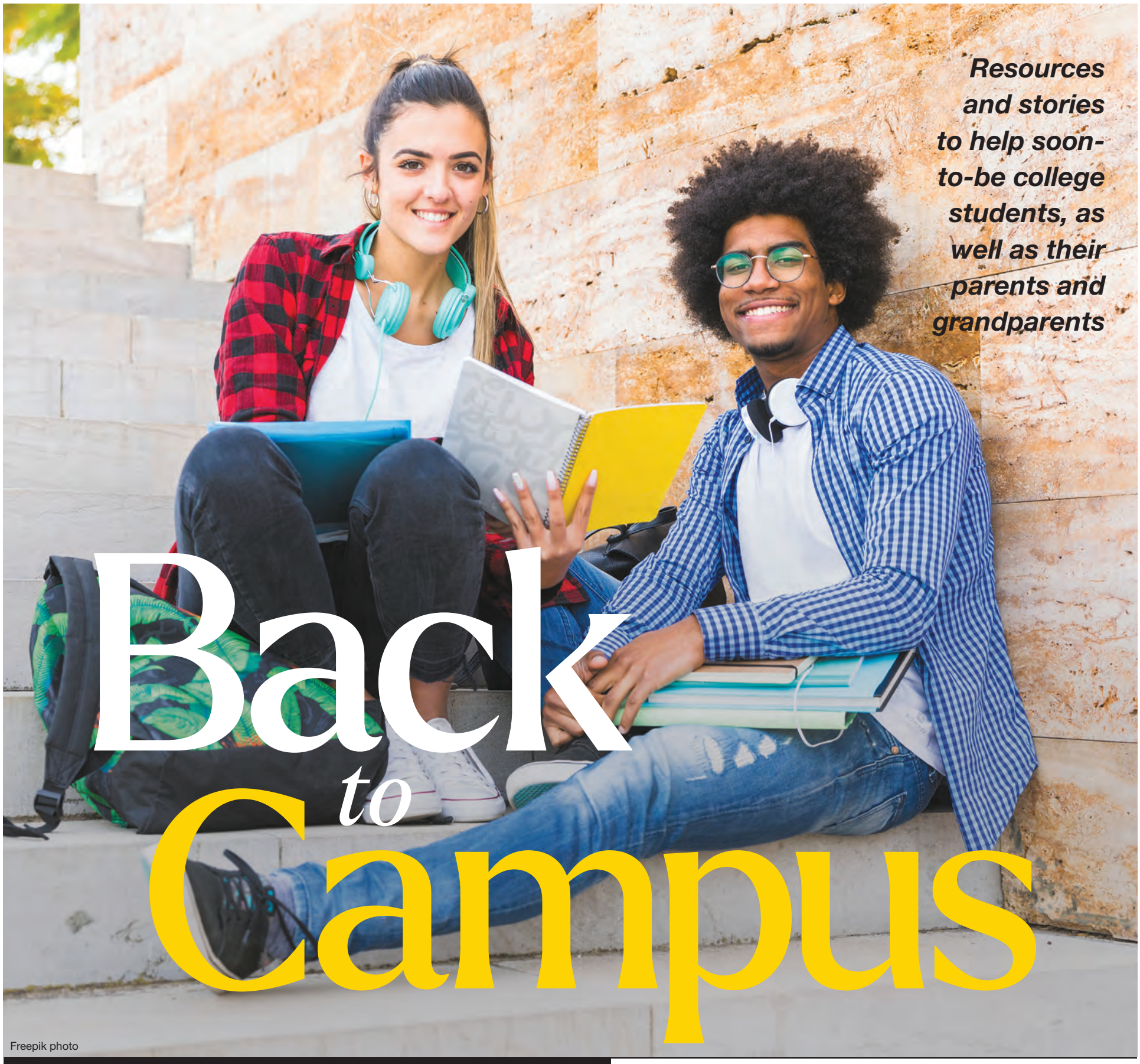
SPECIAL EDITION

The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

July 25, 2024

Vol. 189, No. 15
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Resources and stories to help soon-to-be college students, as well as their parents and grandparents

Back to Campus

Freepik photo

SPOTLIGHT SPONSOR ...

Samford University, Beeson Divinity School
"Experience the Beeson Difference"

SCAN ME

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published every other week by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org
or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Baton Rouge, La.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

Group Rate per subscriber per year — $16.25

Individual — $34.95 per year (26 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP)
Religion News Service (RNS)
Morning Star News (MS)

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads. Also, the information in Alabama News is typically provided by or approved by the individual, church or association represented.

Member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability

TAB Media Group among top in nation

The newspapers, online content and other media offerings produced by TAB Media Group continue to be honored among the top in the nation in the Christian market and in the state's general market. Best in Class, Awards of Excellence and other top awards have been earned by team members every year for nearly 30 years.

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 23.

CONTENTS

03 GUEST EDITORIAL
You can change the world today

04 YOUR VOICE
Opinion pieces from readers and others related to faith and life

06 NEWS
Updates from around the state, across the nation and the persecuted church

10 STUDENT AID
Education groups still trying to counter low FAFSA numbers

16 SENSE OF PURPOSE
Magician David Garrard conjures spiritual reflection at Auburn's baseball chapel

17 COMMUNITY
Alabama baseball players part of 25th season for Bethesda Big Train team

20 AGING WELL
Could your sleep be more than just rest?

21 HEROES OF THE FAITH
Sarah Platt Doremus was founder of the Woman's Union Missionary Society

22 UPCOMING EVENTS
Sponsored by the State Board of Missions

24 SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentaries for Explore the Bible and Bible Studies for Life

26 YOU GOTTA' HEAR THIS!
Finding humor in the everyday moments — Not so hot tub

27 MEDIA REVIEWS
Tips for navigating life, marriage and coaching

09 LIFE SHAPING
Developing virtues in college students deserves attention, prof says

11 FUTURE FINANCES
Tips for establishing a healthy financial foundation in college

13 COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS
Ways to limit your reliance on loans

14 'CHILD OF GOD'
God leads former pro pitcher to identity in Christ after journey of setbacks

19 TRANSITION
Elmore, Guin churches demonstrate mentoring the next leader right in the pews

21 LASS WORDS
Wisdom in small bites

THANK YOU

TAB Media Group appreciates all the advertisers who support this Back to Campus issue. For more content about preparing for college and campus life, go to **tabonline.org/campus.**

OPINION

GUEST EDITORIAL

for this week's issue of The Alabama Baptist

By Karen Moore, Author, "Prayers from the Heart"

You can change the world today

A former Canadian politician, Jack Layton, said, "My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world."

I'm reflecting on this attitude toward change as I consider the inherent negativity that exists in our everyday lives and our political arena. We've become too well acquainted with anger, with hopelessness and despair. We've imagined the worst instead of cultivating the best. We've allowed our hearts and minds to wander away from the ways God wants us to think and the ways He wants us to care for one another. We are individually and collectively the ones who can make a difference. We are the ones who can remind others who God is, and that God still reigns, and He is in control. We can choose to think as the world suggests, wandering in the dark, fearing one another, or we can trust that God has not left us desolate. We simply have to pay attention to the Spirit who leads us forward.

"[Lord,] help us to honor one another and forgive our uncaring thoughts so that we lovingly choose kindness in all we do."

Please pray with me.

Lord, it feels like so many people are deceived by a spirit of depression and negative attitudes. So many people suffer miseries that never befall them, worrying about what might be and missing what is. I ask today that You would free us from fear and anger and deceitful spirits and renew us with the power of Your Holy Spirit. Help us to remember all You've done in the past to strengthen us and guide us. Give us positive thoughts as we embrace the good in others and help us flood the world with light to overcome the seeming darkness.

Let each person who seeks Your guidance, Your mercy and Your grace today be encouraged by all that is still possible. Help us to do our possibles, while you do the impossibles. We are in Your hands from here to heaven, and we are in this world together. Thank You for renewing our thoughts, our spirits and our abilities to do all we can to bring the power of hope to others.

Help us to honor one another and forgive our uncaring thoughts, so that we lovingly choose kindness in all we do.

We praise and thank You.

Amen.

(Partial excerpt from my book, "Prayers from the Heart")

"We can choose to think as the world suggests, wandering in the dark, fearing one another, or we can trust that God has not left us desolate. We simply have to pay attention to the Spirit who leads us forward."

OPINION

Your Voice

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

‘Now is the moment for all of us to unite’

Baptist leaders across the nation responded quickly following the July 13 assassination attempt on former President Donald J. Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Across the board, leaders requested prayer for the nation as well as all involved and highlighted the urgency to unite around the agreement that violence and hatred is not the preferred path.

ABC News screenshot

‘Remember who we are’

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, wrote in a Facebook post that this “is a time for all of us to reconsider our political discourse and remember who we are as Americans.”

“Christians need to fervently pray for our country and its leaders,” he wrote. “We need to turn to the Lord like never before in our history.”

Brent Leatherwood, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, called this incident a “horrific moment” in a statement released by the ERLC.

“The reality that this has taken place tonight should bring us to our knees,” he said, calling for prayer for Trump and others impacted by the shooting that left at least two people injured and two others, which included the gunman, dead.

“In a democracy like ours, we voice our opinions, we passionately press our case, we bravely dissent and we loudly campaign for our cause. But we must never cross the line to harm those we disagree with,” Leatherwood said.

“Political violence has hurt too many individuals and taken too many lives in our history. Now is the moment for all of us to unite and bring a swift and universal condemnation to this vile act that has no place whatsoever in America.”

He urged Americans to “pause, lament this violence and realize how far we have strayed from our nation’s ideals.”

Seeking the peacemakers

“Let’s commit to praying for our leaders, those who are willing to serve in public office and appeal to our Lord that His reconciling work would be poured out on this nation to overcome the hatred that is so prevalent in our culture,” Leatherwood said.

Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director Julio Guarneri tweeted a prayer on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, the morning after the shooting: “As we prepare to gather in our houses of worship, we grieve. Our country, and the world, has been shaken by the tragedy that occurred yesterday.

“The violent attack on former President Trump and the senseless loss of lives reminds us of our divisions and our brokenness. Regardless of political persuasion, Your people hold human life sacred because You do. Any attack on those made in Your image is a transgression against You.

“Today may Your gathered people pray in humility. May we grieve before You for the state of our world. May we repent of bitterness, hatred, malicious talk and pettiness. May we seek Your forgiveness, experience Your grace, and desire to be like You.”

Guarneri continued: “May we learn to pray for and talk to those who disagree with us. May Your people be peacemakers so we can truly be called the children of God.”

Bart Barber, immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, posted a message on his blog for members of his congregation, FBC Farmersville, asking them to “pray for our nation.”

“Let us make it clear that this kind of behavior is unacceptable. Unlike people in many other places around the world, we get to speak by way of our votes,” Barber wrote.

“We live in a nation where our votes are not coerced, we are not threatened or intimidated in our voting, our votes are fairly counted every time and our country transfers power every time in accord with the expressed wishes of the people.”

He urged prayer for Trump “no matter how you plan to vote in November.”

“Let us all speak with one voice saying that this kind of behavior is WRONG. Let us not contribute to making things worse, but let us be the ones summoning what Lincoln called ‘the better angels of our nature’ in all of those around us,” Barber wrote. “Let us do all of those things around our family tables, in our Sunday School classrooms and in our presence online.” (Compiled from news reports)

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

OPINION

Current challenges stem from lack of compassion; people of faith have answer to heal polarized nation

It's commonplace today to say we are living in an era plagued by political, religious and social unrest. The barrage of headlines continually erodes our confidence in our national leadership and unravels the ties that bind our local communities together.

Despite the tools we have to increase mutual engagement, our society is profoundly disconnected, and instead of promoting understanding, the isolation and competition these technologies seem to promote have affected our mental health.

We recognize all this, but we too rarely ask why this has come to pass.

The challenges we face stem from a fundamental lack of compassion, empathy and genuine understanding. Social media platforms, while providing unprecedented access to information and to one another, somehow curb our ability to conduct respectful, nuanced conversations.

While they provide superficial communication in abundance, we have lost sight of the importance of deep, meaningful dialogue.

It's up to us to invest time and energy into building relationships with the neighbors we consider adversaries and seek to understand their perspectives. When we make this shift, our perceived enemies are suddenly revealed to be friends.

'You might be right'

Two former Tennessee governors, Democrat Phil Bredesen and Republican Bill Haslam, who led the state from 2003 to 2019, have modeled these ideals in their podcast, "You Might Be Right." Now in its fourth season, the show reminds us of the power of dialogue and mutual respect.

Their conversations, which feature guests from opposing sides of a given issue in each episode, are a call to action on the importance of finding common ground.

The governors' friendship offers a valuable lesson: Respect cannot be extended without humility. Arrogance or pride have no place in the equation if progress is the goal. Only through humility can we forge connections with our neighbors and tackle the complex challenges we face together.

When we stop defending our own viewpoints and earnestly seek to understand, we discover solutions that have long eluded us and grow in the process.

But we can't depend only on our political leaders to adopt the values needed to find the path out of brokenness and division. We need to turn to our faith communities.

Communities of faith are distinctively (perhaps even divinely) positioned to demonstrate how to build solidarity with one another. From the values taught in Scripture — humility, respect and love — we can create spaces in which groups of people from diverse backgrounds can come together to listen, learn and grow.

Putting others' ideas first is ultimately in our own best interest. Engaging solely with like-minded people limits our own potential and hinders our calling to share hope with our neighbors. As we build bridges, we invest in a healthier future for others and ourselves, mending past wounds and creating a ripple effect of positive change.

Jon Roebuck, executive director for the Rev. Charlie Curb Center for Faith Leadership at Belmont University, the Christ-centered school I lead, has cultivated strong ties with Nashville's Jewish community, allowing us to expand our knowledge, challenge our assumptions and develop a more well-rounded perspective.

To that end, in February, Rabbi Mark Schiftan was appointed Belmont's first Jewish faith student adviser, a position created from the groundwork laid by Roebuck and Schiftan's friendship. Their work has been a catalyzing force for various interfaith initiatives, playing a pivotal role in fostering mutual understanding between Jewish and Christian communities on campus and throughout the city.

This process, while sometimes difficult, is essential for fostering genuine connection in our community, and it leads to a greater capacity to love.

The Gospels' tenets of loving one's enemy and neighbor are central to the Christian faith. Our commitment to these principles will enable us to open our doors wider to help our neighbors, bridge divides and mend ruptures in our social fabric.

Bridge-building projects

There are many concrete actions faith leaders and members of faith communities can take to facilitate their own bridge-building.

Interfaith events and dialogues that bring together members of different faith traditions in a safe and respectful environment allow for open and honest sharing. As a first step, congregations might develop resources to help their own members develop the skills needed for effective interfaith dialogue.

Faith communities can collaborate on local service projects that address shared values and concerns, such as caring for the poor or promoting social justice. This allows members to work together toward common goals and build relationships and trust.

Fostering community

Having established their own ties, different faith communities can organize or support initiatives in their areas meant to heal and transform the broader community. By doing this, faith communities can create a culture of compassion and understanding that extends beyond their own walls.

While we seek to build bridges and cultivate understanding, let us remember the Apostle Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, which reminds us that our view of the world is like a dim reflection in a mirror.

May we approach one another with compassion, grace and a willingness to listen as we pursue our convictions to bring about a better world, share hope with our neighbors and create a society where all people can thrive.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This opinion piece by L. Gregory Jones was first published by Religion News Service on July 9 and is reprinted with permission. Jones is the president of Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. Prior to his appointment at Belmont, he served as the longtime dean of Duke Divinity School.

Why aren't Americans influenced by Christians?

Some say Christians have lost their influence because "fewer Americans believe that faith in God is relevant" and "Christians don't act any different than those who aren't."

How do we change these perceptions, whether they are real or imagined?

It all goes back to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Until God's people "humble themselves and pray and seek His face," nothing will change. It will only get worse.

Most Americans who reject God will not be persuaded to "change their wicked ways" because they see no need to read the Bible.

What they need is to see Christ at work among His followers. We are the only "Jesus" some people will ever see. If all they ever see is Christians arguing and bickering with each over, then it is no wonder they believe that we don't act any different than non-Christians.

We need to be intentional in allowing people to see Jesus in and through us. Then, and only then, will people begin to repent so God can truly "heal our land."

—Lonnie Wilkey

Tennessee's Baptist & Reflector

NEWS

3 stories you should know

Photo courtesy of ABDR

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chainsaw crews are hard at work in Huffman, Texas, after Hurricane Beryl battered the area. They expect to have received more than 200 work requests at press time. Teams from Southeast Alabama, Clarke and West Central Baptist associations have worked to clear trees and debris and will be joined by crews from Colbert-Lauderdale and Madison Baptist associations. Visit sbdr.org to find out how you can help. (TAB)

FBC Montgomery campus experiences another fire

FBC Montgomery's golf carts caught fire during the 11 a.m. worship service July 14, causing a blaze in the church courtyard.

According to a Facebook post by pastor Mark Bethea, the fire was contained quickly and no injuries were reported. The cause of the fire wasn't mentioned.

Bethea wrote that it was an "awesome day" at FBC, part of which was celebrating the 20th anniversary of the main sanctuary. In September 2021, the sanctuary was set on fire in an arson attack. The church was able to gather there again in July 2022.

"Detours, roadblocks, fires and storms happen every day," Bethea wrote in his Facebook post. "We press onward and upward. We've got more gospel sharing and showing left to do!" (Grace Thornton)

Jordan's Arab Woman Today marks 25 years

Alabama Baptists are helping Ruba Abbassi celebrate 25 years of ministry to Arab women throughout the Middle East.

Baptists recently gathered at Shades Crest Baptist Church in Bluff Park to mark the silver anniversary and hear from Abbassi, who founded Arab Women Today. She addressed the group via Zoom.

"Your involvement in this milestone celebration means a great deal to us," Abbassi shared following the July 6 event. "You have been an integral part of our journey, and your unwavering support and commitment have played a significant role in our achievements.

"AWT's success over the past quarter-century is a testament to the collective efforts of individuals like you, who have faithfully served alongside us." (TAB Media Group)

Persecuted church

Turkey's high court upholds recent expulsion of nine Christians

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's high court decided June 7 that the government's expulsion of nine foreign Christians did not violate the individuals' rights.

While the nine were in the country legally, the government issued them the "N-82" immigration code, which does not allow them to stay in Turkey nor return to it, stated Alliance Defending Freedom International. The code essentially deems them "risks to national security."

The nine can appeal the court decision to the European Convention on Human Rights.

ADF International said that since 2018, an estimated 185 foreign Protestant ministers living in Turkey either have been made to leave or are prohibited from reentering the country.

The decision to deport or ban Christian ministers generally results from Turkish intelligence claiming the individuals threaten national security. The information used to make the decision is withheld from each individual, explained ADF International.

ADF International has supported the legal challenges of the nine Christians as well as others who have faced similar situations.

commons.wikimedia.org

Two charged under Pakistan's blasphemy laws

LAHORE, Pakistan — A sibling squabble ended with one Christian charged with blasphemy, while the act of stepping from a rickshaw netted a blasphemy charge for another person.

Police arrested Chand Shamaun on June 23 in the Christian Colony area of Pakistan's Punjab province on a charge of desecrating the Quran. The arrest came after he and his two siblings argued about his share of ancestral property.

The news services Christian Daily International and Morning Star News, quoting a source, report that Shamaun also was charged under Pakistan's anti-terrorism act.

In a separate situation, rickshaw driver Dennis Albert has been jailed since April 27 on charges under two blasphemy statutes, the news services state.

A passerby claimed to have seen Albert standing barefoot on pages of the Quran at a roadside in Lahore.

One of the charges against Albert, a Catholic, carries a mandatory life sentence.

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY THE ALABAMA BAPTIST STAFF

NEWS

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

LLOYD STOCKMAN

Lloyd Stockman, who recently retired from Faith Chapel Baptist Church in Marion after 30 years as pastor, died June 28. He was 82.

STOCKMAN

Stockman grew up at Plantersville Baptist Church, where he was saved and was in the first group baptized in the new church baptistry. He met his wife, Carolyn, at Northside Baptist Church, Selma, where he was ordained as a deacon. He helped start Summerfield Baptist Church, Valley Grande, and he was licensed to ministry there in 1987 and served as youth minister.

He was ordained as a pastor in 1994 at Summerfield, by request of Faith Chapel, where he had become the pastor. Stockman also worked for 33 years as the director of distribution and traffic for American Candy Company in Selma.

Stockman is survived by his wife of 57 years; three children; six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

▸ A Night of Champions Back to School Bash featuring Jake Fromm, former University of Georgia quarterback, will be held at Billingsley School, Aug. 10, 5–7 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Bear Project (a community organization providing financial support and resources for youth educational programs) and **Billingsley-area churches,** who are working together to bring the event to their location for the first time. For more information, contact 334-467-9347.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

▸ **Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Eufaula,** will celebrate homecoming Aug. 4 at 11 a.m. Clyde Hancock, who will bring the message, will retire after serving more than 11 years as pastor. Special music will be provided by Marsha Hudson and Jason Self, music director at Corinth Baptist Church, Clayton. Other guests include Don Hatcher, the association's mission strategist. A luncheon will follow the service. Clyde Hancock is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▸ **East Gardendale Baptist Church** will host "Never Too Late," a women's conference, Aug. 17, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. The event features speaker Carol Stewart, and a light lunch will be served. Reserve a spot by Aug. 7 by contacting the church at 205-608-0889. Mark Barber is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

▸ The former Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, has rebranded as **Redemption Shoals**. Brett Pitman is pastor.

DALE ASSOCIATION

▸ **Matt Gilmore** is the new associational mission strategist of **Dale Baptist Association.** He previously served churches in Florida and Alabama; most recently he served as pastor of Mount Tabor Baptist Church, Lakeland, Florida. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in theology from the Baptist College of Florida (now university), Graceville; a master of education degree from Southeastern University, Lakeland, Florida; a master of theological studies degree from Southwestern Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree in church growth and revitalization from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Shauna, have six children.

GILMORE

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

▸ **Jim Botts** is the new pastor of **Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery.** Botts previously served as lead pastor and missional pastor in Illinois, Oklahoma, California and Texas. He holds degrees from several Illinois-based schools — an associate of arts degree in Bible from Moody Bible Institute, a bachelor of arts degree in business management and leadership from Judson University and a master of arts degree in evangelism and leadership from Wheaton College. He also is pursuing a doctor of philosophy degree in intercultural studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Botts and his wife, Rose, have three children and five grandchildren.

Photo courtesy of Jim Botts

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

▸ **First Baptist Church Pelham** will host southern gospel trio New Ground on July 28, 6:30 p.m. Homemade treats and ice cream will be served after the concert; a love offering will be collected. Daven Watkins is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

▸ **First Baptist Church Opelika** will host the Alabama Singing Men and the Sons of Jubal of Georgia for the first combined concert Aug. 8, 6 p.m. with an instrumental prelude beginning at 5:30. This marks the final concert for Tom Smith, who has served for 25 years as the conductor of Alabama Singing Men. The evening will include a special recognition of Smith for his tenure with the group. Smith is the former chair of the Choral Department at Auburn University and is currently the minister of music at Providence Baptist Church, Opelika. Jon Duncan has served for more than 20 years as conductor of the Sons of Jubal. An offering will be taken to support the missions work of these two nonprofit music ministries. Jeff Meyers is pastor.

Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries changes name

After 63 years as the Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries, the group voted earlier this year to change its name to "better represent who we are."

The name Alabama Association of Baptist Ministry Assistants reflects the fact that over time, many churches around the state have switched to use the title "ministry assistant" rather than secretary, said Sara Bible, AABMA president and ministry assistant at First Baptist Church Demopolis.

Facebook photo

Changing the group's name to AABMA "also better represents us because we truly are in ministry," she said. "We have a vital role we play in the ministry of our churches and associations and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions."

Bible said the name is the only aspect of AABMA that's changing — "we are just simply growing and helping people better understand who we are."

"The organization still has the same heartbeat; our leadership still has the same goal in mind," she said. "We still want to love and support our ministry assistants. The conference is still there to do its job. We just want to better represent who we are now." (Grace Thornton)

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY KRISTI ENT AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL

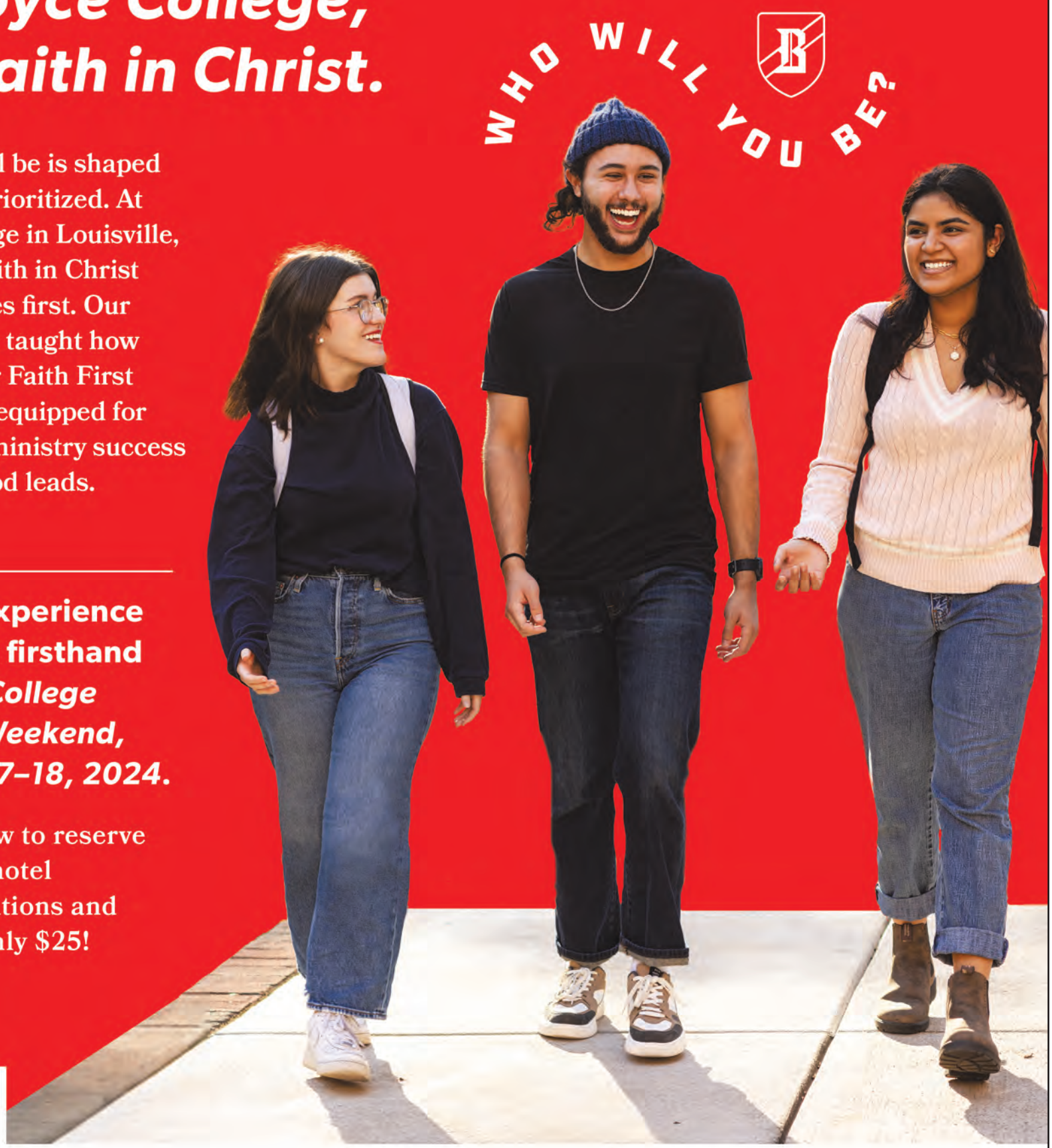
Something always comes first.

At Boyce College, it's Faith in Christ.

Who you will be is shaped by what is prioritized. At Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky, faith in Christ always comes first. Our students are taught how to keep their Faith First while being equipped for career and ministry success wherever God leads.

You can experience Faith First firsthand at *Boyce College Preview Weekend, October 17–18, 2024.*

Register now to reserve 2 nights of hotel accommodations and meals for only $25!



BOYCE COLLEGE.COM/ALABAMA

Life shaping

BY ERIN ROACH • THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Developing virtues in college students deserves attention, prof says

In a day when college students tend to lack a sense of community and are confused about their own values, a counseling professor says educators and church leaders should recommit to developing virtues in students.

"There are serious doubts about their personal worth," noted Selin Philip, associate professor of counseling at Colorado Christian University.

"There is absence of meaning and purpose. For instance, they don't have a larger cause or a purpose that they can work toward. Very few are religious or have a belief system."

Some struggle to find meaning beyond earning a degree, Philip added, and some don't even know how the degrees they seek should fit into the rest of their lives. Moreover, the culture at large has grown bitterly divisive, and people are shrinking back from community involvement at higher rates.

PHILIP

"College students need to learn how to think critically and find what is truth and talk respectfully about some of these crucial topics," said Philip, who also directs the Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision program at CCU.

Photo by cookie_studio on Freepik

Shaping character

For centuries, education was intended to shape character.

"Across cultures, we see from ancient Greece until the late 19th century, the main goal of education was to make people better people," Philip explained. "We look at famous thinkers like Plato, Aristotle and Kant. They believed that education should teach morals and values to create virtuous citizens."

The Greek educator Isocrates "defined an educated person as someone who manages daily life well," Philip said, "someone who makes good decisions, someone who shows qualities like decency, honor, bravery and humility."

"An educated person reflects not just intellectual knowledge, but that person reflects good moral values and virtues and character. Basically, we need to develop better people on college campuses."

Meaning and purpose directly impact virtues, Philip noted, because positive traits are developed in part through meaningful experiences.

The decline in teaching morals began in the mid-20th century in America, she added, as the focus shifted more toward academics. Over time, an emphasis on not offending others with one's beliefs has led to college students who are afraid to believe.

> *"College students need to learn how to think critically and find what is truth and talk respectfully about some of these crucial topics."*
>
> Selin Philip, associate professor of counseling, Colorado Christian University

As educators consider intentionally developing virtues in students, Philip recommended modeling such behavior.

"We do believe in modeling virtuous behavior in front of our students so they will not feel that we are teaching something that we are not practicing," she said of CCU. In her classes, Philip emphasizes three kinds of patience: with God, neighbor and self.

"Leaders have a huge responsibility to consistently demonstrate the virtues they wish to instill in the younger generation," Philip asserted. "That can be integrity, patience, compassion, honesty, humility and resilience. What I'm seeing is that this generation is looking for people who are honest, people who live their truth. They cannot tolerate people who lead double lives."

Influence today

Some who have best influenced her own high schoolers have been college students at church who are living godly lives and can teach those coming behind them how to behave when they go to college, Philip said. She urged pastors to create opportunities for mentorship when possible.

"Some people say that these young people are tomorrow's leaders, but I believe they are leaders today," she said. "Every day, if we work with them with humility and patience, that is going to impact the current society. As they grow, they are going to take what they have learned today toward the future.

"It is not just about building a generation for tomorrow. It is about building a generation for today."

America needs people with strong virtues, and educators and other leaders can play a crucial role if they are intentional, Philip added.

"We need a young generation who [doesn't] get offended so easily, who face it with strength, courage and humility and ask questions and are filled with gratitude and thankfulness for the opportunities that are in front of them," she explained. "For this to happen, we also need the older generation to create a supportive space where the young can ask questions, respond with humility and mentor them with patience."

One resource Philip recommended is Veritas Forum, an online community helping scholars engage in "charitable, life-shaping conversations."

Student aid

BY MARY SELL • ALABAMA DAILY NEWS

Education groups still trying to counter low FAFSA numbers

Significantly fewer Alabama high school seniors filled out the federal application for student aid this year than in previous years and, even though school is out, education officials are still trying to reach graduates and boost application numbers.

"The U.S. Department of Education's horrific rollout of the new (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) significantly impacted the number of high seniors across the country that have completed the FAFSA," Jim Purcell, executive director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, told Alabama Daily News. The new forms were announced last year.

"While the new Federal application was touted as being simpler than prior versions, the delay in starting the FAFSA application process [in] January rather than October ... has discouraged many students," Purcell said. "And many students received inaccurate award letters because of serious glitches in the software that determined eligibility and award amounts."

PURCELL

Besides federal loans, FAFSA is used as a basis for many scholarships and other aid, so filling it out opens more possibilities to students, Purcell previously said.

The Associated Press reported last month that a series of blunders by the Education Department made the application process harder than ever, delaying college decisions by months and raising fears that hundreds of thousands of students will forgo college entirely.

The Alabama State Board of Education in 2021 began requiring graduating high school students to complete the FAFSA, but the application glitch isn't just impacting high school seniors.

"Current college students are also having difficulty with completing their financial aid applications," Purcell said. "Many colleges and universities are reporting that many current students have yet to secure financial aid to continue their college. Uncertainty in the financial aid process this year has made it difficult for both students and campuses as they make plans for the upcoming year."

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story is reprinted with permission.

Photo by wirestock on Freepik

Future finances

BY LINNIE RUSSELL • THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Tips for establishing a healthy financial foundation in college

One of the biggest fears associated with pursuing a college degree — for both students and parents — is getting overwhelmed by student loans. But learning how to properly manage income and debt can help students take ownership of their education and begin stewarding their finances wisely.

Zach Bruketta, financial aid director at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, advises students to "do what you can to learn how your loan works first."

"Learn the difference between principal amount and interest rate. Be mindful that when you take out a loan, interest is going to compound on that loan. You're paying something outside of what you actually borrowed," he said.

Quickly adds up

Many students take out loans without realizing how quickly interest can add up, especially after graduation. Ideally, you should spend time educating yourself on these financial principles before you take out any student loans.

Being well informed will help you better structure your loans and tailor them to fit your academic goals and career plans. It will also allow you to plan ahead and begin budgeting in order to pay off your student debt in a timely manner.

A great resource for learning about your loans is the "Federal Student Aid" website. It offers insight into the different types of student loans, and it helps students make responsible investments in their education.

One valuable tip included there is to "think about how the amount of your loans will affect your future finances and how much you can afford to repay. Your student loan payments should be only a small percentage of your salary after you graduate, so it's important not to borrow more than you need for your school-related expenses."

> *"Your student loan payments should be only a small percentage of your salary after you graduate."*
>
> Zach Bruketta
> financial aid director
> New Orleans Seminary

Once you take out student loans, paying them off promptly should be a top priority. "The longer you hold onto [student debt], the more money you'll pay in the long run," Bruketta cautioned.

He recommends students prioritize paying off their debt when budgeting for expenses, even if it means "making some sacrifices for a time." This may look like sitting down and assessing your spending patterns in order to find areas you can cut back on for a season.

"If there's an extra source of income or unexpected gifts that you receive, I would say loan debt would be on the highest priority list for where that might go," he said.

Paying off debt responsibly may feel restrictive in the moment, but it's absolutely an investment worth making. Establishing a healthy financial foundation and working toward being debt-free can afford you invaluable opportunities in your personal and professional life, as well as in your ministry and the Kingdom commitments you're able to make.

"Jesus was not silent about how we steward the gifts and the talents and the treasures that we have," Bruketta said. "And so I would say don't overlook or neglect to bring those things to the Lord," especially by praying for His wisdom and provision in your finances.

School loans aren't the only source of debt students might encounter during their college career.

When budgeting for college, you have to consider the best way to handle out-of-pocket expenses. Many students decide to apply for their first credit cards when they start their education, sometimes with the express goal of building healthy credit. Unfortunately, many students fail to educate themselves on the ins and outs of credit usage beforehand, leading to unforeseen expenses and a credit rating left worse for wear.

Credit card balances

In 2023, a U.S. News & World Report survey found that 52.7% of college students polled owned a credit card in their own name. Of those students, only around 20% were able to use their credit cards without accumulating debt.

Just like student loans, credit card debt accrues interest over time. The longer you take to pay back your debt, the steeper that cost will grow.

Carrying a balance on your credit card from month to month also lowers your credit score, so college students interested in building credit must be prepared for the responsibility of paying off their credit card balance in full each month.

How much you spend

It also matters how much you spend. According to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, "Credit scoring models look at how close you are to being 'maxed out.'" Ideally, they say your credit usage should stay below 30% of your total credit limit.

Students with credit cards should be careful to create a budget and track their spending to ensure they keep their balance low and pay it off each month. In the event a balance is carried over from one month to the next, financial advisors say it is best to stop using that credit card until it is paid in full.

It's important for students to remember that managing their student loan debt and staying up to date on payments will also help them build a healthy credit score. So for some, it's best to simply wait on getting a credit card if possible.

With or without credit, it tends to be most vital for students to focus on finding one or more part-time jobs in order to pay for out-of-pocket expenses. Sometimes, simply gaining work experience and budgeting carefully are the biggest investments you can make toward your future.

Samford University
Renowned Excellence
#10 IN THE NATION FOR CAREER PREPARATION - The Wall Street Journal (2024)
Samford is a leading nationally ranked Christian university, renowned for excellence, robust in opportunities, intentional in fostering connection and committed to cultivating students' foundational faith. Across our 10 academic schools, students are prepared to powerfully pursue the calling God has on their lives.
Samford. Where passion meets purpose.
samford.edu/go/discover

Cost-benefit analysis

BY LINNIE RUSSELL • THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

What are the best ways for proactive college students to limit their reliance on loans?

Responsible debt management begins before you take out a single loan. When planning for your college education, it's important to first get to know your options and count the cost.

Prospective college students should carefully consider what their academic goals and career plans might be. Then they can weigh the value of their education against the cost of attending a specific university.

A useful tool for carrying out this cost-benefit analysis is the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook. It showcases the average salary, required education level and projected future demand for different jobs.

Knowing how much you're likely to earn in your career field can help you determine how much debt you can afford to take on, how long you'll be in school and the best way to structure your student loans. This information can be a huge help in deciding where to attend college.

Aspiring students should also learn about all the ways they can fund their college career without relying on loans.

Photo rawpixel.com on Freepik

Scholarships

Marie Batson, associate vice president for financial aid at the University of Mobile, said students should look out for opportunities. Academic, athletic and artistic merit scholarships can help you cover the cost of tuition.

Most universities offer institutional or foundation scholarships to future and current students, but many nonprofit organizations, private businesses, community associations, government programs, foundations and employers offer outside scholarships.

High school students can talk with their parents about employer-based scholarships and with their school counselors about local, statewide and national opportunities. These include faith-based and denominational scholarships like those offered by The Baptist Foundation of Alabama and Woman's Missionary Union Foundation.

"There are so many scholarships out there that students don't realize," Batson said.

To help fill in gaps, work-study programs can provide both need-based support and valuable on-the-job experience.

When planning for college, students who feel called to vocational ministry or the missions field will have special considerations to keep in mind.

Ministry and missions

Zach Bruketta, financial aid director at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, outlined several ways excessive debt can complicate ministry and missions. Student loans can keep missionaries waiting longer to join the field, and they often limit where pastors and ministry leaders can afford to serve.

"When you sit underneath any type of debt," Bruketta explained, "there's always a part of your life that's going to be restricted by that."

But many missions and ministry positions require a seminary degree in addition to an undergraduate degree.

Daniel Atkins, senior pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery and a trustee of Gateway Seminary, offers seminary-minded students some practical advice.

"I would recommend the student really pray about getting a degree in something other than ministry" prior to seminary, Atkins said.

Many young ministers find themselves called to bivocational or part-time positions early in their ministry. A secular vocation can provide "something they can financially fall back on."

Another option is to earn a ministry-focused undergraduate degree at a seminary. Atkins noted that "five out of the six seminaries in our Southern Baptist Convention" include undergraduate institutions, like Leavell College at New Orleans Seminary. Students can get both their bachelor's and master's degrees over the course of a six-year program rather than the normal eight years of schooling. This can cut back significantly on costs and reduce the need for student loans.

Southern Baptist Convention seminaries are a uniquely affordable option for Southern Baptist church members in good standing, as half of their education costs are already covered by the Cooperative Program.

‘Child of God’

BY TRACY RIGGS FRONTZ • THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

God leads former pro pitcher to identity in Christ after journey of setbacks

When Paul Bush, a former professional baseball pitcher, dealt with injuries that ended what could have been a five- or six-year career, he had an identity crisis and a major pity party before returning to his faith.

“It was really hard to deal with that because it was a lot of ‘What did I do to deserve this?’ I deserved to have my dream come true because I worked hard,” he recalled.

Bush’s baseball dream began at about 6 years old. Seeing former New York Yankees first baseman Don Mattingly hit a grand slam and hearing the crowd’s reaction, he knew he wanted that for himself.

He started T-ball the next year.

High school standout

Bush became a standout in high school and his freshman year in college. Then in his sophomore year he stalled.

Advanced training and mental exercises with a new coach helped him progress from his former top pitching speed of 89 mph to 95 mph. As 90 mph was the beginning point for professional pitchers, it began to look like his dream might become a reality.

Drafted in the 24th round by the Atlanta Braves for the 2002 season, with a $1,000 bonus and $800 per month salary in his contract, he left for minicamp. There he saw the others’ talent and realized that to stand out, he had to “work harder and be better.”

Over the next few years, he bounced around the different levels of MLB. At times he didn’t take it seriously and had to work to get back in shape. Once a muscle pull caused him to drop down a level.

However, Bush progressed each year and in 2005, he made it to a Double-A team and was chosen for the Arizona Fall League, a top prospect league. In 2007, Bush was invited to join major league spring training. He had a 1.7 ERA and was pitching really well. His performance review at the end of training camp was promising.

“I talked to Bobby Cox and he said, ‘We’re going to send you back to Triple-A, but we like the way you threw the ball. You’ll probably be one of the first guys we bring up if we need somebody. Stay ready.”

Photo courtesy of Tom Priddy

Another setback, injuring his arm that May, meant surgery and a year of recovery. Bush was raised in a Southern Baptist church and was saved at 15 years old, but only being required to complete one hour a day of rehabilitation left a lot of time for partying and drinking.

His low point came at the end of that year when he watched his former team play for the Triple-A championship on ESPN, and he drank an entire bottle of rum to deal with the pain of not being able to compete.

Battling back

Bush had major decisions to make in 2008. After being released from the Braves organization, he talked with his pastor and decided he wasn’t finished with baseball. He knew he had to focus on it instead of partying.

He fought his way back and pitched five games in the 2009 season before breaking his arm and needing more surgery. Thinking it was the end, he was still signed by the Yankees in 2009.

After once again battling his way back, Bush developed bone spurs and needed a third surgery. At that point, there was no fighting back. He was done.

However, he remembered the quote, “Do not let your happiness depend on something you may lose.”

“Baseball could be taken away from me. Any of these other things, like if I have a bunch of money, can be taken away from me. But the only thing that can’t be taken away from me is my salvation.

“I was 31 years old, so it wasn’t like my life was over. I was still young enough. I knew baseball wasn’t always going to be my career. It wasn’t always going to be my job,” he said.

Bush got married and graduated college with a business degree, wanting to coach college baseball. He applied to more than 100 schools and got only one interview. The next season had the same result.

It was a Sunday School friend, the district executive for the financial services company BBVA, who asked if he might want to go into finance.

“I’m pretty good with numbers and I like to talk to people, so yes, I’ll give it a shot,” Bush told him.

“For some reason, I took to it like a fish to water.”

Church life

This led to a career that he loves, helping people with investments at Raymond James, an investment banking company. He attends Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham, where he is on the praise and worship team and teaches a class on finances. He and his wife have two daughters.

“It got easy to see God’s hand in my life through all the things that I thought were bad — how they ended up being part of God’s will,” Bush said. “I’ve been able to trust that because I’ve seen it in my own life.

“He is always there, always constant, always consistent. I can always rely on Him. He always has the best intentions for me.

“My identity is not what I do; it’s who I am — and that’s a child of God.”

Sense of purpose

Photo courtesy of David Garrard

BY TOMMY ELLISON • SPECIAL TO TAB MEDIA GROUP

Magician David Garrard conjures spiritual reflection at Auburn's baseball chapel

In a captivating blend of magic and message, retired Southern Baptist minister and magician David Garrard recently mesmerized the audience at the Auburn University "Baseball Chapel."

Garrard urged players to embrace a deeper connection with their faith as he performed illusions and other feats.

Scott Shepherd, Auburn Baseball chaplain and local representative of Athletes in Action, welcomed Garrard as the special guest for the team breakfast.

He transitioned from spellbinding tricks to heartfelt challenges, encouraging the players to place God at the forefront of their lives.

Garrard's May 5 performance proved to be more than just entertainment.

Through his illusions, he emphasized the importance of spiritual grounding and encouraged attendees to reflect on their faith. Designed to leave an indelible mark on all those present, Garrard sought to ignite a renewed sense of purpose and commitment among the players.

Looking ahead, the Louisville, Kentucky-based Garrard continues to spread his magic and messages of hope and inspiration.

On Jan. 26, 2025, Garrard returns to Alabama to headline the Magic Moments Magic Show fundraiser for the wish-granting organization — a charity serving the local community in Alabama. This event is expected by organizers to be both an evening of wonder and goodwill.

Scheduled for April 1, 2025 (April Fool's Day), Garrard returns to Samford University, his alma mater, where he will deliver a full evening show of magic and illusion.

Community

BY TUCKER MASSEY • THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Alabama baseball players part of 25th season for Bethesda Big Train team

After 25 seasons, Bethesda Community Base Ball Club still lives up to its name and original vision — baseball is being used to inspire, develop and maintain a love among players and fans, and it brings together and builds their community in the process.

Alabama baseball players — Sam Mitchell, Jonathan Stevens (an Alabama Baptist) and Luke Vaughn — are currently experiencing that community as part of the summer league in the area. The teams are made up of college players from across the nation.

In 1995, Bruce Adams had a vision that would combine baseball and philanthropy — an idea that would benefit both college players looking for a place to keep playing throughout the summer and children's teams in need of a field to play on.

Adams took his idea to John Ourisman, a business leader who could help fund Adams' newfound dream. The two began working together closely and established the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club, baseball being split in two words as it was in the 19th century, according to the club's website.

Eventually, the duo, along with the help of others, raised enough money to construct Shirley Povich Field — named for a prominent sportswriter in the mid-20th century — in Cabin John Regional Park in Bethesda, Maryland, an unincorporated area just outside of Washington, D.C.

Bethesda's home team soon became known at Big Train, a homage to another legendary sports figure, Walter Johnson, who pitched for the Washington Senators for more than 20 seasons. Johnson's grandson, Hank Thomas, was Big Train's first general manager when the league held its first season in 1999.

Vision for youth sports

Twenty-five years later, Adams' vision for a college level summer league that raised money for youth sports facilities is not lost.

"We didn't create this to have summer college baseball," Adams said. "We created this as a vehicle to raise money to fix fields for kids."

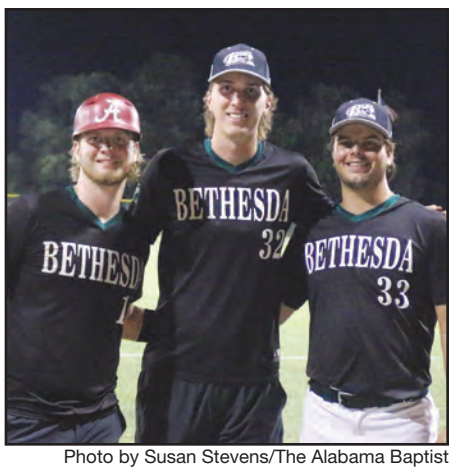


Photo by Susan Stevens/The Alabama Baptist

University of Alabama baseball players — (l to r) Luke Vaughn, Sam Mitchell and Jonathan Stevens are spending the summer as part of Bethesda's Big Train team.

Adams said the organization raised more than $500,000 dollars in its first 13 years and has constructed quality baseball fields throughout Montgomery County — where Bethesda is located — and in other cities and towns near D.C.

Adams said an added advantage in the college summer league is that it could spark a child's initial interest in the sport and inspire them.

He said the club draws crowds of anywhere from 500 to 900, and attendance often depends on the day of the week and how many games in a row they're playing.

Nonetheless, it is a community-based experience that many have lauded as a small-town atmosphere despite being less than 10 miles away from the nation's capital.

Photo courtesy of Bethesda Big Train

Bethesda Big Train players participate in a food drive in the area.

"Maybe my favorite quote in all our 25 years is [from] a friend of John [Ourisman's] who came up to him in either the first or second summer, and he said, 'John, when I come to Povich Field, I feel like I live in a small town,'" Adams recalled. "Well, that's a big deal. All these big, busy people who work a zillion hours have a place to go that feels like a small town."

The community atmosphere has been key in BCBBC's success. The field serves as a sort of escape from the hustle and bustle of D.C. life and brings people together in ways that Adams never imagined a quarter of a century ago.

'We like being together'

John Daniel is a loyal Big Train fan — he has missed very few home games in the organization's 25 years — and is originally from Clayton, Alabama. He has bought season tickets each year since 1999.

"[BCBBC] is community-based, volunteer and nonprofit — every community should have something like it," Daniel said. "[BCBBC] is a delight. ... It has tremendous community support, and for the Juneteenth celebration, there were 921 people here."

He said for 25 nights each summer — the duration of each summer season — they nearly fill up the stadium. He said this clearly illustrated the deep support the organization receives from the community.

"[The support] is only in part because it's baseball," Daniel said. "We all like baseball. But also, we like being together."

The community is bigger than just Bethesda, Daniel said.

As each player from wherever they've traveled from settles into their host home, a larger community is woven together as the players, their families, their host homes and the fans get to know one another, and the community of Big Train baseball becomes something that extends far beyond the unincorporated town of Bethesda.

UNION
UNIVERSITY
RELIGIO ET ERUDITIO
THIS COULD BE U!
When you visit Union University, you'll discover what sets us apart and why Union is one of the premier institutions and best values in Christian higher education. Join one of our preview day experiences, come for a personal on-campus visit, or visit virtually without leaving your home.
REGISTER TODAY AT uu.edu/campusvisit

Transition

BY GRACE THORNTON • THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Elmore, Guin churches demonstrate mentoring the next leader right in the pews

Robert Mullins said with the large number of retiring ministers versus the small number of young pastors rising up to take their place, "we're in big trouble." But he wonders if the answer might just be in each church's own pews.

"I think it should be an option to find that pastor within your congregation," he said.

Mullins saw that happen recently in his own church — Crossroads Community Church in Elmore. After 11 years as the church's pastor, he stepped away in September 2023 to become executive director of Madison Baptist Association.

And on March 17, Mullins preached the installment sermon for Crossroads' new pastor — Brandon Wilemon, who for the past two years has served as the church's associate pastor of students and discipleship.

The two have known each other for more than 20 years, ever since Wilemon was on a ministry team that Mullins was leading at a Super Summer camp at Mississippi College. After meeting at conferences occasionally over the years, they reconnected in 2015 and "rebooted" their friendship, Mullins said. Then in 2022, Crossroads called Wilemon to its staff.

Facebook photo

Brandon Wilemon (center left) and family are prayed for after his church, Crossroads Community Church in Elmore, voted Wilemon in as pastor.

A good fit

"He was the perfect person to come in and begin his pastoral ministry," Mullins said. "I was mentoring him, and we made sure he was able to preach ... and teach, to let him flex his muscles as much as he could, and he nailed it."

Mullins said Scripture models transition through mentorship, such as when Moses passes the baton to Joshua.

"I think we are so traditional in our mindsets that we have put together this pastoral search process that is so strict in nature, but sometimes what we need most is to pray and walk in the Spirit and He will lead us to the person He has for us," Mullins said.

Wilemon said for him, in addition to the built-in mentorship, a helpful dynamic of the transition was that he already knew the church's vision and "already knew the people and their heart."

Photo courtesy of Robert Mullins

Brandon Wilemon (left) and Robert Mullins (right) stop for a photo after the March 17 service in which Mullins preached Wilemon's installation message.

"People have asked me if I feel different now that I'm the lead pastor, and I say that I've changed offices, but I've been leading like this for a while," he said.

Crossroads was home before Wilemon became the pastor, and that's made him even more "eager to embark on this journey," he said.

Zane Miles said similar things about his transition to become pastor of First Baptist Church Guin.

A decade ago, he left his job as Guin's parks and recreation director to come on staff at the church as associate pastor and student minister.

"I moved my office the three blocks from the park to the church," Miles said.

Since then, he's had some opportunities to leave and take pastoral roles at other churches, but he talked with then-pastor Kenny Hatcher and told him that he felt led to stay in Guin.

Hatcher thought that was the perfect opportunity for an internal transition.

"For three years, only we knew about it," Miles said. "In November 2022, we started having conversations that he was ready to transition out of being the pastor, and we got a team together and started working through a transition process."

'Learning curve'

In May 2023, the church voted for the transition to happen, and on Jan. 1, 2024, Miles and Hatcher switched places. Hatcher is now associate pastor and senior adult minister.

"I think the greatest benefit is that you don't really have that learning curve of going to a new place and learning the congregation," Miles said. "You're able to jump in — you know the heart of your people, you know what the mission is, you know your community. You're able to hit the ground running and do the work the Lord has called you to do."

Mullins said he believes churches miss out on great candidates right within their church by having a requirement that new pastors already have pastoral experience.

"Some say you've got to have three to five years of experience before you can come as our pastor," Mullins said. "But if you've been a youth minister for 20 years, how are you going to qualify for that job? One of the things we really need to do is ask, 'What does the Bible say about this?' And it says a lot."

Miles said he sees this kind of transition modeled in Scripture too.

"Paul would start the churches and find people within that house church to lead that church — that was the biblical approach to the early church," he said. "My observation is I think God really intended to raise up people from within the congregation to lead the congregation."

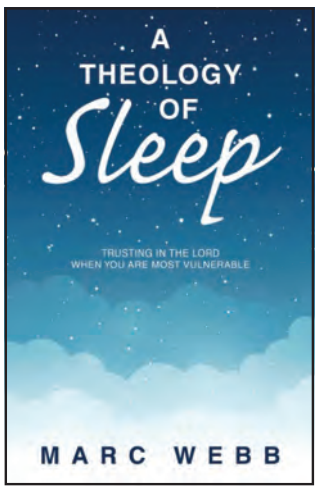
AGING WELL

Could your sleep be more than just rest?

By Karen O. Allen
The Alabama Baptist

Our bodies require it, our minds can't function without it and a third of our lives comprise it. Sleep. An activity in which the eyes are closed and consciousness of our surroundings is altered. For most, sleep occurs at night. We cannot wait to hit the pillow at the end of a hard day.

The amount of sleep we need varies by age. According to Discoverhealthinfo.com, teenagers need 1–2 hours per night more than adults. Adults are recommended to have 7–9 hours of sleep each night; that number drops to 7–8 hours by age 65 and older.



"Sleep is one of the most vulnerable states that we can be in," says Marc Webb, author of the newly released book, "A Theology of Sleep: Trusting in the Lord When You Are Most Vulnerable," published by WestBow Press. "Sleep is so much more than just a physical benefit or part of our daily routine. Sleep reveals how much we need God. Every time we go to sleep it is a reminder to trust in the Lord to watch over us, to keep us, to protect us, to sustain us."

Although we are made in His image, sleep is one of the ways we differ from God. He created us to require sleep while "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). God is always working.

"Sleep reveals who we are, and it also reveals the nature of God too," Webb said.

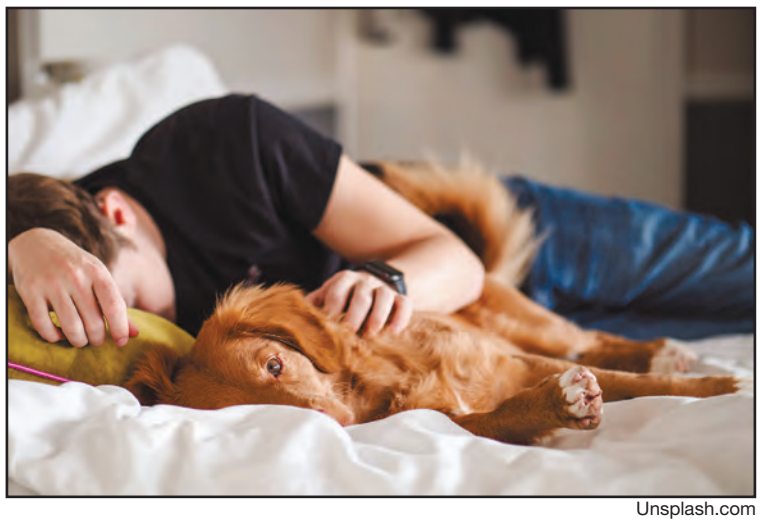
In the Bible

In the second chapter of Genesis, Adam falls into a deep sleep while God removes one of his ribs to create a woman. Since he was asleep, Adam had no part in the creation, highlighting God's power and might.

Webb, senior pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Shelbyville, Kentucky, was prompted to explore what the Bible says about sleep after struggling for years with sleep and fatigue issues.

When he was in middle school, he began to need two-hour naps every day. That increased to four to five hours per day by the time he was a senior in high school. He found himself in bed almost 15 hours a day.

His parents knew something wasn't right, so they took him to see numerous doctors but got no answers. Finally a friend suggested he see a cardiologist. It turned out Webb had a one-inch hole in his heart and one side of his heart was three times larger than normal.


Unsplash.com

Although his heart is better after surgery, Webb continues to battle other health issues in adulthood. Ongoing fatigue and a dire need for sleep have not subsided.

While the book stems from Webb's personal challenges, he was more interested in the theological nature of sleep, specifically how the Bible addresses sleep.

How often is sleep a part of God's story? What role does sleep play in His purpose for our lives? Are there spiritual or theological ramifications to our nightly rest?

The action of sleep is scattered throughout the Bible, connecting significant events and conversations — Samson and Delilah, and the angelic visitations to Mary and Joseph, to name a few.

Spiritual matters

But could there be any implications associated with sleep for our spiritual lives?

Yes. Jonah slept soundly through a severe storm while sailing in the opposite direction from where God told him to go. According to Webb, Jonah's sleep is a sign of disobedience.

In contrast, David slept peacefully although he was under intense political pressure from his son. He slept safe and secure, knowing God was in control.

Sometimes lessons can be learned through dreams, like King Nebuchadnezzar's bold challenge for someone to recall and interpret his dream.

Through God's guidance, Daniel was the only one to meet the king's outrageous demands, and in so doing, he proved that God is more powerful than even the most powerful human on earth.

Years of research for Webb's book included numerous commentaries, books and guides from notable sources such as Warren Wiersbe, Matthew Henry, C.S. Lewis, John Piper and Charles Spurgeon.

"Sleep is a vital element by which God teaches, matures and sanctifies our lives," Webb said.

Twenty-five Bible stories were chosen, including stories about Isaac's night in the desert, Uriah sleeping in David's palace, dreams of Ezekiel and Job's friend Eliphaz, each with a spiritual truth.

LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE
SINCE 1995
Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679
Call for FREE on-site consultation
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
Visit www.LeedsStainedGlass.com
for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!

3 Questions for Church Bus Buyers:

1. Which Bus Company has sold more buses and vans to churches than any other company in the country?
2. Which is the only Bus Company to offer a FREE 8 Year / Unlimited Mile Body & Chassis Warranty on all new buses and vans sold to churches?
3. Which Bus Company has the largest in-stock, ready-to-deliver inventory of buses and vans?

1 Answer:
Carpenter Bus Sales

Doesn't that make it easy to know who to work with?

Carpenter BUS SALES

America's #1 Church Bus Dealer

www.carpenterbus.com · 800-370-6180 · Nationwide Delivery

Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Wisdom in small bites

It was my routine visit to the dentist. There I was sitting in the exam chair, leaned back, mouth wide open as the hygienist picked and prodded to clean my teeth. All the while, we were carrying on small talk about family, food, politics and various topics.

It's very tricky to converse while your teeth are being cleaned. You must wait for those brief opportunities when the hygienist pauses to grab her rinsing tube or load up her polishing brush. Then you must quickly say what you want to contribute to the conversation before she goes back in. There's a rhythm to it. You get good at it after a while.

'How come?'

During one pause, she asked me how many grandchildren I have. "Four," I replied. One-word answers are easy to get out in time. But at the next chance, I decided to go for a longer comment. "My daughter takes all four of them to the dentist at the same time," I hurriedly said. "That's quite a challenge," I added, "but there's one thing I don't understand. How come you have to ... ?"

I had to stop there. She had gone back in with the floss. I had to wait until the next break to finish my thought. "How come you have to take such good care of baby teeth when they're all just going to fall out anyway?"

She went in with a rinse as she explained that baby teeth are extremely important because they hold the space in your gums to the proper dimensions until the permanent teeth are ready to come in. They also serve as perfect practice models while a child learns how to brush and floss.

"God gives you a set to practice on," she said through a smile.

Intentional design

It's pretty amazing really. God thought of everything when He designed us. He gives us what we need but not until we're ready for it, including permanent teeth. He knew children would love candy and sweets, and He gives them a chance to grow and learn and develop the right tooth habits before He blesses them with the real thing.

Is there something you've been praying and hoping for, but it just hasn't happened? Could God be waiting for you to grow and learn and develop the right habits in your Christian walk before He brings it to you?

Now there's something to chew on.

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Sarah Platt Doremus was founder of the Woman's Union Missionary Society

Sarah Platt Doremus (1802–1877) was an American philanthropist and founding president of the Woman's Union Missionary Society.

The daughter of businessman Elias Haines and his wife, Mary Ogden, Sarah was born Aug. 3, 1802, in New York City. At the age of 10, she joined her Presbyterian mother in praying for the conversion of the world.

DOREMUS

Sarah married Thomas Doremus in 1821 and became a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. Her husband was a successful merchant whose wealth was used for her missions and charitable work. Sara and Thomas had eight daughters and one son and adopted several children.

Relief mission

In 1828, Doremus and seven other women organized a relief mission to the Greeks who were under Turkish control. They sent missionary Jonas King to Greece with supplies. Seven years later she promoted the Swiss Baptist work in the Grand Ligne Mission in Canada and was made president of the mission in 1860.

She started visiting New York City prisons in 1840 and established Sabbath services. She also started the Home for Women Discharged from Prison; the New York House and School of Industry for Poor Women; the Nursery and Child's Hospital; the New York Woman's Hospital; and the Presbyterian Home for Aged Women.

The first meeting to plan organizing the Woman's Union Missionary Society was Jan. 9, 1861, in New York City. The speaker was Ellen Mason, wife of Francis Mason, Baptist missionary to Burma (now Myanmar).

Encouraged by Mason, Doremus and her group of women founded the first American nondenominational women's missionary society, whose purpose was to send single women as missionaries to Asia. Doremus became its founding president, and her home was the organization's first headquarters. Her home also served as the rest home for those returning because of bad health. Harriette Brittan, the first missionary sent by WUMS, went to India. Within 20 years, the society supported more than 100 women missionaries of various denominations in Burma, India, China, Syria, Greece and Japan.

'Mother of Missions'

In addition to her work with the WUMS, Doremus collected supplies for Irish Potato Famine victims in 1869. A year before her death, she helped establish schools for Italian immigrants in New York.

Called the "Mother of Missions," Doremus died Jan. 23, 1877. Her funeral was at South Reformed Church in Brooklyn.

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of FBC Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 40 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).

UPCOMING EVENTS
sponsored by the State Board of Missions

One-day event for teen guys set for Aug. 24

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.

Speak Tour in Ozark and Tuscaloosa

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.

Renew, recharge, refresh for youth ministers

This year's Youth Minister Retreat is set for Aug. 26–27 at WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs.

The retreat will be an opportunity to connect with student pastors from all over the state to be renewed, recharged and refreshed to do the work of the ministry.

The cost is $40. To register, visit ymlink.org/calendar.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR
Shadow Lawn Baptist Church, Eight Mile, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor and spiritual leader for our church. Education requirements: graduate of a seminary college or Bible college. Interested individuals with some experience in pastoral ministry and knowledge and agreement with the Southern Baptist Faith & Message are invited to apply. Please submit all cover letters, resumés, sermon links and letters of recommendation to: T_hagler@bellsouth.net. For additional information, contact Judy Robertson at 251-422-8716.

PASTOR
Pinckard Baptist Church, Pinckard, Alabama, seeking full-time or bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: mark.b.ivey@gmail.com.

PASTOR
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.

FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR WITH ADVANCEMENT TO LEAD PASTOR
Community Baptist Ardmore, Alabama, seeking a full-time associate pastor with advancement to lead 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.

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.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR
Thorington Road Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, is seeking a part-time/full-time children's ministry director. We are a growing church in east Montgomery that needs someone to lead our kids on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. Please send resumés to: michael@trbaptist.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS
The Mobile Baptist Association is seeking a full-time director of missions. To view the full job description: https://bit.ly/4cGsOqE. Please send resumé before Aug. 30 to: DOMsearchMACK@MobileBaptists.org.

CHURCH SECRETARY
Pathway Baptist Church in Dothan, Alabama, is seeking a church secretary. Hours will be 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday–Thursday. Compensation will be based on experience and expertise. Person must be an active Christian of a local church. Must also have skills at using QuickBooks and Microsoft Office. Please send resumé to: Pastor, Pathway Baptist Church, 3551 Flowers Chapel Rd., Dothan, AL 36305.

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGN
Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. www.reliablesigns.com

BUSINESS

ADOPTION LEGAL SERVICES
Long-time lawyer and former deputy probate judge Eddie Vines offers legal services to families walking through the adoption process. He is an ordained Baptist minister and does ongoing missions work in India. Contact Eddie Vines: 205-586-0222 or evinesattorney@yahoo.com. No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.

CLEAN COMEDY
Seeking clean entertainment for a senior audience? Tommy Ellison's comedy magic will delight. Book now at 205-515-3876 or tommy@tommyellisonmagic.com.

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS
Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658

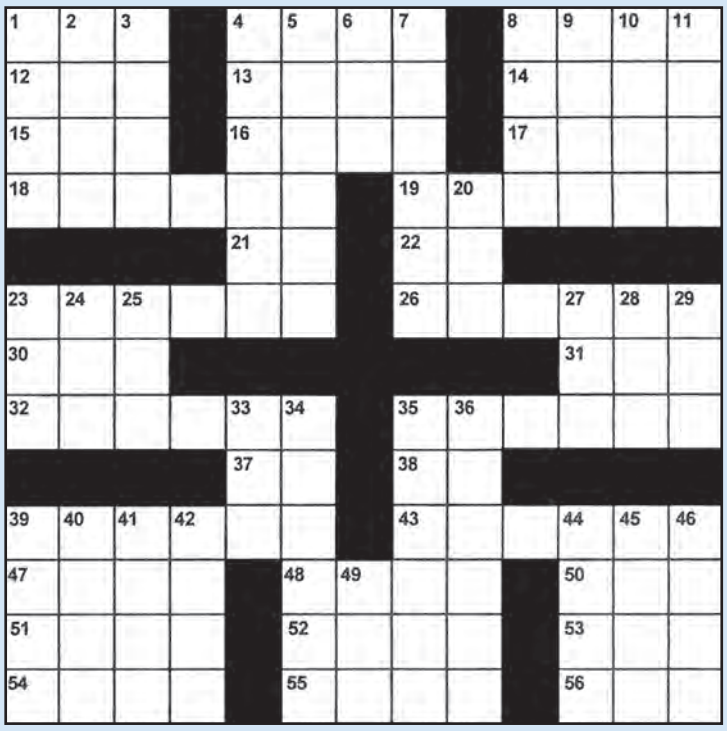
TRAVEL/VACATION

NORTH CAROLINA VACATION HOME
Beautiful home on the crystal clear Hiawassee River in historic Hayesville, North Carolina. Vacation inquiries, call Tina 334-296-3930.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS
Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Efficiencies, 1 bedroom, 2 bedrooms and 3 bedrooms are available. Lowest prices on the beach for over 30 years. Call Don: 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

LOG CABIN RENTAL
Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

CHRISTIAN crossword



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

ACROSS

1. Brought him to an ____. (Luke 10:34)
4. The house was filled with the ____ of the ointment. (John 12:3)
8. Clip.
12. Deliver thyself as a ____ from the hunter. (Prov. 6:5)
13. This is now ____ of my bones. (Gen. 2:23)
14. Greek letter.
15. Of birds. (prefix)
16. Very. (French)
17. Went by plane.
18. Lunatic.
19. Again he ____ the same sacrifices. (Heb. 10:11)
21. Iowa. (abbr)
22. Rhode Island. (abbr.)
23. We remember the leeks, and the ____. (Num. 11:5)
26. Leah was ____ eyed. (Gen. 29:17)
30. Teachers organization.
31. And Bezaleel the son of ____. (Ex. 38:22)
32. God shall send them ____ delusion. (2 Thess. 2:11)
35. And John bare ____, saying, I saw the Spirit. (John 1:32)
37. Each. (abbr.)
38. And she (Shuah) conceived, and bore a son; and he called his name ____. (Gen. 38:3)
39. I will not be an ____. (Isa. 3:7)
43. The disciples asked him again of the same ____. (Mark 10:10)
47. Naum, which was the son of ____. (Luke 3:25)
48. God. (Spanish)
50. Then enquired he of them the hour he began to ____nd. (John 4:52)
51. The blind receive their sight, and the ____ walk. (Matt. 11:5)
52. Between. (combining form)
53. 1/1000 inch.
54. Plutonium, arsenic. (chem. symbols)
55. Scottish denials.
56. Isle in England.

DOWN

1. A duke of Edom. (Gen. 36:43)
2. Suddenly bright star.
3. No. (German)
4. For whoso findeth me ... shall ____ favor of the Lord. (Prov. 8:35)
5. Also called Tabitha. (Acts 9:36)
6. First number.
7. My strong habitation whereunto I may continually ____. (Ps. 71:3)
8. Spat.
9. Part in a play.
10. To do again and again: ____ate.
11. They shall give unto the priest the shoulder ... and the ____ (pl.). (Deut. 18:3)
20. Response of disgust. (archaic)
23. Belonging to a son of Peleth. (Num. 16:1)
24. Let his ____ that he hath hid catch himself. (Ps. 35:8)
25. Adjective suffix.
27. A pair.
28. If any of you do ____ from the truth. (James 5:19)
29. I will ____ evil beasts out of the land. (Lev. 26:6)
33. Born.
34. The Lord God planted a ____ eastward in Eden. (Gen. 2:8)
35. Distant.
36. Deletes.
39. My ____ cometh from the Lord. (Ps. 121:2)
40. Jacob's twin.
41. Woman's name.
42. Or if he finds lost property and ____ about it. (Lev. 6:3)
44. But the tongue can no man ____. (James 3:8)
45. Man's name.
46. Because thou didst ____ on the Lord. (2 Chron. 16:8)
49. For I am ____ ____ strait betwixt two. (Phil. 1:23; 2 words)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Discerning a call to ministry

For a teenager or young adult, the call to ministry can seem like the most complex decision to wade through. That's why the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions created the Called conference.

The conference, which will be held Aug. 3 at Samford University, is a one-day event designed to help young men and women, high school through college, who are considering the life-changing call to ministry.

The speaker will be Scott Pace, vice president of undergraduate studies, dean of the College at Southeastern and associate professor of pastoral ministry and preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. There will be breakout sessions led by ministry leaders from fields including children's ministry, missions, church planting, discipleship and more.

The cost for the conference is $30. Lunch will be provided. For more information or to register, visit bcmlink.org/called.

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

Equipping children's leaders

Reaching and Teaching the next generation is a great opportunity to equip your preschool and children's ministry leaders.

Jana Magruder from Lifeway Kids will be the featured speaker at the event, which is set for Aug. 18, 2:30–5:30 p.m., at Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster. There will also be breakout conferences. There is no charge for this event.

To register, visit kidzlinkal.org/event.

By Doug Rogers/SBOM

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

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

For July 28

BAPTIZING
Acts 8:26–39

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God filled with the Spirit of God engaging in the mission of God. In our lesson this week, we learn how the gospel made it to Ethiopia and began transforming lives. People are saved through the gospel, and the heart of the gospel is the salvation orchestrated by God.

Intersection (26–29)

God was working mightily through Philip in Samaria, and yet an angel of the Lord told Philip to "get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

The next words are astounding: "So he got up and went." He didn't argue. He didn't seek to form a committee. He obeyed the command from the Lord immediately. Philip couldn't have understood why he should leave such a successful evangelistic campaign (vv. 5–8), but he obeyed the angel of the Lord. Understanding can wait; obedience cannot.

The journey would have taken several days on foot, but he continued heading south into the desert. There, out in the middle of nowhere, was an Ethiopian man who was a eunuch, an important political figure who served as treasurer for Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.

This man had made the long trip to Jerusalem to worship, and now he was returning home. He was in his chariot reading aloud from Isaiah the prophet, which allowed Philip to hear what he was saying.

The Holy Spirit told Philip to approach the man and engage in conversation. This was no accident; it was a divine appointment. Their meeting was not because of human ingenuity but because of God's sovereignty.

Illumination (30–35)

Walking in obedience to the Lord and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit, Philip was intentional and bold in the encounter.

He overheard what the man was reading and asked him if he understood. Here we learn a life-changing reality: God has chosen to use Christians to share the gospel with unbelievers. How did you get saved? Someone in your life explained the gospel to you. This is how God desires the gospel to be shared today.

The Ethiopian man needed someone to explain the Scripture to him, so he invited Philip to sit with him in his chariot. The man was reading Isaiah 53:7–8.

Here we see the beauty of God's providence. Isaiah 53 is the pinnacle of Old Testament prophecy that emphasizes that the Messiah would come as a substitute, becoming the sacrifice for the sins of those who would trust in Him. This prophecy about the Messiah being silent before His accusers was fulfilled when Jesus remained silent before Pilate (Matt. 27:14).

The eunuch was confused and asked Philip who the writer was talking about in the verse. Beginning with Isaiah 53, Philip told him the good news about Jesus. He took the Word of God and explained Jesus to the Ethiopian man.

Saving people is God's work, but proclaiming the gospel is our work. Philip showed the man that the Lamb of whom the Scripture spoke was none other than the Messiah, who would be the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin.

Affirmation (36–39)

As they approached some water, the man expressed to Philip his desire to be baptized. It is evident that Philip had explained the gospel so that the man understood the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the significance of following Jesus in baptism. So Philip and the new believer went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

For August 4

CALLING
Acts 9:3–16

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God filled with the Spirit of God engaging in the mission of God. The more the gospel spread, the greater the opposition became. In our lesson this week, we learn about the conversion of Saul, a Pharisee who passionately persecuted the followers of Jesus.

As he traveled to the city of Damascus to arrest Christians, Christ arrested him. Jesus called him to salvation and service. The persecutor of Christians became a gospel globetrotter.

Saul confronted (3–4)

Saul was concerned that the religion called the Way was spreading. It had started in Jerusalem and had spread through Judea and even into Samaria. He had heard that it had even taken root in Damascus, about 120 miles north of Jerusalem. This could not be allowed to take place. Receiving authority from the chief priests, he headed north to put an end to this threat to Judaism.

As he approached Damascus, he was surprised by a light from heaven that flashed around him. Saul testified that the light was an intense light, brighter than the sun at noon (26:13).

He and his traveling companions fell to the ground, but only he understood the voice that spoke to him in Aramaic (26:14). Saul had to have been shocked more than ever before in his life as he heard the voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Jesus identified (5–9)

Knowing this was no human encounter, Saul replied, "Who are you, Lord?" Saul used the title "Lord" to indicate reverential respect. The voice responded, "I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting."

In his account before King Agrippa, Saul announced that Jesus had appeared to him so that he could be a witness of what he had seen (26:16). But how could it be?

Jesus had been publicly crucified and buried. Truly, His body was missing, but how could this be possible unless what His followers were saying was true?

The men traveling with Saul were speechless during this holy encounter. They had seen the blazing light and had heard the sound, but they did not see anyone. This account agrees with Saul's later testimony in Acts 22 and 26. Although his companions did not comprehend exactly what was happening, their testimony adds weight to its authenticity.

Jesus commanded Saul to proceed to the city of Damascus, and then he would be instructed what he must do. When Saul stood up, he was unable to see anything.

At this point, he had to walk by faith and not by sight. His companions took him by the hand and led the blind Saul into Damascus.

Purpose given (10–16)

The Lord appeared to Ananias, a faithful disciple of Jesus, and commanded him to go to Saul. The Lord told him He had prepared his way by giving Saul a vision of a man named Ananias coming to him and laying his hands on him to restore his sight.

Saul's reputation preceded him and created fear in Ananias. The Lord assured Ananias by revealing to him that Saul was His "chosen instrument to take My name to Gentiles, kings and Israelites."

Jesus called Saul to salvation and to service. He is still calling people from spiritual death to salvation. And the people He calls to salvation He also calls to share the gospel with the lost who desperately need His forgiveness.

And [Saul] said, "Who are you, Lord?"

And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Acts 9:5

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Kevin Blackwell, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Ministry Training Institute/Assistant to the President for Church Relations, Samford University

For July 28

BARAK
Judges 4:4–8, 12–16; 5:1–5

The Book of Judges recounts one of the most difficult times in Israel's history brought about by their indifference toward the nation's covenant with Yahweh. As Chapter 4 begins, the Israelites' situation illustrates this point.

God had delivered His people into the hands of Jabin, king of Canaan. Because God is merciful and full of grace, He sent a judge, Deborah, to deliver the people from the heavy hand of Jabin.

Allow yourself to be challenged. (4:4–8)

The Israelites had been under Jabin's cruel slavery for 20 years, and God answered the people's cries to end the cruelty. Deborah called on a hesitant helper, Barak the son of Abinoam, to lead the Lord's army into battle. The commander of Jabin's army was Sisera, and he had quite the intimidating force. For the Israelites, their foe seemed invincible because Sisera commanded 900 chariots of iron.

Barak's hesitancy was understandable, but it also revealed a lack of trust in God. Barak's insistence that Deborah go with him into battle was not likely due only to cowardice but because Deborah represented the presence of God.

When we are challenged by an intimidating enemy or by frightful situations, we can be assured that God will give us His strength to stand in the battle. God had promised Barak through Deborah, "I will hand him over to you."

Do what is necessary to carry out what you're called to do. (4:12–16)

As the battle reached its inception at the banks of the Kishon River, Sisera brought his mighty force of 900 armed chariots and all his troops to face an Israelite army of 10,000 foot soldiers. Barak led his army into battle after Deborah insisted. She announced the victory even before the battle began.

The Lord sent the army of Sisera into panic. It was not the hand of Barak that carried out the victory because it happened "before Barak." He only watched God do what God does: He overwhelms our foes.

> ***Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?"***
>
> **Judges 4:14**

Are you currently facing an overwhelming situation? Maybe what you are facing makes 900 iron chariots look like child's play.

God will often give wisdom and empowerment to His children while confusing and disempowering the enemy.

The Bible is replete with stories of God's people facing incredible odds, only to enjoy a tremendous victory because they trusted in the power of God to deliver them. This is nowhere more obvious than in the story of Calvary.

Give God the honor and credit for your achievements. (5:1–5)

Chapter 5 of Judges is one of the oldest songs in the Old Testament. It is a duet for the ages as Deborah and Barak sang of the victory of God over the Canaanites.

The song was not a selfish tribute to the skill of Barak as a military leader, nor was it an ode to God's anointed Judge, Deborah.

It was a song of praise to the Lord God of Israel. Verse 4 seems to indicate that part of the confusion that overwhelmed the Canaanites was a flood from the Kishon River. However the battle was won, it is obvious in the song that it was all the Lord's doing.

For August 4

DAVID
1 Samuel 18:5–16

After David's successful leadership of King Saul's army against Goliath and the Philistines, he returned to a hero's welcome. The triumphant army was greeted by the women of the town with songs and celebration. Per Hebrew tradition, the women composed songs that signified the army's military successes.

The words of the song enraged Saul as he heard the mothers, wives and daughters sing, "Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." From that point forward, everything changed in Saul's relationship with David.

Give your best to whatever your leaders call you to do. (5–7)

King Saul was a man of deep insecurity. Whether it was Samuel or David, Saul struggled with those the Lord sent to him to benefit his kingship. He saw everyone as a competitor to his throne, though neither Samuel nor David had such ambitions.

Though Saul's evil spirit would cause outrage in his heart toward David, this did not change the way David sought to serve Saul. David understood that ultimately his service was not to the king but to the King of kings.

Even though those around David saw him as a more capable military and political leader than Saul, it did not change the way David served the one God had placed in authority over him. David felt that as long as his actions under Saul would ultimately bring glory to God, he would do his very best to serve the king.

Excellence in your work is not always valued. (8–11)

After the women sang their lyrics, Scripture describes Saul's dramatic change toward David. "So Saul watched David jealously from that day forward" (v. 9). The Hebrew word used here means that Saul watched David with iniquity in his heart. He had sinful eyes toward David, even while David continued to serve him with excellence.

Because Saul now believed that David was seeking to usurp the throne from him, he would begin seeking to kill David. His attempts at this were not very subtle.

First, Goliath had a spear in his hand to kill David, and now Saul would attempt to strike him with a spear as well. God, however, would spare the life of David because he lived a life that was pleasing to the Lord and also because it would be for the ultimate good of Israel.

Even when a believer's work and service are not valued by those in authority over them, a Christian will serve with excellence knowing that the work being accomplished is ultimately for the glory of God.

Even when disrespected or opposed, continue to honor God with what you do. (12–16)

Whether David was being challenged by a 9-foot giant named Goliath or a spear-hurling king named Saul, he enjoyed success in his endeavors because "the Lord was with him" (v. 14). Though Saul tried to murder him twice with a spear, David still left the palace and went right back to his place of service commanding Saul's army.

When we have relational hardships with those who oppose us, we must continue to serve the Lord in faithfulness. Paul encourages us to remember, "Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23–24).

> ***And when Saul saw that [David] had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him.***
>
> **1 Samuel 18:15**

WORD **search**

ADMISSIONS
APPLICATION
CAFETERIA
CAMPUS
CHAT
COLLEGE
COMMENCEMENT
CO-OP
CREDITS
DEGREE
DIPLOMA
DORM
ESSAY
FAFSA
FEES
FINANCIAL AID
FRESHMAN
FRIENDS
GPA
GRADUATION
INTERNSHIP
LECTURE
MAJOR
MINOR
ORIENTATION
PROFESSOR
ROOMMATE
SCHOLARSHIPS
SEMINAR
STUDY
SYLLABUS
TESTS
TUITION

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

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Finding humor in the everyday moments

Not so hot tub

My buddy, Bill, went on a trip with the senior adult group from his church. One afternoon, a few of the husbands decided to relax at the hotel's indoor pool area while the wives were busy getting ready to go shopping.

The four men took their swimsuits and towels and enjoyed the rare treat of swimming in the middle of the winter.

Suddenly, Bill had a great idea and shared it with the guys. The hot tub seemed like it would be so comfortable and soothing to a bunch of tired, old men who had been walking a lot in the last few days.

They got into the hot tub but soon realized that it wasn't hot at all. What was even more frustrating was that they couldn't get the jets to work either.

Relaxing

One by one, they each tried buttons and switches to no avail and finally just decided to sit in the lukewarm water and relax. Their wives soon emerged from their rooms, ready for a day of shopping.

They looked over the balcony rail to say goodbye to their husbands in the pool area below them.

The women were confused by what they saw and shouted down to the men.

"What are y'all doing?" they shouted.

"Well, we tried to get this hot tub to work, but it's not warming up and the jets aren't working," the men shouted back to them.

All the women doubled over laughing and screamed, "Well, maybe that's because y'all are sitting in the baby pool!"

Now, four grown men sitting in a baby pool is funny! Bill and his friends will never be able to live down that story. But to me, the moral of this misunderstanding is simple — God is good, life is fun and we can laugh at any age!

"But to me, the moral of this misunderstanding is simple — God is good, life is fun and we can laugh at any age!"

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 Tucker Massey, Tracy Riggs Frontz and Steve Potts
The Alabama Baptist

Book reviews: Tips for navigating life, marriage and coaching

Dad's Notes

By Jason Davis
JAD Publishing, 2024

In his debut book, "Dad's Notes," Jason Davis offers practical wisdom for young adults to utilize as they step into their next season of life, and he does so with a foundation in his faith in God.

Throughout the book, readers are tasked with taking time to reflect. In fact, Davis poses several questions at the end of each chapter along with space to answer these questions, jot down notes or mark key takeaways.

I found several chapters to be helpful, one of which is the first chapter, "Plate Spinning."

Davis suggests that of all the plates we can spin, four are vital: faith, family, fitness and finance. It was his guidance on how not to lose control of those primary plates that I related to most.

As a college student, I have a lot of aspirations and goals I want to achieve that are not necessarily vital to my well-being or relationships, and I get discouraged when I don't get around to doing those things. I found Davis' advice to forget about the other unnecessary plates until the primary four are in good shape to be very helpful.

When we lose sight of what is most important, we often lose control. When we keep what matters in our sights, the things of little importance don't seem so big anymore, and we can find peace and joy in the things that our lives should be centered around.

Another chapter — "I Did It My Way ... Sometimes" — also offered wisdom that resonated with me. He points out that our way is not the only way. It is wise to listen and consider the thoughts and opinions of others, especially when the decision at hand affects them as well.

This bit of wisdom aligns with Proverbs 15:31 (and plenty of other verses throughout biblical wisdom literature): "The ear that heeds wholesome admonition will lodge among the wise" (NRSV).

Overall, "Dad's Notes" offers something that everybody can borrow from and apply in their daily routines no matter how young or old they may be. The book is available at Amazon. (Tucker Massey)

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.

New Marriage, Same Couple

By Josh and Katie Walters
Thomas Nelson, 2024

Have you ever thought your marriage was bulletproof? That nothing serious could come between you and your spouse — certainly not an affair?"

Josh and Katie Walters pose these questions in the introduction of their new book, "New Marriage, Same Couple: Don't Let Your Worst Days Be Your Last Days." The book explores what the couple did to heal and recover their marriage after Katie had an affair with one of their best friends.

"New Marriage, Same Couple" takes the reader through the steps they took to repair their marriage:

- Start with you. Discover that when one person changes, the entire relationship changes.
- Take quitting off the table. Bring your whole self to the solution, and don't check out mentally or emotionally.
- Allow others to be part of your journey. Trust the right people in the right ways at the right time.
- Yield to vision. Look past what is and imagine what could be.

Josh and Katie share personal accounts that illustrate the principle being taught throughout and do so with transparency, clarity and at times, humor.

Corresponding to the book is a separate workbook called "New Marriage, Same Couple Workbook," which includes different examples of the same principles.

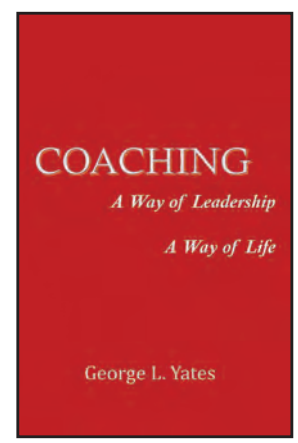
Josh and Katie lead a nonprofit called Francis + Benedict, are on staff at Seacoast Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and have seven children. Bringing "hope to the hopeless" and seeing "people walk in abundant life" is their mission.

More information can be found at joshandkatiewalters.com. (Tracy Riggs Frontz)

Coaching: A Way of Leadership, A Way of Life

By George L. Yates
Sonlight Publishing, 2017

Skillful leadership in an organization — whether a church, an academic institution or a business — often makes the difference between success and failure. In this book, George Yates brings his extensive ministry coaching experience to bear on how to lead well.



Yates is the founder of SonC.A.R.E. Ministries, and he serves as a church health specialist.

He emphasizes the skill of careful listening and the clues of body language in helping to discern the best fit for people in various roles.

Yates encourages leaders to perceive more deeply than just analyzing spoken conversations to really understand others they are trying to lead, hire or call. He also includes several chapters on how to ask good questions that reveal helpful insights. He shows ways to draw clearer and deeper information out of conversations with others.

Overall, I found this book to be beneficial. One could question whether too much focus on nonverbal signals, such as facial expressions and body language, could distract from a warm and genuine conversation with another person, but Yates helps the reader consider a broader array of factors in communication. (Steve Potts)

The Baptist Paper

INFORMING, INSPIRING & CONNECTING BAPTISTS ACROSS AMERICA.

Subscribers to The Alabama Baptist can add The Baptist Paper at a special rate of only **$10 a year.**

Call us at 1-800-803-5201 to find out more or scan the code with your smartphone's camera.

TAB MEDIA GROUP *works with Baptist media partners across the nation to publish* **The Baptist Paper**.

tbponline.org | subscribe@thebaptistpaper.org