

The Alabama Baptist

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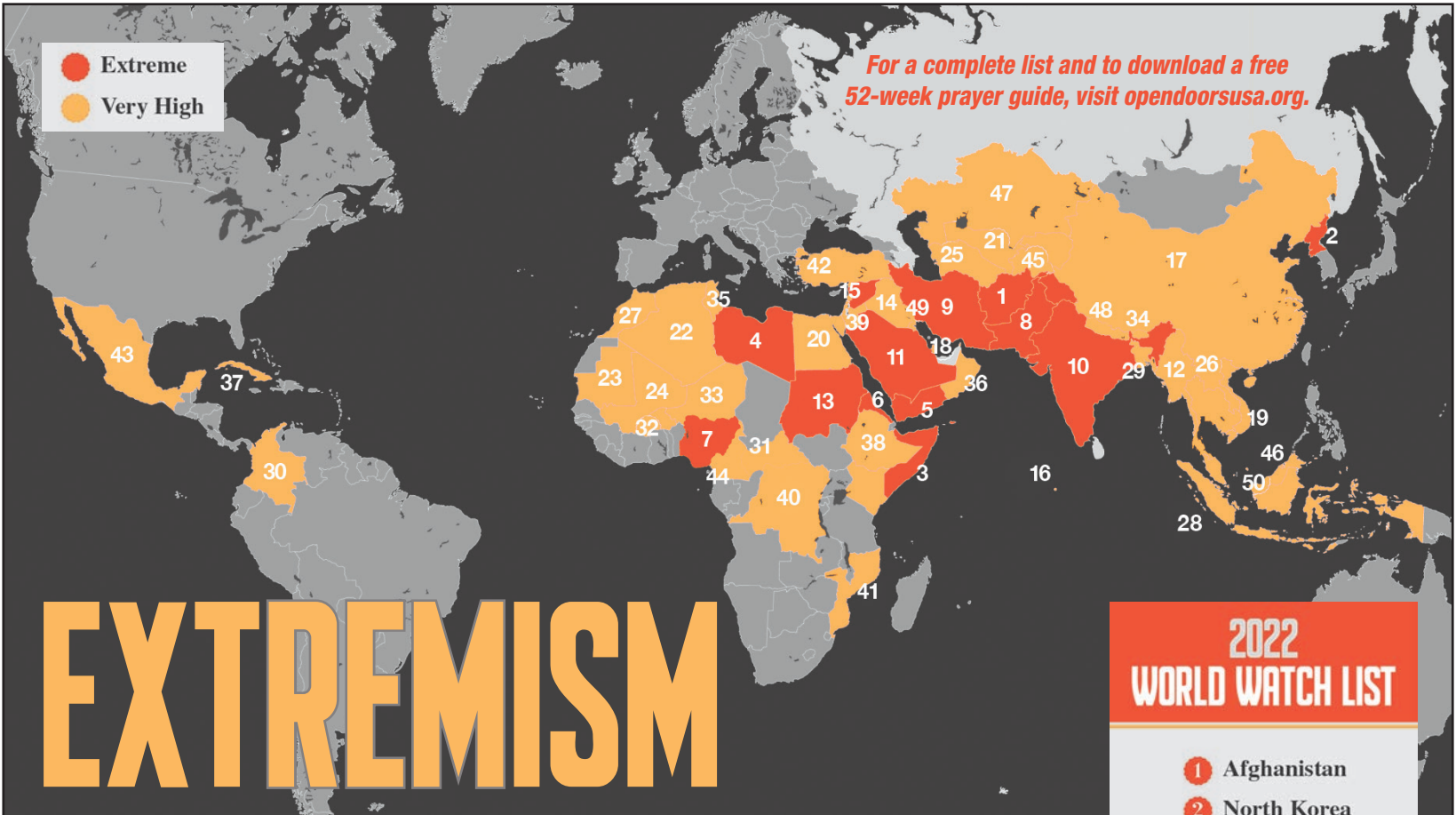
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EXTREMISM ON THE RISE

Afghanistan moves to No. 1 on World Watch List of most dangerous countries for Christians

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Afghanistan has moved to the top of the list of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution for their faith, overtaking North Korea for the first time in more than two decades. The 2022 World Watch List, compiled by Open Doors USA, a missions organization

that works in the world’s most oppressive regions to empower and equip persecuted Christians, was released Jan. 19.

Top spot

The shift in the top spot doesn’t mean the situation for Christians in North Korea has gotten better, said David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors, only that Afghanistan has gotten worse. “You’re going to be killed in North Korea for being a Christian. You’re going to be killed in Afghanistan for being a Christian,” Curry said. Paul, an Afghan believer and one of the last refugees to

leave Afghanistan, described the situation in his country as “very dangerous” for believers.

“If you share [your faith,] maybe 5% of people they accept it, 95% maybe they will turn you [into the] Taliban,” he said. “That’s the fact in Afghanistan now.”

Long known for violence against anyone outside the Islamic faith, the Taliban took over the Afghan government Aug. 15, 2021. Christian converts are seen as traitors for leaving Islam, enemies of their religion, their state and their communities who deserve death. The Taliban

now has the means to target Afghan Christians, almost all of whom are converts from Islam.

Most expatriate Christians have left the country, though Open Doors estimates a few thousand Christian converts remain.

Many Afghan Christians are thought to be in hiding.

Taliban power

As the Taliban consolidates its power throughout the country, the situation for these believers will grow increasingly challenging, Open Doors reports. An already deadly (See ‘Christian,’ page 17)

2022 WORLD WATCH LIST	
1	Afghanistan
2	North Korea
3	Somalia
4	Libya
5	Yemen
6	Eritrea
7	Nigeria
8	Pakistan
9	Iran
10	India



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Photo by Dianna L. Cagle/The Alabama Baptist
Megan Harris (left) and Selah Vetter joined TAB Media Group this month to work with both The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper. Harris will focus on editing and Vetter on writing.

Spring interns join TAB Media staff

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Two new interns have joined the TAB Media staff this semester, bringing with them a variety of skills and experience.

Megan Harris, a December 2021 graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, will focus on proof-reading TAB Media’s print publications and assisting with copy editing.

Selah Vetter, a senior at Samford, will write news and feature articles and help with news summaries for the print editions.

Both Harris and Vetter will focus mainly on helping produce The Baptist Paper, though they also will assist with The Alabama Baptist.

Both say they are looking forward to the new opportunity.

“As a Christian, I am excited to be able to incorporate my love and passion of journalism with my faith at The Alabama Baptist, a newspaper I have admired for many years now,” Vetter said. “I am excited to be able to use this opportunity to learn and serve within the community of Christ through my writing.”

Harris said she is enjoying collaborating “with such a wonderful team that has already been so welcoming, supportive and encouraging to me.”

“I’m also looking forward to learning more about the editing process and working in a faith-based environment,” she added.

‘I’m grateful’

“The stories TAB shares make a difference for the gospel, and I’m grateful for this amazing opportunity to be a part of their work.”

Last spring Harris worked with national Woman’s Missionary Union as a writing and editing intern.

She also has experience working as a textbook department assistant at Westminster Christian Academy in Huntsville and as a tutor and student leader at Samford’s writing center.

Harris earned a bachelor’s degree in English language and literature.

Vetter previously served as a freelance reporter for TAB and as news editor for The Samford Crimson, the university’s campus newspaper.

She also has worked as a content producer intern for Bham Now, editorial director for Anchored Passion and an editorial intern for Shelby County Newspapers. She currently is working toward a bachelor’s degree in journalism/mass communication and Spanish.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

The Alabama Baptist

“If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32

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OPINION



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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@RashionalThts

Vision for what God's going to do outshines daunting journey ahead

The congregation at New Life Missionary Baptist Church in Ensley — a little southwest of Birmingham near Midfield — may be few in number, but their heart for the Lord is a mighty force.

And when God led them to donate their building to the Jefferson County District Missionary Baptist Association, they didn't blink.

"God said to give the association the building," Pastor Curtis Lee said, so the decision was easy.

The church body worships in an area on the first floor of the education building that once served as a Sunday School department with adjoining classrooms.

It's the perfect space for the active members of New Life, but it's only a tiny section of the full campus — a campus that has enormous potential for reaching the surrounding neighborhood for Christ.

New Life, a 2004 church plant affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, purchased the building in 2009.

They bought it from Green Acres Baptist Church, a once-thriving Southern Baptist church and member of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

And now it's time for New Life to find another new home, Lee said, noting he and the congregation are confident God is at work with the vision and enthusiasm of the association's leader, Victor L. Harkins Sr., pastor of Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Bessemer.

Pastor Harkins sees past the leaky roof, damaged flooring and original green paint on the walls.

He even laughed when one of the doorknobs came off in his hand as he closed the door behind me. The repairs needed are massive, it's true, but Pastor Harkins isn't deterred.

He already sees the bright smiles on the children's faces as they eat a snack and play games after school — before digging into their homework with a tutor, of course.

He hears the laughter from those same youth as they find a place to belong and grow in

positive ways, all while hearing about Jesus and learning to follow Him.

Pastor Harkins senses the relief expressed by the single mothers as they find resources and continuing education opportunities.

He already feels the hugs from the area senior adults who discover a place to serve.

"We don't need to recreate the wheel, we just need to connect with the wheel that's already rolling," Pastor Harkins shared as we explored the facility.

"This building sits in the midst of the community, and while New Life church has been doing great things, we (as an association of 40 congregations) can do even greater things.

"I'm envisioning this building being in operation seven days a week, and I know God has given the building and the vision to us," he said.

At the same time, "I know we have to plan. I know we have to prepare, and I know we have to get the building functional," he added. "I know that doesn't happen overnight.

"While it is functioning with the New Life congregation, it isn't fully functional for what it has the potential to do, and that's where we are looking for partners to help us get the property ready for use," he said.

Each church in the association also will assist with the overall remodel project. Some will help clean out old equipment, while others will paint walls.

Calvin Bell, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Bessemer (a member of the Jefferson County District Missionary Baptist Association), will oversee the technology side of the building.

He's working with the Center for Congregational Resources and others to assist with consulting, setup and donations.

Installing proper equipment will not only provide the needed resources for community services but also allow church plants and congregations in transition to hold services in the building.

And "for the first time in its 128 years, the [association] has its own headquarters with an educational wing that can host all of its meetings," Pastor Bell said.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Your Voice



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

Pastors Conference president: How to pray for your pastor

By Matt Henslee

2022 SBC Pastors Conference president and associational mission strategist for Collin Baptist Association in Texas

Many years ago, someone asked Charles Spurgeon why he was so successful. His response? “Because my people pray for me.”

While many today know Spurgeon as a powerful preacher of the gospel who we often call the “Prince of Preachers,” he knew where the power was — prayer.

Most pastors don’t have 100 in attendance on any given Sunday. According to the 2020 Faith Communities Today study and the 2019 Annual Church Profile, 65% of all U.S. congregations and 67% of Southern Baptist churches average less than triple digits. Pastors can still ask their people to pray for them.

During the height of COVID-19, I asked several people who couldn’t join us in person to pray specifically and passionately on Sundays from their homes. And they did.

By the end of my time serving our church, we averaged more in

attendance and baptized more people than ever before. Why? I firmly believe I can say with Spurgeon, “Because my people prayed for me.”

Here are five ways to pray for your pastor:

1. Pray for his family.

Pastors wear a lot of hats, but if he’s married with children, none are as crucial as husband and dad. Take some time to pray for his home, his first ministry.

Ask God to help him love and lead his family well, making the most of his time in the home. Ask the Lord to give him the courage to put off the trivial matters of ministry, so he’s fully engaged as the husband and father God calls him to be.

Helpful Scriptures to guide prayer here are Ephesians 5:25 and Psalm 127:3–5.



HENSLEE

2. Pray for his schedule.

It’s easy for your pastor to feel tugs from every direction, especially as a new year begins.

He’s trying to prepare engaging sermons, has people to visit in the hospital, worries homebound members will fall through the cracks, and is attempting to follow up with all the holiday visitors.

Pray God will help him manage his schedule well enough to spend time with his family and lead his church family at the start of a new year.

Helpful Scriptures to guide prayer here are Ephesians 5:15–17 and Psalm 90:12.

3. Pray for his sermon preparation.

Speaking of your pastor’s schedule, he’s likely working hard in the study to prepare fresh sermons, either by continuing an old series or launching a new one.

Pray God gives him focus and perseverance in sermon prep, as well as clarity and wisdom as he aims to rightly handle the word of God.

Helpful Scriptures to guide prayer here are 2 Timothy 2:15 and Psalm 119:18.

4. Pray for his preaching.

Your pastor prepares sermons in the study, but he preaches them in the pulpit.

As the new year dawns, some folks may consider visiting a church for the first time or returning after a long absence.

Pray God will fill him with passion and conviction as he declares the good news to encourage the

saints and lead the lost to love and follow Jesus.

Helpful Scriptures to guide prayer here are Hebrews 4:12 and Mark 16:15.

5. Pray for his walk with God.

None of the above will matter if your pastor isn’t walking with God. If he’s not spending daily time with the Lord, his family, preaching and everything else will suffer.

As silly as it may sound, pray your pastor will wake up even before his alarm goes off with one thing in mind: time with God.

Pray he will devote himself to prayer and Bible reading first and foremost before he even begins his day of ministry and family time.

Helpful Scriptures to guide prayer here are Philippians 4:6 and Psalm 119:9.

E.M. Bounds once said, “What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use — men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.”

That’s not new, of course; even the Apostle Paul asked for prayer not once, but eight times (Rom. 15:30–32; 2 Cor. 1:10–11; Eph. 6:18–20; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:2–4; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1–2; Philemon 22).

Prayer was so important to Jesus’ disciples that they asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1), and it should be important to you, too.

As we begin 2022, join the disciples, Paul’s churches and Spurgeon’s church by praying for your pastor.

Engage culture with the gospel

Yes! Thank you for encouraging [the TV show “Squid Game”] as a jumping off point rather than avoiding it. Great approach (with your coverage)!

We’ve got to not run from culture if we are going to impact it. Plus, we can’t really isolate ourselves like we think.

Therefore, how we can use those things as a pivot to the gospel is key.

I’m not suggesting we watch everything, but that’s why each person is built by the Lord differently. You’ll be attracted to entertainment I’m not and vice versa.

Either way, by faith those entertainment pieces can be used by God with the people He puts in our path to share the gospel.

Mike Chitwood
Auburn, Ala.

“Eloquent words without the endorsement of a godly life become rather lifeless.”

JERRY BATSON

Theology 101, “Jesus Came to Teach Truth”

We all have different strengths, purposes, passions, gifts, abilities and roles in the Kingdom. As you recognize those gifts and talents that God gave you and share your faith, your life will bless and encourage others.

David Jeremiah

Pastor, author, radio host

“As they spoke after the game, the first thing they said is, ‘The only reason we’re here is because of God,’” said **Brandon Garrick**, a deacon at Grove Hill Baptist Church who helped organize a weekly breakfast for local high school foot-

ball players, quoting members of the Clarke County High School state 2A championship football team.

“The goal is making sure that even the smallest of our churches has an opportunity to be engaged in the Great Commission whatever way they are led to,” said **Justin Olvey**, director of missions for West Cullman Baptist Association.

The Apostle Paul [in 2 Corinthians 5:14–20] reminds us that if we are reconciled to God through Christ, we are dead to ourselves, to our old ways, to things like our prejudices.

Paul tells us as ambassadors of Christ we must see and love people as Christ does, with the mission to reconcile them to God through the salvation offered by Jesus. ...

There is no room for prejudice in the Christian heart. Not a smidge. But Christians categorically disqualify themselves from service to Christ if their first response to anyone begins with, “Yeah, but ...”

The gospel is for all people and is not ours to conditionalize or withhold.

Chris Turner

**Director of communications
Tennessee Baptist Mission Board**

From the *Twitterverse*

@brocraigc

“Do not carry yesterday or tomorrow with you; live for today and the twelve hours you are in.” —Martyn Lloyd-Jones

@TaylorBurgess87

Portable church. Holiday weekend. Lots of folks out sick. Pouring rain made for very challenging load-in and load-out. But by God’s grace, His people gathered. We prayed, sang, preached, observed the Lord’s Supper and celebrated 7 baptisms. Easy? Almost never. Worth it? Always.

@claysmith79

Yelling at secularism won’t change it.

@shane_pruitt78

As parents, when our actions tell our kids that chasing a ball is a greater priority than chasing Christ, that commitment to practice is a

greater priority than commitment to church ... then, we can’t be surprised when Christ & church is not their priority when they become adults.

@kswhitfield

“Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before.”
1 Thessalonians 4:11

@nathanafinn

There are no nobodies in the church. There are no Big Dogs in the church. In the church, everybody matters. 1 Corinthians 12:21–27

@evanlenow

Seminary students, plant yourself in a church. Soak up all you can. Expand the ministry of that church wherever you go. Invest in friendships that will last. Who knows, one

day you might get to go back and invest in the next generation.

@JackieHillPerry

This is God’s will for you:

1. Rejoice always.
2. Pray without ceasing.
3. Give thanks ...

@andrewhebert86

Pastor: If you are worn out, burned out, fearful about the future, questioning your effectiveness and maybe even your calling, don’t lose hope. Most pastors I talk to are feeling the same way. What you do matters. You matter. God sees you. Keep going.

@DustinBenge

Pastor, if Jesus doesn’t shine brilliantly through tomorrow’s sermon, throw it away and start over.

@kferg16

The antidote for greed is generosity.

Thoughts on church membership

I’ve battled some church members over the years who’ve insisted we remove people from membership who don’t attend.

“All they’re doing is hurting our records,” they said.

I’ve gingerly reminded critics that people are our “record.”

At one time we accepted a spiritual responsibility to care for these folk. If we cavalierly remove people, who will care for them? Who will pray for them? Who will seek to serve them in the name of Christ?

We must love people more than they sometimes love us.

We know trusting Christ for salvation is primary, but it’s biblical to seek out like-minded believers as a new spiritual family once we come to Christ.

Indeed, most who come to Christ do so through the witness of local churches, so it’s normal and natural for them to continue this relationship with church membership.

Churches have members whose names are on their rolls but who attend other churches, have joined other churches or don’t attend any church.

Thus, the matter of church membership has taken a hit, and we struggle to maintain meaningful church memberships. I think we’re the poorer for this.

Accountability is lessened. The church in the New Testament is called the “bride of Christ.” Christ surely loves His bride and serving Him through His church is a matter of obedience (Eph. 5:25).

Being a Christian and being an active member of a local church go hand-in-glove.

The church continues to point us to a world in need and says, “Brothers and sisters, let’s go.”

Pastor Michael J. Brooks
Siluria Baptist Church
Alabaster, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

3 stories you should know



Facebook photo

Struck by a Dec. 10 tornado that ravaged its community, St. James AME in Mayfield, Kentucky, will receive emergency funds from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. The Action Fund has assisted with more than 200 preservation projects nationally and seeks to help churches with practical needs and historic stewardship. Founded in 1868, St. James AME has only 15 or so active members but is assisting in tornado relief efforts. (TAB)

High court to hear football prayer case

The Supreme Court said Jan. 14 it will hear the case of Joe Kennedy, a former Seattle-area football coach who was removed from his job at Bremerton High School because he refused to stop praying on the field.

According to his lawyers, Kennedy's religious beliefs "compelled him to give thanks through prayer" at the end of games. Students often joined him, and he eventually began to give motivational speeches that included religious content, the Associated Press reported.

When Kennedy refused a request by the school system to change his practice, he was put on paid leave and sued to get his job back.

Kennedy is represented by First Liberty Institute.

The case is expected to be argued in the spring. (TAB)

NCAA declines to set transgender policy

The NCAA board of governors on Jan. 19 declined to issue a definitive policy on collegiate transgender athletes, instead leaving their status up to each sport's governing body.

The new policy is effective immediately with the start of winter sports championships. It comes as a transgender college swimmer is shattering women's records after competing three years as a man.

An official on the panel said the policy attempts to provide an "inclusive" and "fair" environment.

The Women's Sports Policy Working Group is one of several groups who have called on sports governing bodies to review and update their rules on participation of transgender student athletes.

Read more at tabonline.org/ncaa-transgender. (TAB)

Persecuted church

Muslim Fulani kill three Christians, wound five, vow more attacks

IRIGWE, Nigeria — Muslim Fulani extremists are suspected of killing three Christians and injuring five others in attacks in Nigeria's Irigwe area, reports the advocacy group International Christian Concern.

Five people were attacked Dec. 31 returning home from an annual prayer meeting for Christian communities of Irigwe chieftdom.

Killed was Adamu Sunday, 38, who was burned beyond recognition. The four others suffered injuries, according to the report.

A survivor said one of the militants declared this "the first attack for the new year" and warned that more would come in 2022.

"Attacks of this nature have been ongoing for the past 20 years," said ICC President Jeff King.

Around Christmas, three Christians were ambushed after a night of caroling. Gideon Amba, 33, and Laraba Sunday, 16, were shot to death. Veronica Sule was hospitalized with gunshot wounds, the report says.

Nigeria is No. 7 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List, up two spots from No. 9 on the 2021 list of countries where it is most dangerous to live as a Christian.

Pastor beaten following secret church service, attacked for leaving Islam

WAJIR, Kenya — A Somali-born pastor in Kenya suffered a broken leg during a beating Dec. 3 for leaving Islam to become a Christian, Morning Star News reports.

The pastor, whose name was withheld for safety, said four Kenyan-born, ethnic Somali Muslims beat him near Wajir, 62 miles from the

Somali border, according to reports. The assailants fled when a vehicle approached. A passerby took the pastor to a hospital.

The attack occurred after the pastor had led an underground meeting of 13 new Christians of Somali descent, Morning Star reports.

The pastor left Somalia 15 years ago and became a Christian four years ago. Since the attack, the family has relocated, the report says.

Somalia is No. 3 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places where it is most difficult to be a Christian. Kenya was No. 49 on last year's list but dropped out of the top 50 this year.



NordNordWest, Creative Commons

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Harold Cleveland Proctor**, 91, died Jan. 10. Proctor, an Eagle Scout, held a bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) and master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary.

Ordained in 1949 at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Birmingham (now located in Hoover), he was a minister for 72 years. He served churches in Texas, Georgia and Alabama: 66th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham; First Baptist Church Albertville; Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham; and New Temple Baptist Church, Dora. He was preceded in death by his wife of 29 years, Peggy.

He is survived by his seven children, 16 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.



PROCTOR

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Tom Daniel** is the new interim pastor of **South Luverne Baptist Church**. Previously, he was interim pastor of First Baptist Church Greenville.

A graduate of Troy University with a bachelor's in business, Daniel holds a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He has led churches in Louisiana, Georgia, Florida and Alabama (including Excel Baptist Church, Monroeville, where he was pastor for 16 years). Daniel retired from FBC Lynn Haven, Florida, two years ago. He and his wife, Sylvia, have two children and five grandchildren.



DANIEL

► **Craig Burkhalter** is the new pastor of **Rock Hill Baptist Church, Honoraville**. Previously, he served as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Georgiana. He and his wife, Linda, have one daughter and two grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Amy Byrd** is the new minister to girls for **Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover**. Raised at the church, she has been on staff since 2008 and has served as director of girl's ministry since 2016. She holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn and will finish a master's in biblical counseling in spring 2022 at Southern Seminary. She and her husband, William, have three children.



BYRD

► **Ellen Olive** is the new minister of pre-

school for **Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover**. She and her family have been active members and leaders at Hunter Street since joining in 2008.

Olive holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama and a master's degree from the University of West Alabama in elementary education. She has taught in Pelham and Hoover City Schools for 14 years, most recently as a kindergarten teacher. She and her husband, Anthony, have two children.



OLIVE

► **Doug Dortch** retired as senior minister of **Mountain Brook Baptist Church** in November after serving 10 years.

He holds a bachelor's degree in counseling and guidance from the University of Montevallo, and M.Div., Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Southern Seminary.



DORTCH

He previously served at First Baptist Church Tallahassee, Florida; Trinity Baptist Church, Madison, Alabama; FBC Elba, Alabama; and Lebanon Baptist Church, Kentucky. He and his wife, Judy, have two children and three grandchildren.

► **Wayne Splawn** is the new senior minister of **Mountain Brook Baptist Church**.

Splawn has served on staff at the church since 2008, when he came to serve as student minister and then associate minister (2014). His wife, Mary, also serves on staff as the minister of connections.

He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of South Carolina-Upstate. The couple attended Beeson Divinity School where they each received master of divinity degrees. He also holds a doctor of ministry degree from Beeson. The Splawns have three children.



SPLAWN

► Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, is slated to speak at **"A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism,"** sponsored by Birmingham Metro Association and the State Board of Missions. No registration is needed for the March 6 event. The program begins at 6 p.m. at Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer.

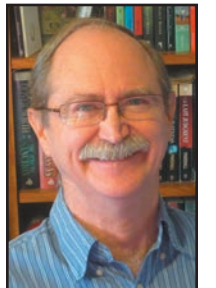
► **Frank Jones**, known for his musical talent across Alabama and the Southeast, recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of Frank Jones Ministries with a Jan. 16 concert at the Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla. Jones began

playing the piano at age 3 learning familiar hymns. When not playing at churches across the Southeast, you will find Jones serving at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, as music associate and also as senior adult event coordinator for the State Board of Missions.

Photo by Debbie Campbell/
The Alabama Baptist

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Danny Cotton**, who was serving as the interim pastor, has now been called as bivocational pastor of **Oldfield Baptist Church, Sylacauga**. For 29 years he was pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, near Talladega, until November of 2018 when it disbanded. For the next two years, Cotton served as supply or interim pastor. He also is the part-time financial ministry assistant for the association. He and his wife, Linda, have three children and five grandchildren.



COTTON

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **Pastor Marvin Minton** (center) retired Dec. 31 after 26 years as pastor of **Crawford Road Baptist Church, Phenix City**. The church held a retirement reception Dec. 19, and Tom O'Flinn (left), chairman of the deacons, presented Minton and his wife, Susan (right), with a plaque and a gift from the church.

Before coming to Crawford Road, Minton served churches in Chicago and his hometown of Pensacola, Florida.

During his time at Crawford Road, he led the church through a variety of acquisitions of property and construction projects.

He also led the congregation to become debt-free in recent years and kept the members connected and the church strong during the pandemic difficulties that took place in 2020 and 2021.

Photo courtesy of Crawford
Road Baptist Church

Send staff changes, retirements, death announcements, church anniversaries, etc., to news@thealabamabaptist.org. Submit events at least three weeks prior to the event and include high-resolution photos with your announcement if possible.

Headline news

from around the Southeast

ARKANSAS

Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock has formed a new Women on Mission group. Women on Mission is a missions group under the umbrella of Woman's Missionary Union designed to equip adult women to become active disciples through missions projects, ministries, prayer, giving and Bible study.

The new group, "Plarn & Prayer Group," meets monthly to make plastic mats for children in the local school district who do not have permanent homes and to pray for the students, families, teachers and staff. Plarn, a combination of the words plastic and yarn, is when women cut plastic shopping bags into strips then others



Photo courtesy of Arkansas Baptist News

loop and tie them together to form a ball. They used the balls of plarn to crochet eight mats to provide a barrier separating the ground from a blanket or sleeping bag

for the North Little Rock School District liaison for homeless students. According to the liaison, in 2020 approximately 700 students in the entire district were classified as homeless.

FLORIDA

As pastor of Lighthouse Baptist Church since 2007, Jess Burton has sought ways to impact his community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is especially dedicated to making a difference in the lives of young students in Citrus County's local schools through a Good News Club, sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship.

"For many children, this is the only church in their lives," Burton said.

At age 70, he has been volunteering with the club at Romeo Elementary in nearby Dunnellon for the past decade. Good News Clubs are an after-school program held weekly at elementary schools. From 90 minutes to 2 hours, the program includes a Bible story and a variety of activities with an evangelistic focus, including prayer time and singing.

The organization is seeking more church sponsors to help find volunteers for additional clubs.



Photo courtesy of Florida Baptist Convention

"We have schools across the state who would like to have a Good News Club. The biggest challenge is finding a church to sponsor it," Burton said. "Our schools are inviting Good News Clubs ... back into our schools. We just need to recruit more churches to take up these opportunities."

GEORGIA/KENTUCKY

Churches in north Georgia knew children in Kentucky communities leveled by tornadoes in December needed new bikes and toys to lift their spirits. In an inspiring show of generosity, Georgia churches and others donated more than \$80,000 for 230 children after Pastor Jamie Callaway of Faith Baptist Church in Bowman posted a call for donations on Facebook. Children under 14 received the bikes. Older teens received gift cards to purchase what they wanted.

"To see the Lord work all this out was just absolutely amazing. It was something," Callaway said. "Our community, through churches, individuals and businesses, came through in an unbelievable way."

KENTUCKY

Pastor Jamie Masso and his wife, Ana, have been the rock in the Mayfield Hispanic community since deadly tornadoes swept through Kentucky in December. Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana has become a shelter and a food pantry, a place where the Hispanic community can find what they need.

"We are open for that one person who is needing something," he said. "From facilitating a haircut, providing food, to fixing a car, we at Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana try to help people in so many ways, even after hours."

The couple's day typically starts around 7:30. It's 12 hours or more before the work is done due to a day filled with serving others, including feeding the community lunch and dinner.

"Me, my wife and people from the church are 100% (for the people)," he said. "If it was not by God's strength and people stepping up, we couldn't do what we have been doing."

LOUISIANA

More than 100 members of First Baptist Church Zachary recently celebrated "Geaux Sunday" with four baptisms followed by intentional community outreach.

Four teams planted gospel seeds in homes neighboring the church.

The first team delivered 100 bags that included a coffee shop gift card and an invitation to attend



Photo courtesy of Louisiana Baptist Message

upcoming church events. Another reconnected with 50 families who had not attended the church in 12 months. The third team wrote encouraging cards that were mailed to indi-

viduals in Zachary, and the final team prayed for the effort that took place.

Before venturing into the community, the church observed the Lord's Supper.

Jake Roudkovski, interim pastor and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor, said the day was fruitful because members stepped outside the four walls of the church and shared the love of Christ with their neighbors.

"God favored our efforts when we intentionally decided to go to the community," Roudkovski said. "Going is part of the Great Commission. When we go, good things happen in the church and in our lives."

MISSISSIPPI

A federal court has approved a consent decree allowing developers to construct the first Islamic mosque in the city of Horn Lake in DeSoto County, Mississippi, over the initial objections of local officials, according to The Baptist Record.

Although noise and traffic were cited in local officials' opposition to mosque construction, mosque developers alleged anti-Muslim discrimination played a prominent role in the city's initial denial of the permits necessary to proceed with construction.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi issued a Jan. 4 press release that stated, "Horn Lake officials must approve the mosque's site plan, which they previously rejected, and act quickly in the future to address any other permitting and building-related matters."

The Horn Lake mosque will be the northernmost of 20 mosques in the state. (Margaret Colson of The Baptist Paper contributed.)

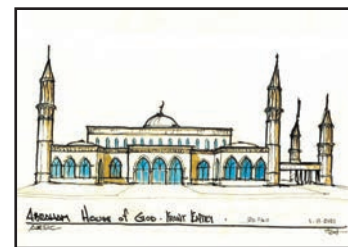


Photo courtesy of ACLU

Leading and Loving CHILDREN

By Julie Redmond Donovan | The Alabama Baptist

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY • PART 1 OF 2

More than a babysitter: Gospel-focused children's ministry points kids to Christ

EDITOR'S NOTE — As children's ministry leaders in your church, you are an instrument God is using to bring Him glory and grow His Kingdom.

God has given you a special gift to lead and love the children you teach. Your investment of time and your ministry to each child and his or her family has a purpose.

In this two-part series, children's leader Julie Donovan addresses several important topics related to children's ministry. We hope you will save these resources and share them with your team.

If you teach preschoolers, the fact that you change diapers, wipe snotty noses and clean sticky hands may make it feel like you're just a babysitter, but I promise you are so much more.

A preschool teacher, like any other Sunday School teacher, ministers to the learner but also to the entire family. When you teach children of any age, you are allowing parents to study the Word and worship God while their children are cared for and taught as well.

Filling cups

The parents' cups can be refilled at church so they can use the overflow at home with their children. This also means the children's cups can be filled with God's word. At church, every family member's needs can be spiritually met.

Don't waste the small amount of time you have with your young students. Here are some tips for making the most of the 1–2 hours you

spend with them each week:

► Invest time into your lesson and into knowing your children.

Children know when you are unprepared and when you have a lack of interest. Set aside time to prepare your lesson. You will start seeing results in your own life, as well as in the lives of the children in your classroom.

► Get to know the children.

Take a few moments during Sunday School or Bible study to ask your students about their weekend or their favorite sport. Make it fun by passing around a ball or rolling some dice to see who goes next.

► **Write letters.** Keep in touch with your students during the week by writing each child a letter commenting on what he or she said in class. Children love to get letters, and parents notice and love the extra things you do for their children.

► **Share the gospel each week.** Bible stories reveal so much about God and His relationship with us, His relationship to the

world and His power. Sometimes, especially with children, we tend to focus on the moral lesson from the Bible story. This is not bad, but the Bible is so much more than teaching us how to be "good" people.

Resources

- **"Show Them Jesus"**
- **"The Jesus Bible"**
- **letthelittlechildrencome.com**



Photo by Doug Rogers/State Board of Missions

Investing time in your church's children's ministry helps not only the children but the entire family. Each lesson should steer the children to the gospel.

The Bible is not simply a moralistic book that shows us how to live a good life. There are so many worldly books that teach us how to be good people, so why don't we just read them? And quite honestly, it might be easier to follow those books than the Bible.

The Bible points to Jesus from the beginning to the end, and all of it is for God's glory. When teaching children, we should do the same thing — always point them to the cross.

Connect to the cross

The cross should always be where you end your Bible study lesson. You never know when a child will understand the gospel.

Each week, explain the gospel in a way they can understand.

Children need to see that without the cross, we have no hope but because of what Jesus did on the cross, our sins are forgiven when we repent and believe in Him as God's Son.

Some of you may be saying, "I don't know how to connect my Bible study to the cross." Everything in the Bible points to Jesus.

Seek out fun object lessons that can help children understand the gospel. Some learn by touching or seeing rather than listening. Many resources incorporate all the senses into children's lessons.

Always aim for Jesus in your lesson and help children see the importance of His sacrifice on the cross. You never want to miss an opportunity of seeing what the Holy Spirit can do in your class.

Leading and Loving Children

A children's curriculum that is scripturally sound, age-appropriate and engaging will help students learn Bible truths and have fun at the same time.



Photo by Doug Rogers/State Board of Missions

Gospel centered

4 tips for choosing a children's ministry curriculum that teaches truth from Scripture

When deciding which curriculum to use for your class or children's ministry, it is important to be intentional and prayerful in your search.

A good curriculum should allow you to teach God's truth from Scripture to build up and equip students for daily living.

Obviously, the application is different for children than adults, but we must teach what the Bible actually says and listen to what God is teaching rather than teaching our own interpretations.

Make your search easier

Fortunately, many good resources are available. Follow these four tips to make your search easier:

1. Ensure your choices are age-appropriate. It can be easy to go over children's heads when teaching or to oversimplify a lesson and misstate the key truths. The best curriculums introduce theological concepts to children in a way that best fits their ages.

A frequent issue, especially in

small churches, is having a large group with a wide range of ages. Most of the time in a situation like this, it is best to target the middle group — look for lessons that will not lose the interest of the older children but also will not be too far above the learning level of the younger children. For example, if your children's group includes first through fifth graders, aim for the third grade level. This will help balance out the other ages.

2. Use the strengths of your leaders and children. If you have leaders who are musically inclined, find a curriculum using music as part of the teaching plan. If your children's ministry is full of athletes, use games to teach them more about Jesus. The same could be said of arts and crafts, large groups, small groups and table activities.

If you know your people, you can use curriculum that will make teaching easier to engage. Don't make it harder on your teachers than it needs to be. Prayerfully match their gifts with the curriculum.

3. Find something engaging and creative. We want children to come to church

to hear the good news and know God loves them and has a plan for their lives. That message and our focus are too important not to make teaching engaging and creative.

That is what Jesus did with His stories and object lessons.

Use a science experiment to help further the message or a musical motion time to help children be more engaged. Yes, you want to sit down and truly study God's word and dive into what the Bible says

— the Bible is always our text and the center of everything we do.

But children, especially in today's culture, learn through many different means, so let's make use of all that is appropriate. Look for resources that allow for creativity and address different learning styles while always pointing to the biblical lesson.

Point to Jesus

4. Choose gospel-centered curriculum. Everything in the Bible points to salvation through Jesus. We should follow that example. This does not mean you have an altar call after each Bible study with children, but letting them see and hear the gospel message is most important.

Sharing the gospel is urgent because you never know when it will click in their heads. The curriculum you choose must be gospel centered. This is the most essential component. As you research curriculum you should always be asking: "What will this teach our kids about Jesus?"

Resource

Ages & Stages: Levels of Biblical Learning
lifeway.com/en/special-emphasis/levels-of-biblical-learning

Keeping Order

Children's ministry challenges: dealing with discipline issues at your church

Discipline issues in a ministry setting is one of the biggest challenges children's leaders face.

Your No. 1 task as a teacher is to lovingly share the gospel, while also juggling authority and respect. How do you show love while also keeping order in your Sunday School classroom, children's worship, choir or Bible study?

► **Set firm, yet kind rules and expectations at the beginning.**

This will let children know where you stand and how you handle things. It also allows children to know your expectations of what they should and should not do in the classroom.

The rules can be simple: no running; no pushing; speak kind words; sit down at Bible story time, during group or table time; raise your hand to speak and wait for your name to be called.

These are simple rules for preschoolers, but grade schoolers might need them as well. Place the rules somewhere in the classroom, and refer to them when needed. You also may want to give the rules to parents so they know your expectations. Setting clear boundaries is good for children.

Helpful method

► **Utilize the sit, tap, whisper and outside method.**

Some children have a little more wiggle than others, and it might be more difficult for them to sit still. The sit, tap, whisper and outside method can help.

The first step in this method is sit. While the lead teacher is telling the Bible story, ask an assistant to sit next to the wiggler.

The second step is tap. The assistant can tap the child on the shoulder and point to the teacher as if saying, "Listen!" The third step is whisper. The assistant will quietly say to the child, "Let's listen to what Mrs. Smith has to teach us about God. Can you do that?"



Children often test their teachers to see what they can get away with, which is why they need clear boundaries at school, at home and at church. Set and explain kind but firm rules to help maintain order in your church classroom.

If these steps do not work, quietly take the child to the hallway. Ask the child what he or she has done wrong and what the rules of the classroom are.

If the child does not know, gently explain that he or she needs to sit and listen, or whatever the issue might be. Then quietly walk the child back into the room. If he or she continues to misbehave, point to the rules when needed.

► **Talk to the parents.**

When is it appropriate to talk to parents about disciplinary issues?

First, you do not need to talk to parents if it is a one- or two-time occurrence. You never want church to be a burden or stressful to parents. If you talk to them every week about how their child never listens or can't sit still, they may not return to church.

Show kindness

Second, if a child is hitting, pinching or hurting others, the parents do need to know. Tell them in a loving way what is happening.

Third, decide how to talk to par-

ents if their child never listens and is always disobeying. Parents are protective of their children, as they should be, so you want to always show kindness.

Be a cheerleader

Consider phrases such as: "How can I best minister to your child?"

"I love that he or she is in my classroom or Bible study."

"How can I make church easier

for you as a parent? I want you here."

Talking to parents about behavioral concerns is uncomfortable for everyone involved, but it needs to be done. Let the parents know you are their biggest cheerleader and you want to help them.

Importance of prayer

► **Pray for your children and their families.**

While you might see this child once a week, the parents are probably struggling with the same issues at home every day. As a teacher, you are giving them a break and often allowing them a time of worship or adult Bible study. Pray for everyone to have strength.

I challenge you to open your Bible and read Philippians 4:6-7, then pray for the children in your classroom and in your church, as well as for their parents. Pray the child will want to sit down and have a thirst to hear God's word.

God has placed you in this position for a reason. Perhaps you are where you are to bless and help a particular family, and in turn that child will bless you. Continue to pray for the children you minister to, and love them within the stress.

I am cheering you on because I know the stress you are dealing with. You can do it!



About the author

My name is Julie Redmond Donovan, and I have worked in children's ministry for 12 years. Children's ministry is the call God set on my life when I was 9 years old. God prepared me as I worked at church camps and taught preschoolers.

I earned a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University and a master of divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. I most recently served as children's and preschool minister at North Shelby Baptist Church in Birmingham. My husband, Connor, serves as pastor of Hollinger's Island Baptist Church in Mobile. We have two young children.

Children's worship or children in worship?

Many churches have a separate worship time for children on Sunday mornings, sometimes known as children's church. Other churches feel it's important for the entire family to participate in worship together with the congregation.

I have led children's worship and also have struggled with whether or not to have it during the Sunday morning service. Children's worship is not bad, but there are many benefits to children being part of the corporate worship service.

First, a multi-generational service allows children to witness the biblical components of worship. They will see baptisms, they will see people participate in the Lord's Supper, they will know who their preacher and other ministers are and they will see many other attributes of corporate worship they truly cannot see in children's worship.

If children are participating in the service, they can ask questions about the sermon, the Lord's Supper, baptism or anything else they notice.

Focus on serving

Second, children will feel part of the corporate church. And if they are believers, they truly are.

Third, children will see their parents worship and serve the Lord.

On any given Sunday, a child might see Dad pass the offering plate or Mom sing a solo. While offerings and music can be part of a children's worship time too, watching their parents practice these elements of faith sets a strong example.

There is no other time children will see their parents, who should be their primary spiritual guide, worship like this. If children never worship with their parents, how can they imitate them?

Resource

"Why They St(r)ay: Helping Parents and Church Leaders Make Investments That Keep Children and Teens Connected to the Church for a Lifetime"
by Dr. Steve R. Parr and Dr. Tom Crites

2 tips

for including children in worship

How do you help parents teach their children to participate and worship during the church service? Here are some tips:

1. Involve your ministers. Ask your pastor to use sermon illustrations children will understand or your worship leader to sing a song the children will know. Consider a children's message during worship that helps connect them to the sermon.

2. Provide resources to guide engagement. At our church we have something called "Kid's Corner," a basket of clipboards with the weekly newsletter, a sermon notes sheet and an activity sheet that tracks with the sermon. We also provide crayons and pencils. These resources help children stay connected during the sermon by giving them something to do with their hands while they listen.

Alternately, a worship time for children allows many creative ways to open children's eyes to a greater understanding of God's word. Selfishly, I love children's worship. I love thinking of fun games, songs and age-appropriate ideas for Bible study that help children learn God's word and further build their foundation of faith.

Though each church has to do what best fits its situation, schedule

and volunteer capacity, there are ways to incorporate a children's worship time and include children in worship.

Alternate times

Perhaps you have children's worship only for certain grades or only twice a month. Maybe children's worship could be held at a different time, such as on Sunday or Wednesday night.

Moving children's worship to another time or day allows them to still have worship geared toward their age level while also having them in Sunday corporate worship.

There are a lot of reasons why this option works, but one really sticks out to me: What if a child only went to children's worship or only stayed in the preschool area from when they were born to when they were 10 or 11?

When that child does come to worship, he or she might not know what to do or how to act. He or she might not understand what is going on. Allowing children to sit in the service with their family benefits the children in the long run.

Find what fits

As you continue to pray and wrestle over what your church will do, be encouraged that there is no single right answer. Find what fits your church and your children's ministry, and do your very best to disciple the children in your care in how to worship God (Col. 3:23).

Bonus time: Use games and free play to build relationships

Sometimes children's leaders find they have extra time at the end of Sunday School or children's worship. Finding a way to make this bonus time fun and intentional can be challenging, but planning ahead will allow it to be productive.

Two ideas

► **Have games ready.** Utilize intentional games to get to know your students. Jesus was intentional in investing in the people around him while also teaching God's word. You should follow in Jesus' example when leading your students.

Choose games that don't rely

on the specific topic of the day's lesson and can be played any time. Games also work well at the end of a lesson, since once children focus on a fun physical activity, it can be hard to refocus their attention.

Plus, when parents come into the room to pick up their child or children, they would much rather see them playing a game than sitting and talking or causing chaos.

► **Plan a craft or table activity with a gospel focus.** Many hobby stores have inexpensive crafts with a religious theme. These can be pulled out if time allows.

Gospel-centered activities involve a little bit more preparation. You

can find easy bracelets or other activities that share the plan of salvation and allow an introduction to evangelism training for your students. Better yet, take time each week to teach a child-friendly evangelism tool. Help your students see how a simple tool is useful for talking to their friends about Jesus so they can be missionaries to their friends.

Resources

- **"Quicksilver"**
by Steve Butler
- **evangecube.com**



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

State Evangelism Conference

4

Locations

FREE ADMISSION
2022

Sharing Hope On The Road

JANUARY 30-31, 2022

Dauphin Way Baptist Church,
Mobile

SUNDAY EVENING
Chuck Kelley &
J.J. Washington

MONDAY MORNING
Sammy Gilbreath,
Lawrence Phipps
& Blake Newsom



For each event, the Sunday session begins at
5:30 p.m. Monday sessions are 9-11:30 a.m.

Ev

Evangelism
Everybody.

FEBRUARY 6-7, 2022

Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

SUNDAY EVENING
Noe Garcia &
Ted Traylor

MONDAY MORNING
Dean Inerra,
Lawrence Phipps
& Daniel Atkins



FEBRUARY 27-28, 2022

First Baptist Church, Pelham

SUNDAY EVENING
Jarman Leatherwood
& Lee Strobel

MONDAY MORNING
Lee Strobel &
Daven Watkins



Sunday evening sessions at all locations are being
livestreamed at live.alsbom.org. If you can't attend in
person, consider gathering a group and participating online!

MARCH 13-14, 2022

First Baptist Church, Cullman

SUNDAY EVENING
Ronnie Hill &
Ed Litton

MONDAY MORNING
Tim Beougher &
Tom Richter



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama
Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Ministers' Wives Gathering at each location, Monday 9-10:30 am
More info at alabamawmu.org/ministerswivesgathering

evangelizeAL.org/sharinghope

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

'Solid Rock' hymn writer, pastor started as cabinet maker

Edward Mote (1797–1874) was an English Baptist pastor and hymn writer. This month marks the 225th anniversary of his birth.

He was born Jan. 21, 1797, in London, to pub owners. They left him on his own to play in the street while they worked.

He had no religious training. Mote later said, "So ignorant was I that I did not know there was a God."

At a young age, he became a cabinet maker's apprentice.

During his apprenticeship, he visited several churches.

When he was 16 years old, he heard about Jesus from John Hyatt, a prominent preacher. He later accepted Christ when he heard a sermon about the precious blood of Jesus shed for him. He was baptized in 1815.

He moved to Southwark in South London where he was a cabinet maker for 37 years.

'The Solid Rock'

Mote wrote more than 100 hymns. His most famous, written in 1832, was "The Solid Rock."

He wrote the chorus first: "On Christ the solid Rock I stand / All

other ground is sinking sand."

After writing the first four verses, a friend asked him to come visit his very ill wife.

During the visit, the friend said it was their custom to sing a hymn before going to church. Mote took out his verses and sang them.



MOTE

The wife enjoyed the hymn so much that Mote went home and wrote the last two verses and returned to see the woman.

After witnessing the dying woman's love of the hymn, he had a thousand copies printed.

In 1836, all his hymns were published in "Hymns of Praise." William Bradbury, a fellow Baptist, composed the tune in 1863.

In his early 50s, Mote became a pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church at Horsham in West Sussex.

His congregation loved him, and under his ministry, many people were converted.

His members offered him the church building as a gift.

He replied, "I do not want the chapel. I only want the pulpit; and when I cease to preach Christ, then turn me out of it."

He never missed a Sunday for 26 years.

In 1873, his health declined and he was unable to preach.

The next summer, his health worsened.

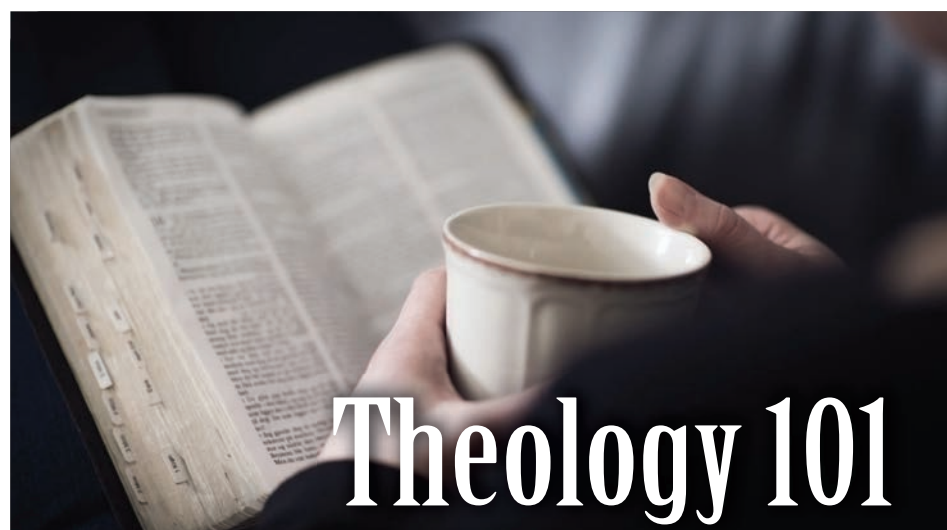
He said, "I think I am going to heaven. ... Nearing port."

The day before his death, he spoke about the "precious blood, the precious blood which takes away all our sins."

On Nov. 13, 1874, he died and was buried in the little cemetery behind the Rehoboth chapel.

By Joanne Sloan

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



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Reflections on Christ's Coming

Jesus Came to Set an Example

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

The Alabama Baptist

During these reflections on Christ's first coming, we have given thought to Jesus as the Word that became flesh, to reveal God, redeem sinners and teach truth. We round out these reflections by thinking about God's Son becoming flesh in order to be an example to all who believe on His name.

Of course, Jesus' revealing and redeeming mission lies at the center of the incarnation, but within the circle of His accomplishments is that of example setting.

Toward the end of the Gospel of John, we read about Jesus washing His disciples' feet. When He finished, He told them, "I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (13:15). Later in the New Testament we read, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

Pleasing God

Jesus shows us what a life pleasing to God looks like. From His example, we can learn how we might live so as to please God. Our enablement for Christlikeness is the truth in Colossians 1:27: "Christ in you." We think of this as Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, living through us the kind of life He exemplified in His earthly sojourn.

As our pattern, Christ set an example of enduring love. He loved His own to the end (John 13:1). He set an example in forgiving — He forgave a repentant thief who mocked Him on the cross.

He gave an example of serving, saying, "I am among you as the One who serves" (Luke 22:27). He furnished a pattern of obeying, saying, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38).

'It is enough'

At the end He gave us an example of how to die when He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Let us ask ourselves, "As followers of Christ, what might we experience about which we would say, 'It is enough?'"

Jesus suggested a good response by His words in Matthew 10:25: "It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and servant like his master."

Is it really enough for us to be more like our Master, who set the premier example of a God-pleasing life?

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Leatherwood Baptist Church in Anniston, Ala., is prayerfully looking for our next pastor. God has blessed our church over the last 25 years under our previous leadership, and we are excited that you may be God's man for our church. We are a biblically conservative church that loves the communities that we serve. We are in the middle of construction on a new children's building for K-4th grades. We are debt-free and small group/Sunday School focused. With our outreach efforts, we have new guests almost every week. Minimum qualifications: 10-15 years experience in a similar sized church 300-450+. If you feel led to be considered for this position, please email your resumé to: office@leatherwood.church and look up our church online on our website leatherwood.church and [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/leatherwood.church).

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

South Mobile First Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a godly man to serve as bivocational pastor. Email resumé c/o Search Committee to: vgnelson@bellsouth.net. Visit our website southmobilefbc.org and our Facebook page for information about our church.

SEEKING

Fern Creek Baptist Church is seeking part-time and/or full-time ministerial staff in the following areas: music, youth, children or education. According to the applicant's gifts and skills, two of these areas could be combined for a full-time position. Applicants must exemplify a growing relationship with God, spiritual maturity, responsible authority, fervent evangelism, sound theology and effective communication skills with all age groups. Applicants should have experience and education in ministry. Anyone seeking the music position must be an excellent musician, worship leader and educator. Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 5920 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291, or email to: linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumé will be received through Feb. 21. Questions? Call 502-239-0316, ext. 103, (Linda Barnes Popham).

MINISTER OF WORSHIP

Northwood Hills Baptist Church, Northport, Ala., is seeking an individual who feels called to lead worship at our growing, multi-generational church by incorporating hymns, a worship band and choir. Responsibilities will include weekly service planning, organizing music for special events and managing a team of production volunteers. Compensation range for this position is \$30-\$45K per year depending upon availability, qualifications and experience. To request a complete job description or submit a resumé, please contact Rusty Selman, pastor at 205-339-3196 or office@northwoodhillschurch.com.

WORSHIP LEADER

Mount Carmel Baptist Church, West Blocton, is looking for a part-time worship leader. Send resumé to: mt.carmelbaptistchurchwb@gmail.com

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

New Market Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational worship leader. The church is located in N.E. Madison County near Huntsville, Ala. Send resumé to: newmarketbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

YOUTH MINISTER

First Baptist Church, Center Star, youth

minister position. Part-time (20 hours estimate). For more information about this job opportunity, contact the FBCCS church office at 256-757-1310.

BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God's choice for a bivocational children's minister who will lead the children's ministry program. Applicants should subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith & Message. See additional information under the announcements tab at ehbc.church. Please send resumé to: cmse@ehbc.church.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The Biblical Recorder is seeking a full-time executive editor. The ideal candidate will have journalistic experience, a bachelor's degree in journalism or a related field (master's degree preferred) and will display discernment in covering and disseminating North Carolina Baptist news. The ideal candidate will display an understanding of print media along with a skill-set maximizing current journalistic platforms. The editor search committee is looking for a self-starter who has the courage to take appropriate risks with regard to the business model for this news outlet. Resumé for this position will be accepted through Feb. 18. More information as well as a candidate profile can be found at BRnow.org. Interested candidates can apply by sending a resumé to: editorsearch@brnow.org.

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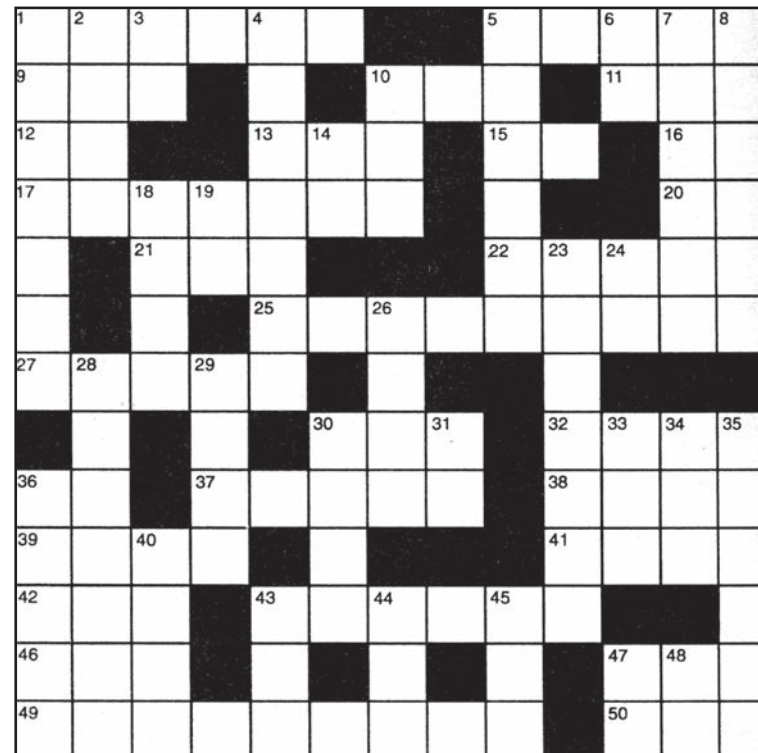
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CHRISTIAN crossword



By Joan M. Jarzebinski

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ACROSS

1. To glorify or honor.
5. Form by heating and hammering.
9. Her. (opposite)
10. "Much ___ About Nothing."
11. Body part for hearing.
12. Anno Domini. (abbr.)
13. Republican party. (abbr.)
15. X-ray person. (abbr.)
16. Railroad.
17. O Lord, ... ___ me. (Jer. 15:15)
20. ___ unto others ...
21. A Gadite. (1 Chron. 5:15)
22. Submit yourselves unto the ___. (1 Pet. 5:5)
25. Springs.
27. Sweet fluid made by bees.
30. Knock.
32. Come ___ with me. (1 Kings 13:7)
36. Do, re, mi, ___.
37. Nimble.
38. Persia.
39. Name given to Esau. (Gen. 25:30)
41. He that goeth forth ..., bearing precious ___. (Ps. 126:6)
42. To be unwell.
43. There came a ___ over ... Egypt. (Acts 7:11)
46. Small amount.
47. Royal city of the Canaanites. (Josh. 17:11)
49. Unleavened bread in the tabernacle.
50. Single unit.

DOWN

1. Egyptian ruler.
2. To travel on.
3. I ___. (John 8:58)
4. In them did ___. (1 Pet. 1:11)
5. I will not ___ thy word. (Ps. 119:16)
6. With reference to. (abbr.)
7. ___ of Eden.
8. For the ___ of the people. (Heb. 9:7)
10. Large monkey.
14. Amorite king. (Josh. 13:12)
18. This man's religion is ___. (James 1:26)
19. What did you say?
23. City south of Jerusalem. (Josh. 10:3)
24. Princess ___.
26. Mountain range in Soviet Union.
28. Minor prophet.
29. Test.
30. In thy majesty ___. (Ps. 45:4)
31. Physical education. (abbr.)
33. Metal-bearing rock.
34. Girl's name.
35. His name shall ___ forever. (Ps. 72:17)
36. Extraordinary acts.
40. Ye ___ Country Inn.
43. Tap gently.
44. Now ___ we the sons of God. (1 John 3:2)
45. Theodore. (nickname)
47. Blessed are they that ___ his commandments. (Rev. 22:14)
48. Off. (opposite)

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

STRONGER TOGETHER

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

I believe in the Cooperative Program because of its IMPACT. When my wife and I give our tithes and offerings through our church, we are literally impacting the world. From missionaries to the ends of the earth to theological education to disaster relief here at home, the Kingdom impact of the ministries funded through the Cooperative Program is truly staggering.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because of its SIMPLICITY. Every Christian and every church wants to give toward evangelism, missions, church planting, education, disaster relief and other Kingdom ministry efforts. Through the Cooperative Program, we fund all of those efforts through a single channel. Think of it this way. A church can give directly to each of 100 different missionaries and ministries. Under that scenario, the church must make 100 individual donations. With the Cooperative Program, that same church can fund 100 different missionaries and ministries with ONE gift through the Cooperative Program.

Finally, I believe in the Cooperative Program because of its CUSTOMIZATION. While the mission and the Word of God are the same in all contexts, effective ministry in Alabama might look a little different than effective ministry in other parts of the country. Through the Cooperative Program, our state conventions are able to customize ministry strategies according to the unique ministry contexts within their states. For example, here in Alabama the Cooperative Program helps fund strategic ministries in one of our state's greatest mission fields: our college campuses. The Cooperative Program doesn't just help to plant churches; it helps us plant Alabama Baptist churches.

These three reasons are only the tip of the iceberg. Count me as a joyful promoter of the Cooperative Program among our Southern Baptist family.

Greg Corbin is pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, and chairman, State Board of Missions.

For more information about the Cooperative Program and resources to help promote it in your church, visit AlabamaCP.org or contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, (334) 613-2283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS Event and location are followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613 plus the listed extension, or visit alsbom.org/events. To register for virtual events, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

- FEBRUARY 2022**
- 6-7 **Sharing Hope Conference**, Taylor Road, Montgomery, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
 - 7 **Ministers Tax Conference**, Tennessee River Association, Scottsboro, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 7 **Ministers' Wives Gathering**, Taylor Road, Montgomery, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
 - 8 **Ministers Tax Conference**, Crosspoint, Trussville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 8 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
 - 11-12 **ESL Training**, First, Prattville, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 2311
 - 13 **Racial Reconciliation Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
 - 15 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
 - 18-19 **Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
 - 20 **World Hunger Sunday**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 2283
 - 21 **Ministers Tax Conference**, Mobile Association, Mobile, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 22 **Ministers Tax Conference**, Southeast Alabama Association, Dothan, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 24 **Child Safety Workshop**, First, Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
 - 25-26 **Pursue**, First, Opelika, Mike Nuss, ext. 2276
 - 27 **Korean Evangelism Conference**, First, Pelham, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244
 - 27-28 **Sharing Hope Conference**, First, Pelham, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
 - 27-28 **La Toma de Alabama**, First, Pelham, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244
 - 28 **Ministers Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 28 **Ministers' Wives Gathering**, First, Pelham, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
- MARCH 2022**
- 3 **UpLink on the Road**, SBOM, Prattville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
 - 4-5 **COMPLETE...A gathering for Teen Girls**, Heritage, Montgomery, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
 - 4-6 **Children's Honor Choir**, Tuscaloosa area, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230
 - 6 **A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Canaan, Bessemer, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
 - 6-9 **Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference**, Shocco Springs, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
 - 6-13 **Week of Prayer for North American Missions & Annie Armstrong Easter Offering**, Shannon Mayes, ext. 2226
 - 8 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
 - 8 **Concourse Library Software Event**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 13-14 **Sharing Hope Conference**, First, Cullman, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
 - 14 **Ministers' Wives Gathering**, First, Cullman, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
 - 15 **Senior Adult Singin'**, First, Oxford, Frank Jones, 205.393.7020
 - 15 **The Basics of Church Security**, SBOM, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 2267
 - 15 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
 - 15 **Atrium, an Internet-based Library Software Program Training**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 17 **UpLink on the Road**, First, Decatur, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
 - 17-19 **Enlace Global AL 2022**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244
 - 18-19 **Adventure Weekend**, Shocco Springs, Mary Kelley, ext. 2227
 - 18-20 **OneVoice Tour**, Central Alabama, April Brewer, ext. 2279
 - 19 **Disaster Relief Admin Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
 - 20 **Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
 - 22 **Senior Adult Singin'**, Valley View, Tuscaloosa, Frank Jones, 205.393.7020
 - 22 **Programming Activities for Your Library**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
 - 24 **Child Safety Workshop**, First, Fairhope, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
 - 26 **Disaster Relief Shower and Laundry Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
 - 26 **Disaster Relief Communications Training**, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356
 - 27 **A Night of Encouragement & Evangelism**, First, Sylacauga, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
 - 29 **Church Libraries Making Disciples with Their Churches**, ONLINE, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263

Christian women most vulnerable, report says

(continued from page 1)
situation is only growing worse, Curry said.

The Taliban's victory in Afghanistan has galvanized Islamic extremism around the globe, Curry said.

"Today, religious extremists and the governments they control or influence lead the World Watch List," he said. "Extremism and tribalism are skyrocketing and so are the related incidents of harassment against Christians."

Causes and conditions

"Nine of the top 10 countries on the World Watch List are run or influenced by radical Islamists or Hindu extremists. Only North Korea, No. 2, is the exception, and it is run by a murderous dictator with a communist ideology," Curry said.

"We must examine the causes and conditions highlighted on the World Watch

List so that we can understand how intolerance is growing and spreading and also how we can stand and advocate for religious freedom."

The increase in Islamic extremism is especially dangerous for women, Curry noted.

Christian women are "the most vulnerable group in the world," he said.

In Afghanistan, the rights and protections for women have dramatically decreased since the Taliban took over.

In North Korea, Christian women sent to forced labor camps are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and rape. An estimated 80% of all defectors from North Korea are women, and many who defect to bordering China are subject to human trafficking, the report states.

Opposition to the Bible is strong in many of the countries on the World



Photo courtesy of International Mission Board

Afghanistan has moved to the top of the list of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution for their faith, overtaking North Korea for the first time in more than two decades.

Watch List. In North Korea, the new "anti-reactionary thought law" bans the Bible and has led to an increase in the number of Christians arrested and the number of house churches closed.

In China, No. 17 on this year's list, new laws restrict the teachings of Jesus. Chinese officials have even edited Bibles to match communist teachings.

"What that means in a practical way is that soon 100 million followers of Jesus in China will be subjected to Bibles that have key elements removed or changed because they conflict with communist dogma," he said.

Curry also urged U.S. of-

ficials to put Nigeria back on the list of Countries of Particular Concern, a designation from the State Department that highlights severe violators of religious freedom.

Violence in Africa

Violence in the middle band of the African continent "has crossed every border and become a larger regional issue," he said. "Burkina Faso was not even on the World Watch List a few years ago. Now it's No. 32 and rising; Mali is No. 24; Niger, No. 33; Cameroon, No. 44."

Release International, another Christian ministry

working in countries where persecution is high, noted that jihadis in Burkina Faso have targeted Christians and forced churches to close and meet in secret.

"Attacks ranged from bombings, killings, kidnappings and school burnings to assault on religious leaders and places of worship," the organization said in a statement earlier this month.

Qatar rose 11 spots on Open Doors 2022 list because its government has forced churches to remain shut even after other faith communities were allowed to reopen following the lifting of coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

People of faith and nations who value freedom of religion can help spread the word, Curry said, adding that hope exists despite the grim news. In many places, "the church is still growing, despite persecution," he said.

"The church is getting pressured in China, for example, [but] it's maturing. "People are taking more active leadership over the discipleship of their families. People are treasuring Scripture more. So in pandemics, in economic deprivation ... there's hope — even in great darkness."



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 30

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



DEMONSTRATE ALLEGIANCE Daniel 3:14–26

Few stories in Scripture are as familiar as this one. A giant statue overshadowing. A band playing. A crowd bowing. Three men standing. A king threatening. Three men unwavering.

A fiery furnace baking. Four men in the fire walking. Three men exiting — unharmed and unsinged. A king proclaiming.

This story has captured the attention and creativity of people throughout history.

Alexandrian Jews added more details about these men in the Greek version.

Children's Bible story books include versions of it. Even the Statler Brothers and Johnny Cash sang about it.

These young captives stood out in their allegiance to the Lord. Imagine three young men in Mecca standing tall while all around them men are circled around the Black Stone, bowing toward it.

The king was not initially aware of their act of defiance, but others with an agenda made a point to inform the king.

Allegiance Declared (14–18)

These Jews were men of faith, whose God commanded them not to make any graven image to bow down and worship (Ex. 20:4–6; Deut. 5:8–10).

They were more concerned about obeying the God of Israel than they were about Nebuchadnezzar taking offense. While the Babylonians may have seen this as an act of defiance and civil disobedience, these young men were declaring their allegiance to God.

When the king explained the instructions to them personally, he used an Aramaic expression “but if not.”

Within our translation, the text reads, “But if you don't worship it.”

In their response to the king, the three men expressed their confidence God would deliver them from the fire and from the king.

Then they used the same expression “but if not” (see CSB foot-

note). The translation reads, “But even if He does not rescue us ... we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”

Persecution Intensified (19–23)

The three men were fully aware of the consequences that would follow resisting the king's executive order.

They knew they could die for resisting the civil authorities. The midwives Shiphrah and Puah knew defiance to Pharaoh could lead to execution (Ex. 1:15–22). Daniel knew continuing to pray openly would lead to the lion's den (Dan. 6:6–10).

Esther knew breaking royal protocol and entering court without a summons by the king was grounds for capital punishment (Esther 4:16). “If I perish, I perish.”

Jesus told the crowds to count the cost for following Him (Luke 14:25–35). We must still count the cost today. Many of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world face ongoing persecution for their faith.

The threats of leaders, acts of violence by neighbors from other faiths and pressures of family members weigh heavy upon them. Let us pray for persecuted believers around the world to resist the temptation to abandon their faith.

God Honored (24–26)

The king witnessed divine intervention by a fourth “man” in the fire with them. He said the being looked “like a son of the gods.”

This Aramaic phrase by a Gentile king may be understood to be a reference to an angel, as some translators interpret similar phrases in Hebrew.

Many evangelicals interpret the fourth person in the furnace to be the pre-incarnate Christ.

In life and in death, God is honored with unwavering commitment to biblical faith.

May God be honored through our lives.

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies, Samford University



THE PITFALL OF TEMPTATION Genesis 39:1–12

Just as Isaac and Rebekah's favoritism had created a rift between their sons Jacob and Esau, Jacob's own favoritism toward Joseph created a conflict that nearly ended in murder.

Thanks to his brothers, Joseph found himself a slave in Egypt, but his troubles were just beginning. Joseph worked hard for his master, an Egyptian official named Potiphar, and God blessed him to rise to a position of authority. Potiphar put everything he owned in Joseph's care, and the same blessing that had rested on Joseph now rested on Potiphar's house as well.

But then Potiphar's wife entered the scene. Joseph was “handsome in form and appearance” (Gen. 39:6), and she found herself infatuated with him. “Lie with me,” she urged him day after day after day. What would Joseph do?

Be careful when things are going well. (1–7)

In a crime drama, detectives always look for motive and opportunity to identify suspects. Joseph had both of these when faced with the chance to sleep with Mrs. Potiphar. Joseph's opportunity was obvious. First, she came to him; he didn't have to seek her out. Joseph didn't have to seduce Mrs. Potiphar; she was already willing.

Second, Mrs. Potiphar and Joseph were alone. The text tells us she cornered Joseph when he “went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside” (v. 11).

Third, Joseph was far from home, so far that he would likely never make it back. Who would really know if he slept with this woman?

Joseph also had a great deal of motive for succumbing to Mrs. Potiphar's charms. He was in his sexual prime as a young, handsome man, and Mrs. Potiphar may have been a catch herself. Potiphar was a high-ranking official in Egypt; we can't know for sure, but Potiphar may have had his pick of women. Mrs. Potiphar may have been beautiful, and Joseph may have found a

healthy dose of motive in resentment toward his master.

Granted, Joseph served Potiphar well, but a certain amount of resentment must have accompanied the fact that Potiphar “owned” Joseph. The language of “master,” “bought,” “serve” and “slave” permeates this passage.

Lastly, Joseph might also have felt resentment toward God. Where was God when Joseph was thrown in the pit? Where was He when he was sold as a slave? This could be Joseph's opportunity to pay both his masters back.

Resist temptation by having standards and convictions already in place. (8–10)

But those who know the story of Joseph know this is not what he did. Though he had motive and opportunity, Joseph refused to sleep with Potiphar's wife. How did he survive this temptation?

First, Joseph had a clear sense of right and wrong — he doesn't dabble in the ambiguities of justification and rationalization. He says right out, “How could I do such a great evil and sin against God?”

Joseph survived, in part, because he refused to pretend he wasn't sure what was right and wrong. He knew (as do we all) and declared his conviction right up front.

When nothing else works, run! (11–12)

Secondly, Joseph survived the temptation by putting geography to good use — when Mrs. Potiphar grabbed his garment and pressed him again, Joseph ran. The greater the distance the less likely he would be to fall under her spell.

When the wise father of Proverbs 5 counsels his son on resisting the charms of a “forbidden woman,” he says, “Keep yourself far away from her; Do not come near the doorway of her house” (v. 8).

Though he had every possibility to turn his back on God, Joseph did not. He saved his honor and stayed on the path that would see him save his family as well.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Couple's book deals with 'transforming trials,' trusting God

Marina Shelton knows how to communicate through writing, so adding author to her resumé isn't a far stretch.

But the topic of her latest book is extremely personal — and includes her husband, Mason, as co-author, which is a new experience.

The social media and web associate for Kentucky Baptist Convention, Shelton said "Transforming Trials: A Study Through James" is for those who are hurting and need Christ.

"'Transforming Trials' is by no means complete and is by no means the most exhaustive understanding of trials that you'll have as a believer," she added.

"It's an interesting concept to think about — being in the middle of your story," Shelton explained. "So many people write a book once they have a happy ending. They try to figure out how to give advice once they get what they want."

Expanded faith

"That's not what this book is and not what it will continue to be. I wrote the book in the middle of a loss, I'm still walking through another loss and I will continue to grow in my understanding of trials."

Shelton's loss is miscarriage. She



MARINA & MASON SHELTON

Photo courtesy of Kristen White

and Mason started writing the book in March 2021, a month after their first miscarriage. Then in November, just after the book's release, they experienced a second miscarriage.

Though "Transforming Trials" isn't about miscarriage, Shelton does have advice from her own experience.

"Dealing with that kind of loss is something that can't be explained in words because you're trying to understand how to process something that isn't tangible," she said.

Shelton said it's OK to feel bad and cry, but believers must remember God is still good. It's also important to utilize support from others who have had similar experiences — and look for ways to find Christ amid the pain.

Even the experience of writing the book with her husband, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, taught

her life lessons, she noted.

"When my husband first started the first draft of the book, he wrote a little bit," she elaborated. "He had about a couple dozen pages, and he felt from the Lord that it's not the direction the book should go. He deleted every page and started again."

She noted how that situation is like life.

"Sometimes you'll walk down a certain path with the Lord, and you'll think, 'Oh, He's taking me this direction,'" Shelton explained. "Then He'll walk you completely back and down another path and you'll wonder, 'Does He even know what He's doing, guiding my life?'"

"Well, He does," Shelton declared. "He knows what His plans are for you. ... But you have to believe it because you can't always see it."

Shelton has been emphasizing this point since 2015 with her blog "The Pursuit."

"The purpose of my writing was to help people understand that the pursuit of their first love is more important over any other pursuit," she said. "Everything I write about is to point people back to Christ as our first love."

The blog led to other things: In 2019 she wrote "The Pursuit of Change," a devotional about goal-setting, and in 2020 she and 10 others wrote "Hope is Here," an Advent devotional based on the names of God.

Communicating with readers of "The Pursuit" helped make the latest book a reality, and her goal continues — to point people to Christ.

The five lessons in "Transforming Trials" include Scripture, short studies and meditations, as well as a story from others who have experienced trials.

Shelton's love of writing developed naturally with her mother, Kristen White, serving as a writer for Lifeway Christian Resources, Kentucky Living and other publications.

Shelton even wrote her first book — a mystery — at age 10.

Heart for ministry

Her passion for ministry also grew from life experiences.

She struggled with anxiety due to moving frequently and attending different schools. Her biggest concern was finding friends, she said.

However, that recurring trial expanded her faith.

"I asked Him, 'Please, help me find friends,'" Shelton said, "and Him answering that prayer every time grew my trust in Him. By the time I had grown older, I was excited to be involved in the local church."

She later led Bible studies, served as a campus ministry leader and spent time as a student missionary.

Shelton's blog and information about ordering books can be found at thepursuitblog.co.

EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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