

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Bethsaida Baptist Church welcomes original TAB building to its forever home

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From background checks to special needs, practical tips for children's ministry

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Winter Olympics offers opportunity to pray for persecuted believers

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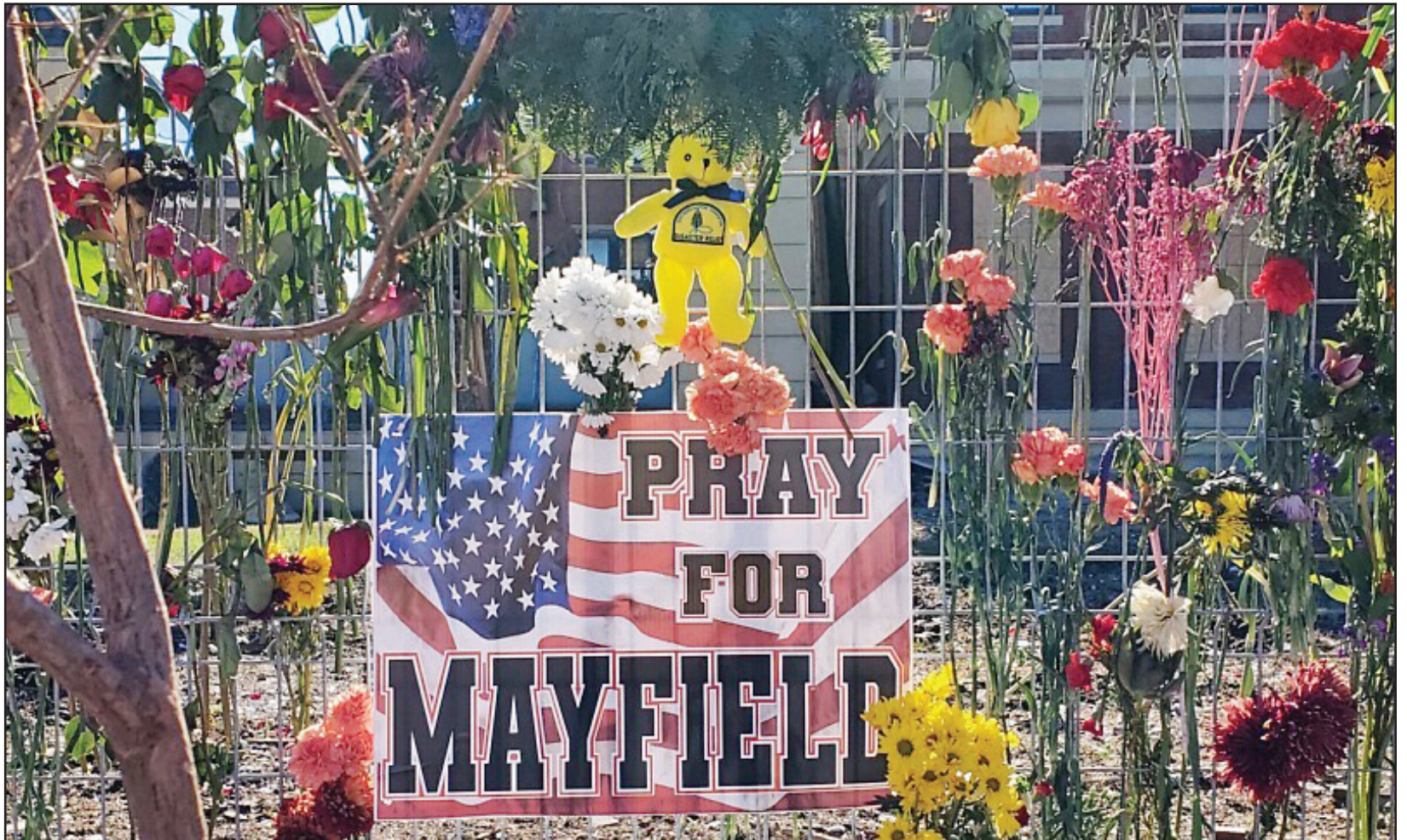


Photo courtesy of Cookie Baker

A yellow Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teddy bear sits on the memorial fence in downtown Mayfield, Kentucky, which was devastated by a tornado in December. Two teams of chaplains from Alabama have been on the ground ministering to survivors since the storms hit.

God provided

Recipients of Alabama Baptists' generosity thankful for gift cards

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Cookie Baker has been on a lot of disaster relief trips, but she says something felt differently about this one — the children.

When tornadoes plowed through western Kentucky Dec. 10–11, killing 77, they also left hundreds of people

without homes, cars or even in some cases jobs.

And the storms swept away all their Christmas plans and presents too, said Baker, who serves with Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief.

Lives devastated

For the kids, that was a reminder life for them wasn't normal right now.

"Most children, that time of year you see excitement on their faces, and they just had kind of blank stares," she related.

Baker's team of nine chaplains from Alabama arrived Dec. 19 to relieve the first team of six who deployed the week before.

Most of the families they met had children, she said.

"One family I talked to, a couple and three boys — the oldest was 6 years old — they were living in the car," Baker said.

"They were almost emotionless ... they were devastated. It's heartbreaking to see children like that."

The family had lost a lot of things, including gifts for (See 'Chaplains,' page 17)

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Spotlight on Christian Higher Education



coming next week

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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Carrie B. McWhorter
Content Editor
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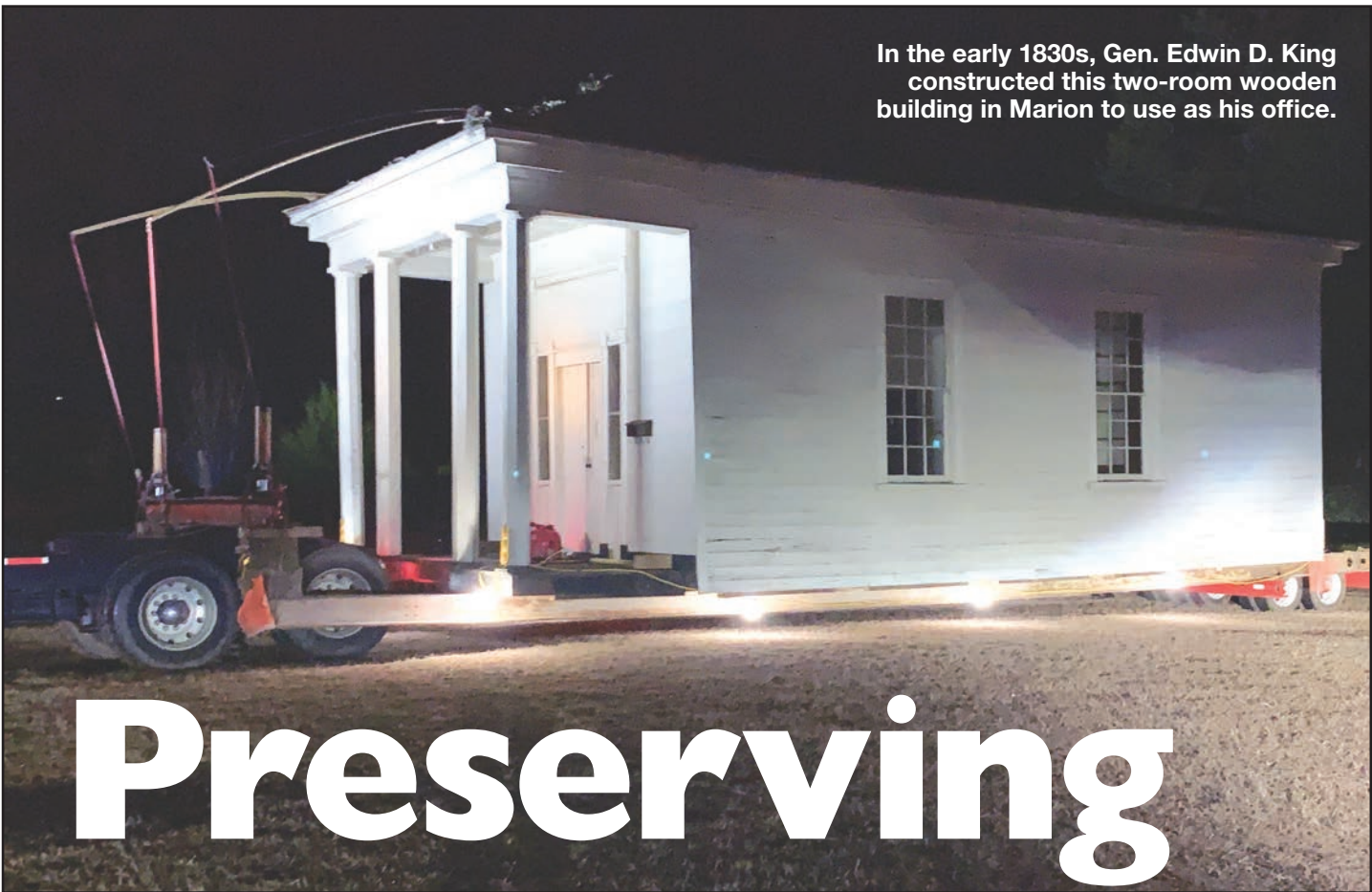
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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 14.



In the early 1830s, Gen. Edwin D. King constructed this two-room wooden building in Marion to use as his office.

Photo by Don Donald

Preserving
a bit of history

Bethsaida Baptist Church welcomes original TAB building to its forever home in Furman National Historic District

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist
The little white building that was the first home of The Alabama Baptist made a 71-mile trip to its new location in Wilcox County's town of Furman overnight Jan. 26. Since 1997, the nearly-200-year-old building has rested on the campus of Judson College in Marion, just blocks from the place it was first constructed in the early 1830s.

For years students passed it on the way to class, and guests toured it on special occasions like TAB's 175th anniversary in 2018.

'A God thing'
But this year, as the historic Baptist women's college prepares to sell the campus, TAB's first home needed a place to go. Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB editor-in-chief, said the leadership of both TAB and Judson tried to keep the building in Marion but weren't able to find a way to work it out. The grounds of the current TAB office in Homewood also aren't large enough

to accommodate the building. So when a conversation with a friend connected Rash with members of Bethsaida Baptist Church in Furman at the exact time a decision needed to be made, she said she "knew it was a God thing." The church voted to take owner-

ship of the TAB building from Judson on TAB's recommendation, let it rest on land owned by the church and undertake any restoration and maintenance in the future. Judson's board of trustees also perceived the decision as a good solution and affirmed the move.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

General Edwin D. King's two-room building housed the first editor and printing press of The Alabama Baptist from 1843 to 1852. The building was moved to Judson's campus in 1997, and TAB's two most recent editors — editor emeritus Bob Terry and current editor Jennifer Rash — both participated in the unveiling of the restored building.

“Our friends from Bethsaida Baptist Church are such a blessing and answer to prayers,” Rash said. “We wanted to find a way for the building to be preserved, and God definitely made it all happen.”

Historic significance

The building will be part of the Furman National Historic District and featured on its tours, including an annual lighted spring pilgrimage tour. That event — the Wilcox Historical Society’s Tour of Homes — is expected to draw more than 1,000 people on March 26, according to Don Donald, deacon chairman at Bethsaida Baptist.

“We feel very honored to get this done and that we were considered to do it,” he said. “We have a great home for it, and we’re excited to have it as part of our downtown restoration effort.”

Pastor Don Bell said it’s a natural fit to bring to the community. It’s a “unique little place,” and Bethsaida Baptist — which has been fully restored — is the centerpiece. Almost all 21 members of the church have a business background of some kind and are “go-getters” who are dedicated to keeping the history of the area alive. Bell himself has restored eight antebellum dwellings.

The TAB building “is coming to a very good home,” he said, noting there frequently are visitors from “all over the place.” The area offers bus tours as well as a new restaurant, an antique shop and other places of interest.

Bell said they plan to restore the TAB building to its original state and find a printing press that represents the era in which The Alabama Baptist was first printed.

“The building is coming to an area where it will be well taken care of,” he stated. “People will hear the story, and it will have a life and will be open for people to come and visit.”

The building was built more than a decade before the official state Baptist paper existed.

General Edwin D. King, one of the founders of Judson, constructed it right across the street from Siloam Baptist Church in Marion for use as his business office.

At that point, Marion — though it had fewer than 1,500 residents — was the central place for Baptist

goings-on in the state. The first issue of The Alabama Baptist was published in 1843, and later that same year messengers to the annual convention decided it would be their official way to stay connected.

King was a member of the Association of Brethren — the editors and proprietors of The Alabama Baptist — ironically one of whom was a woman, Julia Tarrant Barron. They printed the newspaper in King’s office building until 1852. After that, TAB had a variety of homes around

the state before its current building in Homewood was constructed in 1976. Roughly 175 years later, Rash is its second female leader.

Sometime after the newspaper moved out of King’s office, the building was purchased and used as a dental office, eventually housing a variety of other businesses. A third room was added onto the back at some point, but a storm destroyed it.

‘Gratitude to Judson’

In 1997, the building was deeded to Judson by the family of Dr. O.L. Shivers, the second dentist who practiced there.

It was moved to the campus by Cullman House Movers and restored as a museum of early Alabama Baptist history.



The original TAB building passes by the front of Judson’s campus as it leaves Marion for its new location in Furman.

Photo by Jim O’Neal

Right: Bethsaida Pastor Don Bell (center) and deacons Sonny Gray (left) and Don Donald welcome the moving crew and building to Furman about 12:30 a.m. Jan. 27.



Photo by Mary Charles Donald

“We are in deep gratitude to the Judson College family for their love and care of the original building where The Alabama Baptist was born and faithfully shared the news of the day during the mid-1800s,” Rash said.

“Judson has been extremely kind to care for the building on the corner of campus at the intersection of Bibb and Dekalb streets since it was placed there in 1997.”

The move to Furman — funded by TAB Media Group — was completed by Hussey Structural Movers, and Rash is once again grateful for a

gracious host for TAB’s first home.

“We are so very thankful for the interest shown by the members of Bethsaida and their willingness to take ownership of the building to restore it, preserve it and allow the legacy of both The Alabama Baptist and Judson College to be shared from the building as it sits among the historical district in Furman,” she said.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

The nearly-200-year-old building where The Alabama Baptist was born has survived two moves. The first took place in 1997 from downtown Marion to Judson College’s campus, just a few blocks away. The second move took place overnight Jan. 26, 2022, when the building traveled 71 miles to Furman where it will be restored and open for touring.

Your Voice



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

Mary Magdalene: despite questions, a model for discipleship

By Gary Hardin

Author and pastor

I asked the members of a discipleship class I taught in my church recently, “Who was Mary Magdalene?” Most replied, “Prostitute.”

This false view originated with Pope Gregory I (A.D. 540–604), who preached a homily in which he labeled Mary Magdalene a repentant prostitute.

Mary Magdalene might be the most misunderstood woman in the Bible. She has been falsely described as the unnamed woman with a bad name who wiped Jesus’ feet with perfume as an act of

repentance (Luke 7:36–50). The Jewish Talmud, a collection of early writings for the purpose of teaching, translates “Magdalene” as megadela, meaning one who plait hair, a hairdresser — another false view of Mary Magdalene. The 2003 mystery novel “The Da Vinci Code” asserted Mary Magdalene was Jesus’ wife. Shocking, isn’t it?

What do we know for sure about Mary Magdalene?

► Many evangelical Christians believe she came from the town of Magdala, on the Sea of Galilee’s western shore, though some biblical scholars disagree.

► Mary Magdalene became a devoted follower of Jesus after He healed her from demon possession (Luke 8:2).

► Mary Magdalene and other women supported Jesus’ ministry financially (Luke 8:3).

► The gospel writers noted Mary Magdalene’s presence at Jesus’ crucifixion (Mark 15:40–41, John 19:25) and His empty tomb (Matt. 27:61, Luke 23:55–56).

► The Gospel of John shows Mary Magdalene as the first to see the risen Lord (John 20:11–18).

► The angel at the empty tomb gave Mary Magdalene the commission to “go and tell His disciples.” Jesus told her, “Go to My brothers and tell them” (Matt. 28:5–7, John 20:17).

From these instances, we see Mary Magdalene as a committed follower of Jesus. This quality marks her as an important model for the discipleship of today’s believers.

Lessons from Mary

What can we followers of Jesus learn from Mary Magdalene? Here are just three discipleship lessons:

1. When Jesus healed her of demon possession, she responded with gratefulness beyond words. I have said often to numerous congregations, “Never lose your sense of amazement that Jesus died on the cross for you. Never cease being thankful for what Jesus did for you.”

2. Mary Magdalene modeled the ministry of presence. Her powerful

ministry of presence can be seen in the day-to-day work of Jesus and all the way to His crucifixion, burial and empty tomb. A ministry of presence can be described as “being there” for others. Sometimes we can share wise counsel. At other times we can do helpful acts. But there are times when words and actions aren’t enough. In those situations, our best ministry is to offer ourselves, simply being there.

3. Mary Magdalene provided a powerful witness for Jesus by telling His disciples of the resurrection. Have you ever considered most of us tell good news without hesitating? We speak easily of our children’s accomplishments, our favorite sports team or a fun vacation trip. Why then should we not talk about the most important One to us, the Lord Jesus?

We appreciate Mary Magdalene most for the depth of her commitment to Jesus.

We expect pastors, missionaries, seminary professors and other clergy to model exemplary discipleship. But what about the rest of us — truck drivers, salespersons, homemakers, retail clerks and other “regular” people?

Mary Magdalene shows the “rest of us” what it means to follow Jesus and to live all out for Him.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Gary Hardin is a retired pastor and serves part time as associate pastor and minister for older adults at First Baptist Church Centre, Alabama. He is the author of several books, including “Discipleship for the Rest of Us: Lessons on Following Jesus from Mary Magdalene.”

Letters to the editor

On behalf of the congregation of Bethsaida Baptist Church located in Furman, I want to thank you and the staff of The Alabama Baptist for the outstanding coverage of Baptist news in the state of Alabama.

Every member of Bethsaida Baptist Church is provided a subscription to this publication courtesy of the church.

The articles are very timely, and the feedback from subscribers is outstanding.

Thanks again for keeping Alabama Baptists informed through this outstanding publication.

Ersine G. “Don” Donald
Pine Apple, Ala.

I have liked all the issues of Fruitful (the magazine produced annually by TAB Media in conjunction with the Alabama Baptist State Convention), but 2021 was the best so far!

It is so informative, with great content and great layout.

It’s a great printed piece and a good way to help others understand what the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), the entities and colleges provide for Alabama Baptists.

I’m looking forward to the 2022 edition of Fruitful.

Lynn Graham
SBOM ministry assistant

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“The greatest danger you will ever face is losing the touch of God upon your church.”

TERRY LONG

Director of missions, Choctaw Baptist Association

Coaching is such a stressful job ... There have been issues with kids and their families — kids have more issues now than they ever have in my career. I don't think I could deal with that if I wasn't a Christian.

Scott Goolsby

Defensive coordinator, Auburn High School football team

“There's almost a story behind every song, because the Lord inspires me. And sometimes I have woken up during the middle of the night with a song on my heart that I was singing,” said **Guenda Vincent**, a songwriter and wife of a retired Alabama pastor.

There are promises of God yet to be fulfilled, but we look toward that

future day with confidence in our God who has proven faithful time and time again.

Jessica Ingram

The-scroll.com

“Our prayer is that this year, the local churches will penetrate the darkness of their communities with the gospel message,” said **Annel Robayna**, who leads Hispanic work and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

I believe the foundational truth that we are all created in God's image. ... Many have come to a place of real complacency and acceptance because abortion is a giant in the land, and we don't feel that there's anything we can do about it. But that

doesn't lessen our responsibility before the Lord to speak the truth and to speak up for these little ones who cannot speak for themselves. So we have to find very practical ways to really help people, not just rail against the darkness.

Laura Messick

Executive director of Portico, a pregnancy resource center in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Any sound, intelligent business will check itself to see how it is doing. The Church is involved in business with eternal consequences and everlasting dividends. What a tragedy for local congregations not to check and see how they are doing.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

Stay the course when investing

After stocks finished their worst week since April 2020, investor uneasiness is understandable. The tech-heavy NASDAQ index lost 7.6% (the week ending Jan. 21), and the broader S&P 500 index ended down 5.7% for the week.

While moment-by-moment headlines can be jarring, the best plan for retirement plan investors is to focus on their long-term objectives, not those headlines, GuideStone Financial Resources experts said.

“The market expects the Federal Reserve to begin raising interest rates in the next few months,” Chief Investment Officer David Spika explained. “Higher interest rates generally lead to less money in the overall economy, which the market is reacting to.”

Markets are cyclical, Spika said, noting that the S&P 500 was up 27% in 2021, 16% in 2020 and 29% in 2019. Since 1962, midterm election years tend to be especially volatile, with the S&P 500 falling 19% on average at some point during the year.

“A pullback like this is often very healthy for the market,” Spika said, adding that market declines in midterm election years are normal. However, the S&P 500 has never produced a negative return during the 12 months following a midterm election.

While the run-up in stocks in the last three years might leave investment allocations lopsided, any changes in allocations must be strategic, not a reaction to the news.

“This is all part of the wisdom of regular, consistent contributions to a retirement plan,” said Brandon Pizzurro, director of public investments at GuideStone.

From Guidestone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention

From the Twitterverse

@AbbyJohnson

Why do we march?
We march for the past.
We march for the present.
We march for the future.
For those born, unborn and who will never be born.
We march for life.

@jbwester

Ending Roe is about loving (all of) our neighbors.

@pastorjaycbc

True theology brings light to the mind and heat to the heart.

@sPeytonHill

I'm super committed to expository preaching, but preaching the five woes from Habakkuk 2:6–20 ... has me rethinking my “never skip a text” policy.

@kswhitfield

Maybe it is time for us all to

agree that video clips aren't the way to assess people's character or theological positions.

@richardblackaby

Your mind is a muscle that needs stretching. That involves more than merely reading what you already know.

@drtimmcknight

2018–2019 an average of 5,250,230 people attended worship in an SBC church. During that time 330 million people lived in the U.S. That means SBC churches had only 1.6% of the U.S. population in attendance. Sobering! We need to deploy to the field rather than fight in the barracks.

@johnnymhunt

Nothing proves a man's ability to lead others, as what he does from day to day to lead himself.
—Thomas Watson

@DianeLangberg

You do not need to be extraordinary. You need to be the ordinary inhabited by the extraordinary life of God.

A word, a meal, a cup of cold water, have the capacity to bring the life of God to this world and delight His heart.

@ericjohnthomas

Pastoring is more farming and less fast food.

@shane_pruitt78

The social media account of a “Christian celebrity” should never replace the role of a local church pastor in your life.

@davidjeremiah

Think about whatever is right; do not dwell on the wrong. ... Think about whatever is pure, not the sleazy. Think about the lovely, not the disgusting. —D.A. Carson

3 stories you should know



RNS photo courtesy of University of Haifa and Yoli Schwartz/Israel Antiquities Authority

Headlines in late 2021 announced the archaeological discovery of a synagogue (above) in the ancient Israeli city of Migdal, also known as Magdala, and prompted many to think of Mary Magdalene. Debate exists among Bible scholars over the exact meaning of the surname “Magdalene,” says James Strange, religion professor at Samford University and director of the Shikhin Excavation Project in Israel. Hear more at tabonline.org/magdalone. (TAB)

State Sexual Abuse Task Force ready for reviews

The eight members of Alabama Baptists’ Sexual Abuse Task Force are organized and ready to start reviewing policies and practices of Cooperative Program-funded entities and the State Board of Missions. The first round of meetings will take place in late February and the second round in late March.

Serving as chair is Craig Carlisle, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association. He said to the leaders of the groups being reviewed: “Our task is actually very simple and straightforward: To help you and strengthen you as you take every precaution to protect your ministry against sexual abuse in these days and the future.”

State convention president Buddy Champion serves as an ex-officio member of the task force. (Jennifer Davis Rash)

Texas abortion provider drops sanctuary city suit

A Texas affiliate of Planned Parenthood, the nation’s leading provider of abortions, has dropped a lawsuit against the city of Lubbock, the largest sanctuary city for the unborn in the U.S.

In a May 1, 2021, referendum, Lubbock residents voted to outlaw abortion within the city limits, making the West Texas city the largest “sanctuary city for the unborn” in the nation, the Christian Post reported. The city’s ban mirrors the Texas Heartbeat Act, which leaves enforcement of the measure up to private citizens.

Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas Surgical Health Services filed a lawsuit against the city two weeks later. A federal judge later upheld the ban, and on Jan. 20, Planned Parenthood filed a motion to dismiss its lawsuit. (TAB Media)

Persecuted church

Pastor sentenced to prison, first convicted under proselytizing ban

DOLPA, Nepal — A Christian pastor was sentenced in November to two years in prison, Nepal’s first conviction under an anti-proselytizing law that went into effect in 2018, according to Morning Star News.

Keshab Raj Acharya, pastor of Abundant Harvest Church in Pokhara, was sentenced Nov. 30 by Dolpa District Court. He was released on bail Dec. 19 to await appeal.

The pastor was arrested three times in just a few months. He was first arrested in March 2020 on a charge of spreading false information, Morning Star News reported. He was released on bail April 2020 and rearrested minutes later for “outraging religious feelings” and “proselytizing.” Released again on bail in May 2020,

he was immediately rearrested. The third set of charges were filed under the anti-proselytizing law, which bans converting a person from one religion to another, the report stated.

Acharya’s July 2020 release came after he paid \$2,500 in bail.

Nepal is No. 38 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Father’s beheading by Boko Haram strengthens daughter’s faith

Northeast Nigeria — Watching Boko Haram behead her Christian father and leave her brother for dead in their Nigerian village has

strengthened the faith of Manga, who practices Christianity there as well.

Manga told her story two months after the U.S. State Department dropped Nigeria’s designation as a Country of Particular Concern, a designation that can draw economic sanctions from the U.S. government.

“Once you are Christian in Nigeria, your life is always at stake,” Manga told Open Doors, a missions organization that empowers and equips persecuted Christians.

Nigeria had only been designated a Country of Particular Concern since 2020 before it was dropped in November. David Curry, president of Open Doors, has expressed his hope the country will be returned to the State Department’s list.

Nigeria ranks No. 7 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of countries where it is most dangerous to live as a Christian. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Open Doors USA

Alabama news

OBITUARIES



TURNER

► **Paul David Turner**, age 68, died Jan. 7.

He was pastor of Village Street Baptist Church, Sylacauga, and had previously led Bluff Springs Baptist Church, Sylacauga, for seven years.

He is survived by his wife, Pam; two daughters; and four grandchildren.

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Lonnie Worthington** is the new pastor of **Weed Baptist Church, Brantley**. He previously served as youth pastor of First Baptist Church Luverne. He and his wife, Tiffany, have five children and one grandchild.



WORTHINGTON

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW & BUTLER ASSOCIATIONS

► **Randy Sexton** has been called as bivocational pastor of **Pleasant Home Baptist Church, Brantley**, and **Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, Georgiana**. He previously served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Georgiana. During his years of ministry, Randy has served several churches in both associations. "My ministry has never been about me; it's all about the Lord," Sexton said. He and his wife, Elaine, have two adult children and five grandchildren.



SEXTON

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a singing Feb. 20 at 5 p.m. Gospel group 2nd Mile from DeKalb, Mississippi, will perform.

COFFEE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, will host the Enterprise Military Support Group on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. beginning Feb. 20. The meetings are for veterans and will continue for six weeks. Contact John Granger, director of missions and pastor, at 334-894-6411.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Terry Smith** is the new pastor of **Patton Chapel Baptist Church, Lincoln**. He has been in ministry for over 50 years, serving as pastor of churches in Alabama and Georgia and as director of missions for Clay-Carey Baptist Association for five years.

He most recently served as interim pastor of

Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Jacksonville. After retiring from full-time ministry, he served as bivocational pastor of Clairmont Springs Baptist Church, Talladega, and as associate pastor of Leatherwood Baptist Church, Anniston.



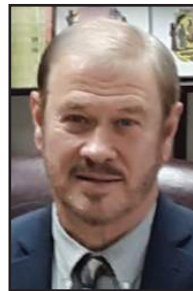
SMITH

He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University.

He and his wife, Gail, have one adult son and four grandchildren.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Scott Donaldson** is the new senior pastor of **Harmony Baptist Church, Andalusia**. Ordained in 2012, he served as a youth leader prior to his first pastorate. He previously served as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Brantley, and Oakley Ridge Baptist Church, Andalusia. He and his wife, Tammy, have two children and two grandchildren.



DONALDSON

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION

► **Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville**, is hosting Terrific Tuesdays weekly in February. Upcoming speakers are Ed Newton (Feb. 8), Sammy Gilbreath (Feb. 15) and Brett Pitman (Feb. 22). Fred Luter spoke Feb. 1. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. with the program following at 7. Call 256-332-2804 or visit discovercalvary.com for more information.

FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION



BURROUGHS

► **Brandon Burroughs** is the new pastor of **County Line Baptist Church, Trafford**.

This is his first pastorate. He is currently an undergraduate student at New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Heather, have two children.

MADISON ASSOCIATION

► **T.J.**

Mosser is the new pastor for **Essential Church, Madison**. He previously served in student ministry at Essential Church, Huntsville. He was baptized at Essential and married his wife, Alex, at the church. He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Alabama.



MOSSER

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Samuel Rodriguez** is the new pastor of

Iglesia de Nueva Vida en Cristo, Montgomery. He was a pastor in Cuba for 19 years and previously served at a Miami church as pastor.

He and his wife, Heydi, have one daughter and are musically trained in voice, piano and bass.



RODRIGUEZ

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church**

Huntsboro celebrated its 150th anniversary Dec. 19.

Marty Holley, director of missions for Russell Association, was the guest speaker, and pastor Christopher Webb led music with help from guest Cheryl Barrow. Maude Bowden, who has been a member since 1958 and served as the church clerk since 1981, presented the church's history with Nathan Smith.

Calvin Milford presented a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. "It was a blessing to be part of a celebration of something that has kept going. God is not finished with us," Bowden said.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Melvin Cates** is the new student pastor of **North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham**.

He has served as a student pastor and associate pastor over the last nine years.

He has a master's degree in community counseling from Steven F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas, and has worked in wilderness therapy, adolescent experiential counseling and parent coaching.

Cates and his wife, Stephanie, have been married 22 years and have two sons.

SOUTHEAST ALABAMA ASSOCIATION

► **Drew Stringer** is the new middle school student pastor of **Bethel Baptist Church, Dothan**. Raised at Bethel, he is pursuing a bachelor's degree in leadership and Christian education with a focus on youth ministry at the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, where he is a senior. He served as an intern at the church last summer.



STRINGER

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.

Nehemiah Teams train in Northeast Alabama

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

Alabama students now have a local opportunity to get three months of intensive discipleship and church planting training, thanks to the vision of Alabama-native Jess Jennings and his wife, Wendy.

More than 20 years ago, the two International Mission Board missionaries caught a vision for mobilizing students to take the gospel to people who hadn't heard it.

They started Nehemiah Teams, an IMB program that sends short-term student volunteers from the U.S. to take the hope of Jesus into unreached areas of the Philippines and many other countries.

About a decade later they added Advanced Operations Training, a three-month intensive course in evangelism, discipleship and church planting offered twice a year — one training specifically for young Filipino adults and one for students from throughout the world. The goal is to prepare them to be deployed to take the gospel to unreached peoples.

'He is worthy'

"We really believe God wants to use young people," Jennings explained, "and we are pleading with this generation to make their life

count for Jesus — because He is worthy, and there's no greater cause than to live for Him and to make sure that in our lifetime that we give every person in the world a chance to hear about Him."

Nehemiah Teams is opening a second AOT site, this time in Alabama, focused on preparing American students to go out into the world.

"Now that we are 10 years into Advance Operations Training in the Philippines, we have seen how having a training close by offers young people a clear, easy on-ramp to the nations," Jennings said.

Training isn't easy, he cautioned.

Alabama's AOT started in Mentone at a facility owned by Nehemiah Teams (a nonprofit organization), and leading the effort will be another Alabama native, Jacob Brooks, and his wife, Jessica.

"Nehemiah Teams' heart and their vision and heartbeat is very much mine and Jessica's heartbeat and our vision," said Jacob, who grew up in Birmingham. "We are so excited to take this step of obedience and play this small part in God's big plan for the world."

Jessica said their primary role is to serve as trainers for students 18–29.

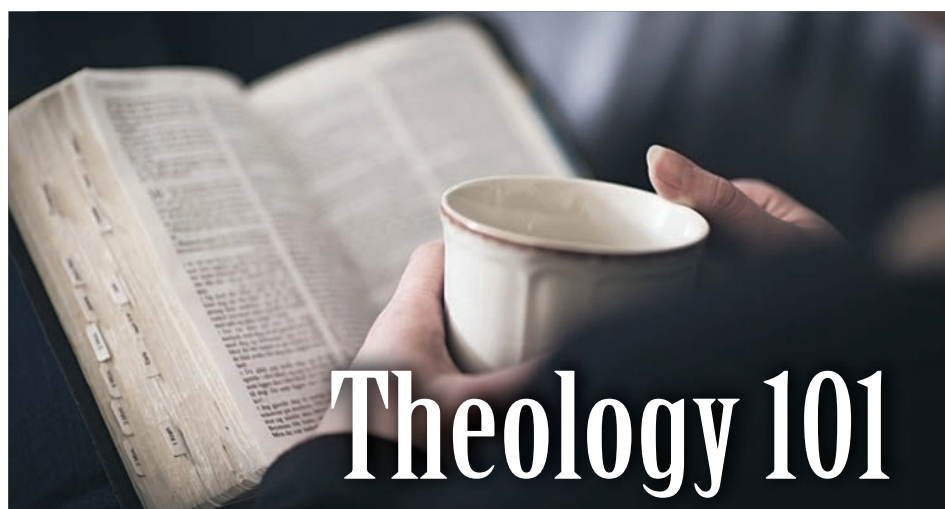
Another selling point of AOT — New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will count the training as 19 hours of course credit toward any master's degree.

For more information, visit nehemiahteam.com/aot.



Photo courtesy of Nehemiah Teams

Nehemiah Teams, which began in the Philippines to train ministry leaders to disperse into rural villages and spread the gospel, now offers a three-month training in evangelism, discipleship and church planting in Mentone, Alabama.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

The Body of Christ

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

The Alabama Baptist

The Old Testament reminds us that in a special sense God chose Israel to be His people. While the descendants of Jacob were enslaved in Egypt, God's word to Moses was "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry" (Ex. 3:7).

Later Moses reminded the generation God had delivered from bondage, "The Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people" (Deut. 4:20).

As an expression of this special relationship with God, later generations of Israel learned to sing, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 100:3). When subsequent generations turned away from God, He gave them a promise: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

While Israel was God's old covenant people, the Church is His new covenant people. The saving mission of Christ was God's plan to redeem sinners "from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14). In a similar way, the Bible addresses God's new covenant people, declaring, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may

proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God" (1 Pet. 2:9–10).

When we think of Christians as the people of God, we must use a wide-angle lens so we are thinking of the redeemed in all places and throughout all time, not merely a local congregation. The Bible contains a number of images or analogies with which to describe God's people in this broader sense, among which is a bride, building, family, temple, flock, household and priesthood.

'Head over the church'

After declaring God the Father raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly place, Ephesians 1:20–23 continues by declaring the Father put all things under His feet and "gave Him to be head over the church, which is His body."

During the remaining weeks of February, Theology 101 will seek to explore truths about being God's people, conveyed by the image of His people as a body — the body of Christ.

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.



Leading and Loving CHILDREN

By Julie Redmond Donovan | The Alabama Baptist

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

Background checks, protective policies essential to safer children's ministry

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.

Background checks have become a necessity in children's ministry over the past 10 to 15 years in order to protect the children in our churches' care.

Many instances of abuse involving church leaders have come to light in recent years, and parents who visit your church are understandably wary of leaving their children with strangers.

The security of our children outweighs any argument against the requirement of background checks, which provide reassurance to parents and help protect the reputation of your ministry.

If your church does not carry out background checks on every individual who works with children and students, my best advice is do them now and continue doing them as new volunteers come into your ministry. Any new volunteer should be vetted before being allowed to work with minors.

The small investment of time and money to complete these steps now will provide valuable protection in the long run.

Here are three common questions about background checks and possible responses you as a children's ministry leader can offer in support:

1. I have known these people my entire life. Why should they get a background check?

Your children's ministry is likely a team of wonderful, godly volunteers you know and trust. But new or visiting parents may not know these volunteers. Requiring background checks for all volunteers shows parents you have taken steps to ensure their children are in safe hands.

2. Privacy is important. Won't volunteers be insulted if I ask them to provide personal information?



Photo by Carrie B. McWhorter/The Alabama Baptist

If a children's volunteer is insulted or annoyed about filling out a background check, perhaps that individual is better suited to another area of service. Those who protest may be sending up a red flag deserving of further consideration.

In my experience, most volunteers are aware of the reasons background checks are necessary, and they want to be an example to others.

3. Background checks cost money. What if our church budget is too small to do checks on all our volunteers?

A basic background check is relatively inexpensive. If your church budget cannot cover the cost, ask volunteers to pay for their own or pay a partial amount — you might

be pleasantly surprised how many workers will take on the expense.

The church will still be in charge of the background check, but by helping with the fee, volunteers are making an investment in your ministry.

After all, serving the children of your church is an honor and privilege, even if it costs something.

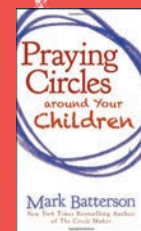
3 Resources

1. Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions has a partnership with MinistrySafe and offers a coupon for a discount on the first year's fee: alsbom.org/ministry-safe-discount.

2. Protect My Ministry helps faith-based organizations maintain a safe environment: protectmyministry.com.

3. Verified First specializes in background and drug screenings: verifiedfirst.com.

Book



"Praying Circles around Your Children" by Mark Batterson

New visitors

Welcome, friends: 5 keys to creating positive experiences for church guests

Visiting a new church is seldom easy. Unless they have been invited by someone who already attends, visitors may not know anyone or anything about your church.

Some may not have been in church for years — if ever. They may be new to the area or leaving a previous church home. For families with kids, the children's ministry is often the front door to the life of the church, so leaders and volunteers should be ready.

VIP of the day

Regardless of their situation or background, guests should be treated with love, care and sensitivity to their recent church history. Take a moment to speak individually to them. Make this first visit to your church special, as if this family is the VIP of the day. Your goal is to keep them coming back so they ultimately become fully engaged in the life of the church.

Here are five keys based on the word "VISIT" that will help you welcome families to your church and ministry:

1. Keep the *VENUE* clean and up-to-date to offer a good first impression on visitors to your



Photo by Doug Rogers/State Board of Missions

Create a welcoming first impression by using signs, arrows, balloons or well-placed volunteers throughout your church campus to greet visiting families and show them where to go for Sunday School, children's ministry and worship.

children's ministry area. If parents see a well-designed and cared-for children's area, they can feel confident you will take care of their children too. Being neat and tidy works out in the long run. Use signs to direct parents where to go. Remember, new visitors have no idea where anything is, so if you have signs to help parents navigate the children's area, they will feel more comfortable.

2. Be *INTENTIONAL* when speaking to each family who visits your church. Make some form of connection with them, and write it down so you will remember it for later. Perhaps they mention their child plays basketball, or they just moved to your town from Kansas. Reach out to the family during the week and mention this intentional connection you had with them.

3. Make visitors aware of the *SECURITY* measures in your children's ministry. For example, at our church we have a secure check-in system, cameras in all of the children's rooms, two volunteers with a background check, someone from our security team close by and a deputy on campus.

Extra precautions

Parents, especially new parents, enjoy hearing the extra precautions you are taking when it comes to their children's safety. You may not be able to provide all the above, but consider if there are changes and improvements to make sure

your children are protected, first and foremost for the sake of the children. The confidence your security systems will bring to parents and their desire to return is an added bonus.

4. Show each child he or she is *IMPORTANT* to God and to you. Get to know the children. Say their names frequently. You may think you aren't good at remembering names, but don't use that as an excuse. Work harder at it or take simple steps such as using name tags for everyone. Getting to know each family member's name and important information helps build relationships and shows each individual is important to you, your ministry and to the Lord we serve.

5. *TOUCH BASE* with parents and children after their initial visit. The first four keys happen while the family is on campus. This fifth and final key happens during the week following their visit. Some churches and children's ministries have an intentional plan for following up with each Sunday's guests.

Reaching out

I recommend some if not all of the following steps for reaching out to guests who do not have a church home:

► Write the family a letter or card. Let them know how glad you are they visited and include a newsletter with more information about your children's ministry.

► Send an email inviting the family to a Bible study at your church.

► Call or send a text and ask if they have any questions about your church or ministry.

► Invite parents to like or follow your children's ministry social media pages.

► Share contact information with other Bible study or Sunday School leaders. Encourage them to reach out to the parents and



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.

invite them back to church. If you or your church feel comfortable visiting homes, make a front door visit and leave church and children's ministry information in a bag on the front door.

Surprising results

All of the above might seem like a lot of effort, but you will be surprised at the results. Guests who are seeking relationships will be impressed with the attention you are giving them. And since so many avenues of communication are available today, reaching out in multiple ways will assure at least one way reaches the intended recipient. While one might not read an email, he or she may read a text. Another might toss snail mail as junk, but children are often intrigued by a handwritten letter or note. What matters is the follow up. While you do not want to be pushy, you do want your visitors to be prayerful and intentional about engaging in ministry and joining your church.

Put a plan in place

Maybe you are reading this and thinking that it's been a while since any new families have visited your church. Go ahead and put a plan in place anyway. Create an environment of reaching and welcoming others. Encourage children and adults to invite lost and unchurched friends. You might be surprised who the Lord sends your way when you make a plan under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

MINISTRY TIP

Be their cheerleader

As a teacher, volunteer, children's minister or children's director, you can be parents' biggest cheerleader.

► Provide breakfast once a month before Sunday School for young families.

► Write notes to parents telling them they are doing a great job. Make each note as personal as possible.

► Give small gifts to support and encourage them as Christian parents.

Informing

3 C's of communicating with parents at church

School and homework. Lessons and activities. Birthday parties and church activities. Family calendars fill up fast with information coming from many directions. That's why communication is key in your children's ministry.

To make information as easy and accessible as possible, keep in mind these three C's:

Consistency

Consistency is important. When parents know when and how you are sending out information, they will know where to look if they have questions.

A weekly or monthly newsletter sent to parents by email, Facebook and/or Instagram is a good start. Another option is to give children a handout each Sunday morning with upcoming dates and activities. Something families can place on the refrigerator is always helpful.

Clarity

Busy parents appreciate clear instructions. How can you accomplish this? First, provide information far enough in advance so parents can plan properly. Second, present information in a fun and creative way as much as possible to build excitement in children and parents. Third, use a clean, simple layout that is easy to read.

Use headings and bullet points to emphasize major points, and keep long explanations to a minimum. (Search "children's newsletters" templates on canva.com for free ideas.)

Caring

Ministry goes hand in hand with building relationships. Show the parents at your



Photo by Doug Rogers/State Board of Missions

Children are eager learners. Keep the lessons of Sunday morning on the minds of students and parents all week by providing a weekly or monthly newsletter that outlines Bible lessons and includes upcoming events.

church how much you value their role as their child's primary Bible teacher and spiritual leader.

Inform parents what their children are learning in Bible study, and provide tips for how parents might build on the lessons at

home during the week. This can easily be included in the newsletter or handout, and parents will notice the intentional effort you are making to engage the family in learning Scripture together.

“START CHILDREN OFF ON
THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO,
AND EVEN WHEN THEY ARE OLD
THEY WILL NOT TURN FROM IT.”

PROV. 22:6 (NIV)

Special needs

Minister to children, families by focusing on what they can do, not what they can't

One of the most challenging issues facing any children's ministry is how to best serve children with special needs and their families.

Once there was a boy in my Sunday School class with special needs; let's call him Bryan. He sat on the floor and played with cars or put puzzles together while everyone else sat at the table.

Bryan had a job every Sunday to turn the light switch on and off when we watched a short Bible story video.

One Sunday, Bryan was out of town, and the other children missed him. They said he was important to their class, and they wanted to write him a letter. So we all did. Having Bryan in the classroom allowed the children and Bryan to be blessed. Every child in your classroom is important.

Sadly, many families who have a child with special needs don't attend church because they feel their child is a burden or because churches are ill-equipped to take care of him or her. If this is a ministry need in your church or community, find someone who can train your teachers to serve these families.

Getting started

More common in small churches is the need to assist just one child who needs an extra level of love and care. How do you get started?

► **Include a child with special needs in activities with other students whenever possible.**

Children possessing special needs are often segregated if not excluded from others. The church should not be a place of exclusion.

► **Locate volunteers who will be buddies to children with different abilities.**

In a best-case scenario, a special needs child in your classroom can be a blessing to everyone. In a worst-case scenario, the child is a distraction and keeps others from learning. To help manage this situation for the benefit of everyone, a volunteer buddy or conscientious paid worker is helpful.

A buddy is the person who is always with that child while on campus. The buddy will know the child's church schedule and parents' cellphone numbers and seek to discover how to help the child when he or she is in need. The buddy can determine when the child should be part of the group and when he or she needs a break.

Importance of consistency

Having such a person in place will give the parents great comfort because they know their child is in good and consistent hands. Consistency is important to children with special needs.



Unsplash.com

A buddy is a person who is always with a child with special needs while on campus. The buddy knows the child's church schedule and parents' cellphone numbers and knows how to help the child when he or she is in need.

MINISTRY TIP

Parents night out

Some families cannot afford a babysitter or may not know anyone to stay with their children, so offering a date night for parents can be a huge blessing. Provide this ministry once a month, once a quarter or even once a year, and the parents will adore you for it.

Parents of children with special needs especially value a time of respite, knowing their children are cared for while they relax. The same security and safety measures you use on Sunday should be applied to every event.

► **Meet with the child's parents and Sunday School teachers to discern how best to minister to the special needs of the child.**

This will show parents how much you care about the child and his or her spiritual development.

► **Ask the parents if you might speak with the child's teachers at school.**

Reach out to these professionals to learn if there is information they can share that will help you better care for the health and learning of the child.

► **Know how to appropriately speak to families who have children with special needs.**

Many well-meaning people fear saying the wrong thing or simply

feel uncomfortable and avoid contact with these children and their families.

As a children's ministry leader, your example is important. Annual training can help your entire team serve these families better.

Resource

"Leading A Special Needs Ministry"
by Amy Fenton Lee



► **Show love in everything you say when assisting families with children with different abilities.**

I am far from an expert in this area, and unless your church has hired someone exclusively for this ministry, you probably do not have an expert on staff.

You may have someone in your church or community who works regularly with special needs children who can take the lead or help train others.

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First Baptist Church, Decatur

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FEBRUARY 6-7, 2022

Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

SUNDAY EVENING
Noe Garcia &
Ted Traylor



MONDAY MORNING
Dean Inserra,
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!

*Ministers' Wives Gathering
at each location,
Monday 9-10:30 am
More info at
[alabamawmu.org/
ministerswivesgathering](https://alabamawmu.org/ministerswivesgathering)*

MARCH 13-14, 2022

First Baptist Church, Cullman

SUNDAY EVENING
Ronnie Hill &
Ed Litton



MONDAY MORNING
Tim Beougher &
Tom Richter



evangelizeAL.org/sharinghope

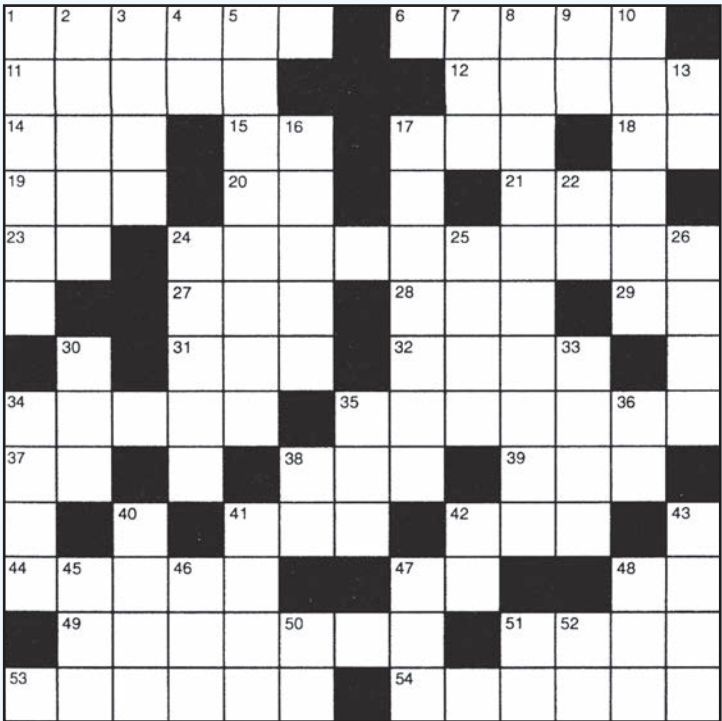
WORD search

- ALIVE
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GLORY
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GRIEF
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C Q R Q J W I T N E S S E S S N

CHRISTIAN crossword

- ACROSS**
1. ___, O isles, unto me.
(Isa. 49:1)
6. Nor ear ____.
(1 Cor. 2:9)
11. ___ one another.
(1 Thess. 5:11)
12. Ten ___ of vineyard.
(Isa. 5:10)
14. The ___
commandments.
(Ex. 34:28)
15. Called the altar ____.
(Josh. 22:34)
17. Joan of ____.
18. Connecticut.
(ZIP code abbr.)
19. Tasmania. (abbr.)
20. ___ be it.
(Josh. 2:21)
21. Bow thine ___ to
my understanding.
(Prov. 5:1)
23. He called the name
of that place Beth-
___. (Gen. 28:19)
24. But ___ ... receiveth
us not. (3 John 9)
27. Agricultural. (abbr.)
28. ___ to teach.
(2 Tim. 2:24)
29. Each. (abbr.)
31. Sign for Jesus.
32. Christ is the ___ of
the church.
(Eph. 5:23)
34. They which ___ in
Asia. (Acts 19:10)
35. Scottish painter Sir
Henry ____.
37. Electrical engineer.
(abbr.)
38. A ___ without
blemish.
(Lev. 5:15)
39. Local mean time.
(abbr.)
41. To give help.
42. Hebrews. (abbr.)
44. Bowels did ____.
(Gen. 43:30)
47. Errors excepted.
(abbr.)
48. Utah.
(ZIP code abbr.)



By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

49. Love one ____.
(Rom. 13:8)
51. Dwell at ____.
(Ps. 25:13)
53. Difficult experience
that tests character.
54. God will ___ my soul.
(Ps. 49:15)
25. Fencing sword.
26. They were ___
asunder. (Heb. 11:37)
30. Stand in ____.
(Ps. 4:4)
33. I was ___ with
silence. (Ps. 39:2)
34. Thou shalt ___ me
thrice. (Matt. 26:34)
35. Short for "radiation."
36. Right. (abbr.)
38. Rhode Island. (abbr.)
40. Kingdom of heaven
is at _____. (Matt. 3:2)
41. American National
Theatre and
Academy. (abbr.)
42. ___ healeth the
broken. (Ps. 147:3)
43. A single article.
45. Incline thine ___
unto me. (Ps. 17:6)
46. My beloved is like
a ____.
(Song of Sol. 2:9)
47. They ___ in vision.
(Isa. 28:7)
48. The ___ of edifying.
(Eph. 4:29)
50. House of Lords.
(abbr.)
51. Mr. Sullivan.
52. Architectural
engineering. (abbr.)
- DOWN**
1. Written a ___ unto
you. (Heb. 13:22)
2. Model of perfection.
3. Confess our ____.
(1 John 1:9)
4. Territorial force.
(abbr.)
5. In his _____. (Ps. 18:24)
7. Give ___ to my
prayer. (Ps. 55:1)
8. Good and ___ before
God. (1 Tim. 5:4)
9. Railroad. (abbr.)
10. A ___ from Caesar.
(Luke 2:1)
13. Saint. (abbr.)
16. Ye everlasting ____.
(Ps. 24:7)
17. ___ believed God.
(James 2:23)
22. ___ Lord God!
(Ezek. 11:13)
24. I ... called ___ upon
thee. (Ps. 88:9)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Government Street Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., is actively and prayerfully searching for a senior pastor whom God has chosen to lead and grow our church family into the future. We are a biblically based church that treasures the doctrines in the word of God. If you feel led by the Holy Spirit to be considered as our preacher and pastor, please send your resumé to: Pastorsearchcommittee@governmentstreet.org. Psalm 5:3, "In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly."

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Bromley Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. The church is located in north Baldwin County in the community of Bromley. Mail resumé to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 7977 Bluefield Drive, Bay Minette, AL 36507 or email to: bromleybaptist316@att.net.

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@northwoodhillchurch.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: cmssc@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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MISCELLANEOUS

TERRIFIC TUESDAYS

Calvary Baptist Church, 16241 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL. 7 p.m. Terrific Tuesdays speakers: Feb. 1 — Fred Luter, Feb. 8 — Ed Newton, Feb. 15 — Sammy Gilbreath, Feb. 22 — Brett Pitman.



Photo courtesy of International Olympic Committee

Voice of the Martyrs, along with other ministries, is using the upcoming Olympics as a call to prayer. China, the host country, is known for its persecution of believers.

Olympic games offer prayer opportunities

By Margaret Colson
The Alabama Baptist

As the eyes of the world turn to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics Feb. 4-20, The Voice of the Martyrs is calling for prayer for persecuted Chinese believers.

At PrayForChina2022.com, believers can commit to participate in this worldwide prayer campaign, receive prayer updates, invite others to pray through social media, add prayer reminders to their calendar and learn more about how the communist Chinese government persecutes Christians within its borders.

"We hope that every single one of those events and every single one of those moments is a reminder ... we have spiritual family members there [in China], and they are being persecuted," said VOM spokesperson Todd Nettleton. "They are suffering at the hands of the communist government. Let's not just enjoy the Olympics and cheer on our country. ... Let's use this as a reminder to pray for our brothers and sisters who live in China

and who face persecution there."

VOM's 2022 Global Prayer Guide classifies China as a restricted nation where government-sanctioned circumstances or anti-Christian laws lead to Christians being harassed, imprisoned, killed or deprived because of their witness and also where government policy or practice prevents Christians from obtaining Bibles or other Christian literature.

Open Doors' World Watch List designates China, home to 1.4 billion people or 20% of the world's population, as the 17th most difficult country in the world to follow Jesus.

Committed

Because of the sacrificial 39-year missionary service of Lottie Moon in China more than 100 years ago, Southern Baptists have long been committed to praying for and sending missionaries to China and throughout the world.

Lottie Moon is the namesake of Southern Baptists' annual international missions offering.

To participate in the worldwide prayer campaign, receive prayer updates and invite others to pray through social media, visit PrayForChina2022.com.

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is distributed through the Global Hunger Fund. Of that, 80% goes through the International Mission Board for overseas hunger relief and 20% is sent through the North American Mission Board to feed hungry people in the United States and Canada.

The remaining **25%** is used to feed the hungry within the state of Alabama. This is distributed through the office of Associational Missions & Church Planting to assist churches and

associations with food pantries and meals for hungry people.

Because personnel and volunteers are already in place and promotional expenses come through other budgets, your entire gift is used to minister to the hungry in Jesus' name.

For more information and promotional resources to assist you with collecting a Hunger Offering in your church, contact Ministry Assistant Lori Lockett at (334) 613-2304, llockett@alsbom.org, or visit alsbom.org/hunger.



Alabama Hunger Offering
Global Hunger
bread for life.

Chaplains share love of Christ with survivors

(continued from page 1)
Christmas, but thanks to the generosity of Alabama Baptists, Baker distributed gift cards to help out.

The mother “just broke down crying and said, ‘I told you an angel would show up. I told you God would send a way,’” Baker recalled.

Best way to help

She noted that after a disaster, many want to send bottled water and clothes when what is often most helpful is gift cards to help meet specific needs.

“The people feel bad enough and they don’t want to ask, but when they get that gift card, it brightens their day, it gives them some hope to see that somebody cares,” Baker said.

As she dispensed gift cards to families, there were multiple opportunities to share the love of Christ. Volunteers also were able to distribute

special Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teddy bears that say, “Jesus loves you and we do too,” a tangible reminder that they are not alone.

Several people professed new faith in Christ while Alabama Baptist chaplains were serving.

“They wanted hope and that’s what we wanted to give them,” Baker said.

Chaplaincy ministry has been the primary role of ABDR in Kentucky so far.

Fifteen chaplains, including Baker and Mark Wakefield, disaster relief and chaplaincy ministries strategist for Alabama Baptists, supported Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief teams on the ground doing cleanup and recovery and spent time with and ministering to survivors.

They also walked through damaged areas engaging people in conversations, Wakefield reported.

“Most of the disaster relief

work was done by Kentucky teams. We were just able to come alongside them.”

Kentucky relief teams accomplished much during those weeks as far as initial cleanup, Wakefield added, but the long-term effort will be huge.

Bob Cooper, interim director of missions for Winston Baptist Association, served on the first chaplaincy team from Alabama and said it’s a blessing to get to step into that role for both survivors and crews.

Focused on listening

A chaplain is “a person whose whole job is to listen to the survivor and then make sure our crews are both physically and spiritually fit and help the ‘blue hat’ foreman of each crew make sure nobody is getting too tired,” Cooper explained.

“It was an interesting deployment in that I think we

helped them open their eyes to the ministry of chaplains after a crisis a little more than they had previously experienced.”

Cooper and his wife have served in disaster relief for a decade, and he said other than the 2018 California wildfires, this was the “worst destruction I’d ever seen.”

One story Cooper said will stick with him is of a family who huddled in their hallway as the roof was blown off their house.

The father dove into the hall just as the storm was hitting and had a hard time holding on as the tornado blew by. But they were OK, and after the storm had passed, they realized their infant had slept through the whole thing.

“That was the silver lining for the whole neighborhood,” Cooper said, adding that the family was encouraged to see how strangers came to-

gether to care for them.

He too was encouraged by that sight, as he is every time, Cooper said.

‘Small world’


When he was living in Colorado nine years ago and had to evacuate because of wildfires, a team from Kentucky came to help clean out ash in his area.

He showed a photo of that team to someone he was working alongside in Kentucky in December.

“I said, ‘Do you know these people?’ and she said, ‘I know them all.’ She pointed to one and said, ‘That guy right here, he’s here,’” Cooper recounted.

So he was able to reconnect with him and thank him again, while now serving alongside them in their home state.

“It’s a small world and a small family in disaster relief,” Cooper said.




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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 6

Explore the Bible

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



HUMILITY REQUIRED Daniel 4:28–37

Throughout history, pride has been a common characteristic among kings. Moses preemptively warned future Israelite kings against pride by requiring them to write a copy of God's law and to keep it with them (Deut. 17:18–20). Solomon attempted to warn his son about pride through the proverbs (Prov. 16:18). Ezekiel warned a Tyrian king that pride leads to judgment (Ezek. 28). Daniel recorded the humiliation of proud Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. This passage focuses on the fall and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar.

In the verses which precede our passage, Daniel interprets the king's dream. The tree of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will be cut down, but its stump and roots will survive to grow again. Daniel 4:4–18 records the king's testimony concerning the dream, and verses 19–27 provide Daniel's interpretation of the dream. Daniel warns Nebuchadnezzar of God's impending judgment on him, encouraging him to rule with justice and compassion.

Pride Declared (28–30)

One year after the warning, Nebuchadnezzar's prideful words lead to his humiliation: "Is this not Babylon the great that I have built to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory?" He built for his residence, by his power and for his own glory. This king, who had already acknowledged the might and dominion of Most High God and His eternal Kingdom (vv. 2–3), failed to recognize he was stealing glory from the same God.

This is a far cry from the humility of King David, who was careful to give God the glory due His name: "Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to You" (1 Chron. 29:11).

Reality Defined (31–33)

Nebuchadnezzar's prideful declaration was his own indictment, and the heavenly announcement of his

judgment was immediate: "The kingdom has departed from you." He lost his right mind, withdrawing from humanity, failing to groom himself and eating grass like an animal. God replaced his pride with humiliation.

When the days of the king's humiliation were completed, he would acknowledge that "the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms, and He gives them to anyone He wants." Let the reader note that "Most High" is the same name Nebuchadnezzar used in his declaration following the supernatural rescue of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (4:2).

Honor Given (34–37)

After seven times (likely 7 years), God granted the king his right mind again. God also returned to Nebuchadnezzar his awe of God, like he had after the rescue at the fiery furnace. The king gave honor and glory where it was due: "Then I praised the Most High and honored and glorified Him who lives forever."

Scholars are of differing opinions regarding the faith of Nebuchadnezzar. Did his decree constitute a confession of faith in Yahweh (as in Gen. 14:22), or was he making a henotheistic statement that the God of Israel was chief "Most High" among the pantheon? Both are plausible explanations, though there is no extant archaeological evidence to indicate Nebuchadnezzar converted exclusively to Yahweh worship.

Honor was extended once again to the king, and his realm was expanded after his return to sanity. More significantly, however, Nebuchadnezzar confessed the power and authority of God in heaven and on earth: "There is no one who can block His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

The Most High is also called the "King of the heavens." The king of Babylon, at that time the most powerful ruler in the Near East, acknowledged the authority of Israel's God over him. Without a doubt, he learned his lesson concerning pride: "He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

Bible Studies for Life

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



THE PITFALL OF INJUSTICE Genesis 39:21–23; 40:4–8, 20–23

Joseph was not a perfect figure. He embraced his father's favoritism a bit too readily and was certainly not above lording it over his brothers when he had the opportunity. When he dreamed they (and even his parents) would one day bow to him, he didn't hesitate to tell them about it. When his father gave him a coat to mark him as his favorite, Joseph was not shy about sporting it in front of his brothers. He even foolishly wore the coat when his father sent him to check on them as they worked in the fields.

Joseph was not a perfect figure. But when it counted, he came through in remarkable ways. Far from home and with every reason to succumb to Mrs. Potiphar's temptations, Joseph said no. He insisted it would be wrong to sin against his master and against God, and when Mrs. Potiphar pressed him, he refused to give in and fled from the scene.

Because he resisted Mrs. Potiphar's advances, Joseph was accused of attempting to rape his master's wife. We have to wonder if Potiphar actually believed the accusations. Had he really believed the story, surely he would have had Joseph put to death. The fact that he only put him in prison suggests Potiphar may have had doubts about Joseph's part in the affair. Either way, Joseph had acted honorably, and a jail cell was what he got in return.

Keep doing good in the face of injustice. (39:21–23)

When Joseph was in the service of Potiphar, the Lord had blessed both him and his master's house. Now that he was in prison, God blessed Joseph once again, giving him favor in the eyes of the warden. Soon Joseph was put in charge of nearly the entire prison. So faithful was Joseph that the warden had no need to concern himself with the things he put in Joseph's care.

When Joseph was sold to Potiphar, he could easily have suc-

cumbed to bitterness and anger. Instead, he proved to be a faithful servant who brought honor and blessing to the house he served. The same proved to be true in prison. If Joseph could have been resentful before, he had all the more reason to be angry now. Yet once again, Joseph served honorably and was blessed for it.

When you're a victim, don't take it out on others. (40:4–8)

Joseph's next test would come in the form of two attendants of Pharaoh, a cupbearer and a baker, who had somehow managed to displease their king. The pair now found themselves stuck in the same prison where Joseph was confined. While they were in prison, both the cupbearer and the baker were visited by dreams.

Separated from the royal dream interpreters, they had no one to tell them what the dreams might mean. Joseph assured the men an interpretation was not something that belonged to a man but rather to God. "Tell your dreams to me," Joseph said. He would give them the divine interpretation.

Don't be discouraged by delays. (40:20–23)

When God revealed the interpretation, it would not prove to be good news for either of the dreamers. The cupbearer, Joseph revealed, would be restored once again to his old position, but on that same day, the baker would be killed. Understandably eager to get out of prison, Joseph begged the cupbearer to remember him when his interpretation came true.

Events played out exactly as Joseph had said they would — one attendant received his old job back, and the other received a death sentence.

Sadly, the restored cupbearer did not do as Joseph had asked. Yet again, Joseph's faithfulness had been met with seeming abandonment. How much longer could he hold up?

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Timothy Cockes

Baptist Press

New Skillet album steers believers to dominion of Christ

Christian band Skillet released a new album Jan. 14 that lead singer John Cooper said represents a “positive rebellion” against forces influencing Christians to live in fear.

The album, titled “Dominion,” is the 11th studio release for the highly successful rock band, and it was written during the pandemic.

Cooper said he wasn’t sure if the band was even going to write a new album because they did not get to perform the songs from their previous album (2019) for long.

Yet as the pandemic raged on, Cooper said the songs “just started coming out of me.”

“There are times when you just get inspiration,” he said. “Something hits you, and you know you need to say something. That’s really what this record was like.”

‘Unique’ experience

“I would say the main theme of the record is not being a slave to fear. It’s a rebellion against forces trying to get you to live in fear. The record is kind of telling you ‘do not give into that.’”

Cooper described the process of recording the album as “unique” and “bizarre,” considering the band members were never in the same



SKILLET

Photo courtesy of Baptist Press

room as the producers they were working with.

The band and their producers would start with writing sessions together over Zoom. The band would then record music in their own studio and send the tracks to the producers in another state. Everyone would then come back on Zoom to talk over needed changes.

Cooper said the unusual process allowed the group to create the familiar sound the band is known for but also to experiment with new things.

“It’s a really energetic record. It’s a very hopeful, positive record, but it’s also got this sort of Christian defiance to it,” he said.

“I mean that sort of spirit of ‘We need to stand up for what’s right because of the times that we’re living in.’”

“It might cost you something ... but it’s time for Christians to really

stand on the word of God and not back down.”

Skillet has been making music together since 1996. The band consists of Cooper and his wife, Korey, lead guitarist Seth Morrison and drummer Jen Ledger.

Over the last 25 years, the group has achieved significant success both in the contemporary Christian music genre as well as the mainstream heavy rock genre.

They have sold over 11 million units worldwide, have multiple music videos with hundreds of millions of views on YouTube and have toured all over the world. The band has won multiple Dove Awards and a Billboard Music Award and has been nominated for two Grammy Awards.

Success over the years

When looking back on the success of the band, Cooper said

he never imagined “in a million years” that he would still be making music full time.

In addition to music, another of Cooper’s passions has come to the forefront the past few years — standing up and speaking out about the truth of the Bible and the gospel. For a variety of reasons, Cooper has become more vocal about Jesus and Christian values.

Compiling thoughts

He published a book in late 2020 compiling his thoughts about the Bible and current culture titled “Awake & Alive to Truth: Finding Truth in the Chaos of a Relativistic World.”

In it, Cooper describes the different reasons he’s chosen to become more vocal about Christianity.

The opening story of the book describes a conversation Cooper had with a successful music agent a little over 10 years ago. The agent told him Skillet had everything necessary to become a superstar rock band if they would just stop talking about Jesus.

Despite everything going on in the world and in American culture, Cooper said he encourages all Christians to build the foundation of their life on God’s word.

“In the end, your belief in the word of God is going to have an incredible effect on the stability of your life with God,” Cooper said.

“We don’t know what is going to happen, but what I’m sure of is this — if you radically build your life on the unchanging word of God, then you will be unshaken and unstoppable for the kingdom of God no matter what happens.”

“Dominion” is available wherever music is sold, and Skillet can be seen headlining the Winter Jam tour across the country.

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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