

# The Alabama Baptist

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Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

TAB Media Group hosts a WM-Who? conversation in front of a live studio audience featuring TAB Media's president and editor-in-chief, Jennifer Davis Rash (left), and national WMU's president, Connie Dixon, on April 24 in Birmingham.

## Missions centered

### 'WM-Who?' conversation shares how WMU remains vital aspect of church life

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Connie Dixon's hometown in New Mexico has about 200 people, and she's been part of the same church her entire life. She's been just as dedicated to missions discipleship resources provided by national Woman's Missionary Union. She started in Mission Friends as a preschooler,

grew up through Girls in Action and Acteens, became a missions leader in her church and served 13 years as executive director of New Mexico WMU.

There's one big reason why WMU is so important to Dixon.

"We want to be sure we equip today's generation for missions, because if we fail to teach this generation the importance of missions, we're one generation away from having no more missionaries," Dixon asserted.

As the current national WMU president, Dixon spoke with Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB Media Group editor-in-chief, at an April 24 event called

"WM-Who?" at the TAB Media offices in Birmingham.

Rash's interview with Dixon and a live audience Q&A were intended to help Baptists better understand who WMU is, why it's important and what it needs to keep going forward.

#### 'Tried and true'

"It's tried and true," Dixon said about WMU's missions discipleship curriculum and other resources.

But she and other WMU leaders have seen a trend in churches doing less and less missions-centered discipleship in recent years.

"Our missions education and missions discipleship is so important to the growth

and health of a church, but we've almost made missions discipleship and missions an elective. And it's not," Dixon declared. "It's how you have a healthy church. Missions is not a trend, it's a commandment."

WMU has long offered preschool and children's curriculum — Mission Friends, Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors and now a new coed curriculum, Missions Journey: Kids. It also offers resources for teens and adults.

"We have been mandated in the Great Commission to go and make disciples, so we provide resources for every age level from preschool through adulthood to learn how to be  
(See 'WMU,' page 6)



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The crossword puzzle  
can be found on page 13.

# Teen’s art helps him join team going to Utah

**By Grace Thornton**  
The Alabama Baptist

In 2020, we shared the story of Heflin Baptist Church’s partnership with a congregation near Salt Lake City.

Brent Thompson, pastor of Heflin Baptist, had felt compelled to get involved in reaching one of the North American Mission Board’s Send Cities, 32 of North America’s highest populated areas with the greatest need for the gospel.

So several years ago, the church connected with Derek Duvall, pastor of Awaken City Church in Herriman, Utah, south of Salt Lake City. Heflin Baptist started sending missions teams and giving generously.

These days Thompson said the church still very much supports the effort.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, even though they had to cancel travel plans, the congregation gave above and beyond to help support the work in Utah.

**Embracing the vision**

“For a small, rural town they’ve really embraced the vision,” Thompson said. “We’re encouraged every time we hear an update from somebody out there, and I put their prayer requests in our bulletin.”

Those bulletins get posted on church members’ refrigerators to remind them to pray, he noted.

Something else gets hung up these days, too — pictures drawn by Nathan Cobb, a seventh grader and member of Heflin Baptist.

His mother, Misty, said he has been interested in serving in Utah since she traveled there last year to help with children’s camp. So when the church began planning this year’s trip, he asked if he could go.

“We had our meetings to deter-



Photo courtesy of Heflin Baptist Church

Nathan Cobb, a seventh grader and member of Heflin Baptist Church, helped raise funds for his missions trip to Utah by drawing scenes for donations.

mine interest, and they were passing out forms with the cost and other information, and he had an idea that he could help pay his way by drawing some art,” Cobb said of Nathan. “I told him that people had seemed interested in his art before, so we could try it.”

They posted seven different drawings on Facebook and offered the

drawings for donations.

“I’m really proud of his efforts,” Cobb said.

Nathan’s trip is now paid for, and on June 25 he will join 14 others heading to Herriman.

Thompson said the church was happy to support Nathan.

“People in church, they were excited. I knew of some who bought his pictures, put them in a frame and said, ‘I’ll

keep that to remember him by,’” Thompson said. “When people think they’re too young to come up with an idea of how to serve, I say, ‘Let me tell you a story.’”

**“When people think they’re too young to come up with an idea of how to serve, I say, ‘Let me tell you a story.’”**

**Brent Thompson**  
pastor, Heflin Baptist Church

## 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

## Community news, media outlets keep professional efforts alive

**R**ecent conversations with students studying journalism and mass media give me hope. So do updates from college and university faculty members and reporters, editors and producers of our Alabama-based newspapers, TV newscasts and multimedia outlets.

As we've engaged with representatives of our Alabama Baptist schools and our state schools through our partnership with Alabama Press Association, we hear them speak of the importance of a trustworthy news source.

It's comforting to know the ethics of professional journalism are being taught and embraced, to know the next generation grasps the importance of seeking truth, fact-checking and countering false rumors.

While the way news is shared continues to change, the foundational elements of accuracy, fairness, clarity and integrity should remain.

Another encouraging aspect we've discovered points to the value of relationships, something we as believers truly understand. No matter how often we study the latest trends in culture, we always circle back to the importance of authentic and consistent relationships. Relationships are built on trust, and trust is a precious commodity.

Research groups such as Knight, Pew and others continue to report how community newspapers and local TV stations (combined with

the digital versions of each) outrank national news year after year.

According to the National Newspaper Association, a March survey by Susquehanna Polling and Research Inc. found local newspapers received high rankings when it comes to informing the reader in general (93% agreed), providing shopping and advertising information (81% agreed) and sharing local news (83% agreed).

While a growing number of national media sources have lost the trust of many consumers, we can be encouraged by the work taking place in our communities.

Local media sources aren't perfect, but they truly care about the communities where they exist and

are closer to the everyday lives of the people. This brings us back to trust and relationships because the people working to understand and report the news of the day are our neighbors. They are our friends and many times community leaders.

It might not always seem like it, but solid reporting is taking place across the state by media professionals who are working hard to follow the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently and be accountable and transparent.

The Alabama Baptist is proud to be part of the trusted news sources. Our team also seeks ways to invest in the next generation as well as encourage our peers across the state.

The national outlets will come around soon if we help them understand how consumption of content created with motives outside the boundaries of traditional media ethics is harmful. It has the potential to create exaggerated fear, anger and hostility. It changes us.

Here are a couple of hints for determining if your preferred news source might need muting for a bit:

1. If your blood pressure rises and stays elevated.
2. If you know how the reporter sharing the information feels about the situation and/or if the reporter tells you how you should feel about the situation rather than strictly reporting the news with credible sources outside himself or herself.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

## Students learn ethics along with skills

Alabama State University junior Amayah Williams experiences her first simulated live newscast April 21 as part of end-of-semester assignments in the class that prepares students for broadcast journalism careers. The students are learning a wide range of skills in the radio and TV track, including the importance of fact-based news reporting.



# Your Voice



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

## All things are possible with God

By Karen Moore

karenmooreauthor.com

I'm an optimist. I love to think about all the things that are still possible. That's how I move past yesterday and look forward to tomorrow. From everything I can tell, the greatest possibilities occur when we prepare for them, get ready and imagine everything we want. Whether we plan to run a foot race, take a marvelous vacation, or build a house, we have to prepare. We have to get ready.

As a believer, getting ready means you start with prayer. You ask for God's direction for your plans, preparing what you can and fully anticipating the moment to get set.

Getting ready is what the 10 biblical maidens did as they prepared to meet the bridegroom. They had their lamps ready waiting for the bride-

groom to appear. All 10 of them were ready, but only five were set.

The five that brought more oil for their lamps had prepared for any contingency. They anticipated their plans could take longer than they might hope so they were set for things to go forward.

The other five maidens who ran out of oil had to go back to square one, refill their lamps and return to the waiting area. They were dismayed to discover the bridegroom had come while they were away.

### Facing obstacles

I don't know about you, but I can relate. How many times have I started in a great direction and prepared for it as well as I could, only to forget some detail that meant things could not happen as I planned? I had to go back and get more information

or work around the obstacles that had arisen.

Reworking the plan sometimes meant the door of opportunity closed because of timing. Sadly my lamp burned out.

Possibility comes all the time. It fills the air exploding into beautiful fireworks and then slowly disappears. If we're ready because we've done our homework and prepared for it, trusting in the goal and setting the direction with skill and planning, then possibility embraces us, and we're set to go. All we had to do was prepare the way.

All things are possible with God, Jesus told His followers. They become possible as we get ready, prepare and make our best efforts. Then we have to be laser-focused, setting our sights on all that can be, and finally, we have to act. We have to go!

As a writer, I think about all the planning and preparation that goes into creating a book. When I worked on my book, "It's Still Possible," I had to believe in the project with my whole heart. Once I did my homework, I moved toward the goal, writing the book as best I could.

I wouldn't have been successful if I simply put the completed manuscript in a drawer. I had to go. I had to take action, sending it out into the world and giving it wings. Whatever your goal might be, get ready, set the standard and go after your dreams. With God's help, all things are possible.

Get Ready! Get Set! Go!

"Any way you are able to sponsor or work closely with schools in the community allows families to have a bird's eye view of who your church is up close," said **Gina Harper** of **Golden Acres Baptist Church in Phenix City**. "Every opportunity we get to show people Jesus, who we are and Who we serve is an opportunity to draw people to Christ."

"One of the criticisms of a pregnancy resource center is that we just get them to keep the baby and then turn them loose and they're on their own," said **Lisa Hogan**, executive director of **Sav-A-Life** centers in Vestavia and Fultondale. "Nothing could be farther from the truth."

"If God calls you to a difficult task and there are problems, He might not deliver you from the problems, but He will go with you through them," said **Donnie Isbell Byrd**, a member of **Valley Grove Baptist Church in Tuscumbia**.

"This trip opened my eyes to what long-term missions work looks like," said **Anna Leigh Breedlove**, a medical volunteer with the IMB. "I had the opportunity to see what it was like to live in a different culture, practice medicine and serve in a community that truly needed it."

## Missionary says 'thanks'

We are so thankful for the fruit we are seeing in our ministry after years of seeing so little.

We are convinced that's because the Bible translation project that you funded is finally complete, and our people can hear the Bible in their heart's tongue.

Fellow Southern Baptists, we could not do anything we do without you.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for giving to the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Because of your prayers and gifts, we got to go. We got to be part of the work God is doing among our people.

You can rejoice with us because you gave and lives are being changed.

**Andy Hoffman**  
International Mission Board

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# “Members with cluttered hearts can hamper the church from being a temple of God’s Spirit.”

JERRY BATSON  
*Theology 101, “God’s Temple”*

“The Lord had a plan. He placed people in my path who would push me and grow me. Through that, I sensed a call to ministry,” said **Nate Young**, who shared how his involvement in campus ministry eventually led to his call to full-time ministry. He is pastor of **North River Church in Tuscaloosa**.

For Christians “the gospel should affect every piece of our lives, including the way that we invest the capital that God has entrusted to us,” said **Brett Danforth** director of client development, **Oak City Consulting of North Carolina**.

“My heart can’t handle the photos of the bodies so I delete them ... and while I’m not one to cry easily,

watching fathers having to leave their families at the border with the kids grasping to hold on to them gets me,” said **Sabin Boruga, Baptist church planter in Sighisoara, Romania**.

“I don’t know of a single Russian person who does not have relatives in Ukraine and vice versa,” said **Theresa Felt, former International Mission Board missionary**. “So it isn’t just a concern of the lives that are being lost on either side of the conflict, but also that it’s truly relatives fighting against relatives. I’ve compared it to the Civil War here in the U.S. Not all Russian people are supporting this. Always remember, our individual politics are often way different from the government’s

politics. People are just people. We are creations of God who need a relationship with Jesus.”

“There’s a great Church in Russia. The Church in Russia is strong, is sound, is growing and is vibrant,” said **Lamar Shubert, IMB worker**.

“God gave me this vision to reach out to people who are getting ignored — the good ol’ boys,” said **Terry Billings, mud bogger racer**, whose story is featured in TAB Media Stories podcast. “I’ve always been one of them. I was an alcoholic, and God reached out and touched me. If He hadn’t, and if people hadn’t, I wouldn’t have been saved. So there’s nowhere that’s too far for me to go to reach them.”

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @ethicist

We must remember that just as God was merciful and long-suffering toward us, so is He patient with unbelievers who sometimes persecute the church.

### @GaryFenton07

Prayer is practiced and commanded in the Bible, but never fully explained. We trust the One to whom we pray and not our words.

### @macbrunson

The preaching of the Word of God does not mean merely that the text is taken from the Bible ... But that the preacher ... is experiencing the presence and power of God’s Spirit in his reason, conscience, affections, and purposes — that his own life is hid with Christ in God, that he is in all meekness and lowliness, because of his unworthiness. Yet with all boldness and trustfulness, because of God’s call and endowment, ful-

filling a divine mission in delivering a divine message. — Alfred Earnest Garvie

### @TAndrewBrown

He who fights with the precious blood of Jesus fights with a weapon that cannot know defeat. The blood of Jesus! Sin dies at its presence; death ceases to be death; heaven’s gates are opened. The blood of Jesus! We shall march on, conquering and to conquer. —Spurgeon

### @DrGaryChapman

Your most basic emotional need is ... to be genuinely loved by another, to know a love that grows out of reason and choice, not instinct. You need to be loved by someone who chooses to love you, who sees in you something worth loving.

### @ToddUnzicker

“Christian, in light of the resurrection that we all just celebrated, let’s

remember today that the ground is level at the foot of the cross and He commands us to ‘love one another.’”

### @johnnymhunt

If we have received the Holy Spirit, God expects the work of the Holy Spirit to be exhibited in us. — Oswald Chambers

### @MichaelCatt

The divisiveness of our nation has infiltrated our churches. Jesus is not far left or far right. He is the King. We need to ... start repenting of fleshly agendas that divide us instead of the mission that unites us.

### @bellevuepastor

Christian, you don’t have time to participate in everyone else’s agenda. Ask God what your focus should be and then commit yourself to that. If others get upset ... don’t worry about it. Your goal is to please the Lord by obeying Him.

## Preparing for our adversaries

By **Franklin Kirksey**  
Spanish Fort, Ala.

A foundational element in military strategy is to know your enemy. If you underestimate your enemy, you will experience defeat.

### Foes, family, friends

Believers have three evil adversaries: the world, the flesh and the devil.

These correspond to “earthly, sensual, demonic” (James 3:15). The world is a system of thought without God (1 John 2:15–17). The flesh is the self not under the control of God (Gal. 5:17–25). The devil is Satan who rebelled against God (Rev. 12:7–10).

Believers also have three exemplary ancestors: Noah, Daniel and Job.

Ezekiel 14:14 reads, “‘Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,’ says the Lord God.”

Noah overcame the world (see Gen. 6:8 and Heb. 11:7).

Daniel overcame the flesh (see Dan. 1:8).

Job overcame the devil (see Job 1:11–12, Job 42:7).

Believers have three eternal allies: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It has been said the world rivals God the Father, the flesh rivals God the Holy Spirit, and the devil rivals God the Son.

### ‘Get up, face them again’

Oswald Chambers explains, “In education everything is built up on difficulty, there is always something to overcome. And this is true in the spiritual world.

“If the world, the flesh and the devil have knocked you out once, get up and face them again, and again, until you have done with them. That is how character is made in the spiritual domain as well as in the natural.”



# WMU provides resources for missions education

(continued from page 1)  
on mission and see the world and see beyond themselves into the world,” Dixon said. “We want to see the needs and then give them ideas of how they could meet those needs.”

Dixon noted WMU’s intent is not to give churches a cookie-cutter framework they have to fit into. WMU provides customizable resources churches can use to include missions discipleship in their context.

## ‘Make it yours’

“We want them to fit their culture and what their community and association and state needs,” Dixon explained. “We do not say, ‘This is what a WMU group looks like and this is how it needs to operate’ ... we just give you suggestions of how you can do it, and then you can take whatever elements you want to make it yours.”

It’s a grassroots organization, she added.

“The most important person in WMU is the woman or man sitting in the pew or the preschooler going to Mission Friends,” she said.

Other topics Dixon addressed were:

### ► Can men also participate in WMU?

“Yes, they can, from birth,”

Dixon said. “We have a place for everyone in WMU.”

Boys are included in Mission Friends, Children in Action and Missions Journey: Kids curriculum as well as Royal Ambassadors, a missions discipleship resource for grade-school boys.

Men also are needed as leaders in missions discipleship and WMU ministries like Christian Men’s Job Corps and Christian Women’s Job Corps, which equips men and women for life and employment in a Christian context.

### ► What other types of work does WMU do?

WMU includes compassion ministries such as WorldCrafts, which develops sustainable, fair-trade businesses among impoverished people around the world.

Pure Water, Pure Love provides clean water through water filtration systems and well-drilling projects, spanning Asia to

New Mexico, where Dixon said she’s seen the effects of a well dug on a Navajo reservation.

### ► How is WMU funded? Does it receive Cooperative Program money?



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Eddie Gibson (left) and David George participate in the April 24 WM-Who? event at the offices of TAB Media Group. Gibson is a ministry leader in Birmingham and his home country of Liberia. George is president of the WMU Foundation.

National WMU does not receive any CP funds and never has, Dixon stated.

Its work is funded primarily through the sale of resource materials and supple-

mented with funds from the WMU Foundation and generous donors.

Some state WMUs are funded or partially funded by

the national, state and local church levels, Dixon said.

“Our board is probably the most diverse board in all of [Southern Baptist Convention] life.”

One third of the WMU executive board is made up of women of color, and seven state executive directors are women of color, Dixon noted. Leaders also represent a range of ages and life stages.

## Diverse organization

WMU has recognized work in 49 countries and every U.S. state.

“It’s a very diverse organization, and we love that,” she said. “We’re hoping to have more and more of that.”

### ► How can local Baptist associations support WMU?

It’s a great help for associations to hold missions fairs and offer an opportunity for WMU to be heard from the associational office, Dixon said.

Having associational WMU directors is also a great way for WMU to resource associations so they can resource individual churches.

“If there are any needs, especially in smaller associations, we want to let them know we would love to work with them and resource them and help them in any way we can,” Dixon said.

### ► How long has WMU been serving its mission?

WMU was organized in 1888 and has continued to serve faithfully.

“We’re not your grandmother’s WMU,” Dixon quipped, “but that 134-year-old heritage doesn’t go away. We still have the same objectives that we want people to grow in their faith and learn about missions and pray for missions and give sacrificially and do missions. But we also want them to do it their way.”

“And we want to make sure we equip today’s generation for missions,” she declared.

To view the video of Dixon’s interview visit [youtube.com/tabmediagroup](https://youtube.com/tabmediagroup). To learn more about WMU visit [wmu.com](https://wmu.com).

## National WMU moves toward finding the ‘right footprint’

National Woman’s Missionary Union is taking another step toward finding the “right footprint” for its staff in 2022, according to Julie Walters, corporate communications manager.

They plan to move operations to the first floor of their building as second-floor tenant Lifeline Children’s Services prepares to relocate this summer to a 66,000-square-foot facility gifted to them.

Emptying the top two floors of the 135,000-square-foot WMU building will save energy costs and give WMU an opportunity

to determine the optimal office arrangement for its team, Walters said.

The building at 100 Missionary Ridge in Birmingham has been on the market for about a year, after board members voted in January 2021 to explore the possibility of selling it.

### Smaller staff

“We had about 160 staff members in 1984 when the building was built. With printing changes and other changes, our staff is much smaller,” Walters explained. “The building is a much larger footprint than we need for all the staff who work on site.”

National WMU has some 30 full-time and part-time staff and also works with independent contractors and volunteer leaders. Fewer than 20 employees work on site all the time.

“With COVID-19 we adopted a remote work policy,” Walters noted. “We have some staff who work here 100% of the time, some who work in the office some days and at home some days and others who are fully remote.”

The WMU Foundation, a separate 501(c)(3), also occupies the building, with most of its staff working in a hybrid format.

Walters said WMU leaders knew

the sale of the building would likely be slow as the Highway 280 corridor is flooded with available office space as more companies move to remote work.

### ‘The right buyer’

“We are actively showing the building, but it is going to take God bringing the right buyer at the right time,” Walters said.

While curriculum sales dipped during the pandemic as many churches moved away from in-person meetings, Walters said numbers are beginning to rebound. (Grace Thornton)





Photo by Mat Alexander

Craig Carlisle (right), director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association welcomes the April 25 School of the Prophets speakers: (l to r) Ed Litton, Bart Barber, Matt Henslee, David Eldridge and Marshall Blalock.

# ‘Remain faithful’

## 2022 School of the Prophets conference emphasizes ‘essentials’ for ministry

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

In early 2022, Craig Carlisle read a report from Lifeway Research that struck a chord.

The study focused on the challenges pastors face and the enduring needs they sense in their personal and professional lives.

Carlisle, Etowah Baptist Association’s director of missions, was planning the association’s annual School of the Prophets ministry conference, and a theme emerged from his reading — “Essentials: Tools to Strengthen Today’s Ministry.”

April 24–25, six pastors expanded on those seven needs, speaking to pastors, ministry leaders and others at First Baptist Church Gadsden.

Jason K. Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, spoke April 24 and challenged pastors to “remain faithful in a faithless age.” Allen pointed to Paul’s second letter to Timothy, his “son in the faith.”

“Timothy is tired, weak, discouraged,” Allen said. “Paul is writing to ... encourage him to be strong, to tell him to be faithful.”

It’s a message Allen said he often delivers to pastors as cultural forces “seek to redefine what we thought was beyond redefinition: marriage and human sexuality, gender and human identity.”

In every generation, the church has faced conflict, he said, and “the

church is called to be faithful. Period.”

Speaking April 25 from 2 Corinthians 12, Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, pointed to the pain leaders face in their congregations and communities.

Addressing pain is the “key to progress in our churches,” Litton said, because “the longer you avoid a problem, the more painful it gets.”

“Pain humbles us. It drives us to our knees. It refines us. ... And pain will drive you to Him,” Litton said. “Embrace the pain God has called you to and watch Him gloriously move.”

David Eldridge, pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, used the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 to encourage

pastors in their personal devotional lives.

### Different approaches

Eldridge pointed to the contrast between the two women: Mary, learning at the feet of Jesus, and Martha, serving those gathered.

It’s an apt metaphor for the pastoral life, Eldridge said.

“Martha’s busyness has become an obstacle. ... Martha is preparing bread while the Bread of Life is in the next room. She is pouring everyone something to drink while the very Source of living water is in the next room.”

“We (pastors) are like Martha,” he

said. “There is a flock to feed. We must prepare the word of God for others to feast on. And the temptation is to prepare without feasting on what we prepare.”

Instead, Eldridge said, “all of our service for Him must first flow from the joy of an intimate relationship with Him.”

Friendships matter as well, said Matt Henslee, associational mission strategist for Collin Baptist Association in Fairview, Texas, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference.

“We need friends in the flesh to keep us in the fight because the good fight must be fought,” he said.

He pointed to a culture where gripes and grumblings are common, from opinions on the pandemic to conflict within churches and the SBC.

“We’re all weary,” he said. “But the battle is worth it and we must fight it.”

Pastors need friends like Aaron and Hur (Ex. 17:8–16), he said, “to keep us in the fight.”

“Aaron and Hur couldn’t do everything, but they could do something,” Henslee said. “No task in God’s service is unimportant.

... Who in your circle can you encourage?”

Pastoral sabbath was the topic Bart Barber addressed, based in Hebrews 4. In confession and repentance there is rest, he said.

“If you are working hard to hide

what you really are, would you give it a rest? ... If you are carrying the shame of your past failures, give it a rest. ... If you have taken on yourself the burden, having been forgiven by God’s grace, to straighten everybody else out, give it a rest.”

### ‘Peace and joy’

Sabbath in the Old Testament is an appointment, Barber said. Sabbath in the New Testament is a person. And that’s better, he emphasized.

“If you want rest, it’s only found in [Jesus]. ... Trust in Him that His grace not only saved you ... but preserves you through your ministry. Let Him give you peace with the people and ... joy in the midst of your service.”

Marshall Blalock, pastor of First Baptist Church Charleston, South

Carolina, reiterated the “absolute necessity of repentance and confession.”

Spiritual disciplines are good, but they are not the goal, Blalock said.

“The goal is to love God — heart, soul, mind and strength — and to be so moved by His love that your heart has a single-minded passion to bring Him glory by everything in your life.”

The first calling of a pastor is to “fix our eyes on Jesus,” Blalock said. “Gaze upon the amazing grace of God, upon His perfection, His power, His amazing love. ... If we get this right, it takes care of everything else.”

*Watch full videos of the School of the Prophets, including worship music led by music evangelist Bob Smith, minister to seasoned adults at FBC Trussville; the Abundant Life Choir from MeadowBrook Church in Gadsden; and the FBC Gadsden choir, at [fbcgadsden.org/live](http://fbcgadsden.org/live).*



# Miller wrapping up 60 years of student ministry service

By Lanell Downs Smith  
The Alabama Baptist

Jerry and Carolyn Miller joined First Baptist Church Huntsville in 1960, the first Sunday after they moved to the area following college graduation.

The Millers began teaching a youth Sunday School class one year later, and this July 31, 85-year-old Miller will step out of the role after more than 60 years.

“God blessed Jerry Miller with wonderful health and perpetual youthfulness,” said Travis Collins, pastor of FBC Huntsville.

“Jerry, in turn, invested those gifts into countless teenagers. Only heaven itself will reveal the return on Jerry’s investment.”

Miller has enjoyed working with young people and playing ball since high school. As a student athlete in Boaz, he frequently led groups of elementary school students to play after-school football games.

## Lifelong calling

He dreamed of becoming a coach but eventually pursued a degree in engineering and worked at NASA after graduating from Auburn University.

Church leaders at the time asked the Millers to teach the intermediate — 13- and 14-year-old — Sunday School class in 1961, and the young pair eagerly jumped in though they

felt not much older than their students. Through the years he continued teaching, moving up through older teen groups before settling in to lead 12th grade classes.

## WMU connection

Meanwhile, Carolyn shifted to other ministry, eventually serving as Alabama WMU president and then national WMU president.

“I feel like it’s a God-calling to work with [young people],” Jerry Miller said. “I’ve been sensitive to the needs of young people, and I can see where they’re going, where they’ve been and what they’re feeling. So I’ve tried to use that talent to minister to them in any way that I could.”



MILLER

Miller works to build confidence in students, said Jamie Mackey, minister to students.

“Students know Jerry believes in them,” Mackey explained. “That belief shows up in Bible studies, with Jerry getting students to feel confident reading Scripture or praying.”

Miller has been a buddy and father and grandfather figure to the students he served.

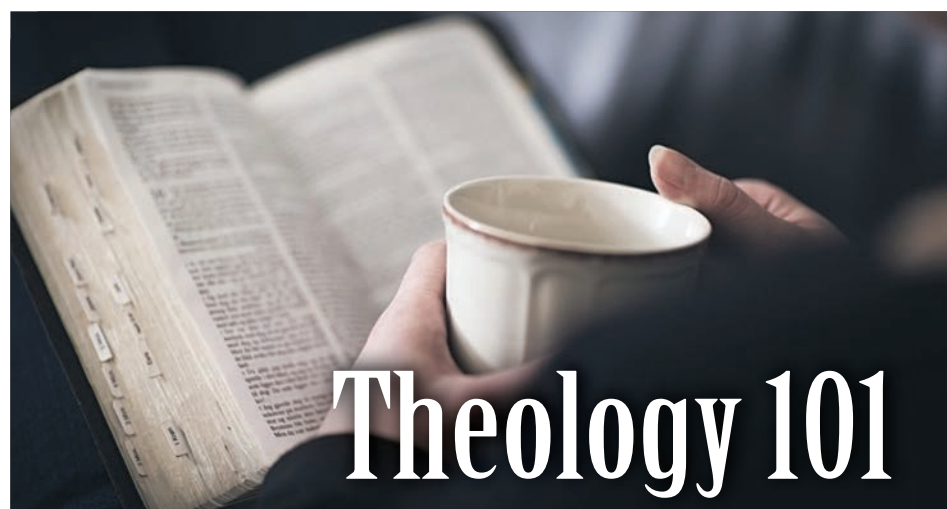
Now a great-grandfather, Miller said he feels the time has come to step away from his active teaching role.

In August he plans to join Carolyn as a student in an adult Sunday School class.



Photo courtesy of Jamie Mackey

In 1968, Jerry Miller helped FBC Huntsville develop a week-long youth camp. Here, Miller is pictured with participants in Spring Camp 2022 in March at the Cottage Christian Retreat Center in Laguna Beach, Florida.



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## The People of God

# God’s Vineyard

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
The Alabama Baptist

As we have been noting in recent weeks, the Bible presents a variety of images or analogies of God’s people. They are viewed as His field and flock, as well as His building and household. This week we consider the people of God as His vineyard. Such was one of the images used to refer to God’s Old Covenant nation Israel, voiced in Isaiah 5:7: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.”

Jesus is on record in Matthew, Mark and Luke speaking His well-known parable about workers in a vineyard. The phrase “the lord of the vineyard” is in all three books (Matt. 20:8, Mark 12:9, Luke 20:13), putting the focus on a human owner of a literal vineyard.

With greater detail, the imagery of a vineyard occurs in Christ’s well-known analogy in John 15:1–8 where He asserted, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” As the owner and vinedresser of His vineyard, God makes it His business to provide care. In doing so, His purpose is that His vineyard should bear much fruit.

From this latter passage we learn several important truths about being God’s vineyard. First, we note that bearing fruit is the vineyard’s primary purpose. Healthy vines and beautiful leaves are not the ultimate goal for a vineyard owner. His focus is the quantity and quality of the clusters of grapes.

In the application of this analogy to Jesus’ human hearers, He says bearing fruit brings glory to God: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit” (v. 8). A vineyard full of fruitless vines brings no glory or profit to its owner. In the same breath, Jesus declared that bearing fruit is a primary evidence of discipleship: “So you will be My disciples” (v. 8). Furthermore, a fruit-bearing vineyard brings much joy to all who have an interest in it — the owner, the workers and the consumers of the grapes.

## Fruitfulness

Preachers often make the declaration that the proper fruit of Christians is more Christians. It is an agricultural truism that plants bring forth others of their own kind if they are allowed to go to seed. Jesus voiced this truism in the Sermon on the Mount when He asked, “Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?” (Matt. 7:16).

Fruitfulness includes both the production of Christlike character and the winning of others to follow Christ. Both kinds of fruitfulness require maintaining a vital union with Him.

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.





# On the 'PICKLEBALL train'

## Pickleball at FBC Centre brings community together in friendly atmosphere

By Michael Smith  
The Alabama Baptist

With 4.8 million people now playing pickleball — a combination of tennis, table tennis and badminton — it is the fastest-growing sport in the U.S.

First Baptist Church Centre is leveraging its popularity as an outreach opportunity.

The church started the pickleball program at its Recreational Outreach Center in 2017.

"Pickleball has brought people from different towns and backgrounds to play," said Freida Ellis, who founded the program with Jim and Elaine Bridges. "It has been a place to meet others and have fun together. Our church membership has grown because of having our facility open for people to come together playing a team sport that provides a friendly and Christian atmosphere."

Beth Serrentino, administrator of the ROC, said people even come from Gadsden and Piedmont.

Todd Hayes recently moved to the area from Indiana, found out about the ministry and has become a regular.

He said the difference in playing at the ROC versus some sites is that the ROC group is friendly with no attitudes or cliques.

It's an inviting place to play, he said. "I will choose their facility over all the other places."

Serrentino has seen pickleball save people's lives, including one widower who participated.

### 'Saved his life'

"When he started playing, I didn't even know him," she said.

"He would break down and cry many times or just was so discouraged, but over the last two years he is one of my husband's and my best friends, and it's all because of pickleball.

"I introduced him to my friend, and he is engaged," Serrentino added. "He will tell you pickleball saved his life."

Eddie Nation, pastor of FBC Centre, said pickleball is an excellent outreach for the church.

"Pickleball is growing here, and it's growing our community here at the ROC. We are

very thankful we have a facility and can offer it to our community, which enables us to get to know others and invite them to visit our church."

Randy Rainey, FBC's worship leader, started playing the game about a year ago.

"Pickleball is a great way to fellowship with other Christians," he said, adding that it's a great way to reach out to others, too.

"I feel God wants us to use all our resources for His glory," Rainey said. "I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I have built some great friendships through pickleball and feel it is a great outreach for us."

FBC Centre is planning to build a facility on the property where the ROC is located. The church currently meets in the gym for worship on Sundays.

"After we play on Saturday, we lay down carpet and set up about 300–350 chairs every week," Serrentino said. "After church we have our congregation stack all the chairs, and we roll up the carpet to get ready to pull out the nets and

get ready for pickleball on Monday morning."

Serrentino encouraged other churches with recreational space to get on the "pickleball train."

"Do it today," she urged. "We had some issues at first, and sometimes I think we have an enemy that really wants to break our little pickleball family up, but we get stronger."

Serrentino said the ROC's role as an outreach center means everyone feels welcome — even those who aren't believers.

"They see something different about us real quick," she said. "The only con is we don't have enough time and space to play as much as we all would like to!"

*To learn more about First Baptist Church Centre, the ROC and the pickleball program visit [fbc-centre.org](http://fbc-centre.org).*

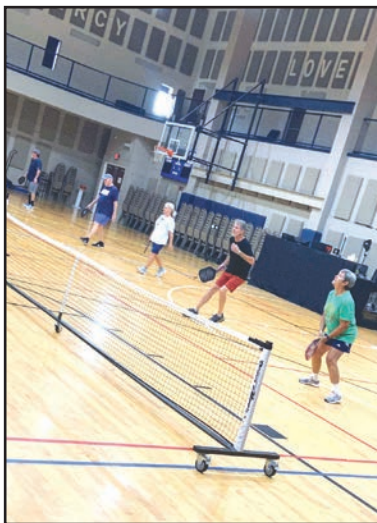


Photo courtesy of Beth Serrentino  
First Baptist Church Centre is thankful for a facility it can offer to the community. It enables members to meet others and invite them to church.



Photo courtesy of Beth Serrentino  
First Baptist Church Centre leverages pickleball's popularity as an outreach opportunity. Beth Serrentino, the administrator of the church's recreational facility, encourages other churches with gyms to get on the 'pickleball train.'





# A love for PICKLEBALL

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

## Church planter to focus on pastoral encouragement, pickleball in new ministry season

Danny Lovett said he’s had a heart for young pastors and the lost for a long time. But the way those passions have fleshed out in the past 10 years has caught him by surprise.

First, after years of training young pastors and helping church planting teams at Tennessee Temple University and Liberty University, he ended up as a church planter himself.

When his friend David Wilson first asked him about planting a church in Shelby County, he said he checked to make sure Wilson remembered his age.

“I was 58 years old, not like a young man being a church planter — it was the old man being

a church planter,” Lovett remembered.

But God gave him and Wilson a vision, and 10 years later the Church at Chelsea Westover is thriving.

A little over halfway through Lovett’s time there, God started planting seeds for what would become a new ministry in his next season of life — a love for pickleball.

“It’s the fastest-growing racquet sport, and Susan [his wife] and I have traveled all over the country playing,” Lovett said.

Pickleball — a cross between table tennis, tennis and badminton — is played with a fiberglass or wooden paddle, a net and a Wiffle

ball. For Lovett, it offers a lot of evangelistic opportunities with fellow players.

“When I introduce myself as Pastor Danny and we get to know each other and play together, I get to share the gospel,” he explained.

He and Susan also set up a tent and hand out water and talk to people at pickleball tournaments. In May, Lovett will play in the National Senior Games in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

As people play pickleball with him and get to know him, Lovett said they often ask, “Are you a real pastor?” And they open up with prayer requests and questions.

“I like to say I’m a missionary to

pickleball or a pickleball chaplain,” Lovett said.

And in this next season, as he and his wife travel in their RV, playing pickleball and sharing the gospel, their home base will be another part of their new ministry — a retreat cabin for pastors in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The cabin will hold four families. Lovett said it is meant to minister to pastors and their wives and is under the umbrella of the Jesus is Awesome Ministry he organized before his time at the Church at Chelsea Westover.

### Encouraging others

“I want to work with pastors and encourage them any way I can,” Lovett said.

Rick Wright, now pastor of the

Church at Chelsea Westover, said he knows what it’s like to be the recipient of Lovett’s encouragement. As he served alongside Lovett for more than half of his time at the church, Lovett poured into him as the church prepared him to become the next pastor.

“God allowed me to work with him and be mentored by him, and that has been such a blessing,” Wright said.

Not only that — Lovett left the church settled in a new multipurpose building on 90 acres of paid-for land in Shelby County, which it already is using for sports outreach and evangelistic events for the community.

In May they’re starting connect groups, something Wright said is needed.

“We have had 40 people join the

church since the end of last year,” he explained. “We have visitors every week and people saved every week, so we’ve got a job to do in discipling. I’m excited about that.”

### ‘Beautiful’ transition

Lovett, who was named pastor emeritus in late March, is excited about it, too, along with the ministry he’ll be doing on the pickleball court.

He said the church’s transition to Wright’s pastorate has been “beautiful.”

Through all his different kinds of ministry, Lovett said the point has always been to get the hope of the gospel to as many people as possible.

“I’m always amazed at the opportunities,” he said.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/  
The Alabama Baptist

## Pickleball community relational, competitive

It’s a racquet sport you play with a paddle — and it doesn’t really have anything to do with pickles, except maybe the pickle juice hardcore players drink for cramps during games.

While the game of pickleball has been around since 1965, it’s only recently gained the attention needed to attract all age groups and ability levels.

Young tennis players are some of the most shocked to discover how much they love the game, sometimes to the dismay of their parents and coaches who have invested thousands of hours and dollars into training and equipment.

“Tennis players and those who play any racquet sport can typically translate those skills to the pickleball court even though the game is played very differently,” said Jason Rash, pickleball coordinator for the national Life Time Fitness chain’s Alabama location.

“Athletes in general are having

fun learning to play pickleball,” he added. “But it’s also a game for people of all skill levels.”

Rash, who has been playing pickleball competitively for about three years, spends several hours a day teaching others how to play the sport he loves.

“Learning the soft, slower touch of the dink rather than aggressively banging the ball is key to developing your game for those who want to play a higher skill level,” he said.

For those ready to learn the game, Rash suggests starting with one or two of the basics and building from there.

“Learning how to properly hold your paddle and

make contact with the ball can make a big difference going forward,” he said. “Start with good habits and remember to have fun.”

“The pickleball community is known for its caring environment, which provides a natural opportunity for church groups to use the sport as an outreach ministry.” (Jennifer Davis Rash)



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Rash  
Pickleball clubs are popping up across the country, some adding a touch of creative branding.

## Keeping score, other tips

Games can be played with singles or doubles. Singles can be played full court or restricted to one quadrant in what is called skinny singles.

Games are typically played to 11 points, and a win has to be by 2 points. (Tournament play varies.)

One point is scored when you are serving and the opposing team fails to return the ball or hits it out of bounds. When the serving team fails to return the ball or hits it out

of bounds, then the serve goes to the opposing team (after the second server for doubles).

At the beginning of each serve, the server should say the score (and the server count if playing doubles) loud enough for all players to hear. For instance: 0-0-1 for the first server when no one has scored, and 0-0-2 for no scores and the second server.

For a full list of the rules and the history, visit [usapickleball.org](http://usapickleball.org).



# RECREATION

## ministry

### Trussville church bringing people to Christ through basketball, disc golf

By Hamilton Richardson  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he significance of sports, recreation and overall physical health probably goes without saying, but when those important aspects of life are connected to a deep desire for spiritual health, churches can make a real impact for Christ.

CrossPoint Church in Trussville is meeting just such a need through a ministry where physical fitness and spiritual fitness meet. That type of outreach can have a big impact, which is what the church is seeing.

Brian Harris, minister of recreation at CrossPoint, explained how crucial he believes this type of ministry is to the community.

“Church recreation is a ministry of the church that provides sports, leisure activities and fellowship opportunities to help the local church accomplish its mission,” Harris said. “The mission of the recreation ministry at CrossPoint is to use sports, leisure activities and fellowship opportunities ... to connect with God, His people and His plan. CrossPoint’s desire is to use the recreation ministry to bring in just one more to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.”

#### Evolving ministry

Harris noted people may not have heard of this type of outreach, but it’s actually been around for some time.

“Sports ministry, activities ministry or church recreation, whatever the name, it is not a new ministry,” he said. “Church recreation has been around a very long time. In the 70s and 80s it was a lot of arts and crafts, camping activities and RA [Royal Ambassador] basketball. Just like other ministries of the local church, church recreation has evolved.”

Harris, who has been involved in CrossPoint’s ministry for nearly 15 years, is passionate about it, having grown up with a love of sports.

#### ‘Offered with excellence’

“My father, Jerry Harris, was on staff at Shades Mountain Baptist for over 30 years and the minister of recreation there for most of that time,” Harris recalled. “I grew up knowing what I wanted to do and that was to be a minister of recreation. Growing up in the home of a minister and being around the CLC [recreation building] at Shades Mountain ... prepared me to fulfill my calling.

“I love sports. I love everything about sports and that includes pretty much all sports,” he declared. “To me, there was no greater job than becoming a recreation minister.”

Under his leadership, CrossPoint has grown to offer multiple sports. There is an array of activities, and everything is done with a purpose.

“Recreation ministry at CrossPoint is not complicated. We offer several events and programs, but not as many as some other churches,” Harris said, adding the church does so by design.

“We wanted to make sure that what we offer we offered with excellence. Our biggest program ... is our CrossPoint Basketball League (CBL). We have two gyms, which definitely helps us host a lot of basketball games.”

The church averages around 75 teams from CrossPoint and approximately 20 from area churches every season. Each plays all the games at CrossPoint, with 25 to 30 holding their practices there as well.

“We typically host around 300 basketball games a year,” Harris



Photo courtesy of CrossPoint Church

CrossPoint Basketball League at CrossPoint Church in Trussville averages around 75 teams from the church and approximately 20 from area churches every season. Each plays all the games at CrossPoint, and many hold their practices there as well.

noted. “This is a great outreach tool for us because well over half of our participants on CrossPoint teams do not have a local church.

“We have seen many families come to CrossPoint over the years through our basketball league,” he added. “Our coaches are awesome and consider it a great opportunity to minister to families and to share the love of Christ with them. The basketball season lasts almost three

months so they have a great chance to build relationships and share the gospel through the game of basketball.”

The recreation ministry also serves the community every day by making the recreation facility, called The Point, available. Harris explained that at The Point people can exercise and take a break from the busyness of life.

#### Making time

“Recreation or leisure activity should be part of each of our lives, but the reality is that it’s often the first thing that gets left out when life gets busy,” he noted. “The Point offers two gyms, a track, a fitness room and a game room for individuals and families to enjoy.

“Over the years we have been able to build some amazing relationships with members of our community.”

Basketball is not the only sport that has made an impact for CrossPoint. The church has introduced pickleball and a disc golf course as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown.

#### Witness for Christ

“During the pandemic we also decided to design and build a disc golf course on our campus,” Harris explained. “The popularity of disc golf grew during the pandemic, and we made the decision to build another course in our area. Since Humble Tree Disc Golf Course opened a year ago, we have hosted several hundred [who] have played over 2,000 rounds of disc golf.”

The most important aspect of CrossPoint’s recreation ministry is its witness for Christ, says Harris.

“The biggest impact I have seen is the lives changed and transformed by Jesus Christ,” he said. “Only God could use a basketball game, golf tournament, pickleball or disc golf to bring Him glory. If the local church can provide those activities all while telling them about Jesus, we can reach just one more to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.”

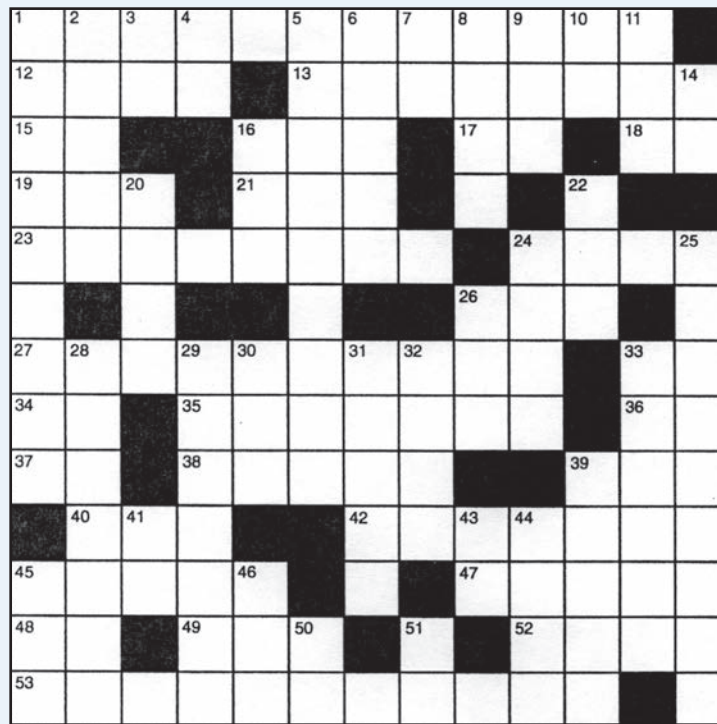
*To learn more about CrossPoint’s recreation or other ministries visit [crosspointchurch.info](http://crosspointchurch.info).*



# CHRISTIAN crossword

## Across

1. Old Testament book.
12. A son of Shobal.  
(1 Chron. 1:40)
13. And a hundred sheep, beside harts, and \_\_\_\_.  
(1 Kings 4:23)
15. Veterans Affairs.  
(abbr.)
16. Sailor.
17. Route. (abbr.)
18. 12 months. (abbr.)
19. Son of Amoz. (abbr.)  
(2 Kings 19:20)
21. Little island.
23. And Eshton begat ...  
\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 4:12)
24. \_\_\_\_ and Dumah and Eshean. (Josh. 15:52)
26. Direction.
27. Old Testament book.  
(2 parts)
33. Branch office. (abbr.)
34. United Artists. (abbr.)
35. Yet he cheweth not the cud; he is \_\_\_\_.  
(Lev. 11:7)
36. And he said, \_\_\_\_, it is yet high day.  
(Gen. 29:7)
37. Zacchaeus climbed up into a \_\_\_\_camore tree. (Luke 19:4)
38. And Ashur the father of \_\_\_\_ had two wives. (1 Chron. 4:5)
39. The throne of \_\_\_\_ and of the Lamb.  
(Rev. 22:3)
40. Women's Army Corp. (abbr.)
42. One who swears to an affidavit.
45. And \_\_\_\_ the daughter of Leah. (Gen. 34:1)
47. Crass.
48. The children of \_\_\_\_, and Hushim, the sons of Aher.  
(1 Chron. 7:12)
49. And if any man will \_\_\_\_ thee at the law.  
(Matt. 5:40)
52. Sweet drinks made from limes or lemons.



By Judy Ellis Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

53. Fifth Old Testament book.

## Down

1. Third Old Testament book.
2. Every one that is proud, and \_\_\_\_ him.  
(Job 40:11)
3. Pa's mate.
4. Elevated railroad.
5. Illness on Amtrak.
6. Great trunk that carries blood.
7. Tellurium. (symbol)
8. Son of Merari.  
(1 Chron. 24:27)
9. Seven angels came \_\_\_\_ of the temple.  
(Rev. 15:6)
10. Raleigh is the capital. (abbr.)
11. Fair weather: for the \_\_\_\_ is red. (Matt. 16:2)
14. "Mr." in Spanish. (abbr.)
16. Light brown.
20. Hushim was his son.  
(1 Chron. 7:12)
22. Sir, come down \_\_\_\_ my child die. (John 4:49)
24. Association. (abbr.)
25. Blood analysis.  
(2 words)
26. And I saw as it were a \_\_\_\_ of glass.
- (Rev. 15:2)
28. Out of order.
29. Because they called thee an \_\_\_\_, saying, This is Zion.  
(Jer. 30:17)
30. Direction.
31. As free, and not using your liberty for a \_\_\_\_ of maliciousness.  
(1 Pet. 2:16, modern sp.)
32. For ye shall be as an oak whose \_\_\_\_ fadeth.  
(Isa. 1:30)
33. Not a brunette.
39. Flashy.
41. Behold, I send \_\_\_\_ Angel before thee.  
(Ex. 23:20)
43. Fire control. (abbr.)
44. Duke Magdiel, duke \_\_\_\_.  
(1 Chron. 1:54)
45. Alexander the coppersmith \_\_\_\_ me much evil.  
(2 Tim. 4:14)
46. Shade.
50. Son of Judah.  
(Gen. 46:12)
51. Called to be \_\_\_\_ apostle. (Rom. 1:1)

## Supreme Court hears case of praying coach

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments April 25 in a case that could broaden religious rights in public schools.

The court's decision in the case of Joe Kennedy, an 18-year Marine veteran and former assistant coach for the Bremerton High School varsity football team, presents a test of what constitutes separation of church and state and could have implications for prayer in school sports across America.

Kennedy left his job after school officials demanded he stop a years-long tradition of praying on the field after games. School officials said they were trying to avoid the appearance that the school was endorsing a religious point of view.

Kennedy says the school district violated his religious freedom by telling him he couldn't pray publicly after the games.

### Question of free speech

Paul Clement, an attorney with First Liberty Institute who is representing Kennedy, told justices Kennedy's 50-yard-line prayers were private speech, protected by the First Amendment guarantee of free speech and the free exercise of religion. The prayer, Clement argued, was much like a player kneeling

after scoring a touchdown.

Kennedy and the district both acknowledge he never required players to join him in his prayers at midfield, but some parents said their children felt pressured to participate out of fear they would lose playing time.

### Question of influence

Justice Brett Kavanaugh noted the concern but suggested there is no real way to remedy suspicions that a coach is exercising favoritism. Kavanaugh also pointed out Kennedy's actions were more visible than audible, taking place in a public space rather than a "locker room situation."

Justice Samuel Alito questioned the school district's attorney whether other actions, such as waving the Ukrainian flag at the 50-yard-line to protest the Russian invasion or kneeling to make a statement about climate change or racial injustice, would be allowed by the district.

Several coaches, former collegiate athletes and current and former NFL players, including quarterbacks Kirk Cousins and Nick Foles, signed onto friend-of-the-court briefs in support of Kennedy.

A ruling in the case is expected this summer. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)



Photo courtesy of First Liberty Institute

Joe Kennedy, an assistant football coach at Bremerton High School in Washington state, left his job after school officials demanded he stop praying on the field after games.



# Baptisms are 'fruit' of sharing gospel

John Jenkins said holding a baptism service just after Easter has made sense for his church family for a long time.

"We kind of always do this after Easter because we really push our people to share the gospel at Easter, and we want them to be able to celebrate after the fact," said Jenkins, pastor of Northport Baptist Church.

On April 24 his church baptized four of the six people who gave their lives to Christ on Easter Sunday.

Northport Baptist's service coincided with Baptism Sunday, a national emphasis across churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Baptism Sunday is a way of recognizing the first step of obedience new believers take after trusting in Christ for salvation, said Johnny Hunt, senior vice

president of evangelism and leadership at the North American Mission Board.

## 'Lost people saved'

"We come together as Southern Baptists to recognize Baptism Sunday to remind ourselves that the main reason for our partnership is the mission of seeing lost people saved," Hunt said. "My heartbeat and passion these past few years at NAMB has been to equip and encourage churches to engage their communities with the gospel and invite people to give their lives to Christ."

Jenkins said for his church, baptism services are an encouragement to persevere in evangelism. Without

celebrating new believers, "it's hard to have a fervor or an urgency to share the gospel," he said. "To see results gives people encouragement to keep going."

## 'Faithful'

Daniel Wilson, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said baptism "is the fruit that comes from faithfully telling people about Jesus. So to emphasize Baptism Sunday is also to highlight the importance of consistently sharing the gospel so there

will be new believers to baptize."

Baptism Sunday is also a great opportunity to remind Christ's followers of the significance of baptism, he said. "Because Christ died and rose again, we have been made new in Christ Jesus."

Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore, said celebrating baptism is a "Kairos moment" for his church.

He recently baptized a father who then turned around and baptized his two daughters while his wife — already a baptized believer — was in the water with them. The three of them had made decisions as the family went through the church's membership class.

"We need to celebrate these things," Mullins said. "We need to give people a marker in their life and say 'God did this at this point.'"

Find resources for evangelism and baptism at [evangelizeal.org](http://evangelizeal.org). (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Northport Baptist Church  
Northport Baptist Church Pastor John Jenkins (left) baptizes Dr. Ray Stewart.

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Prospect Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Tenn., is seeking a senior pastor. Prospect is a conservative, evangelical Southern Baptist church. Send resumé to: [rjones@fpunet.com](mailto:rjones@fpunet.com).

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Jemison First Baptist is accepting resumé for senior pastor. Visit [tabonline.org/FBC-Jemison](http://tabonline.org/FBC-Jemison) to see the job listing.

#### PASTOR

Thomaston Baptist Church, Thomaston, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: [thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com).

#### PASTOR

Full-time or bivocational pastor. Oak Grove Baptist Church, Frisco City, Ala. Please email resumé to: [oakgbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:oakgbaptist@gmail.com).

#### PASTOR

Prayerfully, Hillview Baptist Church is seeking a part-time pastor. Resumé may be sent to: Pastor Search Committee, 800 Heflin Avenue E, Birmingham, AL 35214.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: [padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com) or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35905.

#### CHURCH BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

The First Baptist Church of Headland, Ala., is seeking a church business administrator. This is a full-time, non-ministerial position that oversees the day-to-day business of the church. The job description is available at [www.fbcheadland.com](http://www.fbcheadland.com).

#### MUSIC MINISTER

Fayette First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time music minister to utilize the gifts and talents of our church to guide the church toward meaningful worship. Resumé may be sent to: [scottdavis@fayettefbcc.org](mailto:scottdavis@fayettefbcc.org).

#### PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER & PART-TIME TECHNOLOGY MANAGER

Steele Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister to lead our youth. The individual should be called by God to the youth ministry. Experience and Bible education is preferred but not necessary. Steele Baptist

Church is also seeking a part-time technology manager. The candidate should have a working knowledge of livestreaming, downloading music and working with the sound board. They will work with the pastor, music director and media team to oversee the media ministry. Both positions can be combined for the right person. Please email a resumé to: [steelebaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:steelebaptistchurch@gmail.com) or mail to: Steele Baptist Church, 3811 Pope Ave., Steele, AL 35987.

#### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational youth minister. Please send resumé and or questions to Ken Blakney at [ktblakney@yahoo.com](mailto:ktblakney@yahoo.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's ministry director. Please send resumé or questions to Lori Johnson at [macedoniachildrensministry@gmail.com](mailto:macedoniachildrensministry@gmail.com).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### IL BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME AND FAMILY SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IL Baptist Children's Home and Family Services (BCHFS) is looking for an executive director. See qualifications and standards at <http://www.bchfs.com/employment>. BCHFS is a Licensed Child Welfare Agency whose mission is to "Provide Christ-centered services that protect, heal and restore." The agency has a rich history of providing care for children and families in crisis for over 100 years. BCHFS has an annual budget of \$3.9 million and provides care for children and adults through various programs including residential care, maternity care, adoption services, counseling services and a pregnancy resource clinic. To apply, send a letter of interest and resumé to: Eric Bramlet, Search Committee Chair, [ericbramlet@kogerbramletlaw.com](mailto:ericbramlet@kogerbramletlaw.com).

#### RESIDENT SUMMER STAFF

We are currently praying for and seeking out Jesus-loving, servant-hearted young adults to join us in facilitating our summer

ministry. The RSS program provides work and ministry opportunities, a place for spiritual and personal growth and an amazing Christ-centered community to be a part of. Students are paid a summer salary and receive meals and lodging. We'd love to have your students join us this summer! All this information, a video and the application can be found at [www.shocco.org/summerstaff](http://www.shocco.org/summerstaff).

#### RECEPTIONIST/MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Receptionist/ministry assistant needed at First Baptist Church of Birmingham, 29 hours a week. Experience with Shelby helpful but not required. Must have good computer and people skills. Please email resumé to: [cjames@fbcbbm.org](mailto:cjames@fbcbbm.org).

#### DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY

Youth-focused nonprofit seeking full-time (40 hours) social services manager to oversee daily operations. Located in the Birmingham area. Salary \$47,000-\$52,000 annually. Health and dental insurance eligible. Call 205-994-1439 from 7 a.m.-4 p.m.

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#### CHURCH SIGNS

Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. [www.reliableesigns.com](http://www.reliableesigns.com).

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#### LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to [www.paradisevista.net](http://www.paradisevista.net) to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.



**MOTHER'S DAY IS MAY 8.**

# Moms aren't perfect

## Healthy mother-daughter relationships begin and end with grace

**W**hat goes into a healthy relationship between a mother and daughter? Grace. Lots of grace. What goes into that? Keep reading for more details.

In the counseling world, a healthy boundary is usually the right answer, as much as Jesus is the go-to answer to any question in Sunday School. But if we don't park things here for a minute, we will miss a big piece. Here are a few questions to ask:

- ▶ What do our mother/daughter boundaries look like?
- ▶ Are they appropriate for our specific role and developmental stage?
- ▶ Are we emotionally dependent upon each other in an unhealthy way?
- ▶ Do we share too much? Not enough?

Boundaries look different for everyone and in every life stage, but we know they are appropriate when we can be honest and open. Give yourself some grace here, because healthy boundaries take work and don't just happen overnight.

When you notice your boundaries are unhealthy, make small adjustments and try not to get overwhelmed with changing everything at once. The book "Boundaries," by psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend, is a great resource

if you feel you need additional help in this area.

We all bring aspects from our family of origin into our lives and relationships. These include habits, beliefs, communication styles, traditions, hurts and love. Have you ever said something and then realized you sounded just like your mom?

### We all fall short

Our upbringing impacts us more than we realize. Our moms sometimes make mistakes. Grace is important because those mistakes may have been passed down from her family of origin which, in turn, is passed down to us. It's easy to play the blame game, but when we look at it closely, it is just a big cycle that started when sin entered the world.

Honestly, if we are going to point fingers here, Eve, we are looking at you!

Of course, we are responsible for changing the cycle and, with God's help, nothing is impossible. When we see family dynamics from this perspective, we will exercise more grace and forgiveness.

Our daughters will fall short too, and this can be an opportunity for growth and learning.

For some parents, these shortcomings can feel personal. Children reflect us, so this could hurt our pride, or we could be so exhausted that blaming others for our daughters'



Photo by Halfpoint — stock.adobe.com

issues seems easier. Whatever the reason, just like moms, daughters weren't meant to be perfect and were certainly not meant to fill the void placed in our hearts for unconditional love. That is the job of Jesus.

I recently heard someone describe children as "immature sinners." They fall short just like adults, but with even less brain development. The part of your brain that uses higher level moral thinking does not fully develop until around 25 years of age. Keeping this perspective also allows us to apply a bit more grace. There will always be consequences to poor choices, but there can also be empathy at the same time.

### Picture of God's love

In some ways, being a mother is a beautiful manifestation of the gospel. Our mother can be our biggest cheerleader and love us in times no one else could. This reminds me of Jesus on the cross, while we were yet sinners. While being a picture of the way our God loves us, moms aren't meant to provide the wholeness we find in Jesus.

It is much like the emphasis we may put on pastors. Moms give us vital information. They care for us

and point us to Jesus. But just like a great pastor doesn't eliminate your need for a personal relationship with Jesus, moms and Jesus aren't interchangeable either.

### 'We need Jesus'

We need imperfection to remind us there is only One who can love us enough to provide us a way back to God. If it were any other way, we'd be missing the point.

As daughters, we need to remember that when our moms mess up, it's OK. Moms can't be perfect. If they were, why would we need Jesus? As moms, we need to give ourselves the same grace the Lord so freely gives us and know that Jesus is the perfect presence in our lives. He is always more than enough.

You thought I was kidding when I told you a healthy relationship between a mother and daughter needs grace — lots of grace, always. So get out there and love each other like imperfect people serving a perfect God.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Find more resources and articles like this one at [pathwaysprofessional.org/resources](https://pathwaysprofessional.org/resources). This article is reprinted with permission.



*Her children arise  
and call her blessed;  
her husband also,  
and he praises her:  
"Many women do  
noble things, but you  
surpass them all."*

PROVERBS 31:28-29

Photo by RomixImage — stock.adobe.com



# WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

**By Jim Graham**

I've spent my life as part of teams — from playing sports in my younger days to coaching in my current “older” years. One of the things I love about a team is that it's so much bigger than you. On the one hand, you sacrifice and play your role. But the end result is that you can accomplish so much more than you can alone. You work together.

That's what the Cooperative Program is — an opportunity to work together to do far more than what any of us could do alone.

I'm not sure how many missionaries our church alone could support — maybe one. Or how many churches we could plant. I'm sure we wouldn't be able to give seminary-level training to future pastors.

But together we combine with the other churches in Alabama and then many others across the globe to send thousands of missionaries into other countries and even into our own college campuses.

We support an amazing Children's Homes ministry that fights to protect our most vulnerable. We train pastors and missionaries in our seminaries and train young Christians in many other fields at the University of Mobile. We



Photo by Doug Rogers  
*Disaster relief is one of many ministries every Alabama Baptist church can support through the Cooperative Program.*

help our fellow churches in all of their ministries with expert advice and support. We plant churches, go on mission trips and help in disaster relief. It's amazing!



**GRAHAM**

I'm doing all of that, because you and I and so many others are cooperating in this special program for Southern Baptists. So thank you for letting me be on this team to do something beyond my imagination or ability. Thank you for the Cooperative Program.

*Jim Graham serves as a trustee for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He is the pastor of Coosada Baptist Church in Elmore Baptist Association.*

**By Gay Oswald**

I am in an association with about 14 small country churches that are not able individually to support a missionary or program. However, combined through the Cooperative Program we can make a difference.

Since the early 20th century, the Cooperative Program has been a well-organized and essential tool for spreading the Gospel at home and around the world.

From what I have observed, no other denomination has been as effective with supporting missions as have Southern Baptists.

On a personal note, I am especially thankful for the



Photo provided by SEBTS  
*Gifts through the Cooperative Program help provide affordable ministerial education to students through six SBC seminaries across the nation.*

money that Southern Baptist churches have given through the Cooperative Program to help shoulder the cost of Christian education for young men and women who desire to go into Christian ministry.



**OSWALT**

Our son was a recipient of that blessing. He felt the Lord calling him into ministry and heeded that call. We could not have been able to help him totally with the finances, but because of the lower cost at the seminaries due to the financial support of the Cooperative Program, he was able to attend Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Since that time, he has served as a youth minister and, for several years now, as a children's minister.

I cannot fathom the many souls that have been saved due to the Cooperative Program's support of various ministries. Only God knows. But we have all had a part in these through our faithful support of the Cooperative Program.

*Gay Oswald serves as a trustee for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. She is a member of Arbor Springs Baptist Church in Sipsay Baptist Association.*



# Setting priorities

## Conference emphasizes value, best practices of evangelism and discipleship

By **Hamilton Richardson**  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he priorities of the local church are many, from teaching to sharing the gospel with the unchurched and leading families in worship, but discipleship should be at the top of the list.

That theme ran through the Alabama Discipleship Conference held at Glynwood Baptist Church in Prattville.

“It’s really easy for churches to be involved in so many activities that effective disciple making is overlooked,” said Jay Gordon, adult and small groups minister at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham. “Disciple making involves both evangelism and discipleship. Many of the problems faced by the church today are solved by a focus on disciple making.”

Gordon spoke on the relationship of small groups to disciple making.

“Three reasons churches don’t focus well on disciple making are that most pastors never had anyone disciple them well, disciple making takes time and disciple making isn’t always easy to measure,” Gordon explained.

### No ‘quick fix’

“We often want a quick fix and it’s easy to count numbers of people present, but a church can have large numbers without making any disciples.”

Gordon said both large and small discipleship-focused meetings can benefit churches.

“Many [leaders] utilize small discipleship groups of three to six same-gender men or women who are in a high-relationship and high-accountability group for



Photo courtesy of Mark Gainey

Mark Gainey, pastor of Fultondale FBC and an SBOM associate for Sunday School & discipleship, gives a keynote address at the 2022 Alabama Discipleship Conference held in April at Glynwood Baptist Church in Prattville.

12 to 18 months before the learners become the leaders of a group of their own,” Gordon noted.

In contrast, small groups or Sunday School classes are most often larger and coded. Both type groups can be effective, he said.

“Small groups can accomplish much disciple making if leaders are intentional in not only leading Bible study, but focusing on obedience,” Gordon explained. “How you lead the group just looks a little different based on the type group that it is.”

Mark Gainey, pastor of Fultondale First Baptist Church and an associate for Sunday School & discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, agreed on the importance of making strong disciples.

### ‘For all of us’

“I believe this year’s conference went a long way in helping church staff, pastors and lay leaders realize that disciple making is for all of us and is a way of life,” Gainey said. “The theme this year was ‘Faithful.’

“After everything we’ve been through over the last two years, it was so good

to be reminded that all God really desires is for us to be faithful to the call to be disciples who make disciples.

“The call isn’t to build large churches to explode overnight but to be faithful to the Great Commission.”

The Alabama Discipleship Conference is in its second year and, according to Gainey, designed to build upon preceding strategies.

“Its genesis was formed from a need to create an event or experience that continued the momentum of disciple making in our state over the last few years,” he explained. “We wanted to build an event that was unlike other conferences where you had a ‘sage on the stage’ and just got information flow. We wanted to have leaders, speakers and disciple makers interact with one another throughout the event.”

This year those included Gordon and Gainey, Ken Adams, Larry Hyche, Marc Hodges, Sarah Law, Robert Mullins, Steve Layton, Jeff Gardner, Craig Etheredge, Ter-

rance Andrews, Cody Hale, Andy Frazier, Daniel Edmonds and Eric Taylor.

Gordon said conferences like this will go a long way to strengthening the mission of local churches that strive to be faithful in disciple making.

“Some long-term results of disciple making are developing people with a biblical worldview, people who serve, give and are involved in evangelism and discipleship,” he said.

*To learn more about this year’s conference, made possible through a cooperative partnership between SBOM and Disciple Making Ministries of Alabama, visit [aladiscipleship-conference.com](http://aladiscipleship-conference.com).*

## Health. Hope. Healing.

### Children’s Hospital Intervention & Prevention Services (CHIPS Center)

promotes health and healing for those affected by suspected child abuse and neglect. Staffed by licensed professional counselors, doctors, licensed social workers and sexual assault nurse examiners, the CHIPS Center is an outpatient clinic where children who have experienced suspected abuse, and their families impacted by suspected abuse, can come for support, hope and healing.

 **CHIPS Center**  
[ChildrensAL.org/chips](http://ChildrensAL.org/chips)



# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 8

## Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



### ENDURING 2 Thessalonians 1:3–12

#### Thankful (3–4)

I like all good church music, but I've still got a special place in my heart for a Sunday choir. The music is always uplifting, but the thing I like most about our choir is that I know the faithfulness of the people singing.

There's something powerful about seeing those you know, those who have been through the joys and sorrows of life, week after week lift their voices to the Lord. The music is good, but their example is better. They remind me that God is still working and still worthy of worship. Their faith strengthens my faith.

I don't know how Paul felt about church choirs, but I do know he believed in the encouragement of believers by the example of other believers. That's what Paul is getting at in his opening verses of 2 Thessalonians. He observes their faith is "greatly enlarged," their love for one another grows "ever greater" and their perseverance endures through "persecutions and afflictions."

Paul and his companions "proudly" report their faithfulness to fellow churches, "as is only fitting," because there is no negative report to make. The church is flourishing in the Lord, and Paul is grateful for their example.

God in His kindness does not call us to live independently from each other. He calls us into a church community with one another. Why? As Paul illustrates, it's so we can witness the encouraging examples of those around us persevering in their walk with the Lord and be catalyzed to do the same.

#### Avenged (5–10)

Suffering can cause even the best of the Lord's people to second-guess their faith. It uniquely puts everything we say we believe to the test. Therefore, endurance through suffering is a sure signal we have a vibrant faith. A shallow, superficial commitment to the Lord will wither under persecution like a plant

sprouted over rocky soil.

The persecution the Thessalonians endured, Paul writes, was not a cause for despair. Rather, he says it is "clear evidence" of their worthiness of the kingdom of God. It is the badge of proof, the brand of Christ Jesus, credentialing the genuineness of their faith.

A question about verse 5 remains, "In what sense is this a 'righteous judgment'?" Although the wording of verse 5 can be confusing, the answer is in verses 6–10. Their suffering is righteous in that the Lord will deliver justice by reversing the outcomes of retribution and reward. The persecuted in this life will be comforted in the next. And the persecutors in this life will be afflicted in the next.

At the day of revelation (vv. 9–10) the Lord will be glorified "in His saints." F.F. Bruce summarizes this well: "Nothing can so much redound to His honor as the presentation of sinful men and women redeemed and glorified through His sacrifice on the cross. They will be glorified with Him; He will be glorified in them."

#### Worthy (11–12)

Paul ends this section in his familiar way, with a prayer for the church. He asks that God will "fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith."

Paul has in mind here Jesus' teaching on prayer. Jesus taught that when we pray in His name and abide in Him, we can ask whatever we wish and it will be done (John 15:7, 16:23–24). Jesus gives us certainty because that kind of person will want to accomplish what the Lord wants to accomplish. Their wills will align, and so He fulfills the petition.

Paul can be confident that God will answer his prayer and enable believers to accomplish the goodness they desire because it honors Him. He asks on their behalf that they may glorify the Lord in their conduct ("glorified in you") so they might be transformed from glory to glory ("and you in Him").

## Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



### WATCH FOR CHRIST'S RETURN Matthew 24:23–31

When times get tough, people long for a hero, a savior to deliver them from affliction. The recent war in Ukraine, for example, catapulted Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, onto the world stage. However, no human, even one as brave and resolute as Zelenskyy, can bear the weight of our ultimate hopes for justice and divine blessing.

There is only one true Messiah. Though tribulations like those Jesus warns of in Matthew 24 may leave us longing for a savior, Jesus encourages us not to be deceived. The true Messiah will be unmistakable and obvious.

#### Guard against deception by false messiahs. (23–25)

During this time of intense tribulation for which Jesus is preparing His disciples in Matthew 24, people will long for a messiah, someone to deliver them. The power hungry will seek to capitalize on that credulity.

False messiahs will promise salvation, and false prophets will claim inspired insight. Craving hope, even God's chosen people will be tempted to put their trust in them. But Jesus warns when such claims are made, "Do not believe it."

#### Creation itself will announce the return of Christ. (26–29)

The Messiah will not be out in the wilderness as John the Baptist was (Matt. 3:1–12) or hiding in the inner rooms. No human will need to announce His location. Instead, like lightning flashing across the sky, the return of the Son of Man will be visible to all and missed by none.

Here, Jesus finally answers the disciples' request for the sign of His coming (v. 3). He reinforces his meteorological simile with a proverb. As surely as a gathering of vultures signals a carcass, so the sign of His coming will be clearly recognizable.

Drawing on imagery from the

prophets (Isa. 13:10, 34:4; Joel 2:10), Jesus expands the witness to the Messiah's return in the skies. We might say that de-creation, rather than creation, announces Christ's return, as this imagery of the celestial lights being darkened reverses God's creative acts on the fourth day of Genesis 1 (vv. 14–19).

#### The return of Christ will be unmistakable and obvious. (30–31)

The day of the Lord will be a day of judgment. Along with deliverance for the elect, those the Lord has chosen "from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (see also Zech. 2:10), judgment will come against those who have subjected them to the tribulations.

The reference to the "mourning" of "all the peoples" or tribes is repeated from Zechariah 12:10–14, where it refers to all of Israel mourning over "the One they have pierced."

Revelation picks up this language, and like Matthew, combines it with Daniel's vision of the Son of Man "coming with the clouds" (Rev. 1:7; Dan. 7:13). The sign of the Son of Man in heaven will be the unmistakable indication of His triumph over wickedness, injustice and sin and, in His vindication, of the blessing of His people, Jew and Gentile from across the earth, gathered together in His presence.

We should celebrate and support those heroes whom the Lord uses to bring justice and restoration to this broken world in all sorts of ways large and small.

But we should not be deceived (or deceive ourselves) into thinking they are our true messiahs. Do not believe it.

One day, Jesus will make all things right, ushering in a new heaven and earth, and people "from every nation, tribe, people and language" will declare, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9–10).



# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs  
The Alabama Baptist

## ‘More Than a Mom’ author encourages mothers who bear the extra load

Each year on Mother’s Day, moms are honored for all they do for their families. Flowers, cards and restaurant visits are abundant.

But how are these extraordinary women taking care of themselves? What are ways mothers can model self-care for themselves and the families they love?

Kari Kampakis explores these questions in her latest book, “More Than a Mom.” The book is a product of the extra load mothers began to carry during the pandemic, said the Birmingham-based author, speaker, podcaster and newspaper columnist.

“Every mom I know is struggling personally,” she explained. “The pandemic exhausted us, and we now realize the importance of strengthening ourselves mentally, spiritually, physically and emotionally.”

### ‘For our children’s sake’

“We’re quick to help our children — yet also quick to let our needs slide,” Kampakis noted. “Steps that we won’t take to help ourselves, we will do for our children’s sake if not doing so will hurt them.

“This book is about the wellness that makes you a better parent and a healthier human,” she noted. “That is motivating to moms.”



KARI KAMPAKIS

Photo courtesy of Kari Kampakis

Kampakis is entrenched in the “mom world,” with four daughters. Most of her time is spent taking care of them and carving out time for her husband. Though she didn’t have a shortage of material, finding the time to write “More Than a Mom” was difficult and most of her writing was done while her girls were in school.

Writing the book made Kampakis more aware of ways she could better model self-care.

“This book has made me mindful of things that hold me back, like negative self-talk,” she said. “I never thought about my self-talk until I wrote a chapter on it, and now I try to be more intentional.”

### ‘God’s mercy’

“As a small example, I recently dropped some blueberries and I said, ‘I am such a klutz.’ I’ve been saying this to myself since I was a teenager, but when I realized my sixth-grade daughter overheard me,

I corrected myself in front of her and said that we shouldn’t give ourselves that label.

“That’s not the life-giving narrative God wants and created us to walk into,” Kampakis noted.

Relying on the knowledge that God’s mercy and forgiveness are new each morning, Kampakis said she continually reminds herself how important it is not to get stuck on mistakes or regrets.

“I’m just always trying to learn and grow and walk forward in the freedom of knowing that I’m forgiven

because of what Christ did on the cross,” she said.

“More Than a Mom” is Kampakis’ fourth book, and she still gets excited when a book is released and she hears stories from readers whose lives have been affected. She has learned that if she shares her stories it creates meaningful community as others share their own.

Kampakis hopes the book encourages women and helps them to not be so hard on themselves. Encouragement is essential for today’s mothers, she said.

One way the church can serve women and families better is by helping mothers see their worth through God’s eyes and reminding them to give themselves grace, compassion and kindness, Kampakis said. “As we strengthen the women raising today’s kids, we strengthen families. As we

strengthen families, we strengthen churches and communities.

“The most effective parents parent out of their wisdom, not their wounds,” she said. “But to do that, we’ve got to address old habits, scripts, mindsets, beliefs, etc., that may be hurting us and affecting our ability to walk confidently as children of God; find strength through Him and pass that strength on to our families and children.”

While Kampakis affirms the importance of a mother’s role and the life-changing calling of motherhood, she likes to remind women that there is even more. She encourages mothers to keep in mind that families can change overnight or disappoint, and their core value needs to be found through something bigger.

### ‘Core identity’

“The truth is that our greatest identity, our core identity, is being a child of God, which is even bigger than being a mom,” Kampakis declared.

“When we find our value, worth and identity as a child of God, it helps us stay strong, stable and confident as moms. It makes us

more effective parents and healthier human beings.”

Each chapter of “More Than a Mom” includes an example of how modeling certain traits affects children and family. Reflection questions at the end of each chapter make the book ideal for personal study, group studies or small groups at church.

“More Than A Mom” can be found wherever books are sold. For more information about Kampakis and her work helping parents, visit [karikampakis.com](http://karikampakis.com).

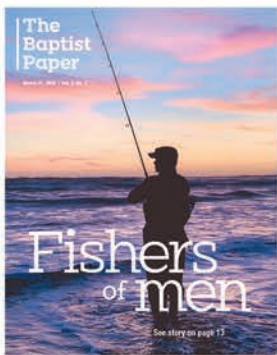


### EDITOR’S NOTE

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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