

The Alabama Baptist

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May 12, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 19
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Church report for 2021: Cooperative Program receipts

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Baptist podcasts reach growing audience, find niche in crowded market

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Judson College archives donated to Samford for preservation

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Photo courtesy of Independence Place

The group at Independence Place sings together. The faith-based ministry, located in Trussville, is a place where adults with intellectual disabilities can develop connections and lifelong relationships with peers.

‘Support network’

Trussville ministry provides a place for independence for adults

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Independence Place of Alabama is a faith-based ministry where adults with intellectual disabilities can develop connections and lifelong relationships with peers.

Carrie Jones, a high school special education teacher, founded Independence Place

in 2012 after parents of former students kept expressing concern that their children had little to no social connection after graduation. They might be involved in part-time jobs or other activities but often had no real friends.

“God just kept this notion in the forefront of my mind that there’s more — there’s just got to be more,” Jones recalled. “Through that, in His amazing way, the idea of Independence Place came to be.”

“I knew what I wanted it to look like; I knew who I wanted it to serve ... but I didn’t know anything else. It’s been a God-thing,” she asserted. “He laid

out the path and put all the people in place. I just tried to follow His direction.”

Space to start

Though not a direct ministry of the church, First Baptist Church Trussville offered some unused preschool space rent-free as long as it was needed, allowing Independence Place to open in 2012.

One of Jones’ favorite aspects of the program is “watching an individual come in who may be totally disconnected from anyone other than family and close family friends and watching them flourish into social butterflies,” she

said. “They want to stay on the go. They have friends who they text or become Facebook friends with.

“We serve some who I personally feel to be the most amazing individuals in Alabama,” Jones added.

The motto for Independence Place is “Connected for Life.”

“That was the goal, to provide a way for individuals to connect with other individuals and their community for a lifetime,” Jones explained, “not just for a year or a month or a season, but to make connections that would last a lifetime.”

(See ‘Ministry,’ page 9)



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TAB Media
youtube.com/tabmediagroup

Professional development

Team members from TAB Media Group are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities each year, and sometimes those moments allow for team building at the same time.

A staff retreat recently took place at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, and a small group from the team also attended Baptist Communicators Association's workshop in New Orleans.



Photo by Dianna Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

Above: TAB special assignment editor Grace Thornton ponders her next move after her gift is stolen in Dirty Santa during the TAB Media Group staff retreat.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Above: This year's retreat was led by David (front row, left) and Melanie Wilkinson (front row, right) and provided a time of encouragement and laughter for the team.



Photo by Jessica Ingram/The Alabama Baptist

Above: A team of staff members enjoys beignets and professional development during this year's BCA workshop in New Orleans.



Photo courtesy of Trennis Henderson/The Baptist Paper

Left: The TAB Media Group team that attended BCA included (l to r) Hannah Muñoz, Jessica Ingram, Trennis Henderson, Pam Henderson, Dianna Cagle and Tracy Riggs.



Photo courtesy of Trennis Henderson/The Baptist Paper

Right: TAB Media Group brought home a number of awards for the work done on its various projects, including The Alabama Baptist, The Baptist Paper and the Stories podcast.



Photo by Dianna Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

Above: BCA members participate in this year's ministry project, packing backpacks for Baptist Friendship House to give away to the city's homeless population.

A special thanks to Shades Mountain Baptist Church for hosting the TAB Media Group staff retreat.

The Alabama Baptist

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

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

Group Rate per subscriber per year — \$16.25
(Check with your church or group to find out if it has a TAB group account)

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

OPINION



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

✉ jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

🐦 @RashionalThts

Making a difference for Christ starts in our own hearts

It's a tale of two young professionals called into full-time vocational missions and ministry. Two lives dedicated to serving the cause of Christ.

One, ready to go wherever God would send her, dreamed of faraway places and extreme situations.

The other, more timid about where she would be sent, managed to remain obedient and willing nonetheless.

And, as frequently happens, they each found themselves serving in areas opposite of what they had secretly hoped.

Still, God worked and each saw His hand quickly, gaining a new depth to their understandings of trusting Him and giving their lives fully to Him.

It's similar to the "never say never" concept and the "let it begin with me" prayer.

We often hear people quote "Lord, let it begin with me" in reference to a prayer for repentance and realignment to the ways of God.

Maybe I shouldn't think this way, but sometimes I wonder if we really mean that prayer. If we were all truly seeking to stay in step with Jesus and willing to be the first to step toward where God is calling us, would

so much dissension exist among people of faith?

Wouldn't we be cheering each other on more as we all seek to discover where God is working and sacrifice our own desires in order to join Him?

Pastors and ministry leaders across our state work tirelessly to help share this message, and countless laypeople are doing the same.

Birmingham-area pastor Mac Brunson shared in a recent tweet (see page 5):

"We are desperately in need of revival in the SBC because we are desperately in need of revival in the local churches because

we are desperately in need of revival in the pulpit because we are desperately in need of revival in my heart."

What is revival exactly? We might think of it as a multiple-day event with a guest preacher, but it's so much more. Revival happens in the hearts of believers and provides an opportunity for renewal on many levels.

What is God impressing on your heart as you spend time in His word and slow down to truly listen? Are you purposefully ignoring anything, maybe out of fear of where those steps might lead?

It's possible you'll determine you've been extremely vocal

about a certain stand that turned out to be a little more complex than you first realized, that it didn't actually have to be an "us versus them" situation. No worries, it's a great time to apologize where necessary and reset.

Or maybe you've invested time and energy in a plan but know in your heart it's time to make a change.

Rather than looking for ways to justify — or as some say, "baptize" — the plan with select Scripture, determine to release the controlling tendency and seek the Lord's guidance and wisdom.

Revival is possible but it must start with each of us.

The Alabama Baptist marks 179 years and celebrates first anniversary of its latest addition, The Baptist Paper

We marked the 179th anniversary of The Alabama Baptist in February and moved right into celebrating the first birthday of The Baptist Paper, which is May 13.

Both publications exist because of your partnership, and we still can't quite believe we get the honor and privilege of serving you in this way.

We give all the glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We know all the good parts of what

we've been able to achieve come from Him — and that He provides grace when we make mistakes along the journey.

Words of affirmation

Thank you for your kind words of affirmation and continued support and encouragement each time our paths cross.

When you call, write or email to share how an article touched your heart or the appreciation you have for our news coverage concept of

"truth with compassion," it gives us a little extra pep in our step.

And, of course, your subscriptions, advertising and donations have allowed us to produce, print and mail the paper.

Be sure to share with your family and friends about The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper and urge them to subscribe today.

Thank you for your friendship and partnership.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

8 tips for dealing with disappointment

By David L. Chancey
McDonough Road Baptist Church

Former Baseball Commissioner Bart Giamatti, speaking of the emotion of the game, wrote, “It breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart.”

Not only do our teams let us down and our hearts break, but life doesn’t work out the way we envision sometimes.

Disappointment is part of living life in a world that’s not always fair. How do you define disappointment?

Disappointment is the feeling we experience when our hopes are not fulfilled, or our expectations are not met. Sometimes unrealistic expectations do not match actual circumstances. Thus, we sense a moment of sadness.

How do we deal with disappointment?

8 tips

1. Own it. It’s OK to say, “I’m really disappointed.” Recognize the sadness and take a moment to grieve.

2. Name it. Part of owning it is recognizing exactly why you’re disappointed. Identify the gap between expectation and reality and express, “I am disappointed because _____.”

3. Share it with a trusted listener. Get it off your chest and talk it out.

4. Refuse to dwell on it. Life moves on and so must we. It’s unhealthy to dwell in the “valley of unmet expectations.”

5. Embrace the letdown as an opportunity to grow. I was a late bloomer on the bicycle front. Just as many teens delay getting their driver’s licenses these days, I didn’t learn to ride a bike until I was in fourth grade. I don’t remember why I took so long, maybe because I didn’t like falling on asphalt and getting scraped up.

Early one Saturday morning, I raised the garage door, mounted my bike and rode down the driveway. No helmet, no help, just me, my bike and possibly disaster ahead. I kept my balance ... for a few min-

utes. Yet, this particular morning, when I fell, I hopped back on my bike and rode again until my confidence grew. Winston Churchill said, “Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.” Disappointment can teach resilience.

Deeper trust

6. Replace disappointment with deeper trust. Isaiah 26:4 presents a powerful reminder to those dealing with disappointment: “Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.” When life is uncertain, God is always certain. He is our rock. Trust God.

7. Focus on the Peace Giver, not the peace disrupters. Isaiah 26:3 reads, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” We too readily focus on the circumstances robbing our peace rather than the Person who brings peace and comfort.

8. Thank God anyway. 1 Thesalonians 5:18 says, “In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Thank God that He is in control and works all things together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

God may have something far better for us than what didn’t work out.

EDITOR’S NOTE — David L. Chancey is pastor of McDonough Road Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Georgia. Visit davidchancey.com to read more of his articles.

“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,’” said **Brent Thompson, pastor of Heflin Baptist Church**, referring to church member Nathan Cobb, a seventh grader who helped raise funds for his missions trip to Utah by drawing pictures for donations.

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.

Connie Dixon
President
National WMU

Only God could use a basketball game, golf tournament, pickleball or disc golf to bring Him glory.

Brian Harris
Minister of recreation
CrossPoint Baptist Church
Trussville

The Lord is with us. The Lord is not with us if we are joyful or if we are fearful. He is just WITH US, PERIOD.

Kristie Brothers
“Surrounded”
leanintojesus.com/blog

The gift of showing mercy (Rom. 12:8) manifests itself in such things as visiting the sick and afflicted, relieving one in a state of distress and difficulty, lending a shoulder to the sorrowful and granting forgiveness to those who sin.

It is the ability, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to dem-

onstrate compassion, to help bear the burden of another, to come alongside and show gracious favor to the hurting.

This gift is action-oriented, far more than a mere feeling. The attitude behind action is cheerfulness.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

Psalm 139:13b–14

Pain humbles us. It drives us to our knees. It renews us. ... And pain will drive you to Him. Embrace the pain God has called you to and watch Him gloriously move.

**Ed Litton, pastor
Redemption Church,
Saraland, and president of the
Southern Baptist Convention**

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

**Kari Kampakis, author
“More Than a Mom”**

Pastors — What our churches, our communities, our families, our chil-

dren, our brides need most from us is not our education, not our expertise, not our experience. They need us to be men who spend enough time on our knees and in His word that when they’re around us, they can smell the unmistakable scent of the sweet aroma of Jesus.

**David Eldridge, pastor
Dawson Memorial
Baptist Church, Birmingham**

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.

**Jay Gordon, adult and small
groups minister
The Church at Brook Hills
Birmingham**

Neither you nor I are at our original starting point in life, but we all have the opportunity to begin again — with the end in mind (Deut. 30:19–20a NLT). Now that’s something to celebrate!

**Donna Jackson
perfectionroad.com**

In a world that has departed from God’s design for sex (and has celebrated that departure and sought to indoctrinate the next generation in it), the societal consequences of sexual sin will continue to be a reality in our lives. ... The only way to healing is in Christ.

**Dean Inserra, author
“Pure: Why the Bible’s
Plan for Sexuality Isn’t Outdated, Irrelevant, or Oppressive”**

From the *Twitterverse*

@jasonkeithallen

“True salvation always produces an abiding change of nature in a true convert. Therefore, whenever holiness of life does not accompany a confession of conversion, it must be understood that this individual is not a Christian.” —Jonathan Edwards

@DKCaudell

As a SBC pastor, the best thing that I can do for the Southern Baptist Convention, my state convention and my local association is to faithfully pastor the church that the Lord has given me the privilege to lead.

Head down. Hand to plow. Laser focus on the local church.

@DianeLangberg

Every time we treat someone with dignity rather than shame, respect rather than disregard, concern rather than exploitation, kindness

rather than brutality and careful attention rather than turning away — we are doing things that are the reverse of trauma and evil.

@micahfries

Our Christian faith is not a Pollyanna faith. When we say we trust God at all times, we aren’t expressing an inauthentic “awe shucks, God’s got this” sentiment. Instead, through tears of lament & an inability to see the future, we feebly express our confidence in God’s provision.

@johnmarkclifton

Bivocational pastors are far [more] important to the Kingdom than most realize. However the NT does communicate the pastor should be taken care of. How many bivo pastors could be full time if church members were more faithful in giving and realized their true biblical responsibility?

@GaryFenton07

Knowing the words of God without knowing the ways of God and the will of God leads to legalism. And legalism uses the language of the faith to hide a humanity-centered religion.

@DustinBenge

The moment we abandon the Bible as our sole authority in faith and practice is the moment we accept and follow false authorities.

@macbrunson

We are desperately in need of revival in the SBC because we are desperately in need of revival in the local churches because we are desperately in need of revival in the pulpit because we are desperately in need of revival in my heart.

@AshleyUnzicker

Fearlessness is one of the most under-utilized benefits God offers ...

Perspectives on potential Dobbs ruling

EDITOR’S NOTE — A draft opinion suggesting the Supreme Court will vote to strike down Roe v. Wade was published May 2 by Politico (see story, page 6). Here is a sampling of reactions from faith leaders shared by Religion News Service.

Greg Laurie, pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California, tweeted:

“If true, SCOTUS will overturn Roe v. Wade. A grave injustice will be corrected. Prayers answered. Now, the church must go over-and-above to care for mothers & their children.”

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, on his podcast “The Briefing” said:

“When the Supreme Court hands down its ruling in coming weeks, the defenders of life dare to hope that this is indeed the court’s ruling and, oh Lord, let us pray, may it be true.”

In a written statement, **National Association of Evangelicals President Walter Kim** said:

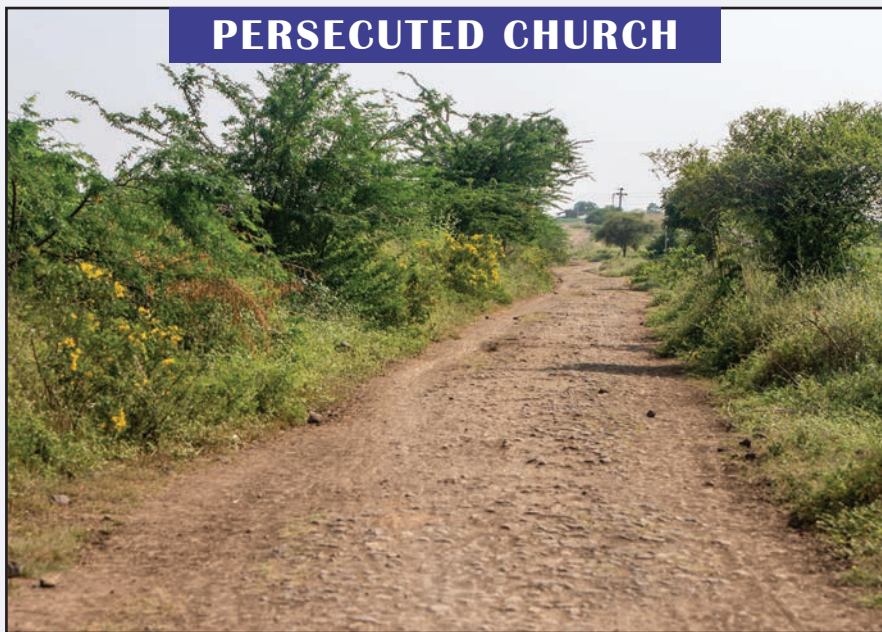
“Evangelical commitment to protecting the unborn stems from our deep understanding that God created human beings in His image and that every human life from conception to death has inestimable worth. If the Dobbs decision remains unchanged, we will celebrate that citizens will have greater opportunity to engage in creating policies that impact women and children. We also recognize that after this decision, vulnerable women and children will need a lot of support. Churches should be ready to help.”

Justin Giboney, president of Christian civic organization The AND Campaign, tweeted:

“Abortion is a human dignity issue, but that issue doesn’t end at birth.”

3 stories you should know

PERSECUTED CHURCH



IMB photo

Kahan walked many miles every day along the dirt paths between villages in South Asia with the goal of having a gospel conversation. He mentored and discipled many in his village church to do the same before he died. Allegedly the death was an attempt to keep Kahan quiet about Jesus' saving grace, Christian worker Morgan Rawlings confirmed. To read the story in its entirety, visit thebaptistpaper.org/persecuted-churches-continue-to-multiply-in-south-asia.

Princeton Baptist Medical Center marks 100 years

Princeton Baptist Medical Center held a Centennial Celebration on May 2 to commemorate 100 years of serving the Birmingham area as well as communities across central Alabama.

Among the special honors and presentations at the event, the hospital was given a Congressional Proclamation which had been introduced on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives by Congresswoman Terri A. Sewell in late April.

The first of four Birmingham-area Baptist hospitals, Princeton opened its doors in the West End community Jan. 20, 1922. It was originally named Birmingham Infirmary and is closely connected to Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing. (Brookwood Baptist Health/BHS)

New conservative Methodist denomination launches

May 1 was the launch of the Global Methodist Church, a new theologically conservative denomination splintering from the traditional United Methodist Church.

After decades of rancorous debate over the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ members of the UMC, a special session of the UMC General Conference and three postponements of a vote to formally split the denomination, the schism finally came "without fanfare, but full of hope, faith and perseverance."

That's how Keith Boyette, chairman of the transitional leadership council of the Global Methodist Church, described the launch of the new denomination in a statement published days earlier on its website — globalmethodist.org. (RNS)

ERLC explainer on the Supreme Court draft opinion leak

A young contractor for the National Security Agency fled the U.S. in spring 2013. Within a matter of weeks, he would release a trove of highly classified documents related to America's surveillance operations around the world.

The effect his disclosures had on the U.S. intelligence community led to numerous reforms and lawsuits. Public policy debates centering on where to draw the line on national security and individual privacy continue to this day. Edward Snowden's leak was consequential.

Another consequential leak happened May 2.

Media outlets are all abuzz regarding the stunning Politico report about a leaked majority opinion from the U.S. Supreme Court suggesting the court is prepared to overturn the precedents set in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* that led to the current abortion legal framework.

Chief Justice John Roberts, in a press release issued by the Supreme Court, confirmed the draft's authenticity.

The working draft, composed by Associate Justice Samuel Alito, shares the perspective of a majority of Supreme Court justices on the Mississippi abortion case known as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.

The Politico report contains this bit of information from a source:

A person familiar with the court's deliberations said four of the other Republican-appointed justices — Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett — had voted with Alito in the conference held among the justices after hearing oral arguments in December.

How Roberts will ultimately vote, and whether he will join an already written opinion or draft his own, is unclear.



Pixabay.com

Establishing a culture of life in the U.S. means advancing policies and protections that prevent preborn children from having their lives snuffed out by abortion.

Overturning the *Roe-Casey* precedents will mark massive progress toward this goal as the jurisprudence stemming from these cases has been the number one factor inhibiting pro-life laws from taking effect.

That is what makes the *Dobbs* case so unique: It goes right at the heart of these prior decisions by questioning the "notion of viability as legal standard" and, importantly, is before a court that seems willing to entertain this line of argument.

Churches will be essential in this coming moment.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article was written by Brent Leatherwood and originally published by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Judith Warren Williams**, of Tullahoma, Tennessee, died April 25 at age 78.

An Alabama native, Williams was preceded in death by Curtis L. Williams, pastor of Bayou Sara Baptist Church, Saraland.

She is survived by three children, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



WILLIAMS

BIRMINGHAM METRO

► **Jamie Walley** is the new senior pastor of **Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Trussville**. He originally served as student and missions pastor of Meadow Grove Baptist Church, Brandon, Mississippi,



WALLEY

for 15 years. He also was interim student pastor of Pinelake Church, Madison, Mississippi. He most recently was pastor of First Baptist Church Florence, Mississippi. He is currently a student

at Spurgeon College, Kansas City, Missouri. He and his wife, Stephanie, have four children.

BLOUNT COUNTY

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will feature The Williamsons in its third Sunday night singing May 15 at 5 p.m. The group hails from Wetumpka, Oklahoma.

COOSA RIVER

► **First Baptist Church Childersburg** will host a weekend of worship May 14 at 6 p.m. and May 15 at 10:30 a.m. featuring Triumphant Quartet and Karen Peck and New River.

RUSSELL

► **Smiths Station Baptist Church** will celebrate its 100th anniversary May 15. The 11 a.m. service will have guest speaker Rick Lance, executive director of

the State Board of Missions, followed by a picnic and games at 1 p.m.

WEST CENTRAL

► **Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion**, celebrated its 200th anniversary April 17.

The guest speaker was Joe Bob Mizzell, pastor emeritus. Pastor George Washburn (right) led music accompanied by Leah Washburn (left), pianist.

The Hopewell Singers also performed with solos and duets provided by the Washburns, Jeanie White and Lawson Price. David Nelson of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate. Lee Tate, associational mission strategist, attended along with descendants of charter member, Oliver Massey.

Ocmulgee Baptist Church, Selma, sent a letter of congratulations. Church history was shared through displays.

OTHER

► The second annual **Jacksonville Gospelfest** is May 21 at the Jacksonville Community Center, 10 a.m.–4 p.m., and is hosted by a number of churches, including Calvary Baptist, Covenant Life Ministries, First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Nances Creek Baptist, New Hope Missionary Baptist, Post Oak Baptist, United Fellowship Baptist and West Side Baptist.

Artists include: Clear Vision, The Connells, Dry Creek Bluegrass Gospel, Velma Thomas, Brittany Hart, Mike Byrd and Soul Redeemers.

Net proceeds from the event will be donated to Jacksonville Christian Academy, a school recently damaged extensively by fire.

Contact Lonnie McCarthy at 256-889-9227.



Photo courtesy of David Nelson

More than 150 commissioned to serve this summer

More than 150 Alabama students were commissioned to serve across the globe this summer through One Mission Students.

This year's REACH commissioning weekend, held April 22–23 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, marked the 75th anniversary of student summer missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said Chris Mills, SBOM student missions mobilizer.

"Thousands of students have served throughout the years, and many people across the globe have heard the name of Jesus and turned to Him for salvation as a result of these Alabama student missionaries taking a step of obedience and giving a summer to serve," Mills said.

Finding laborers

Mills said many students who have served later followed God's call to vocational ministry assignments, often in the geographical area where they engaged in summer missions.

Paul Worcester, national director of collegiate evangelism for the North American Mission Board, gave the missions challenge to the students. He spoke of the great need for individuals willing to share the gospel with

unreached people. The problem is not with the harvest but with finding laborers, he said.

'Give your life'

"God is calling some of [you] not to just give a summer but to give [your] life to sharing the gospel," Worcester said.

Sarah Farley-Beall, student mobilization associate for the International Mission Board, issued the missions challenge.

Farley-Beall encouraged parents to pray for their children and to "grab hold" of the fact their children are following in the footsteps of people who have fearlessly gone before them.

Jacob Freeman, Baptist campus minister at the University of Montevallo, gave the commissioning charge to the students, and Scotty Goldman, director of the SBOM office of global missions, led the commissioning prayer.

The students commissioned this year will serve in the United States, as well as in several countries including Poland, England and Germany.

One Mission Students provides multiple opportunities during the year. To find out about missions opportunities for older high school students and college students, visit onemissionstudents.org. (Reporting by Laurie Mullinax)



Photo by Laurie Mullinax

On April 23 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, more than 150 Alabama students were commissioned to serve across the globe this summer through One Mission Students.

Headline news

from around the Southeast

ARKANSAS

In 2020, Woodlawn Baptist Church and Oasis Little Rock joined together to form Hillcrest Community Church in Little Rock with the vision of becoming an Arkansas church “in the city, for the nations.” Under the leadership of pastors Mitch Tapson and Jordan Bowen, the church has embraced that vision. Multiple language groups are represented in the congregation, and the church’s missions focus includes reaching South Asians in the community. Bowen said the church’s vision is simply connected to the Great Commission. “That’s been our prayer from the beginning, if anything happens that our only response would be that it’s only God,” Bowen said. (Arkansas Baptist News)



Photo courtesy of Arkansas Baptist News

FLORIDA

The Haitian Leadership Conference at Peniel Haitian Baptist Church in Lake Worth drew 920 Haitian Florida Baptists for a time of training, fellowship and worship. The event featured a variety of workshops on topics that included pastoral ministry, deacon’s ministry, church administration, strategies for effective Sunday School growth and sustainability, leadership development for men and next generation ministry training.

The day ended with a worship celebration led by the Peniel worship team. (Florida Baptist Witness)

GEORGIA

Revival services at Kingwood Baptist Church in Moultrie were, in a word, “remarkable,”



Photo courtesy of The Christian Index

according to pastor Matt Greene. The congregation, which averages around 80 on Sundays, recorded 30 salvation decisions between Sunday and Wednesday.

Kingwood leaders sensed the Lord leading them to hold an evangelistic revival two years ago. They reached out to Tim Williams, an evangelism consultant with the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, to lead it,

and the church began to prepare for a spiritual harvest through Bible study, evangelism-focused sermons and intentional outreach to community members. Prayer undergirded the entire event. Greene said, “It all begins with prayer.” (The Christian Index)

KENTUCKY

Four years ago, Flemingsburg Baptist Church invested in an abandoned building located beside the Dairy Queen near the local middle school. Bobby Carr, the church’s youth pastor, thought the spot would provide the perfect opportunity for a ministry site to reach youth in the community since middle school kids were flocking there every day, he said.

The church equipped the building with ping-pong tables, televisions, video games and, of course, food. The Refuge, as it’s called, opens for two hours after school, Monday through Thursday. Students, many of whom have never heard of Jesus or the Bible, grab a bite to eat and hang out in a safe place. The Refuge has become a place where relationships are developed



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Today

and the gospel is shared. Simply put, it has worked, Carr said.

The gospel, he said, has its own draw to the students. “It has been unreal how God

is working,” Carr said. “We have the gospel to share with them and there’s nothing better for them to hear,” he said. (Kentucky Today)

LOUISIANA

Trinity Baptist Church has served as a hub for hurricane relief in Lake Charles the last two years, but the church recently stepped up to serve as a centralized collection site for medical supplies and financial gifts for Ukrainian refugees. Since mid-March, the church has collected more than \$90,000 that will be forwarded to Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief. In cooperation with Send Relief, LBDR will use the funds to purchase emergency food supplies, shelter, transportation, medical care and hygiene kits for displaced Ukrainians.

The church has two members from Ukraine, who have helped put names and faces with the conflict. One of the members, Irina Moss, has been a member of Trinity Baptist since 2006. Before that, she lived in the city of Zaporizhzhia, a city in southern Ukraine. Moss has



Irina Moss/The Baptist Message

spearheaded efforts to collect supplies for Ukraine. “I am very grateful for [the church’s] encouragement and support,” Moss said. To those who want to help, she

says, “Just do something. There are many ways people can help.” (Louisiana Baptist Message)

NORTH CAROLINA

Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia has spent the last five years investing in and committing to ministry in Central Asia through partnerships with International Mission Board teams. Church leaders say this intentional focus has allowed them to raise the ceiling on the help and encouragement they can provide to ministry partners there. The church focuses on that region in several ways.

Under pastor Jeff Long’s leadership, global disciple making pastor Andrew Brafford met and connected with Winfield Scott, an IMB leader among those reaching Central Asian people groups. The church began by providing child care for meetings of IMB workers and expanded to missionary kid retreats and conversational English camps.

This missional focus is kept alive in the hearts of church members because

“the gospel has fostered a heart for the nations,” Brafford said. (IMB)

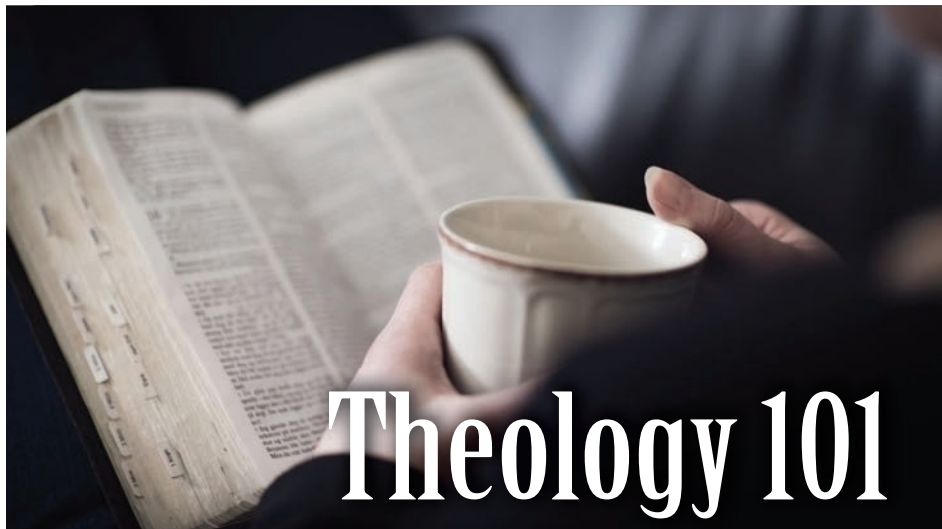


Photo courtesy of Parkwood Baptist Church

SOUTH CAROLINA

Burnsview Baptist Church in Greer set a Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$20,000 for 2021 and exceeded that total by 600% — reaching a grand total of \$122,000 by the end of the year. The church averages 325 in worship with annual giving at a little more than \$1 million.

Since its founding in 1921, Burnsview has seen steady growth. Tim Huckaby, pastor since 2002, said the church was once called “God’s little secret,” but it now has an active ministry presence in the community. “Our prayer is that God will be glorified, the church will be edified, and souls will be won to the Kingdom for such a time as this,” Huckaby said. (The Baptist Courier)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

God's Pilgrims

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

For several weeks Theology 101 has given attention to a variety of biblical analogies through which Scripture speaks of God's people. This week we add another to the list of ways we may think of believers and our relationship with God.

The idea of God's people as pilgrims is as old as the reign of King David. In his farewell address to the people of his kingdom, David declared to God: "We are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers" (1 Chron. 29:15). This same image of God's people as pilgrims is repeated in the faith chapter of Hebrews in which the ancient people of God are described as having "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13).

Obedying God

Abraham's faithful following of God in obedience to the divine call upon his life is described in Genesis 12:8 in these summary words: "He pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord."

We get the impact of Abraham's example in the descriptive actions of pitching his tent and

building an altar. Pitching a tent suggests something transitory that will have to be repeated. Conversely, building an altar suggests something permanent or lasting that can be returned to again and again.

Pitching tents

This simple summary of that period in Abraham's life suggests a pilgrimage of faith in which he pitched his tent and built God's altar.

Using these twin actions as descriptors of a life of faith, we might confuse them and choose to build our tents and pitch our altars. God's faithful pilgrims avoid this confusion by building our altars and pitching our tents. We do not have a permanent abode on this earth.

A gospel song captures the imagery of pilgrims pitching tents: "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through" as we live toward our eternal abiding place. In 1 Peter 2:11 we read of the Apostle Peter's desire for God's people of faith: "Brethren, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

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.



Ministry places no limits on special need adults

(continued from page 1)

Participants go bowling, eat out, frequent the Trussville Public Library and go fishing.

They also do crafts, have weekly Bible studies with guest teachers and go shopping.

Birthday celebrations

A favorite activity is celebrating birthdays.

"It's such an amazing thing. When you're in school, you might have a classroom birthday party or your parents arrange a birthday party.

"People come because you're family or a close family friend. But these folks celebrate birthdays like nobody else," Jones said.

Birthdays are noted on a calendar.

Though not required, participants often bring each other gifts and families sometimes bring cake or pizza.

"They just have some all-out birthday parties. It's just great," Jones said.

"Their families get to watch them truly be celebrated by genuine friends, not friends that they're in class with because they're in special education class, or cousins because they are family members, or peer partners.

"These are friends that know them deeply," she explained. "They know what they like, what they don't like, what gets on their nerves, what makes them smile, that they're always late on this day, and how to cheer them up when they are having a bad day."

Some activities stand out.

Recently participants did a production of "Beauty and the Beast." Only one had ever done theater before. Most never had the opportunity.

This time everyone participated. "It was so wonderful, not only for them to shine, but for all of those who attended to see them shine," Jones said.

"I am so thankful for our staff who work diligently each day to make all the activities at IP meaningful and successful.

"Our IP team went to great detail to make sure all participants have their time to shine, not only in 'Beauty in the Beast,' but each day they are together."

'No limitations'

As much as she has given to the program and to the participants, Jones feels she has gained more.

"There really are no real limits in life if you have people to support you," she asserted. "I found that out, on my end, because I had to go and ask, 'Will you be on this board? I know it's crazy. I know I know nothing about this. Will you come alongside and help me?' and people said, 'Yes.'"

"Then I watch these participants. ... Society can sometimes place, not intentionally, but place some limitations on

them. I watch the support network that forms around them.

"And then there's 'Beauty and the Beast' ... with no limitations."

"We just always want to be in the center of His will with Independence Place," Jones said. "I want it to be whatever He has planned for it to be."



Photo courtesy of Independence Place
Tricia releases a butterfly that the group watched grow from a caterpillar. Participants also go bowling, eat out, frequent the Trussville Public Library and go fishing.

**For more information,
visit iptrussville.org.**

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

receipts for churches

Alabama Baptists change lives, spread the gospel through sacrificial giving

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Sophie Doyle can easily say the gifts of Alabama Baptists changed her life. It started as she grew up in Mission Friends at Eastmont Baptist Church in Montgomery.

“Since I was exposed to the idea of foreign missions as a child, I already had a worldview that was shaped by knowing that there were people in the world who had yet to hear the gospel,” Doyle said.

Now she and her husband serve with the International Mission Board in a hard-to-reach area of South Asia.

“I still remember collecting coins in plastic rice bowls at Christmas to save up money for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, and now my family is the recipient of those who give to the LMCO every year,” she said. “It’s such a blessing to be a part of a convention that places such high value on Kingdom work.”

Chad Stillwell said he agrees. As a student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham years ago, he met Baptist Campus Ministry volunteers who were handing out drinks in a parking lot one day, and the encounter changed his life.

He was “far from God” when he

met them, and “within days I was attending Bible studies and worship, and within months I was a summer missionary going out to serve,” he said.

Now Stillwell serves as director of collegiate ministry for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, leading the same type of ministry that changed his life years ago.

‘Completely grateful’

“I’m completely grateful to Baptists in Alabama who sacrificed and gave and continue to provide ministry so college students like me could hear the gospel and grow as disciples and figure out God’s calling on their lives,” he said.

These are the stories behind the numbers of the Annual Church Pro-

Mission Friends at Eastmont Baptist Church in Montgomery show off their Annie Armstrong Easter Offering banks.

2021 CHURCH RECEIPTS

Cooperative Program	\$38,959,099.62
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	\$11,745,847.68
International Mission Board	\$315,093.81
International Mission Board Designated	\$264,156.50
World Hunger	\$481,702.16
North American Mission Board	\$42,786.48
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.....	\$6,535,913.89
Associational Missions	\$1,799,639.17
Children’s Homes & Family Ministries	\$1,960,137.72
ALCAP	\$147,026.06
American Bible Society	\$825.58
State Causes	\$135,228.97
State Missions.....	\$63,455.59
Myers-Mallory State Missions.....	\$1,525,380.65
SBC Causes	\$16,374.48
Disaster Relief	\$291,749.40
All Other Designated	\$138,392.70

Total Receipts for 2021.....\$64,422,810.46

fully participate in the ACP process through many years, your State Board of Missions is able to provide a church with a 10-year profile that highlights key figures such as: baptisms, missions giving and participation, worship attendance, Bible study and discipleship enrollment and music ministry involvement,” Lance said.

“This 10-year statistical glimpse gives an often invaluable ‘snapshot in time across time’ that can help a congregation understand its ministry trajectory over the long term. While numbers never tell the whole story, they can be helpful for a local church’s celebration of the Lord’s faithfulness with them in the past, present and future.”

Full report

This issue of TAB includes some highlights of the state’s total data for 2021. The reports of every church’s giving and baptisms are now available online at tabonline.org/2021ACP. Churches that did not complete an ACP will see blanks in their listing.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons.

To download the full giving report of Alabama Baptist churches, visit tabonline.org/2021ACP.

Numbers in this report were provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. To contact them, call 800-264-1225.



Photo courtesy of Marti Richardson

CHURCH REPORT FOR 2021

TOP CHURCHES IN GIFTS

>> 2021 MYERS-MALLORY GIFTS

1. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$62,699.85
2. Athens First, Limestone \$35,237.00
3. Prattville First, Autauga \$34,000.00
4. Mount Zion, Madison \$26,082.00
5. Trussville First, Birmingham \$23,927.45
6. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$20,058.58
7. Enterprise First, Coffee \$18,585.00
8. Alexander City First, Tallapoosa \$16,813.72
9. Pleasant View, Blount \$14,580.00
10. Shiloh, Cherokee \$13,750.00
11. Bay Minette First, Baldwin \$11,136.00
12. Greensboro, Hale \$10,770.00
13. Guntersville First, Marshall \$10,678.00
14. Eastern Hills, Montgomery \$10,187.00
15. Mount Zion, Carey \$10,065.00
16. Fort Payne First, DeKalb \$10,029.00
17. Heritage, Montgomery \$10,022.35
18. Tuscaloosa First, Tuscaloosa \$10,000.00
19. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$10,000.00
20. Glynwood, Autauga \$9,966.60
21. Pell City First, St. Clair \$9,366.50
22. Arley First, Winston \$8,875.00
23. Piney Grove, Limestone \$8,796.71
24. Liberty, Shelby \$8,740.01
25. Huntsville First, Madison \$8,187.00

>> 2021 ANNIE ARMSTRONG GIFTS

1. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$215,000.00
2. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$149,620.13
3. Hunter Street, Birmingham \$129,068.55
4. Trussville First, Birmingham \$128,432.00
5. Prattville First, Autauga \$116,230.52
6. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee \$107,787.38
7. CrossPoint, St. Clair \$89,006.25
8. Whitesburg, Madison \$76,122.49
9. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee \$67,067.96
10. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama \$61,460.00
11. Northbrook, East Cullman \$57,593.46
12. Pell City First, St. Clair \$52,756.57
13. Athens First, Limestone \$52,104.20
14. Northport, Tuscaloosa \$51,999.85
15. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$51,863.71
16. Dawson, Birmingham \$46,004.08
17. North Shelby, Shelby \$43,113.00
18. Headland First, Judson \$40,432.00
19. Alexander City First, Tallapoosa \$39,380.00
20. Boaz First, Marshall \$36,308.50
21. Valleydale, Birmingham \$36,000.00
22. Enterprise First, Coffee \$35,560.68
23. Jubilee, Baldwin \$34,045.03
24. Eastmont, Montgomery \$33,729.63
25. First Fairhope, Baldwin \$33,047.73

>> 2021 LOTTIE MOON GIFTS

1. Shades Mountain, Birmingham \$388,525.00
2. Montgomery First, Montgomery \$371,507.04
3. Whitesburg, Madison \$335,526.16
4. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee \$270,001.67
5. Trussville First, Birmingham \$237,768.08
6. Hunter Street, Birmingham \$218,530.67
7. Prattville First, Autauga \$210,473.80
8. Mount Zion, Madison \$203,375.48
9. CrossPoint, St. Clair \$178,012.46
10. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama \$153,493.72
11. Willowbrook, Madison \$147,833.84
12. Headland First, Judson \$143,463.00
13. Dawson, Birmingham \$125,067.08
14. Athens First, Limestone \$103,367.66
15. Golden Springs, Calhoun \$100,500.00
16. Valleydale, Birmingham \$88,000.00
17. NorthPark, Birmingham \$85,053.15
18. Central, Morgan \$84,220.14
19. Decatur First, Morgan \$78,425.04
20. Birmingham First, Birmingham \$76,185.38
21. Pell City First, St. Clair \$75,025.00
22. Enterprise First, Coffee \$74,996.25
23. Northport, Tuscaloosa \$72,881.00
24. Boaz First, Marshall \$71,540.00
25. Lakeside, Birmingham \$68,308.42



Unsplash.com

Simple resources 'best' for disciple makers

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Jeff Gardner has a unique illustration of discipleship.

"Imagine if I had 12 plastic cups on a table and a bucket of water; then I splash the water toward the cups. What would happen? Some cups would get a little water, and some would be knocked over.

"I think discipleship is taking the time to fill cups individually," Gardner told pastors from Shelby Baptist Association during a gathering earlier this year at Wilton Baptist Church in Montevallo.

"Discipleship takes time and it means we get involved in the lives of individuals, not just the masses," declared the minister to university students and young adults at First Baptist Church Trussville.

'Doing church'

Gardner believes much of "doing church" takes focus away from discipleship.

"In ministry we maintain, we go to meetings and we sponsor programs," he explained. "All this has its place. Worship is needed, and Sunday School is important. I wouldn't suggest we 'blow up the boat,' but I do think we should rewire the boat."

Gardner said churches should have a clear goal and a correct definition of success. In evaluating programs, he suggested the KISS acronym: What do you need to Keep, Improve, Stop, Start?

Growing together

Disciple makers don't pretend to know it all or to have arrived, Gardner admitted, but are committed to grow along with their group.

"Discipleship means we get into the lives of individuals — sometimes into their 'mess' — and walk with

them to get to the other side," Gardner explained. "The 'other side' is when people live with Jesus, live like Jesus and live for Jesus."

Gardner said he sees the basics of discipleship as reading the Bible, praying, appropriating the fruits of the Spirit in order to be kind and loving, and being intentionally on mission.

Gardner noted many program resources are available for discipleship groups, but he advises simplicity to avoid getting overwhelmed.

"Pray for God to reveal people to you who are available and teachable and invite them to read the Bible with you," Gardner said. "Keep your focus on individuals who can make a difference in church leadership and God's kingdom."



GARDNER

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Prospect Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Tennessee, is seeking a senior pastor. Prospect is a conservative, evangelical Southern Baptist church. Send resumé to: rjones@fpunet.com.

SENIOR PASTOR

Jemison First Baptist is accepting resumé for senior pastor. Visit tabonline.org/FBC-Jemison to see the job listing.

PASTOR

Gleason First Baptist Church located in Weakley County, Tennessee, is prayerfully seeking a man of God to shepherd our church full time. Must be energetic and willing to live in the community. Our church parsonage is available if needed. Please mail resumé to: Michelle Doster, 245 E Locust St., Dresden, TN 38225, or email to: michelle.doster@yahoo.com. Resumé will be accepted through May 31.

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, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35905.

CHURCH BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

The First Baptist Church of Headland, Alabama, 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.

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 can be sent to: scottdavis@fayettefb.org.

MISSIONS/DISCIPLESHIP MINISTER

Woodmont Baptist Church in Florence, Alabama, is searching for a missions/discipleship minister. We are searching for someone to develop and grow

our missions and discipleship ministry. Minimum five years' ministry experience. College degree required, seminary degree preferred. Strong interpersonal and communications skills needed. Please go to woodmontbaptist.org to submit resumé by May 30.

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 or mail to: Steele Baptist Church, 3811 Pope Ave., Steele, AL 35987.

CHILDCARE CENTER & PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

FBC Flomaton is seeking a full-time childcare center and preschool director. Interested candidates should send questions and resumé via email to: contact@fbcflomaton.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.

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@fbcbm.org.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

North Shelby Baptist is currently seeking a full-time administrative assistant, to provide general administrative and office support. Two to three years administrative experience is required as well as proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite products. In-depth data base entry and membership management experience preferred. The ability to be accurate, detailed and multi-task are necessary. Website maintenance, social media knowledge and understanding of the Baptist church a plus. Please email resumé to: office@northshelbybaptist.org.

SIGNS

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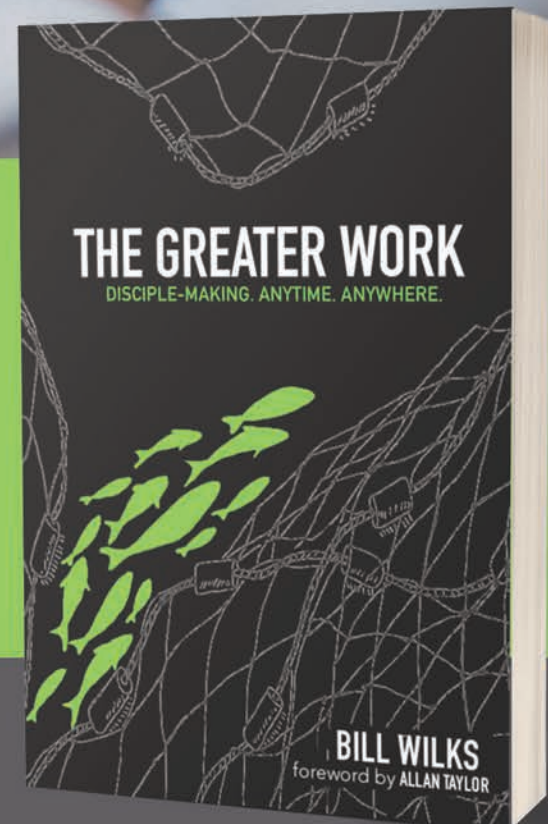
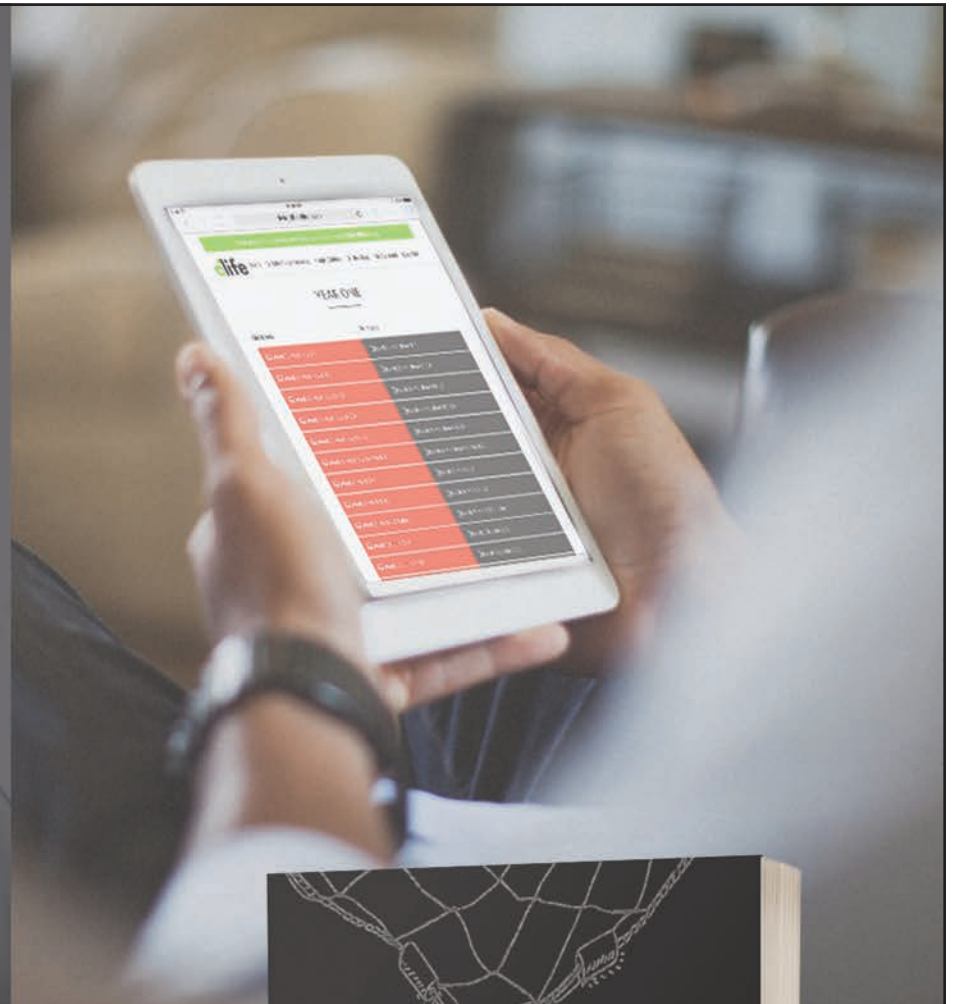
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Entering the podcast world

Baptist podcasts reach growing audience, find niche in crowded market

By David Roach
The Alabama Baptist

A recent seminary graduate who happened across the “Church Leadership Podcast” told co-host Andy Frazier it opened his eyes to what local church leadership is like.

He also said it was “one of the most helpful things he had listened to, read or learned from in the last several years,” Frazier recounted.

That’s exactly what Frazier and co-host Mark Gainey are aiming for. Their Birmingham-based Incite Ministries helps average-sized churches become revitalized and healthy, and they have extended the reach of their consulting services since launching the podcast in 2019. Their audience now spans the globe.

What to consider

Other Christians can have similar impact through podcasting, they say.

“Everybody has something to offer” through podcasting, noted Frazier, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Sumiton. “If you’re trying to ... do what somebody else is doing, it’s probably not beneficial. But if you find your niche,” a podcast may be worth the effort.

An increasing number of Alabama Baptists have recognized that wis-

dom. Ministries large and small are discovering podcasts as another way to connect with target audiences, and they are entering the market with no shortage of offerings.

According to the website Podcast-Insights.com, there are more than 2 million podcasts with at least 48 million episodes. Those statistics have left some churches, associations and state conventions wondering if there’s room for them to enter the pool.

Yet the statistics suggest there’s an audience for new material. Half of all U.S. homes are podcast fans, according to PodcastInsights, and 75% of the population is familiar with the term “podcasting.”

Frazier and Gainey have won listeners by interviewing Christian leaders — both high-profile and lesser-known pastors.

“There’s not a week in my life that goes by that I don’t apply something I’ve learned on a conversation in this podcast,” said Gainey, pastor of First Baptist Church Fultondale and an associate in Sunday School and discipleship with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “If nobody listened, we’d still do it because we want to continually learn.”

Doug Rogers, SBOM director of communications and technology services, said, “Podcasting is appealing



Photo courtesy of Mark Gainey

Incite Ministries’ Church Leadership Podcast co-hosts Andy Frazier (left) and Mark Gainey (right) interview Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, for a recent show. Crain also has launched a podcast called The Undivided Podcast.

because it’s a way to connect. Listeners can control in terms of when they want to listen and where they are when they listen.”

Associations are also entering the podcasting world. In March, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association launched “The Undivided Podcast,” an effort to highlight ministries of the association and its partners. With an interview format hosted by BMBA executive director Chris Crain, initial episodes will highlight hospital chaplain ministry amid COVID-19 and the work of Discovery Clubs making disciples in public schools.

Necessary

It’s almost necessary to have a podcast in 2022, Crain said. “It’s almost the legitimizing factor as to whether your ministry or your organization is relevant.”

“You need to have all forms of communication that people are engaging in.”

Leaders at First Baptist Church Enterprise agree. In May 2020 it launched a daily 10-minute podcast called “Simple Rhythms.” Each epi-

sode features a church staff member reading a Scripture passage and offering devotional thoughts related to the next Sunday’s sermon.

Keep it simple

No complex equipment is required. Most staff members record on their phones and upload the audio to Google Drive.

“In the internet age, you can listen to podcasts of pastors and preachers from literally anywhere,” said Frank Craft, director of media and communications for FBC Enterprise. “You can listen to pastors and preachers that are way better than us. But we believe there’s something special about the pastoral ministry.”

The podcast gives people “access to a steady rhythm” of their pastors, he said.

For churches and ministries considering podcasts, Craft has two pieces of advice: Just do it and keep it simple.

“You’re never going to have the perfect format,” he said. “It’s never going to be the perfect time. You’re never going to have the perfect idea. But just get after it.”

The Alabama Baptist nearing four years of podcasting

Team members from The Alabama Baptist first got behind the microphones in June 2018 and since then podcasting has been a way of life.

The Weekly releases each Wednesday with a recap of news and feature stories covered by both TAB and The Baptist Paper. Hannah Munoz selects articles,

recruits readers and produces the show. Munoz also produces:

Amplify, hosted by Maggie Evans, which focuses on conversations about life and faith, and releases seasonally.

Stories, a serial-style show, allows host Grace Thornton to dive deep into the lives of those featured. (The Alabama Baptist)

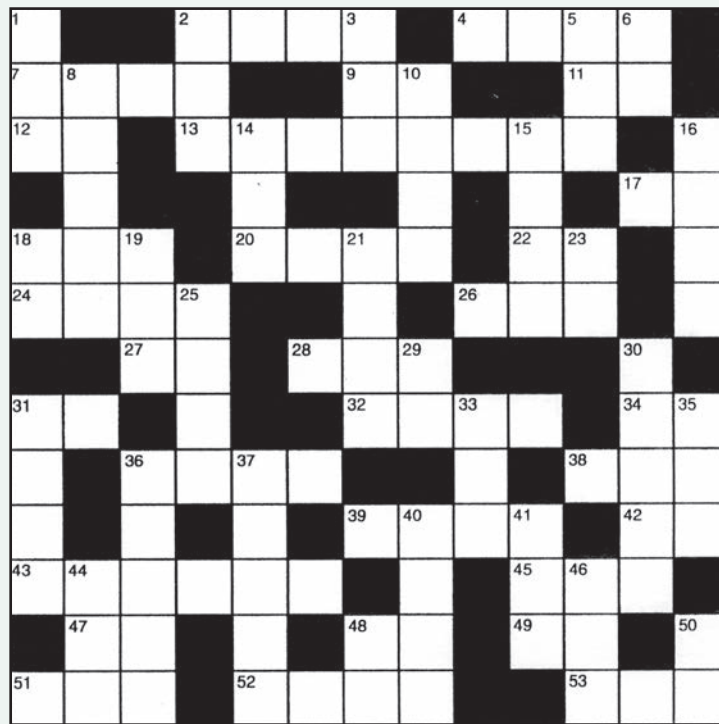
CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

2. She ____ me of the tree, and I did eat. (Gen. 3:12)
4. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until _____. (Matt. 11:13)
7. He that sacrificeth unto any god, save ____ the Lord only. (Ex. 22:20)
9. ____, let that night be solitary. (Job 3:7)
11. ____ Saul also among the prophets? (1 Sam. 10:12)
12. They that received tribute money came ____ Peter. (Matt. 17:24)
13. The Lord will lighten my _____. (2 Sam. 22:29)
17. The God of my mercy shall prevent _____. (Ps. 59:10)
18. Love worketh no ____ to his neighbor. (Rom. 13:10)

20. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal _____. (1 John 2:25)
22. Where there is ____ vision, the people perish. (Prov. 29:18)
24. Thou shalt not ____ false witness against thy neighbor. (Ex. 20:16)
26. He planteth an ____, and the rain doth nourish it. (Isa. 44:14)
27. Ma's companion.
28. Upon the great ____ of his right foot. (Lev. 8:23)

31. ____ that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart. (Isa. 47:7)
32. And ____ that believed came. (Acts 19:18)
34. That Christ cometh ____ the seed of David. (John 7:42)
36. Continue in prayer, and watch in the ____ with thanksgiving. (Col. 4:2)
38. And whether it be cow, or ____, ye shall not kill it. (Lev. 22:28)
39. Father, ____ Thy hands I commend My spirit. (Luke 23:46)
42. The children of Gad called the altar _____. (Josh. 22:34)
43. Prove all ____; hold fast that which is good. (1 Thess. 5:21)
45. ____ the day of the Lord is near. (Joel 3:14)



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47. United Nations. (abbr.)
48. I ____ the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6)
49. Tennessee. (abbr.)
51. So soon as I shall ____ how it will go with me. (Phil. 2:23)
52. Ye know that our record is _____. (3 John 12)
53. And all that handle the ____, the mariners. (Ezek. 27:29)

DOWN

1. ____ Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, "Do thyself no harm." (Acts 16:28)
2. And we know that we are of _____. (1 John 5:19)
3. Moose.
5. That He might be revealed in ____ time. (2 Thess. 2:6)
6. Nova Scotia. (abbr.)
8. We accept it ... most ____ Felix. (Acts 24:3)
10. And they cried out all at _____. (Luke 23:18)
14. Then ____ those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. (Matt. 25:7)
15. Therefore ye ____ of Jacob are not consumed. (Mal. 3:6)
16. If I ____ witness of Myself, My witness is not true. (John 5:31)
18. In the same place. (abbr.)
19. The lot is cast into the _____. (Prov. 16:33)
21. And he reigned over all the kings ____ the river.

- (2 Chron. 9:26)
23. ____ that My people had hearkened unto Me. (Ps. 81:13)
25. Whosoever shall say to his brother, _____. (Matt. 5:22)
29. Each. (abbr.)
30. Their ____ and strength unto the beast. (Rev. 17:13)
31. And Tychicus have I ____ to Ephesus. (2 Tim. 4:12)
33. For they know ____ the way of the Lord. (Jer. 5:4)
35. When they that ____ them saw what was done, they fled. (Luke 8:34)
36. And the city had no need of the sun ... to _____. (Rev. 21:23)
37. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I ____ live unto God. (Gal. 2:19)
40. If ye shall ask any thing in My ____, I will do it. (John 14:14)
41. Why do we and the Pharisees fast ____? (Matt. 9:14)
44. Shade.
46. Lod, and ____, the valley of craftsmen. (Neh. 11:35)
48. Gold. (symbol)
50. For do I now persuade men, ____ God? (Gal. 1:10)

Bible reading marathons speak God's word out loud

By Erin Roach
The Alabama Baptist

At the end of a Bible reading marathon, it feels like revival has broken out as the word of God goes forth in power like no other spoken word, says Vickey Weathers of Cleburne Baptist Association in Heflin.

"To me, especially with how things are going in the world today ... it just changes the atmosphere to have God's word going out, as simple as just reading it," the association's administrative assistant explained.

Jon Graef, associate pastor of Crossgates Baptist Church in Brandon, Mississippi, agreed.

"When we speak the Word out loud, because the word of God is living and active, we can literally change the atmosphere around us."

Open for volunteers

Many churches and associations choose to offer Bible reading marathons — reading the Bible aloud in its entirety — leading up to Easter in April or the National Day of Prayer in May. Crossgates also hosted one leading up to Pentecost.

Cleburne Association, like many other groups around the state, held a Bible reading marathon the first week

of May. They started with a brief worship service at 5:30 the Sunday evening before the National Day of Prayer, which was May 5, and read around the clock until about 11:30 a.m. Thursday.

They concluded with a prayer service outside the courthouse.

'Sign me up again'

"You would think as small as our county is that it would be hard to fill up the slots, but we wind up sometimes turning people away toward the end," Weathers said. "They'll come out and read and realize how fast it goes by, and they'll say, 'Hey, sign me up again if you've got any more empty slots.'"

Using SignUp.com, the association asks people to fill 15-minute slots for the outdoor event, and some churches take a large chunk of time.

Facilitators sign up to serve an hour each, ensuring the reading stays on track and replenishing the snack and coffee table. The association rents a sturdy tent in case of rain.

Weathers advised that a "good, clear Bible translation" is important.

A Bible reading marathon "pulls the community together," Weathers said.



Photo by Carrie Brown McWhorter/The Alabama Baptist

Owen McWhorter, member of Beulah Baptist Church in Muscadine, participates in the 2022 Bible reading marathon as Vickey Weathers of Cleburne Baptist Association monitors from behind. The reading took place outside the Cleburne County Courthouse in Heflin.

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THE GOSPEL
TO EVERYONE

Keeping the story alive

Judson College archives donated to Samford's Special Collection for preservation

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The historical archives of Judson College in Marion will be safe, preserved and accessible going forward, according to officials at Judson and Samford University in Birmingham.

The Special Collection department of Samford's library has added Judson's archives to its mission of "preserving, protecting and providing access" to the history of Alabama Baptist institutions Howard College and Samford University.

The truckload of records, catalogs, yearbooks, scrapbooks and photographs arrived at Samford May 6.

Judson president Daphne Robinson announced the decision via email to alumnae May 5.

"Judson College and the board of trustees are pleased to announce that the histori-

cal archives relating to the Judson story and its history with Alabama Baptists is being added to the Special Collection department of the Samford Library at Samford University. ... We are grateful for the collaboration with Samford to preserve these materials for all to know the Judson story."

'We are honored'

Kimmetha Herndon, dean of Samford's library, said, "We are honored that we are going to have this opportunity to preserve Judson's history, our sister institution, and add it alongside Samford's history as well as Alabama Baptists' history.

"That [the archives are] here at Samford ensures preservation well into the future," she said. "Alabama Baptists can come and see the beginnings of both Howard and Judson."

Robinson added that even



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Jennifer Taylor, chair of Samford University's Special Collection and university archivist, unpacks a box of Judson College's archives May 6.

though it has been a sad journey, "God has brought us all to work as one and all three Alabama Baptist schools can remain forever connected since the University of Mobile has Judson's transcripts and Samford now has the archives."

Sharing about the team at Judson who worked to pre-

pare the archives for transport, Herndon said, "Their commitment and love for Judson is unparalleled. We appreciate all they've done to help us take it on. The archives are in good order and will be easy for Judson alum and friends of Judson to still interact and engage with their historical pieces."

Jennifer Taylor, chair of Samford's Special Collection, also expressed appreciation to the Judson team.

"They have poured themselves into that collection and worked hard making sure it is preserved and making sure it was prepared to transfer to Samford.

"Their love for Judson is evident in the work they did for their history," Taylor said. "We were sad to hear about Judson's closing because we love Judson but are honored to assist in preserving Judson's history."

Between various classes at Samford and the historical tours that come through the library, "we've been telling Judson's story for a long time," Taylor added.

"We are closely connected and honored to be able to continue sharing the story. A lot of hard work has been

put in to make sure the story continues."

Samford's administration is dedicated to making available the space and resources needed to properly preserve the archives, Taylor said.

"The records are going to be kept secure according to guidelines Samford already has in place and will be accessible to researchers," she explained. "Judson alumnae are welcome to come and use the resources and we encourage them to set up an appointment to see it."

In related news

Robinson also reported:

► The business side of Judson continues to operate with a few staff members and security team members remaining on campus.

► Judson continues to work with its creditors to satisfy its debt.

► Leaders are working with a real estate firm to find the best buyer for Judson and the Marion community.

"We appreciate all your prayers and gifts during this time that we seek God's will in the transition of Judson College," Robinson said.

To see the archives, call 205-726-2749.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 15

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



OBSERVING

2 Thessalonians 2:1–12

I wonder if Paul ever thought, “How many times do I have to go over this?”

Although he gave a clear word regarding the end times in 1 Thessalonians, it seems the church remained highly perplexed and hyperfocused on the issue. Thus Paul again writes to help give them clarity.

Remembering (1–5)

We don’t know the precise origin of the theological crisis in Thessalonica.

But it is apparent the church there has gotten the idea “by a spirit or a message or a letter seeming to be” from Paul that the Day of the Lord had come and gone.

He reminds them, therefore, the Day of the Lord will not precede the “man of lawlessness.”

Most likely, this is a reference to the Antichrist, also described in Revelation 13, who will be part and parcel of a unique social and religious upheaval. In fact, his rebellion will be so intense he will attempt to assume the place and presence of God.

We’re not sure how the Thessalonians received this instruction from Paul, but my guess is it was a relief.

First, they learned they had not been left out of God’s kingdom. Second, they could see no matter how bad this world gets, God is still working His plan.

A lot of folks are taught their existence is happenstance, and the sequence of history and its events just happen to you with no reason or cause or purpose.

So it’s quite a comfort to learn as Paul teaches here, that for the believer history happens for you. God is directing all our lives and all of history toward a good, noble and gracious goal (Eph. 1:10).

That’s what Paul is telling the Thessalonians, and that’s what God is also reminding us.

Timing (6–8)

So the question remains: “Why

hasn’t the Anti-christ already appeared?”

Paul says it is because there is a restrainer preventing the full assault of the man of lawlessness against the world.

And who is the restrainer? Well, to be honest, your guess is as good as mine.

Even Augustine said about this passage, “I admit that the meaning of this completely escapes me.” Some good suggestions are the church, the archangel Michael or a just sociopolitical order.

In any case, we don’t want to get too lost on that rabbit trail because the larger point Paul is making is when the lawless one does arrive, he’s going to be slain by the “breath,” or word, of the Lord. So although the details are hazy, the conclusion is clear: Jesus and all those with Him will win.

Deceiving (9–12)

The Antichrist will mimic the power of the Lord in signs and miracles, but like the Egyptian magicians he can only produce false wonders.

He will, in the likeness and power of Satan, deceive those who refuse to “receive the love of the truth.”

Our passage this week describes a grave, terrible future time. Apostasy, deception and idolatry will be commonplace.

This will not be a shock to the Christian, nor will it be unsettling to those whose confidence is the Lord. We’ve been bearing up under hardship since Abel, and we will go on working “till Jesus comes.”

Why? Because the Lord shows us the playbook of the enemy, and we know the outcome of his showdown with the Almighty. Therefore, in peace or persecution, we can remain “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



TRUST GOD’S TIMING

Matthew 24:32–41

We live in an immediate information age. Thanks to the powerful processors we carry around in our pockets, nearly infinite knowledge is simply an internet search away. This can deceive us into believing no knowledge should be beyond our grasp. We are easily frustrated when we encounter something we cannot know, such as when a pandemic will end or how much time we have left with a loved one.

Though Jesus has offered His disciples a number of signs that will help them anticipate His return, in this passage He tells them the exact day and hour is not for them (or even Him) to know. This should inspire trust in God’s timing.

We don’t know when Christ will return, but we can see the signs. (32–33)

Having just described the cataclysmic signs that will usher in His return — wars, famines, earthquakes, the sun and moon darkening, the stars falling from the sky (vv. 6–7, 29) and an angelic trumpet call (v. 31) — Jesus turns to a more subtle, ordinary analogy. The blooming of fig leaves indicates the coming of summer.

When His disciples see the persecution and tribulation of which Jesus has warned them (vv. 4–25), they will know “it is near, right at the door.”

Trust God’s Word about Christ’s return, because His word is eternal and unchanging. (34–35)

The vague reference to “it” in verse 33 is significant because Jesus is addressing two events: the destruction of the temple that occurred in A.D. 70 and His future return.

Referring to the former, He can guarantee the present generation

will live to see it with a certainty firmer than the existence of heaven and earth.

That event, as terrible as it was, offered only a shadow of the final judgment, but Christ’s return will also hold hope for God’s chosen people.

Don’t speculate about the timing of Jesus’ return. (36–41)

Though Jesus has clearly communicated the certainty of His return and indicated the signs of its approaching (v. 33), He discourages speculation about its precise timing. Not even He knows when it will be.

When He “emptied Himself” and took on humanity (Phil. 2:6–8), the Son laid aside His prerogative to this knowledge which is now reserved for the Father.

The sudden judgment on the earth will be like the former judgment in the flood (Gen. 6:5–22). People were living their lives, enjoying the pleasures of food and drink and marriage, oblivious to its coming, before the waters swept them away. But Noah and his family were delivered, just as the elect will be gathered (vv. 40–41; see also v. 31), suddenly, “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52).

Though the knowledge of the exact timing of Christ’s return will elude us,

Jesus has made several things absolutely certain in Matthew 24: He will return. That return will involve judgment, but also deliverance for His chosen people from all nations. Great affliction will precede His return. No one will miss His return when it happens.

This certain knowledge should exhort us to obedience and give us hope as we face challenges, suffering and even persecution in this life. They are not unanticipated, and one day they will end.

Though the knowledge of the exact timing of Christ’s return will elude us, Jesus has made several things absolutely certain in Matthew 24.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Musician shares struggles with fear, not being good enough

Brandon Heath, five-time Grammy nominee, eight-time Dove award winner and BMI 2014 Songwriter of the Year, knows his musical talent and success are gifts from God. But he still struggles with fear of not being good enough.

Heath's new album, "Enough Already," addresses these and similar issues many wrestle with.

One of the tracks, "He is Not Worried," deals with Heath's fears about the future. During 2021 when COVID-19 was a large threat and the conflict in Afghanistan intensified, the Nashville native feared many things in the world.

"I tend to be afraid," Heath acknowledged. "I struggle a lot of times with fear. I literally asked the question, 'I wonder if God's worried, if He's worried about us?' I laugh now but it was a real question then.

"I was able to pretty much answer the question, not that I speak for God, but God wrote history. He is all-knowing and all-seeing and knows what's down the pike for us. He knows the ending.

"I don't think it's in His nature, as God, to worry," Heath added, "because He knows how it's all going



BRANDON HEATH

Photo courtesy of Brandon Heath

to end. If He is not worried, I'm not worried."

'Enough Already'

The title track, "Enough Already," tackles Heath's battle with feeling he's unworthy of love. His father wasn't around much when he was a child. This absence created wounds that made it difficult for Heath to trust others. Ironically, Heath's musical ability and achievements have made trust even more challenging.

"Do they like me for me — in all of my faults? Do they find me to be genuinely funny or are they just laughing to appease me?" he reflected. "That takes a lot of energy if you think about that. It kind of robs you of joy. You can't really settle into friendships. That would be more my struggle — am I good enough on my own?"

However, Heath found a new view of how God sees him through his

own platinum-certified hit, "Give Me Your Eyes."

"When I wrote, 'Give Me Your Eyes,' it was, 'God, how do You see the world? Show me how You see people,'" Heath explained. "Now, 'Give Me Your Eyes' has a new meaning for me — 'God, how do You see me as Your son?'"

"It's evolved for me a little bit," he said.

Heath is excited about the new album, his first in five years. He recently signed with Centricity Music and credits them with allowing him freedom to be creative and try

new things. He also acknowledged being a father has given him a new perspective.

"A lot of times I write from wherever I am — in the season of life that I'm in," Heath said. "Certainly, being a dad has been an inspiration, but also kind of like the lens I'm looking through right now. It's caused me to think about how God

looks at me. I've been thinking about that a lot lately, about what gives me worth and purpose."

Heath travels almost every weekend, but when he's home he goes to West End Community Church in Nashville. In the past he led worship there but as his travel increased, he couldn't be there enough to continue leading worship.

Importance of community

Throughout his successful career Heath said he has learned a lot. One thing is how important community is. He has always felt supported by friends and family and recognizes it makes every moment richer. He's also learned life includes both highs and lows, but the journey is what's important.

"I think thirdly the thing that I have learned is that it really isn't about record sales or number ones," Heath added. "For me, when I see the impact that my creativity has had on other people, it's been like medicine. That gives me great fulfillment that I'm able to help people with my creative process and the things that are in my heart to write into a song."

Finally, Heath said he has discovered truth about God's love using 1 John 4:7 as an anchor.

"One of the things that I was mistaken about God was that His love needed to be earned," Heath recalled. "That taps into my performance thing and being good enough to be an image bearer. But there's nothing that qualifies me other than Jesus. I am made in God's image, so I am an image bearer."

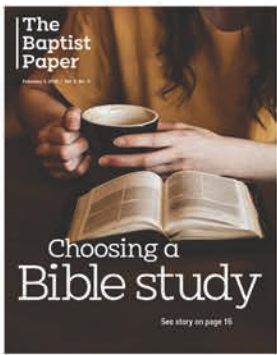
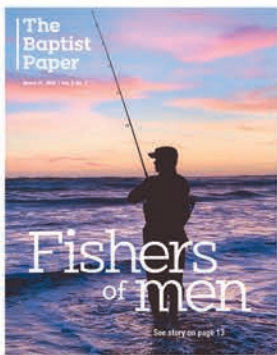
He said he realized God "is love above all things. Sometimes love looks like consequences. Love doesn't always look like romance and soft, fluffy bunnies. Sometimes love is really hard."

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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