

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Samford receives historic \$100M gift from Mann estate

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World Games will bring thousands of athletes, fans to Birmingham July 7-17

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Caregiver support groups offer safe place to find, share encouragement

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Photo courtesy of Julie Donovan

Generational impact

Children from FBC Foley, Spring Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Excel Baptist Church and FBC Tillman's Corner participate in a Bible Drill at Shiloh Baptist Church in Saraland.

Bible Drill carries on in Alabama Baptist churches through pandemic

By Julie Donovan
The Alabama Baptist

COVID-19 has had a major impact on ministries the past two years, but church leaders have overcome the hurdles and carried on.

When it comes to Bible Drill, three state Baptist conventions — Alabama,

North Carolina and Georgia — banded together in 2020 to make Bible Drill a priority and came up with the A-B-C-D of socially distanced Bible Drill: At home, Be online, Church and Discover the outdoors.

“Drills were held in church parking lots, backyards, [using] porch bags with Bible verse activities in them,” said Belinda Stroud, a children’s specialist with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions whose responsibility is Bible Drill.

“Bible Drill is a way for children to navigate God’s word and use it to guide their

lives,” she explained, adding it also “can help children have boldness when sharing God’s word.”

Witness of the impact

Stroud said she sees grandparents helping with the ministry because they realized its impact on their own children’s lives, and they want it to continue with their grandchildren.

Bible Drill incorporates children grades 1–6 and students grades 7–9, with a speakers’ tournament for grades 10–12.

On April 25 Shiloh Baptist Church in Saraland hosted the annual drill with 12 elemen-

tary school students.

“We want you to be successful ... make God happy,” Steve Stephens told the group before the drill began. The retired SBOM missionary served as “caller” for the event.

Five churches were represented: Excel Baptist, First Baptist in Foley, First Baptist in Tillman, Little Escambia Baptist in Flomaton and Spring Hill Baptist in Mobile.

Regional drills also were held in Hartselle, Bessemer, Alexandria, Montgomery, Demopolis and Dothan.

Anna Claire Casey from (See ‘Challenge,’ page 12)



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Congratulations to our TAB Media Group interns



Selah Vetter, who served as a spring intern for TAB Media Group, graduated from Samford University on April 30 and is shown here with her parents. Vetter accepted a position with BhamNow.



Recent Samford graduate Megan Harris transitioned from her internship to serve as a copy editor for national WMU.

TAB Media Group welcomes
Clemson University graphic
design student Taylor Mitchell
as the summer 2022 intern.



Addie Lee Frierson, who worked as a summer and winter 2021 intern with TAB Media Group, graduated from Samford on April 30. She will be serving in a missions intensive program with Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills this summer.

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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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

Consider soaking up the daily sprinkling of Scripture you encounter

My friend flipped seamlessly from Scripture reference to Scripture reference and read them on the spot.

I chose to take notes and jot down the list, confident I would go back and read them later.

We sat in the same church service, listened to the same sermon, but chose to engage with it differently. Both are good ways to listen and learn. Neither option is right or wrong.

After the service, my friend referenced the various Scripture passages and how they connected to the sermon and other related experiences.

I enjoyed learning about the connections and how the pastor's train of thought moved. I wondered where my mind would go when I reread the notes and looked up each verse.

Two more Sundays have passed since that sermon, and I still haven't read through those supplementary Scripture passages.

Will I really go back and read through them?

I can't say, but lately I have noticed a tendency on my part to skip over familiar Scripture referenced as additional resources to the focal passage.

It's not that I've been dismissing or deliberately ignoring them. I merely got in a habit of not looking up the ones I already knew.

However, by doing this I have been missing the opportunity to read the passages in the context of the topic being outlined. I'm also missing the opportunity to grow in Christ.

God speaks to us fresh every day through His word, even the parts we read frequently, and it can happen with a random Scripture reference as well as during our Bible study.

So as Scripture passages catch our eye throughout the day, what if we paused for those few

seconds to read them and reflect?

What breadcrumbs might we follow as we collect each verse?

Would the practice provide an extra barrier of protection from distractions and discouragement?

Could it help us keep our eyes on Jesus?

Consider meditating on every verse you see or hear each day, no matter how you find them.

Take a minute to look up the passage and read through it slowly, looking for what God might be saying to you in that moment.

You might notice a Scripture reference in an email signature line or in the text of a note from a friend. You might see it on a billboard or hear it on a podcast.

And as far as what you might find while reading The Alabama Baptist each week — I suggest preparing an extra cup of coffee or snack before tackling them.

We don't have a protocol or formula, but Scripture appears consistently in the stories we tell, resources listed and services promoted — and of course you'll find lots in the Sunday School lesson commentaries and the crossword puzzle.

Enjoy the journey as you explore messages from the Lord.

Scripture passages about meditating on God's word; what are others you would like to share with us?

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart."

—Deuteronomy 6:6

"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked ... but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night.

"That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither

— whatever they do prospers.

"Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. ...

"For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction."

—Psalm 1

"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."

—Psalm 119:11

"This Book of the Law shall not

depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it ... "

—Joshua 1:8

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

—Colossians 3:16

Your Voice



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

Maintaining a good attitude as we prepare for Anaheim

By Rick Lance

Executive director, Alabama Baptist SBOM

Anaheim awaits Southern Baptists as we prepare for our annual meeting. The setting will be sunny Southern California. As we all know, this is not our typical meeting place for Southern Baptists.

Yet for our brothers and sisters in the western states, meeting in Anaheim makes an important statement about their ministry where Southern Baptists are in a distinct minority. This can be an encouragement to them as we gather.

What kind of attitude should we have as we look toward this annual meeting? We all know that our beloved SBC faces some unique challenges, and differences of opinion do exist among Southern Baptists concerning them.

As one solidly committed Southern Baptist, I would like to offer a

simple but specific kind of attitude that I see as a good one for this historic meeting. I share this with the hope that our SBC family would be encouraged to have the healthiest attitude possible as we approach our family gathering.

Our mission

We need passion for our shared mission.

We all have the same passion for the Great Commission. That is an important affirmation to make.

Reaching people for Christ and helping them become growing disciples of Christ represents our mission. We are at our best when we unify around that passion for the Great Commission.

We need prudence for our family gathering.

To some, prudence may be a

dusty word, but the concept is good. One online dictionary defines it as “skill and good judgment in the use of resources.” For the Christian that only happens when we depend upon God and ask Him for wisdom.

Praying for daily wisdom is as important as thanking God for daily bread. In the midst of these most challenging times, we do need wisdom from God like never before.

Each day I pray for daily wisdom. My prayer lately has been that we have His wisdom for the SBC meeting. With His wisdom we will do the right things, the right way, with the right spirit. Without His wisdom, we will wander in the wilderness.

We need patience with each other.

In times of tension, patience seems to evaporate from the attitudes of people. My prayer is that we will be patient with each other, especially those with whom we disagree.

This is one of the most difficult tests we face as Southern Baptists. In a culture which seems to denigrate those with whom we have disagreements, we can set a much better example.

If we have agape love for one another, we can be patient with each other. Our God has perfect patience. We can draw from the inexhaustible well of His patience.



LANCE

We need to have persistence in prayer.

Sometimes I think if we spent as much time in prayer as we do differing with each other, we could make a much bigger and better impact upon the world. Prayer gives us perspective. Without prayer, we lose perspective.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do know we have serious issues to consider. We can and should have our convictions and opinions about those matters, but my simple plea is to remember our passion for the Great Commission.

Furthermore, remember our need for prudence, or wisdom, from God. Pause and reflect how we can have patience with each other and, as always, exercise persistence in prayer for our SBC family gathering.

Honor the Lord

Call me simple-minded or idealistic, but on my best days I think we can come together and handle our business in such a way that honors our Lord and advances the Kingdom.

I believe Southern Baptists are resilient people. I feel certain we can come out of this period in our history with a renewed sense of being on mission with the Great Commission.

I hope to see you in Anaheim. I want to fellowship with you. I desire to help Southern Baptists see better days in the future, and I know you do as well.

Letters to the editor

Praise our Lord! I read your opinion piece from “Rashional Thoughts” in the April 14 issue and was incredibly encouraged.

The questions you challenged us with regarding “what our daily lives might look like if we intentionally sought to serve others sacrificially” was truly inspiring and convicting.

I am currently serving as interim pastor of FBC Irvington in Mobile County and was so convicted, I shared this piece with the congregation.

Thank you for allowing the Holy Spirit to use you as you listen for direction from our Lord.

Pastor Charles Robertson
Mobile, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

EDITOR'S NOTE — To read more by Rick Lance, visit ricklance.com.

“Don’t let the newspaper headlines frighten you. God is still sovereign; He’s still on the throne.”

BILLY GRAHAM
Evangelist and minister (1918–2018)

“I’ll never forget Jerry Falwell asking me, ‘I’ve heard some stories about the lifestyles of some of the artists. Are they true?’ I said, ‘They probably are.’ I said, ‘Jerry, if you’re waiting for me to get a roomful of unflawed artists, it’s not going to happen. These are human beings who have been gifted in a special kind of way, and they’re trying to work through it in these earthly bodies, and sometimes they make mistakes,’” said **Bill Gaither**, Southern gospel and contemporary Christian artist, speaking in “The Jesus Music” documentary.

“We may not understand all that [God] is doing, or even how He is doing it, but we can recognize that He is doing something quite

unique,” said **Dana Bomar**, **Send Relief’s** Afghan refugee response specialist.

“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,” said **Chris Mills**, **Alabama State Board of Missions** student missions mobilizer.

“Every time I’m around a person, I want to know where he [or she] stands with the Lord,” said former **IMB** missionary **Ellamae Elder**, who recalled recently having a conversation with someone at a store

about how her husband “is with the Lord. I speak openly about the Lord. I just make it into my daily conversation.”

“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,” reflected **Connie Dixon**, **national WMU** president.

“It has been unreal how God is working. We have the gospel to share with them and there’s nothing better for them to hear,” said **Bobby Carr**, youth pastor at **Flemingsburg (Kentucky) Baptist Church**, of a ministry effort to reach middle school students.

Why do we worship on Sunday?

At Easter Sunday worship I heard someone say, “I am so glad we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus once a year.” I was shocked! And I hope those who read this are equally shocked.

After all why didn’t the early Christians choose Friday, the day of crucifixion, as the time for collective/corporate worship? If the crucifixion in itself was God’s main point, why didn’t the early Christians and every generation of Christians since choose Friday as the day of worship?

Why did they choose Sunday? To collectively celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Why has the Church continued choosing Sunday as the day for collective/corporate worship? Because of the resurrection!

Yet strangely enough churches continue to place a cross on their buildings and elsewhere, rather than an empty tomb, as the symbol of the Christian faith. Why not both? Why not reflect the New Testament emphasis?

Something critical seems to be out of focus. After all in the New Testament, ... the death of Jesus is always matched by a parallel emphasis on His resurrection. To emphasize the death of Jesus apart from His resurrection seems an imbalanced viewpoint, or one that is not consistent with Scripture.

The Apostle Paul, for example, stressed that apart from His resurrection, “our preaching means nothing and your faith means nothing” (1 Cor. 15:14).

So let the proclamation of the death of Jesus be done boldly and unapologetically. But do not dare do so apart from also proclaiming boldly and unapologetically His resurrection — unless you prefer to present an inadequate, lopsided message of Jesus Christ.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper Ala.

From the Twitterverse

@EdLitton

Jesus said, “Go ... and make disciples” not — make converts to your opinions. @myutmost

@CatherineRenfro

Imagine the impact if every follower of Jesus had one person that they are praying for and looking for an opportunity to share the gospel with. Who will you pray for and share with? @whosyour1_

@micahfries

My favorite social media is almost always parents highlighting and bragging on their kids. Pictures and/or videos are even better. We need more of that and much, much less angst/political/theology social media.

@ethicist

The only thing more difficult than waiting on God is wishing that you had.

@GreggMatte

It is possible to know a lot about Christianity, go to a Christian church and live among Christian friends without having to actually have Christ in you.

Christianity is more than behavior and knowledge; it involves an inward transformation of the heart.

@trillianewbell

Can anyone be trusted? I don’t know the answer to that question anymore, but I know without a doubt that God can be trusted.

God is holy, pure, lovely and just, worthy of our complete trust and adoration.

That’s what I know.

@LysaTerKeurst

God’s not running from our mess. He’s climbing into it to be right there with us. And with His presence comes peace. Yes. The Lord is near. And we are safe.

@DanielRitchie

Don’t find yourself in your stuff. Don’t find yourself in your successes.

Don’t find yourself in what has been done to you.

Stake your life on the person and work of Jesus Christ. His grace exceeds what gains you can capture on your own and His grace covers your deepest failure.

@lorifrank1

Having a day when I’m just disgusted by the schemes of the enemy. He exploits our weaknesses and fights so dirty with pain, shame, lies. “He who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” God give us mercy and grace.

@howertonjosh

If we can’t do disagreement without demonization, something’s messing with the throne room of the heart.

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of BMBA

Michael Ethridge (left, holding scissors), director of operations for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, and Lisa Hogan (center), executive director of Sav-A-Life, join other friends at the May 5 dedication of the new Crestwood Pregnancy Test Center located in the BMBA Partner Center. The Test Center is the third Sav-A-Life location in Jefferson County and will provide free ultrasounds, resources and support to birthmothers and fathers. (TAB Media)

US pregnancy centers on alert after ruling leak

Pregnancy care centers and pro-life churches around the U.S. are on alert following the leak of a draft opinion suggesting the Supreme Court may be ready to return regulation of abortion to individual states.

On May 2, a draft ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* was released by Politico. The case asks the court to decide on the constitutionality of Mississippi's ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. The court's ruling is expected by the end of June.

Since the leak multiple attacks have been reported, including a fire at the office of Wisconsin Family Action, a pro-life advocacy group; vandalism at a Fort Collins, Colorado, Catholic church known for its pro-life stance; and vandalism at a pregnancy resource center in Denton, Texas, according to the Associated Press. (TAB)

Judge rules for teacher in gender pronoun battle

A federal judge on May 9 granted a preliminary injunction in the case of Kansas teacher Pamela Ricard over her school system's policy requiring teachers to use the preferred names and pronouns of students regardless of biological gender.

Ricard sued Geary County Schools Unified School District 475 after being reprimanded and suspended for three days in April 2021 because she called a biologically female student by her legal name and used female pronouns, The Christian Post reported. The injunction paused any disciplinary action for the remainder of the school year.

Ricard's suit also addresses a district policy that "prohibits employees from revealing to parents that a student has requested use of a preferred name or different set of pronouns at school" in most cases. (TAB)

Persecuted church

Baptism at beach brings scrutiny from Chinese authorities

SHENZHEN, China — The day before Easter, authorities confronted a pastor and others after six new believers were baptized at a remote beach in China.

Some members of Shenzhen Trinity Harvest Gospel Church traveled two hours to the remote beach for the baptism, reported human rights group China Aid. Someone quickly posted photos and videos of the event.

While the group lunched at a restaurant afterward, Pastor Mao Zhibin was contacted by the Management of Health Hotline under the pretense of COVID-19 prevention. Minutes later a local official and police arrived to obtain information and biometrics on those connected to the church, China Aid reported.

In September 2021 police closed a beach in Huizhou because members had gone there to celebrate the church's fifth anniversary. Attempting to avoid a repeat, they traveled April 16 to the remote beach to hold the baptism service.

Authorities have twice raided the church and once banned it, during which time it was not allowed to meet for five months.

Prosecutor vows to continue criminal proceedings against 'hate speech'

HELSINKI, Finland — Finland's state prosecutor is appealing the exoneration of parliament member Paivi Rasanen after the Helsinki

District Court dismissed hate speech charges against her on March 30.

The court unanimously acquitted Rasanen, a medical doctor, member of parliament since 1995 and former minister of the interior (2011–2015). The court further ordered the prosecution to pay more than 60,000 euros (about \$62,340) in legal fees, the legal advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom International reported.

In Finland the prosecutor general can appeal "not guilty" verdicts, and on April 30 the prosecutor filed the appeal of Rasanen's acquittal.

The three charges against Rasanen stemmed from the sharing of her faith-based views on marriage and human sexuality in a 2019 radio debate, a 2004 pamphlet and a 2019 tweet in which she was critical of her church's sponsorship of the LGBT "Pride 2019" event.



Photo courtesy of ChinaAid

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► Retired pastor **Kenneth Wayne Pinegar**, 86, died April 24. He served in the U.S. Navy, worked in the oil fields of Texas for three years and delivered for Dairy Fresh and Merita Bread.



PINEGAR

He held a bachelor's degree from Samford University and master of theology from Southern Bible Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri. He served several churches including Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Sulligent; New Hope Baptist Church, Winfield; Sharon Heights Baptist Church, Birmingham; West Side Baptist Church, Kokomo, Indiana; Berry Baptist Church; and Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Hamilton.

He taught Samford extension classes, now known as Ministry Training Institute, and led numerous revivals.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce; three children; four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO

► **The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera**, will host "Hope for Nigeria: Against All Hope" on May 22 at 6:30 p.m., a program to bring awareness to the persecution of Christians in the west African nation by terrorist groups.

Zamani Kafang, professor of Old Testament theology in Nigeria, will speak.

He is the father of Shelby Crossings member A. Jay Kafang, who works with the International Committee on Nigeria.

Ken Letson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Michael Oliver and Bert Breland** are celebrating 10th anniversaries as pastors of **Trinity Baptist Church, Madison**, and **First Baptist Church Madison**.

SHELBY

► **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Westover**, celebrated its 75th anniversary May 1.

The celebration was postponed from 2021 due to COVID-19. Congregational singing was led by Rick Kenney. Special music was provided by the Vaughn Family of Berry, Alabama; former members Edwina Chappell, Niva Dorough and the Bevins family; and members Rainey Killingsworth (first time to sing in church) and the Vanoy family.

The church's oldest living member, Erskine Morgan, was recognized. His great-grandson made a salvation decision during the service.

Debbie Campbell (left), representing the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to interim pastor Steve Wallace (center) and Ross Vanoy (right), deacon chair.

Mementos and a photo album set up in the fellowship hall

displayed photos and articles.

"The most special thing that happened was Eli [Killingsworth] getting saved," said Regina Vanoy.

Many stayed to enjoy a fellowship meal after the service.

OTHER

► **Scotter Kellum** will be the new team leader of leader empowerment and mobilization for the **State Convention of Baptists in Indiana**. The SCBI executive board approved Kellum for the role May 9.

Kellum has been youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions since June 2015.



KELLUM

Prior to that he worked in student ministry in various churches.

He and his wife, Chelsea, are members of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, where where she

serves as preschool and children's minister.

They have four children.

Alabama pastor moves into full-time Ukrainian relief work

Often church members feel hurt when a pastor leaves, but when Jeff Copeland, senior pastor of First Baptist Church Robertsedale, resigned March 27 after nearly 23 years, he had his congregation's support.

Copeland resigned to be the full-time leader of Kingdom Bridges, an international ministry providing crisis support and relief in Jesus' name.

For the past few weeks, Kingdom Bridges has been organizing and supporting a huge Ukrainian refugee relief ministry in Moldova as part of a 20-year partnership with a Baptist church there. They are housing, feeding and providing food and other essentials for nearly 3,000 Ukrainians.

Connecting churches

Copeland said when he was young he "felt God call me into the ministry to serve as a pastor. Just like that first call, I now feel God calling me to be a bridge — to connect churches in America with those around the world."

Copeland said he didn't feel he could handle both positions like

he wanted to, and he felt led to transition to missions work.

"Kingdom Bridges had outgrown my ability to pastor my church," he said.

"FBC Robertsedale had partnered with the UK and Moldova as a missions field, [and in] the last 20 years, I have made 30 trips to support our Baptist churches over there. Fortunately, our staff at Robertsedale took excellent care of our people during my absence."

Copeland said the first "bridge" is "Serve Ukraine." Since Russia invaded the country Feb. 24, he has made two trips to the region.

His work will consist of build-

ing partnerships with churches, nonprofits and organizations that raise funds to help the thousands of Ukrainian refugees fleeing their homeland.

Finding sources that will deliver food and medical supplies to war-torn areas is a small part of the work. Most importantly he hopes to find shelters to house the thousands of refugees.

"No one is safe," Copeland said. "If Russian forces are en route to a city, every life is in danger." (Carolyn Tomlin)

For more information, visit firstrobertsdale.com/serve-ukraine. Follow Copeland's efforts at [facebook.com/jrc11570](https://www.facebook.com/jrc11570).



Photo courtesy of Jeff Copeland

A young Ukrainian girl, determined to keep her cat warm and safe as they traveled to the border, speaks with volunteers after walking 20 miles in freezing temperatures.

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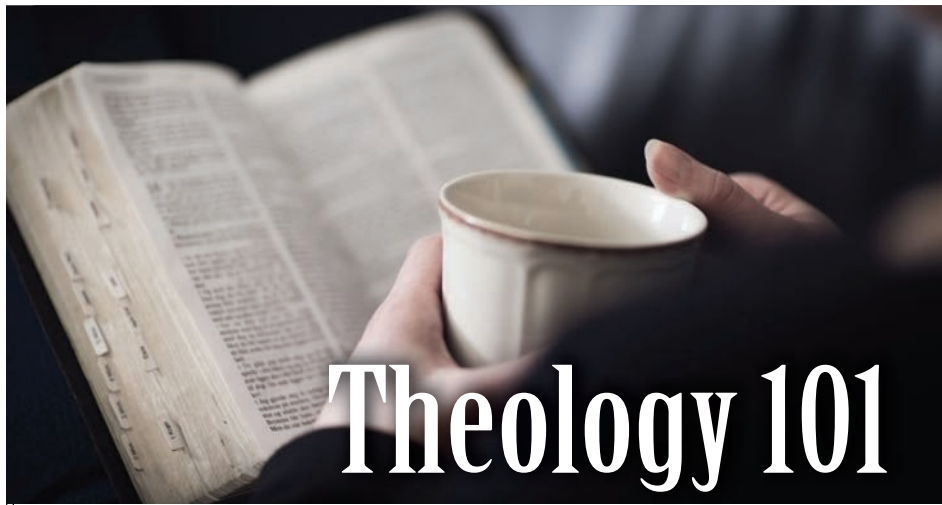
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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The People of God

God's Soldiers

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Last week we gave thought to God's people as pilgrims. This week we continue to investigate biblical analogies that help us think about our relationship with God as His redeemed people, exploring the analogy of believers as soldiers.

First Peter 2:11 warns us against "fleshly lusts which war against the soul." This imagery of spiritual warfare is repeated in Paul's letters to churches and individuals. For example, Philipians 2:25 expresses a commendation of Epaphroditus by Paul as "my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier." In a similar vein, Paul referred to Archippus as "our fellow soldier" in his letter to Philemon (v. 2).

'Endure hardship'

Addressing Timothy directly in a second letter, Paul admonished his younger companion in ministry, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" before reminding Timothy "no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4).

Worthy soldiers give themselves obediently to their superiors. As soldiers in the army of God the Church ideally responds immediately, gladly and completely to divine commands.

This imagery of Christians as well-armed soldiers appears prominently in Ephesians 6 with the admonition, "Put on the whole

armor of God," before enumerating in rapid order the spiritual armor that consists of divine truth as a belt that girds the waist, righteousness as a breastplate, the gospel as sandals for our feet, faith as our shield, salvation as our helmet and God's word as our sword.

Trio of foes

As members of the army of God, those of us in the Church face a trio of formidable foes, namely the world, the flesh and the devil. In every age the Church needs to be well-armed for the ongoing spiritual battle.

In Jesus' time a centurion in the army of Rome had a servant who was seriously ill. He approached Jesus with the recognition that Christ could heal his servant with the power of His spoken word. The centurion based this on the fact that as a military officer he could order those under him to come or go, with immediate obedience.

Isaac Watts gave as the title to a hymn a searching question for all Christians to ask themselves, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" It's a good question for us to be asking ourselves each day.

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.



Samford receives historic \$100M gift from Mann estate

Samford University in Birmingham has received the largest single donor gift ever received by an institution of higher education in Alabama — \$100 million from the Marvin Mann estate.

Samford President Beck Taylor made the announcement during a May 12 news conference from the steps of Centennial Walk in the center of campus.

"This is a historic day in the life of Samford University, the state of Alabama and for the communities that Samford calls home," Taylor said. "We are humbled and overjoyed to be the beneficiaries of this transformational act of generosity."

Mann, an esteemed alumnus and benefactor of Samford, died March 19. An April 2 funeral service was held on Samford's campus in Andrew Gerow Hodges Chapel.

Among his previous financial gifts to the university, Mann provided the funding to establish the Frances Marlin Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership in 2008.

Named after Mann's beloved late wife, it is an academic center that facilitates the understanding and practice of Christian character, servant leadership and moral integrity.

The Mann Center will receive \$5 million of the estate gift as an addition to the existing endowment

for future work. The remaining \$95 million will be used for endowed scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students.

University officials estimate Mann's gift will benefit more than 100 students each year.

"This endowment once fully invested is expected to provide approximately \$3.75 million annually to support and expand access to individuals seeking a Samford education," Taylor said, noting university administrators are currently working to determine exactly how to invest the money in relation to existing endowments or creating new endowments.

The Mann gift brings Samford's total endowment up to about \$470 million.

"This puts Samford in a new category of institutions that celebrate endowments in the half-billion dollar range," he added. "Those funds will be available to perpetuity. That provides that stable foundation of support and [allows us to] confidently offer student scholarships each year because we carefully protect them."

"This extraordinary gift comes at exactly the right time for Samford as we chart a new and exciting course into the future, and it puts Samford on a new and stronger foundation upon which to build and excel," Taylor said. (Jennifer Davis Rash)



MANN



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

As Samford President Beck Taylor announces the gift May 12, he is joined by (l to r) Homewood Mayor Patrick McClusky; Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin; Betsy Holloway, university advancement; (not shown) Bill Stevens, board chair; and Randy Pittman, university advancement.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

World Games will bring thousands of athletes, fans to Birmingham July 7-17

By Cole Shiflet
The Alabama Baptist

This summer, Birmingham will host the World Games, an international sports competition featuring some 3,500 athletes from more than 100 countries who will compete in 34 sports and disciplines.

It's only the second time in World Games' history a U.S. city will play host. In 1981, the first Games was held in Santa Clara, California. Since then it has been hosted by other countries including Germany, Japan and Colombia.

What?

The World Games is an international sports competition showcasing top athletes. It is held every four years and is recognized by the International Olympics Committee. This year is the Games' 40th anniversary.

When and where?

The Games will take place in Birmingham July

7-17. Athletes will participate in opening and closing ceremonies at Protective Stadium and compete in venues across the city.

Events will be held at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Birmingham-Southern College, as well as historic sites such as Avondale Park and Sloss Furnaces National Historic

Landmark and indoor facilities such as the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex and the Birmingham Crossplex.

Tickets can be purchased at TWG2022.com. Each ticket is valid for a sport session, which

may include multiple events.

Who?

Athletes from more than 100 countries will compete in the Games. For the first time ever, an Iroquois lacrosse team will represent Indigenous people.

Many athletes from hard-to-reach countries such as

"The world is coming to Birmingham in a big way."

**John Butterfield
The Church
at Brook Hills**



Photo courtesy of International World Games Association

Athletes from around the world will compete at the World Games in events like canoe polo. This summer is the 40th anniversary of the Games and only the second time a U.S. city has been host.

Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Thailand will compete.

In Uzbekistan, more than 96% of the population remains unreached by the gospel. Only 0.18% of Uzbeks are evangelical Christians.

For these reasons many

churches in Birmingham and beyond view the Games as a great ministry opportunity.

"The world is coming to Birmingham in a big way," said John Butterfield, local disciple-making pastor at The Church at Brook Hills.

"This is a generational type of opportunity that we can leverage to show people the love of Christ and plant gospel seeds that will bear fruit around the world for years to come."

How?

The Birmingham Metro Baptist Association has been working to mobilize churches and volunteers to serve during the Games and to organize a prayer effort ahead of the Games.

The BMBA World Games "Praying on the 7s" prayer guide can be printed, emailed, posted and shared. The guide's purpose is to help every believer commit to pray with purpose in the days leading up to the event.

Find the prayer guide, resources and more information at bmbaonline.org/world-games-2022. (Carrie B. McWhorter contributed)



Photo courtesy of International World Games Association

Sport climbing is a form of rock climbing that takes place on artificial structures. There are three disciplines of sport climbing offered in the Games: lead, speed and boulder (pictured).

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There for each other

Caregiver support groups offer safe place to share, find encouragement

By Lanell Smith
The Alabama Baptist

Caregiver support groups are a valuable lifeline for those with loved ones who have Alzheimer's disease or dementia. In these gatherings, caregivers find a safe place to share their stories with others going through the same experiences.

Caregivers face a unique set of challenges, said Cheryl Blanchard, a licensed social worker, certified case manager and Middle Tennessee regional director of Alzheimer's Tennessee.

Those in the beginning and middle stages of Alzheimer's disease can still be physically capable, but cognitively unable to understand their limitations.

"The emotional challenges are really quite different when you're an Alzheimer's caregiver, because you've got all of the personality and behavior things going on that you may not see in other caregiving situations," Blanchard noted.

'Long grieving process'

"People say [it] is like a long goodbye," she added. "It's a very long grieving process because you lose a little bit of that person each day, even though they're physically right in front of you."

Extended family members often do not offer support, noted Linda Rockett, who facilitates an Alzheimer's caregiver group at First Baptist Church Covington, Louisiana. Some do not believe the person has Alzheimer's or dementia, especially in the early stages, and one family member typically pro-

vides the care with little or no help from others.

The Covington group meets weekly for one hour, and everyone gets time to share, Rockett said. Participants are asked to focus on their own thoughts and feelings.

'Point people to Jesus'

"We are here to support each other and not fix each other," she said. "Confidentiality is a very basic requirement for the group. If members meet out in the store and they want to talk about their situations, that's fine, but they cannot talk about anyone who's outside the group."

"The support group is a place where we can come and kind of unburden ourselves," said Nancy Nicewonger, group facilitator at FBC Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. "In my opinion, the biggest benefit is simply knowing that we have a place where, if we need to cry, we can cry. If we're angry about life, we can be angry."

Judith Moon, support group facilitator at University Baptist Church in Huntsville, said she asks questions instead of offering advice and helps caregivers consider their best options. She works with caregivers and their loved ones battling Alzheimer's or dementia, using the opportunity to point people to Jesus.

"I encourage them to realize they can't handle this on their own. ... I encourage them to search the Bible and find a Scripture that will give them encouragement," she noted.

Support groups also remind care-

givers of their need for self-care.

"Being with other wives who are caring for husbands, or daughters who are caring for parents, or sons, or husbands, whatever, it's just that unique bond of talking to people that are doing the same thing," Blanchard explained.

"As they get to know each other and the caregivers bond [they] hold each other accountable by asking,

'What have you done for yourself lately? When have you had a break?' They talk about hiring in-home health [care].

"They even will talk sometimes about whether it may be time for the

caregiver to place their loved one into an assisted living or memory care community."

The COVID-19 pandemic prohibited some groups from meeting

in person, so they began offering virtual options that enabled connection without risk of exposure. FBC Kennett Square's group is transitioning back to some in-person events but plans to maintain a virtual option.

'Respecting and listening'

Prayer is a vital step toward beginning a caregiver support group, Moon said, and leaders should prayerfully consider how the group will meet needs and who will facilitate.

Blanchard suggested partnering with a local assisted living facility or a professional experienced with dementia.

Building a foundation for the group is important, Nicewonger added. Also, creating a list of norms for respecting and listening can foster a safe space for members to share.

For more information visit alz.org.



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Challenge helps increase believer's Bible knowledge

(continued from page 1)
Excel Baptist said after this year's drill, "Bible Drill helps me learn more about God," while Bryars White, also from Excel, said, "Bible Drill helps me look up Scripture while in church and helps me know why Jesus died on the cross."

SBOM's website notes the purpose of Bible Drill is "to help increase a believer's knowledge of the Bible, develop skills in effectively handling the Bible, learn how to apply the Bible to their life and begin developing memory skills."

Stroud said resources designed for social distancing still are available, including:

► Bible Drill in a box

This resource provides activities and games for teachers and parents to help lead Bible Drill safely. Boxes can be mailed, left on doorsteps or distributed by other means.

► Family devotions

"We offer family devotions for each of the verses children are learning each year; this reinforces what they are learning in Bible Drill," Stroud said.

► Families in the Word

Posted quarterly this worksheet can be downloaded and printed to encourage families to get into God's word together. It is designed to go along with what children are learning in Bible Drill.

Drill description

Each year drillers are given a list of 25 verses to memorize along with 10

key passages, which means if a child stays with Bible Drill at least three years, they will memorize 75 verses and 30 key passages.

At each drill the children stand in a line, shoulder to shoulder, with their Bibles by their sides. The Bible Drill caller first says, "Attention."

He next calls, "Present your Bible," and children hold their Bibles in front of them with one hand on top and the other on the bottom. Then a drill is called and

the caller says, "Start." The children have 10 seconds to find the reference they're looking for or recall what they need to say, then step forward. There are four drills:

1. The books of the Bible

The children find the book

called, then step forward.

If the child is called upon, they say the name of the book before, the book they found and the book after.

2. Key passage

A key passage is called, and the students locate it in the Bible. For example, "God's covenant with Abraham," Genesis 12:1-3.

3. Memory verse

The caller announces the Scripture reference, and the children step forward to say the verse from memory.

4. Complete the verse

The caller says the beginning of a verse, and the children step forward to say the rest of it along with the reference.

Certificates, medals and trophies are distributed at various levels. Scholarships are also available.

"Bible Drill helps me look up Scripture while in church and helps me know why Jesus died on the cross."

*Bryars White
Excel Baptist Church*

For more information about Bible Drill, visit alsbom.org/BibleDrill.

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

Clayton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 4, Clayton, AL 36016 (Barbour County), is accepting resumé for pastor. Please email resumé to: claytonbaptist@bellsouth.net by May 31.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumé to: stamar171526@gmail.com or sonyahumber@gmail.com.

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.fbheadland.com.

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.

PART-TIME CHILDCARE PROVIDER

North Shelby Baptist is seeking a part-time childcare provider. Must be at least 18 years of age and pass background screening. For more information and to apply, visit <https://northshelbybaptist.org/job-posting-part-time-childcare-provider>.

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.

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.

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Terry Billings used to spend his life mud racing in his old drinking truck, until one day everything turned on a dime — in Walmart. Now he and his truck have both had a transformation — and have found a very different purpose. This season, the "Stories" podcast shares his story. Listen at tabonline.org/stories or wherever you listen to podcasts.



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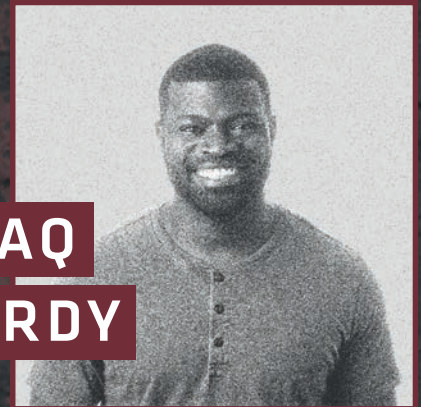
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CHURCH REPORT FOR 2021

TOP CHURCHES IN BAPTISMS

Alabama Baptists celebrate baptisms

In 2021, First Baptist Church Opelika saw 115 people baptized. One of those was Bennett Barron, who was baptized on Christmas Eve. “To be able to celebrate the birth of our Savior and have believer’s baptism is super cool,” said Paul Dunbar, FBC’s kids ministry pastor.

“His birth is for nothing without the cross, and to symbolize [through baptism] what happens when Jesus saves us ... just reiterates the love and sacrifice the Lord made for us.”

He said Bennett decided to follow Jesus a while back but wasn’t able to follow up with baptism because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Coming out of the pandemic, he was ready to make his public profession of faith,” Dunbar said. “And after we all chatted, Christmas Eve couldn’t have been a better time.”

Every one of those 115 people baptized at FBC (which was ranked third in the state in number of baptisms in 2021) has a story. So does every other person baptized in Alabama in 2021. That’s what the numbers reported in the Annual Church Profile each year celebrate, said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

‘Cause for celebration’

“Arguably, some of the most important data reported annually through the ACP is the number of baptisms reported by individual churches each year,” he said. “This is a real cause of celebration for each church and for all Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists. Celebrating the birth of new Christians makes everything else vitally important.”

Alabama Baptist churches reported a total of 6,302 baptisms in 2021, down a little from 2020 when 6,650 baptisms were reported. Churches self-report baptisms and giving through the ACP. (Grace Thornton)



Facebook photo

Paul Dunbar, kids ministry pastor at FBC Opelika, baptizes Bennett Barron during the church’s Christmas Eve service in 2021.

TOP 25 CHURCHES — NUMBER OF BAPTISMS

- 1. Cottage Hill, Mobile 133
- 2. Willowbrook, Madison 121
- 3. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee 115
- 4. Redemption Church, Mobile 114
- 5. Shades Mountain, B’ham Metro 101
- 6. Gardendale First, North Jefferson 94
- 7. Trussville First, B’ham Metro 90
- 8. Hill Crest, Calhoun 52
- 9. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee 51
- 10. Greenbrier Road, Calhoun 46
- 11. Mount Zion, Calhoun 45
- 12. Eden Westside, St. Clair 43
- 13. Union Chapel, Lamar 36
- 14. MeadowBrook, Etowah 35
- 15. Valleydale, B’ham Metro 34
- 16. Cullman First, West Cullman 33
- 17. Enterprise First, Coffee 31
- 18. Shoal Creek, Elmore 31
- 19. Prattville First, Autauga 31
- 20. Pleasant Grove, Muscle Shoals 30
- 21. Mount Zion, Carey 30
- 22. NorthPark, B’ham Metro 30
- 23. Coosada, Elmore 30
- 24. Gilliam Springs, Marshall 29
- 25. Highland Park, Colbert-Lauderdale 29

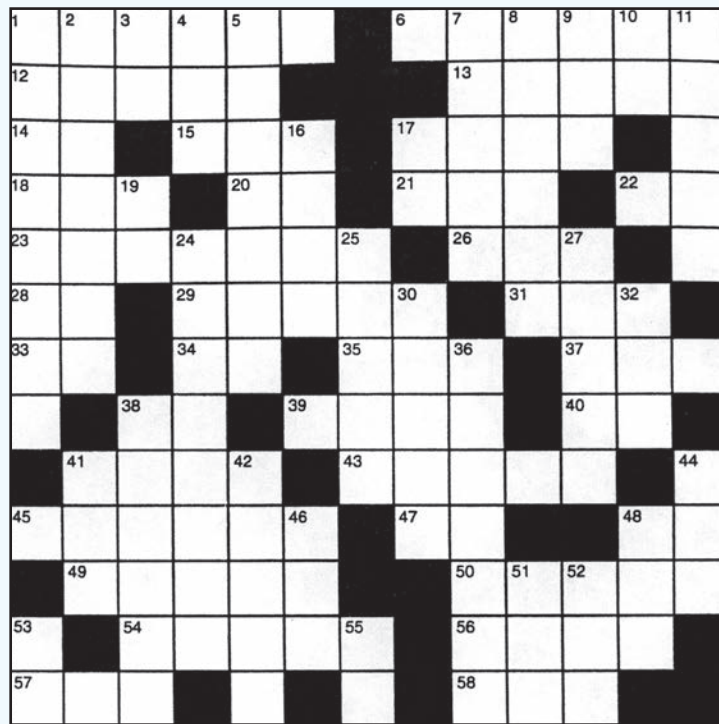
TOP 25 CHURCHES — RATIO OF BAPTISMS

- 1. Liberty, Pleasant Grove 1 to 2.50
- 2. Wheeler Grove, Muscle Shoals 1 to 3.33
- 3. Mount Zion, Carey 1 to 3.83
- 4. Primera Iglesia Bautista, Marion 1 to 4.00
- 5. Mount Pleasant, Tennessee River 1 to 4.00
- 6. Sandy Creek, Tallapoosa 1 to 4.00
- 7. Arkadelphia, West Cullman 1 to 4.33
- 8. Mount Ararat, Southeast Alabama 1 to 4.81
- 9. Marbury, Autauga 1 to 5.25
- 10. Pine Level, Sardis 1 to 5.33
- 11. Northside, Covington 1 to 5.50
- 12. Dixon’s Mills, Bethel 1 to 5.50
- 13. Anderson, Barbour 1 to 5.50
- 14. Shiloh, East Liberty 1 to 5.75
- 15. Greenbrier Road, Calhoun 1 to 6.54
- 16. Pine Level First, Autauga 1 to 7.23
- 17. Calvary Dothan, Southeast Alabama 1 to 7.23
- 18. Rock Springs, Chilton 1 to 7.43
- 19. Paint Rock, Tennessee River 1 to 7.50
- 20. Aiken Grove, Sulphur Springs 1 to 7.50
- 21. Shiloh, Coffee 1 to 7.50
- 22. Moshat, Cherokee 1 to 8.00
- 23. Antioch, Madison 1 to 8.13
- 24. New Chapel, Sardis 1 to 8.62
- 25. Corinth, Barbour 1 to 8.75

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. The ___ of Jesus. (John 2:1)
6. The ___ loveth the Son. (John 3:35)
12. After the ___ of Melchisedec. (Heb. 7:17)
13. Rejoice at His ___. (Luke 1:14)
14. Raised ___ from the dead. (Rom. 6:4)
15. Long-tailed rodent.
17. The ___ of the tabernacle. (Ex. 38:20)
18. National Hockey League. (abbr.)
20. South America. (abbr.)
21. I will ___ unto thy days. (2 Kings 20:6)
22. As many ___ received Him. (John 1:12)
23. Disciple named ___. (Acts 9:36)
26. Electroencephalogram. (abbr.)
28. Come to ___ end. (Ps. 7:9)
29. Very large picture on a wall.
31. Under the fifth ___. (2 Sam. 2:23)
33. This ___ the day which the Lord hath made. (Ps. 118:24)
34. Manuscript. (abbr.)
35. Six on a ___. (Lev. 24:6)
37. A ___ out of the stem of Jesse. (Isa. 11:1)
38. Symbol for holmium.
39. ___ thy neighbor. (Lev. 19:18)
40. Low water. (abbr.)
41. Sin no ___. (John 8:11)
43. Birds of the air have ___. (Luke 9:58)
45. Took the ___ of Elijah. (2 Kings 2:14)
47. Deuteronomy. (abbr.)



By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

48. ___ not kill. (James 2:11)
 49. ___ be with you. (1 Pet. 5:14)
 50. Rising up ___. (Jer. 29:19)
 54. Could ___ stones. (Judg. 20:16)
 56. ___ up the tabernacle. (Ex. 26:30)
 57. Fathers did ___ manna. (John 6:49)
 58. Yea be yea; and your ___. (James 5:12)
- ## DOWN
1. Come and let us go up to the ___ of the Lord. (Mic. 4:2)
 2. We are ___ and fatherless. (Lam. 5:3)
 3. Touchdown. (abbr.)
 4. ___ name was Elisabeth. (Luke 1:5)
 5. Timotheus and ___. (Acts 19:22)
 7. ___ in me, and I in you. (John 15:4)
 8. Material used to kindle fires.
 9. Hours. (abbr.)
 10. Eastern time. (abbr.)
 11. The son of ___. (Luke 3:27)
 16. Asian goatlike mammal.
 17. Short for Papa.
 19. Pound. (abbr.)
 24. The King eternal, ___. (1 Tim. 1:17)
 25. Lord spake unto Moses and to ___. (Lev. 15:1)
 27. Boys and ___. (Zech. 8:5)
 30. I have ___ you. (Mal. 1:2)
 32. Set my ___ in the cloud. (Gen. 9:13)
 36. As for the ___ border. (Num. 34:6)
 38. An ___ and good heart. (Luke 8:15)
 41. Representation of a region.
 42. The popular name of Rodrigo Diaz. (2 words)
 44. That our ___ may be full. (2 John 12)
 46. Poetic for "even."
 48. Dealer. (abbr.)
 51. Actor's Equity Association. (abbr.)
 52. A beam of visible light.
 53. Both of you and ___. (Rom. 1:12)
 55. Genesis. (abbr.)

Team Rubicon completes DR projects in Selma

West Central Baptist Association and Water Avenue Baptist Church in Selma were key in assisting a relief effort in March by Team Rubicon, an international disaster relief nonprofit comprised primarily of U.S. veterans and first responders. "They called and said, 'We're coming,'" recalled Lee Tate, associational mission strategist for West Central Baptist Association. Tate put Beau Rodriguez, a Team Rubicon site supervisor from Texas, in touch with John Goings, pastor of Water Avenue Baptist, whom Tate calls a "Kingdom-minded pastor."

When Rodriguez and Goings spoke, things just clicked, said Rodriguez.

Water Avenue has about 20 regular attendees ranging in age from 2 to 87. Goings asked members if they "would agree to open the door to the organization."

And they did. Water Avenue provided housing for about 20 Team Rubicon volunteers, with people sleeping in the fellowship hall and other spots throughout the church.

Meeting needs

Team Rubicon chooses areas worldwide that need disaster relief but don't qualify for government aid. They

noticed Selma, which in recent years has been battered by a hurricane, tornadoes and a deep freeze.

"We were looking for a place that is struggling. Selma is one of those places where it is very, very impacted from lack of opportunities," Rodriguez said.

'Thankful'

Members of the team worked on homes in Selma selected through a screening process based primarily on the homeowner's age, disability and lack of resources.

Team Rubicon was thankful for Goings' and Water Avenue's support. The pastor and congregation loved the arrangement, too.

Goings called it a "great experience, ... going out to the job site and seeing the team's dedication to helping someone in need and fellowshiping with them in church service on Sunday."

Tate also is thankful for the opportunity to engage with local churches and organizations in serving the community.

"Doing what I do allows me time to visit other churches, worship with them and promote an eternal perspective to their lives, love for the brethren and passion for Christ and His Great Commission," he said. (Tracy Riggs)



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Team Rubicon volunteers repair a home in Selma in March. Comprised primarily of U.S. veterans and first responders, Team Rubicon provides aid in underserved communities.

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'S

INTENTIONAL LEADER CONFERENCE

KEN ALLEN, DIRECTOR,
LEADERCARE



ROB JACKSON, DIRECTOR,
CHURCH HEALTH



TED TRAYLOR, PASTOR,
OLIVE BAPTIST CHURCH



This conference will launch an intentional effort to resource pastors with the tools and information needed to flourish as a leader.

Pastors will be introduced to the **4 P's of Leadership**: PERSON, PASTOR, PREACHER AND PATHFINDER.

PERSON: Intentionally relating to God and others and growing in an emotionally healthy way

PASTOR: Intentionally shepherding the sheep assigned to you

PREACHER: Preaching with intentionality

PATHFINDER: Strategically leading with intentionality

The conference will be led by Ken Allen, director of LeaderCare; Rob Jackson, director of Church Health; and Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla.

During the year following the conference, each of the topics (Person, Pastor, Preacher and Pathfinder) will have their own stand-alone day of training.

For more information, visit alsbom.org/ilc or contact Kim Britton, kbritton@alsbom.org, 334-613-2218.

5 tips for writing emails church members will open, read

By Mark MacDonald

Church Branding Strategist and Consultant

Low open rates on your church emails? Is it possible to get more people to read your correspondence? Is there a trick to getting people to open and read emails? The answer to all three is “Yes.”

Most churches use a program such as a church management system, Constant Contact or Mailchimp to send emails. This is wise because these platforms allow users to easily schedule email delivery and manage a mailing list.

Using analytics

The analytics offered by these services reveal the percentage of people who opened your email and the amount of time they spent with the email.

Knowing whether people are spending longer than a few seconds with your

email before closing it is an excellent gauge of whether your communication is reaching your audience.

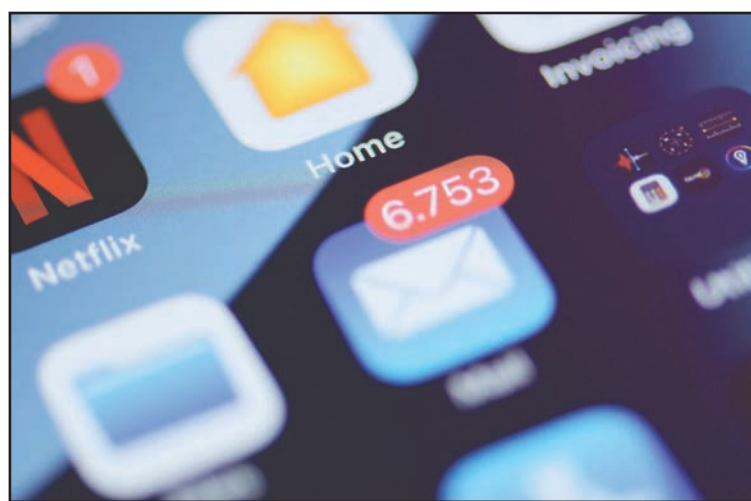
What can you do to increase the likelihood your church emails will be read? Here are five practical tips:

1. Segment your list. Effective communication rises and falls on how well you know your audience. If you know them well, you can talk directly to them. If the list has everyone on it, the message needs to be broad.

It is better to segment the list based on groups you’re talking to. Some examples might include lists for members, non-members and guests.

Another option might be seniors, couples, parents, singles and students. It’s entirely up to you based on how you communicate with each group.

2. Make the subject feel personalized. Now that the



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list is segmented, direct the subject line specifically to that audience.

Many email programs allow you to use a placeholder code for a first name in the subject and body of the email. Use that, but don’t overuse it.

An email should feel natural and conversational to the reader.

3. Don’t overdo frequency. If you send too many

emails, fewer people will open them.

Once a week is probably standard, but if you don’t have much to say or find yourself repeating information, don’t send as many. Once-a-month emails may be all you need to get your church emails read.

4. Keep them short. If someone opens your email, they’ll scroll quickly through it. If it feels too

long or full of paragraphs, most won’t read any of it.

They’ll leave it to read later or delete it immediately.

The shorter it is, the more likely your church email will be read. So edit, edit, edit.

Preview the email on a phone (where most receive it) and see how many swipes you need to get to the bottom. Much more than two? Edit some more.

5. Make them scannable. Most people only read headlines. So make the subject line interesting, then have three or four subheads that allow readers to get the idea of the email.

Need to provide a few details under the subheads? Use bullet points, not paragraphs. Add website links for details.

This keeps your emails shorter and still provides relevant information.

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE BOOK OF THE YEAR

goodnight,
sweetheart.

“Love bears all things ... hopes all things ... endures all things ... Love never ends.” 1 Corinthians 13:7-8

BY ALAN JOHNSTON

When life is suddenly and dramatically interrupted, what do you do? React in fear, despair, become overwhelmed with anxiety, just give up?

“Goodnight, Sweetheart” tells the story of how Alan Johnston dealt with the 16-year illness and eventual death from Alzheimer’s of his beloved wife, Judy.

Johnston says, “... none of the negative thoughts and emotions improved our situation, nor did they solve any problems. Perhaps the best advice is that which comes from the Apostle Paul “... stand firm in your faith.”

Chapters include, “When a Man Loves a Woman,” “The Twilight Zone,” “Bad Things Happen to Good People,” “Man of Sorrow,” “Paradise Found,” “Those That Mourn,” “Joy Comes in the Morning” ... and more.



Alan Johnston is a retired pastor living in Chattanooga, Tenn. During his 54 years of ministry, he pastored churches in Alabama and Tennessee, and during 34 of those years he was also a certified financial planner. He is founder of Path2Truth Ministry and spends much of his time teaching and writing.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 22

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



PRAYING

2 Thessalonians 2:13–3:5

Be Steadfast (2:13–15)

Like every other commonsense American, I really enjoy coffee. And so I can still remember the pit of sadness I fell into 10 years ago when a neighborhood Starbucks closed due to a decline in sales. The reason? According to the CEO's assessment, it was because they had neglected the quality of their main product.

The customers noticed and quit buying. The CEO, therefore, went through a long process of rescuing the company by returning it to the most important fundamental for any decent coffeehouse: making a good brew.

Paul, similarly, is reminding the Thessalonians of their most important fundamental, which is the how and why of their salvation. In these verses, he resumes his prayer of thanksgiving, which began in 1:3 and continues after his teaching on the Antichrist in 2:1–12, by reminding them God “has chosen you.” Their salvation is a gift from God.

God has not only saved them, Paul continues, but He is also sanctifying them by the Spirit until they attain the “glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are not saved to be stagnant but rescued to be righteous. And we are called to go on by faith in the truth until the final day when the Lord is revealed and time shall be no more.

Those are the simple, sacred fundamentals packed into these three verses. By grace, beloved and chosen, you have been saved through faith to grow in sanctification until final glory.

Paul urges that these are the most essential truths they must stand firm in and hold. Against a tide of animus and evil men, the church must remain a pillar and support those doctrines in particular. There is a regular assault from the enemy upon the Church and the gospel. It is incumbent upon our generation, as it is for every generation, to protect and promote the faith fundamentals.

Be Encouraged (2:16–17)

The closing lines of Paul's prayer

have a couple of interesting features. First, the content is very similar to 1:11–12. Paul anticipates God will supply the strength and peace to perform “every good work and word.” God supplies to us the ability to fulfill His will through us. Second, the Apostle Paul makes an equivalence of authority in the Son and the Father. The two members of the Trinity in unison send guidance, comfort, strength, power and deeper love for fellow Christians. Though the early church was still developing its Trinitarian theology, it is clear they were confident Jesus was fully divine.

Be Prayerful (3:1–2)

Paul, who prays so much for others, now solicits prayer from others for himself. Note the content of his request. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy want the word of the Lord to spread through their ministry. In fact, I think the driving purpose for the request for safety is not primarily because they want to avoid suffering, but because they want to make sure their missionary endeavors aren't stifled by imprisonment or violence.

What an example of focus, passion and wisdom! Passages like this ought to reorient every Christian to remember our calling from God to glorify Him through the spread of His gospel.

Be Confident (3:3–5)

Paul has a lot of attributes, but pessimism isn't one of them. Despite his suffering, the church's suffering, the perverse and evil men attempting to derail their ministries and the frightening, uncertain future, he has every confidence in the Lord and in the church that they will go on in the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. Truthfully, we are all able to be as joyful and optimistic as the Apostle Paul because we serve the same Lord he did. And He is faithful. He was faithful to Joseph after Potiphar, Moses after the rock, Abraham after Hagar, Samson after debauchery, Paul after Damascus and Jesus after the cross. And, dear reader, He will be faithful to you.

Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



KEEP SERVING FAITHFULLY Matthew 24:42–51

In Matthew 24, Jesus teaches His disciples about the end times and shapes their expectations for His return. However, His purpose is not to leave them gazing into the future. Here, He directs their attention to the present. How will we behave as we anticipate Christ's return?

Stay alert and ready for the return of Christ. (42–44)

“Therefore” is an important word in Scripture. It frequently indicates a transition from instruction to application, from what you must know to what you must do. Here, the implicit call to be prepared for Christ's return becomes explicit.

Because no one knows the time (see v. 36), we must stay alert and ready at all times. Jesus uses the analogy of an owner protecting his house from a thief.

Paul also compares the day of the Lord's coming to “a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Like Jesus, Paul encourages believers to live in such a way they will not be surprised at that time.

They should be “awake and sober ... putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet” (1 Thess. 5:6, 8).

Remain faithful to what God has called you to do. (45–47)

To convey what this readiness should look like, Jesus employs the metaphor of a master entrusting his household to a faithful and wise servant while he is away.

This image recalls the calling God gave to all of humanity at creation: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen. 1:28).

God has made humans his vice-regents on earth to express His wise and loving care for His creation. Reinforcing this idea is the way

the servant's task “to give them their food at the proper time” echoes the language the Psalms repeatedly use about God Himself. He cares for all creatures, who look to Him to “give them their food at the proper time” (Pss. 104:27, 145:15). We will be blessed if the Lord finds us doing the work for which He created us, bearing His image by caring for His creation, the earth and its inhabitants, when He returns.

Don't live for yourself while you wait for Jesus' return. (48–51)

If instead we live selfishly, abusing our neighbors rather than lovingly providing for them and tarnishing the reputation of our

Master by living with self-indulgence rather than self-control, then at His return, we will face His wrath. That wrath is so intense it is expressed with a series of idioms that transcend their literal meaning.

The master likely “will cut [his servant] in pieces” with sharp rebukes and put him not

merely with the hypocrites, but with all who have rejected the master's rule — the hypocrites being the worst example. The weeping and gnashing of teeth reflects the pain and frustration this punishment will cause.

As we await our Master's return, we have work to do. To be ready when He comes, we must live out the charge He has given His servants. We are called to bear His glorious image by lovingly and wisely caring for His household, the earthly domicile He has provided for us and our fellow image-bearing residents.

We should follow the Master's instructions, loving God and our neighbors (Matt. 22:36–40), so we can hear these beautiful words from Him when He returns: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, 23).

“Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”

Matthew 24:42

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

All things North Alabama highlighted in Connie Pearson's new book

Connie Pearson has always enjoyed travel across her native Alabama, during her time as a missionary and as a writer and author. Now she's sharing that love with fellow travelers in a book, "100 Things to Do in Huntsville and North Alabama Before You Die."

The book covers a lot of ground — food and drink, music and entertainment, sports and recreation, culture and history, shopping and fashion — all available in northern Alabama. Pearson, a freelance writer and blogger, thought the information would be helpful as many are ready to venture out but are still nervous about extended travel after COVID-19.

For all ages

"I wrote the book primarily during 2021 as a coming-out-of-the-pandemic project," Pearson explained.

"After spending seven years traveling around the country in my role as a travel writer — primarily in the Southeast — seeing all that other states had to offer, I realized North Alabama had its own amazing attractions, features, geography, food and people that could rank with any I'd experienced in other places."



CONNIE PEARSON Photo by Jerry Bryant

The book has something for nearly everyone with featured attractions geared to all ages.

While it might be tempting to assume living in one area for many years equals automatically knowing the best places to visit, Pearson said that isn't necessarily true.

"Even though I have lived in North Alabama for at least 50 years of my life," Pearson explained, "there were many of the '100 things' that I had never visited or even knew about until I started researching. So North Alabama folks can learn something new."

A lifelong Baptist now in her fourth career, Pearson has been a private piano teacher, public school music teacher and missionary before venturing into writing.

Her son Matt, campus and teaching pastor at the Church at West Franklin in Franklin, Tennessee, suggested travel writing.

"A couple of years after I retired from the classroom Matt sent me a link to an article about travel writing and said, 'Mom, you love to travel, and you love to ask questions. I bet you'd like this,'"

Pearson recalled. "The idea immediately grabbed my attention, and I started learning everything I could about it.

"[My husband and I] recently returned from a nine-day trip through Louisiana and Mississippi. He was 'Driving Miss Daisy' while I did my thing of interviewing, photographing and asking my many questions.

"My kids call me the 'Queen of Questions' ... in the nicest way, of course."

While researching, Pearson was able to eat amazing food and visit attractions she had never heard of, she related. But the best times were when she included various groups of her 15 grandchildren.

Their memorable experiences included "feeding the animals at Harmony Park Safari, spending the day at Spring Valley Beach, watching the artists at Lowe Mill, sharing the story of Helen Keller at her home, letting them take endless photos at Huntsville Botanical Garden, cheering as they tried to match Jesse Owens' Olympic medal-winning long jump or hearing their exclamations of, 'Come see this, Grandmomma,' at the new Cook Museum of Natural Science," Pearson recalled.

Many hats

"100 Things ..." is Pearson's second publication, but books are only part of her writing career.

She also has a blog, "There Goes Connie," and contributes to TAB

Media through her "Go Taste and See" column.

The Alabama Baptist was woven through Pearson's life before she became a contributor, she said.

Looking back

"My dad (Tom Collier) was the executive director of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes, and they used to have a weekly page in TAB. My mother (Mildred) was the one who kept up with gifts to the Children's Home in memory of or in honor of certain people, and

that list was published in TAB," Pearson remembered. "When my husband and I were appointed as missionaries to Ecuador in 2002, TAB included us with the other appointees. My first book, 'Telling It on the Mountain: 52

Days in the Life of an Improbable Missionary,' was reviewed in TAB by Dr. Martine Bates Sharp."

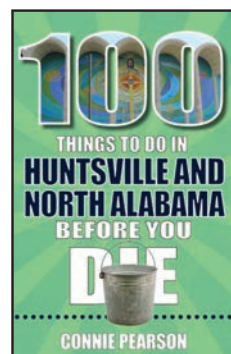
"After several years of travel writing ... I pitched the idea to [TAB editor-in-chief] Jennifer Rash, and she loved it," Pearson recalled.

Because Huntsville is the featured city, originally a rocket was to be on Pearson's new book cover. However, she convinced the publisher "to use a photo of the mosaic in front of FBC Huntsville.

It is a highly recognizable sight in Huntsville, but it also puts Jesus at the top and center of my book," she said.

"I'm glad that I'm a writer now, because I have so much more life experience than I would have had if I'd jumped to being a full-time writer at an earlier stage."

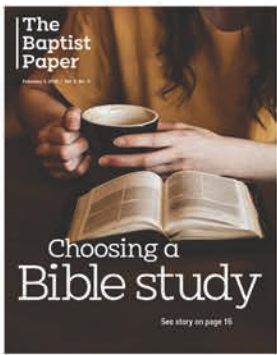
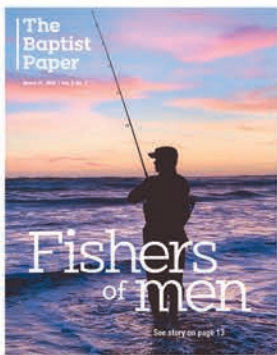
To find out more about Pearson and obtain an autographed copy of the book with a list of bonus suggestions, go to ThereGoesConnie.com and click on "Books."



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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