

The Alabama Baptist



Photo courtesy of John Thomas
Alabama Baptist
Disaster Relief vol-
unteers tarp a roof at
FBC Cottonwood after
a tornado damaged
the building Jan. 9.

‘Heart-touching’

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams help after FBC Cottonwood hit by Jan. 9 tornado

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

As Jimmy Bolin walked up to his church to survey the tornado damage Jan. 9, he said one thing stood out — and it wasn’t that the damage was “bad, really bad.”

“On our sign for New Year’s, I’d put, ‘Praise the Lord in 2024,’” said Bolin, who serves as pastor of

First Baptist Church Cottonwood. “That just stuck in my heart as I walked up to the church — what a test this is to praise the Lord.”

The church was hit by an EF-2 tornado that also killed an 81-year-old woman in her mobile home and destroyed several of the town’s government buildings.

The storm tore off FBC Cottonwood’s steeple, ripped off its awnings, took out two air-condition-

ing units, damaged the roofs and dropped a tree through the church’s fellowship hall, Bolin said.

‘Very fortunate’

“We were very fortunate — our adjuster came out [within two days], and they [planned to] start the renovations on [Jan. 15],” he said Jan. 12. “We got what we could cleaned up and got the sanctuary ready for Sunday.”

Bolin said he was overwhelmed with the way Alabama Baptists responded, starting with his local Southeast Alabama Baptist Association and other associations nearby.

“They were down there within an hour cutting out the tree that had fallen on the church, helping pick up the stuff that was in the yard and helping people in the community,” he said. “It’s heart-touching to see (See ‘FBC Cottonwood,’ page 15)

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Baptists from state, nation gather to honor life of evangelist Junior Hill

Baptists from across the state and nation gathered Jan. 9 to remember the life of evangelist Junior Hill, whose ministry among Southern Baptists spanned seven decades. Hill died Jan. 3 at age 87.

During the funeral at Westmeade Baptist Church in Decatur, pastor Justin McAlpin read a letter from Jim Henry, longtime Orlando, Florida, pastor and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Henry wrote that he and Hill had made a covenant that the one left behind would preach the funeral service of the one who went first.

But as Henry had already committed to preach another service on the same day as Hill's, he sent a message to be read.

In it, Henry told stories of the beloved evangelist and how God had used his years of sharing the gospel.

"We watched as (Hill's) ministry found favor with God and man and his Spirit-anointed preaching led to the conversion of thousands," Henry wrote, noting that his "heart and prayers" were with the family as they honored "this warrior for our Lord Jesus."

More than 1,800 revivals

During his years of ministry, Hill conducted more than 1,800 revivals — from Sunday-to-Sunday meetings for many years, adding "Harvest Days" in subsequent years — and was a sought-after speaker for pastors conferences, state conventions and evangelism meetings across the country. He also spoke in various camp meetings, seminary and college settings and engaged in numerous overseas campaigns.

In 1989, he was elected as the SBC's first vice president at the convention's annual meeting in Las Vegas. The first of his many messages at the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference was in 1981 in Los Angeles.

In his 2005 autobiography, "They Call Him Junior," Hill noted that the "most delightful joy of life on the road is the overwhelming honor of seeing so many precious souls come to faith in Christ."



Photo by Neisha Roberts/The Alabama Baptist
Evangelist Junior Hill was a popular speaker at a variety of Alabama Baptist events such as the 2017 Senior Adult Evangelism Conference (shown here) at FBC Birmingham.

Yet, he never tallied the number of professions of faith during his 68-plus years of ministry, writing, "Only the dear Lord in Heaven knows those facts and I am perfectly content to await His final report."

Hill entered full-time evangelism in 1967, after 11 years in pastorates at two churches in Hartselle, one in Mississippi and one in Birmingham.

At the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference in November 2021, Hill was honored with the inaugural Fred Wolfe Lifetime Pastoral Ministry Award, named for a longtime Mo-

bile-area pastor and former president of the SBC Pastors Conference.

In 2010, the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference first honored Hill, screening video clips by a number of Baptist leaders and giving him and his wife

Carole a five-day trip to Asheville, North Carolina, where they would meet evangelist Billy Graham at his home in nearby Montreat.

Gaining momentum

Hill's rise to SBC-wide recognition began with his preaching at the 1980 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference when he met Bailey Smith, who had been elected SBC president in June. Smith subsequently invited Hill to preach at his church in Del City, Oklahoma, and at the Baptist

General Convention of Oklahoma's evangelism conference.

The invitation to the 1981 Southern Baptist Pastors Conference was extended by Henry, then-pastor of First Baptist Church Orlando, who was the Pastors Conference president at the time and had been one of Hill's classmates at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Soon came invitations to preach to additional thousands at the Texas Baptist evangelism conference and First Baptist Church Dallas followed in the mid-1980s by the annual evangelism conference of First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida.

From the outset, Hill promised never to preach about money and never to solicit funding from any church member after a revival.

Called to evangelism

Even before his first sermon in April 1955, Hill had sensed a call to evangelism since coming to faith in Christ a year earlier.

Nearly 19 years old and the youngest of five children, he set forth 18 points "with a pitiful absence of biblical content," as he described it.

Hill, whose given name was William Junior Hill, went on to write 20 books largely of anecdotes and lessons from his ministry. (Art Toalston for Baptist Press with The Alabama Baptist contributing)

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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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.



Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

 jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

 @RashionalThts

A new way to more clearly highlight where God is working

My friend shared how she prefers news articles and other informational pieces to tell her quickly what she needs to know. She's not willing to invest much time to read nor do the work to understand.

"Get to the point without a lot of fluff, and show me in a visual if you can, that's even better," she said, noting she really likes when the source even tells her how to think about the situation.

My friend's words intrigued me. I'm not sure how widespread the concept of being spoon fed at the level she described is, but I'm confident of the decreasing attention span in general.

Watching trends in newspaper page layouts from what once included long, detailed articles to much shorter pieces with lots of images provides one example.

Many of us lead busy lives, like my friend who is in her 40s, and it certainly is tempting to only skim headlines, scroll social media and listen to sound bites.

That's one reason we work hard to ensure our headlines are clear, fact-based and free of exaggerated claims. If you only have time to skim, then we want you to know as much as possible — even from those few words.

In fact, we encourage those whose schedules don't allow them to officially read The Alabama Baptist to at the very least flip through the paper merely reading the headlines. Another option is to scroll through our brief Highlights email newsletter, which only takes a few seconds.

Aside from debating how we all get our news and to what level we should engage, a concern on my heart is the number of people missing the opportunity to see

how God is working through His people. A simple perusing of the stories shared by TAB provides an easy way to find Him.

It does require reading beyond the headlines, however.

One of our loyal readers suggested we showcase more blatantly the God moment in our stories. People are hungry for those kinds of glimpses, he said, but they are likely reading right over the very thing they desperately need.

As we've thought through his suggestion, we've landed with a starting point I hope you will help us develop. It's the launch

of a new column — "I See Jesus: Where God is Working, Christ is Shining and the Holy Spirit is Moving" — and it's coming soon.

Join us in the effort

We'll work to highlight these moments in the stories we are covering if you'll share the God moments you see happening all around you on any given day.

A quick note in the mail, an email or a phone call all work as ways to share, and don't worry about needing to write it a certain way. We'll take care of polishing the final version; we only need you to be willing to testify.

Staff updates at The Alabama Baptist

With the new year came a few changes regarding staffing at The Alabama Baptist and we wanted to keep you in the loop.

Carrie Brown McWhorter has shifted from content editor to special projects editor. She served in the content editor role full time for five years and filled a variety of part-time and correspondent-type positions for more than 20 years prior to that.

While Carrie is transitioning back to a part-time role, we are thrilled you'll still feel her presence on the pages and in the digital platforms of The Alabama Baptist.

Dianna Cagle continues full time with TAB but is now special assistant to the editor. She previously served as production manager of the print edition. While her new role will be more varied from day to day, she also will cover stories and help with production

efforts from time to time.

And not a change, but just a note that Jan. 1 marked my 5th anniversary as editor-in-chief and my 28th anniversary overall with TAB. Now to head toward that 30-year mark and beyond. I'm excited to see what God is going to do these next few years.

Thank you for caring so well for our staff. We love and appreciate you.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Hand warmers lead Birmingham attorney to new ministry

By **Eddie Vines**

The Mission e-newsletter

Since I have been writing The Mission newsletter, I have had the opportunity to meet and interview numerous inspiring Christ-followers who are reaching the lost in unique and innovative ways.

I have been richly blessed by them, but there are two types of ministries that touch my heart in a special way; those that are conducted by volunteer laypersons and those that arise simply and organically as the Spirit points up a need.

In this installment, we have both of these elements.

Along with a focus on ministry

efforts, I am involved in mediation as part of my profession.

A while back, during a lull in a court mediation, I began telling one of the other lawyers about the small ministry I lead that operates an orphanage in India.

After listening intently, he told me he also started a ministry to serve the homeless population of nearby Birmingham.

This lawyer's name is Steve Shaw, and he has been practicing law in downtown Birmingham for many years.

Steve shared with me that he has long encountered homeless people as he walked from his car to his office and that one particular winter,

as it became bitterly cold, he felt himself becoming disturbed by the thought of these unfortunate people sleeping outdoors with little means of keeping warm.

As he pondered, it occurred to him to check into the possibility of providing them with hand warmers.

After looking around a local sporting goods store, he bought a few that looked like oversized tea bags but became comfortably warm after a vigorous shake.

He decided to start his new missions adventure at one of Birmingham's urban parks. In almost no time at all, he had given them all out.

After doing this a few times, there was an occasion when he got in his car to leave and heard what he described as an "inner voice," telling him very clearly to get back out and have prayer with those poor souls.

He tells with a bit of emotion how he began to pray and suddenly felt someone on his left gently take his hand, and then someone on his right did the same.

While Steve has enjoyed serving in various roles in his local church over the years, he relates that he has received a special blessing from this ministry that involves such personal interaction.

He has also enjoyed getting family members and church friends involved and seeing the joy they experience as they serve "the least of these."

Due to the number of homeless people in the area, Steve began steadily increasing the number of warmers he was distributing.

Inspired by Steve's efforts, a local hardware store has begun selling him the warmers at a discount, and the store owner has also experienced the joy of making a real difference in the name of the Lord.

Others joining in

Over just a few years, Steve has increased the number he gives out each winter to 1,500, and in addition to the small hand warmers he began with, he now also provides larger ones that have the capability of heating the inside of a sleeping bag for 18 hours.

He and his friends sometimes also take coffee and biscuits to distribute along with the warmers.

Steve hasn't incorporated the ministry he calls Warming Hands, Warming Hearts and raises no funds.

Likewise, Warming Hands, Warming Hearts involves no meetings, committees or red tape.

Many sincere believers sit on the sidelines as the Great Commission goes forth because they don't have specialized training or an organization to operate under.

Steve's ministry is a poignant reminder that needs are all around us and that they can often be met in simple and uncomplicated ways.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article first appeared in the The Mission e-newsletter and is reprinted with permission. Learn more about the newsletter and its author Eddie Vines at eddievines.com.

Letters to the Editor

Our voting on candidates is an issue that is very important for America, and we will be voting for primary, national and local elections again soon.

Herein lies multitudes of problems and difficulties:

► Should The Alabama Baptist publish information about the candidates and the issues?

► Are there tax laws that will adversely affect TAB and the Church?

► Will articles about voting of-fend our readers?

► How can people come to know how to vote?

► Where can we find reliable information on the offices and issues that will be on the ballots?

► Can we as individuals put aside our differences and let the wisdom of God help us make good choices?

► How much time and effort will be needed to encourage the population to put time and effort into becoming informed?

Jack Collier
Birmingham

EDITOR'S NOTE — Thank you, Jack, for asking these questions. We invite additional responses.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

COLOSSIANS 3:17

My challenge to you is that we demonstrate joy in all that we do in this coming year. ... What joy it is to know God is in control. ... God did not make our joy dependent on our circumstances or out of our reach. ... It is a result of our relationship with Him. ... We must choose joy and we must choose joy daily.

Connie Dixon

National WMU president

“We lost a lot of possessions, but we have the most important things. Each other and our faith,” said **Erik Naylor**, newly installed pastor of Lahaina Baptist Church, who had moved his family to Maui from Arizona only a few months prior to the devastating fire. He lost his home and had to flee with his wife and five children.

“Ministry offers us daily opportunities to choose the wrong refuge. If we want to stay in it, brothers, we need to continually resituate our refuge. That’s what Psalm 2 does,” said **Matt Mason**, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham.

“We speak into our culture through our vote, and Christians must engage in this civic responsibility. The phrase, ‘vote your values,’ may be trite, but it is, nonetheless, true,” said Alabama Secretary of State **Wes Allen**.

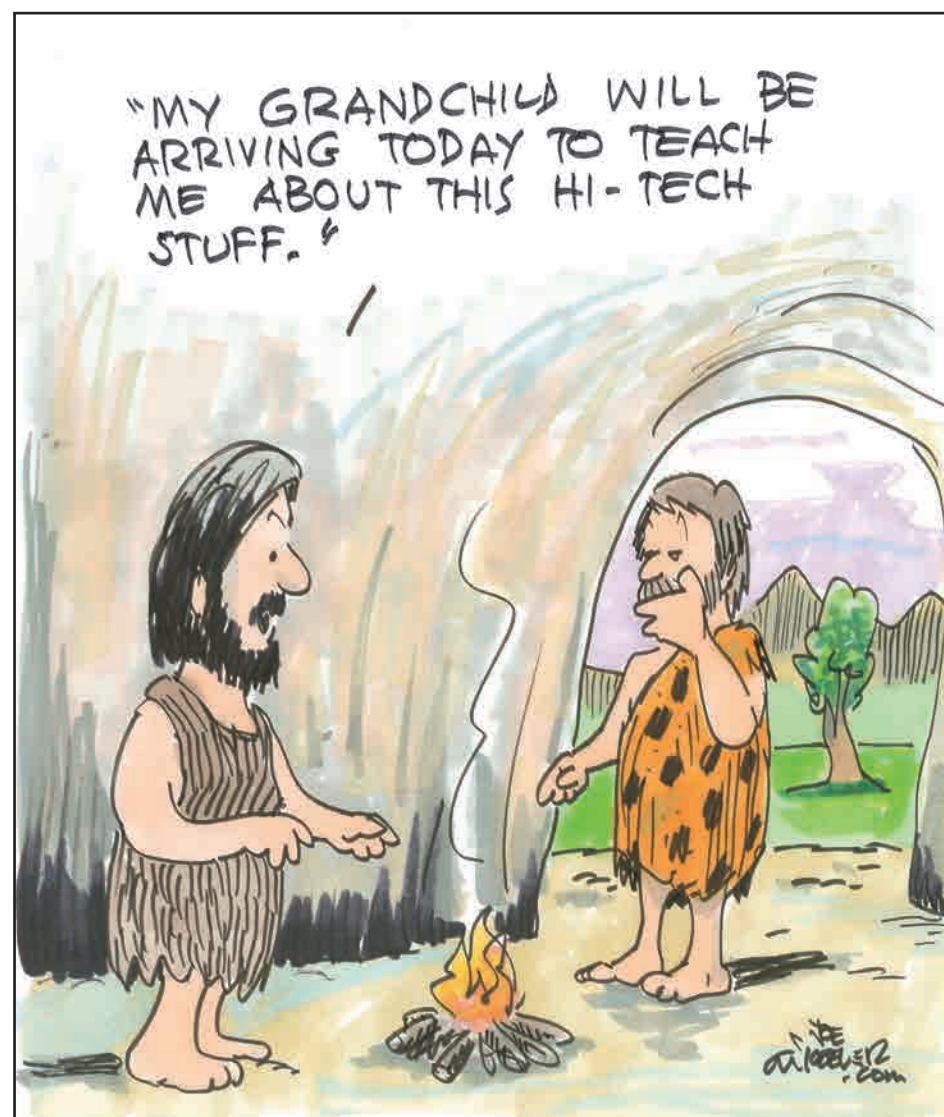
“Many myths exist regarding aging. Some of these include thoughts like the elderly cannot learn new things, all elderly get dementia, the elderly should take it easy or the elderly should not drive. These ideas as general statements and assumptions across the board could not be further from the truth,” said **Kelly Arant**, a registered play therapist and clinical director for Pathways Professional Counseling, a nonprofit ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.

“[God’s] ways are mysterious. We cannot figure Him out. We can’t base our faith on a satisfactory answer to the ‘Why?’ When you base your faith on getting a good answer for your ‘Why did this happen?’ your faith is going to be shipwrecked,” said actress **Nan Gurley**, who starred as Corrie ten Boom in the play-turned-film, “The Hiding Place,” based on the gut-wrenching 1971 book by Corrie ten Boom about her family’s experience hiding Jews during World War II.

With her finger wagging, an **African villager** asked an International Mission Board missionary who visited her community years ago, “What took you so long to come tell us about this man you call Jesus? Why haven’t you come before now

to tell us about this God who really loves us? We are very angry that you were slow to come!”

“Jesus taught us that He is the Light of the World in John 8, but [in the Sermon on the Mount] He also said we are lights in the world,” **Tim Dowdy**, vice president of evangelism for the North American Mission Board, told pastors during a recent workshop in Birmingham. “God gives us family and friends and connections so that we can share His love and plan for them. Evangelism is not something we do for a season or a day. ... It must always be in process. We have programs, and these are good, but it doesn’t matter which program we use. We select what works for us, and then we must do it intentionally.”



In case you missed these nuggets

Excerpts from the Jan. 18 edition of The Baptist Paper:

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday will forever hold a different meaning in our household. It is a reminder that every life has value, even an autistic child’s. Mason — who was born as a micropremie weighing 1 lb. 14 oz. at 24 weeks and survived — is a living, walking testimony of God’s faithfulness and goodness. Those who have walked this journey with us still call him “Miraculous Mason” or our miracle baby, and he truly is.

Lauren Grim, designer
The Alabama Baptist

Personal goals for 2024: Speak a good word about God to somebody every day and worry less, trust God more.

Chuck Lawless
chucklawless.com

Former Alabama lineman **Rich Wingo** recently shared about football and his faith journey at a Man Up event at First Baptist Church Anderson, a small town in the Muscle Shoals area.

He challenged the men present to give their all to getting to know Christ — that’s the only place hope can be found, he said.

Pastor Heath Harrelson said, “This is bigger than FBC Anderson — it’s about reaching men for Christ in an area that feels hopeless. We’re just trying to be obedient to what God has called us to do.”

Harrelson has known the significance of holding men’s events, but when six men in his area under the age of 30 committed suicide within four months last year, he felt a heightened sense of urgency and is already planning a follow-up event.

Read more at tbponline.org.

3 stories you should know



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

David Haynes, pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Jacksonville, leads a prayer commissioning the board and staff of Hope Family Services Sav-A-Life location adjacent to the church, which hosted a grand opening and time of fellowship after the Jan. 14 service. In early 2023, the church bought the building, which was built in 1900 and was previously a grocery store. They named it Hope, not knowing the relationship with Hope Family Services would be the end result. (TAB)

Wheaton College clarifies views on pronouns

Wheaton College, a flagship evangelical school in Wheaton, Illinois, recently updated its student and employee handbooks to restrict employees' ability to designate personal pronouns and to elaborate on the school's position on trans/nonbinary students and faculty.

"The College does not permit the statement of preferred personal pronouns by employees when conducting College business, when on a platform where they are publicly identified as College employees, and/or when using the College brand in print or digital media, except when employees are required to submit such pronouns when registering for a conference or for membership in a professional organization," new language in the student handbook says. (RNS)

Univ of Mobile to host former CIA director

Former U.S. Secretary of State and CIA director Mike Pompeo will be the featured speaker at the 17th University of Mobile Leadership Banquet on April 6.

The evening will feature entertainment by students and faculty from the university's Alabama School of the Arts. The UM Leadership Banquet begins with a VIP reception at 5:15 p.m. at the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center. The banquet starts at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets and sponsorships are available now at umobile.edu/banquet or through UM's office for advancement by calling 251-442-2325.

(University of Mobile)



POMPEO

Persecuted church

Christian mother in Nigeria facing blasphemy charges; trial underway

BAUCHI STATE, Nigeria — A Christian mother of five in Nigeria has been granted bail and is safe in an undisclosed location after being charged with blasphemy.

Rhoda Jatau had been incarcerated 19 months for allegedly sharing a video on WhatsApp that the prosecution claims is a violation of Nigeria's blasphemy laws, states Alliance Defending Freedom International, which is supporting Jatau's legal defense.

The video condemned the death of Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu, a Christian student killed and set on fire by classmates at a Nigerian university for sharing her faith in May 2022.

Since being imprisoned, Jatau had been denied bail numerous times and had not been al-

lowed to communicate. ADF International says Jatau received only sporadic access to counsel and to family members while in court.



Photo courtesy of ADF International

Her trial resumed Dec. 19. If convicted, she could be sentenced to as much as five years in prison.

Nigeria ranks No. 6 on Open Doors' list of the top 50 places in the world where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

Latest World Watch List released; North Korea remains on top

BRIDGEVILLE, Pennsylvania — North Korea remains atop the list of countries where

persecution of Christians is highest, according to Open Doors, which released its 2024 World Watch List on Jan. 17. The annual report highlights the top 50 countries where Christians are most at risk for living out their faith.

North Korea has been listed No. 1 in 22 of the last 23 years (since the 2002 list).

In 2022, Afghanistan jumped into the top spot, but is currently No. 10 on the list.

Others in the top 10 include Somalia (2), Libya (3), Eritrea (4), Yemen (5), Nigeria (6), Pakistan (7), Sudan (8) and Iran (9).

"More than 365 million Christians face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith," the organization noted. To read more about the report, see next week's edition (Feb. 1) of The Baptist Paper.

For more information, go to opendoors.org.

INVEST, INFLUENCE, IMPACT, INSPIRE

Crimson Tide chaplain Castille reflects on faith, sports and supporting future generations

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

From the age of 7, Jeremiah Castille had a vision of one day playing professional football, following in the footsteps of those players he watched in recaps of NFL games. Back then, however, he had no idea how God would end up using this vision.

Most of Castille's life has revolved around football, but his faith has been a steady guide on the journey. The former University of Alabama football player, NFL player and current chaplain for the University of Alabama football team is an associate pastor of Covenant Heirs International Church in Birmingham. He is also a motivational speaker who focuses on mentoring the next generation, strengthening marriages and teaching about intentional grandparenting. He and his wife, Jean, founded the nonprofit Jeremiah Castille Foundation and based it on Isaiah 61:1-4.

Early years

A native of Phenix City, Castille started watching "The Bear Bryant Show" in middle school. On his way to and from elementary school, Castille had walked by the home of Woodrow Lowe, an Alabama linebacker who was part of the national championship team in 1973. Whenever Bryant would mention Lowe's name, Castille thought, "I know him. That's where I'm going to play football — at Alabama."

However, Castille had to overcome a lot of obstacles. His mother had a severe drinking problem, and his dad was a maintenance worker and couldn't afford to send Castille

to college. Castille wanted to finish college in order to have the resources to help her.

"I really started pursuing it — that one day I would see my mother sober. That was the passion that I had. During that time, I came to the Lord — at 13. My relationship with the Lord at that time is what gave me the vision, the strength, the love, the wisdom to navigate my middle and high school years," Castille said.

Getting a scholarship and his newfound faith both kept him disciplined and off the streets. He lettered in track, basketball and football and worked hard on academics.

Meanwhile, God was setting up the opportunity from the college's end. Both Billy Jackson and Lowe had played at Central High School in Phenix City, as did two others who were on Alabama's basketball team.

"So the University had four guys right there out of Phenix City who had done well," Castille said. "I was undersized. I was 5 feet, 6 inches, 155 pounds. Not a lot of colleges were really interested. Auburn told me I was too small.

"But Coach Bryant gave me an opportunity and offered me a scholarship."

Castille started at Alabama in 1979, played all four years, was named a Kodak All-American his senior year and was MVP in the 1982 Liberty Bowl, Bryant's last game. He went on to play for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Denver Broncos where he played in the 1987 and 1988 Super Bowls.

However, it was those college years that deeply affected his life.



Photo courtesy of Jeremiah Castille
Jeremiah Castille celebrates with Tide quarterback Jalen Milroe following Alabama's win over Georgia in the 2023 SEC Championship game.

"The mission of the Jeremiah Castille Foundation is to invest, influence, impact and inspire the next generation. Those four words are the four things Coach Bryant did for me. He invested in me. He influenced me. He impacted me, and he inspired me to be the best person God created me to be," Castille said.

Everyone either loved or hated Bryant. Those who weren't willing to receive the passion Bryant had to be the best hated him. Those who knew that his goal was to help the development of these young men loved him.

'Spirit of excellence'

Castille loved him.

"Everything you did, you had to have a spirit of excellence — everything. Classroom, academics, athletics, socially — every area. He really

was training us to be true gentlemen and to live life at the highest level."

For the past 22 years, Castille has been the chaplain for Alabama's football team. One of his highlights included baptizing Heisman winner Bryce Young.

But the Bible study times that Castille facilitates during offseasons are his favorite parts of this ministry.

"It's where you really dig down, where you can really get to know the players. When the players come back, we still have relationships," he said.

Intentionality

Castille related one example of a now-professional player, Anfernee Jennings, who texted him some of his Bible study notes from years earlier when he was still at Alabama.

The intentionality that he emphasizes in his teaching about marriage, parenting and grandparenting is also a result of Bryant's example. Bryant always encouraged the players to ask themselves after grueling two-a-day practices in the August heat if they had given 110% and if they hadn't, to work harder the next practice. Castille likewise encourages giving 110% to one's marriage, parenting and grandparenting.

"Like Coach Bryant said and taught us, 'Men, you need to have a plan.' It's taught me that success doesn't fall out of the sky; you're not going to have a lucky day. You have to have a plan, and you have to execute that plan.

"That was a Coach Bryant thing that I still live by today. That's how I approach being a father, being a husband, being a chaplain. That's the way we go about developing our relationships with players."

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **E. Melton “Mel” Deason**, a retired pastor who served a number of churches in Alabama, died Jan. 8. He was 88.

Deason grew up attending Ensley Baptist Church and graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in 1957. He earned a master of divinity and doctor of ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.



DEASON

During his 65 years of ministry, Deason served churches in several Alabama cities — Reform, Gulf Shores, LaFayette and Selma. He also served in Kentucky and in Florida, where he retired from East Hill Baptist Church in Pensacola after serving 17 years.

After his retirement, Deason returned to Birmingham and served as interim pastor for several churches, including Central Park Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Vincent and Westwood Baptist Church in Forestdale. He also volunteered for nonprofit and religious organizations.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 65 years, Elizabeth. He is survived by his daughters, Julie and Catherine; two grandsons; and one great-grandson.

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Jonathon “Jonworth” Locke** is the new student minister at **Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville**. He serves at the church in a bivocational role and has previous experience in student ministry. Locke has a bachelor’s degree in athletic training from the University of West Alabama, Livingston, and a doctor of physical therapy from Alabama State University, Montgomery. He and his wife, Taylor, have been married for two years. James Jackson is pastor.

BUTLER ASSOCIATION

► **Ronnie Boulware** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Georgiana**. He grew up in Alexander City and is a graduate of Samford University and Southern Seminary. Boulware served at Valley Baptist Church; Pleasant Mount Baptist Church, Remlap; Central Baptist Church, Talladega; Hillsboro Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville; Antioch East Baptist Church, Greenville; Wayside Baptist Church, Alexander City;



BOULWARE

and Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Prattville. He also served as a State Board of Missions trustee and in various positions at several associations. He and his wife, Kim, have three children and one grandson.

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Ryan Edwards** is the new family pastor of **Iron City Baptist Church, Anniston**. Edwards holds a bachelor’s degree in ministry studies from the Baptist University of Florida and a master’s of divinity degree in Christian ministry from Southeastern Seminary. He spent the last six years serving as a student pastor in Georgia. He and his wife, Gracen, have one child.

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **Philip McDuffie** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Jackson**. He holds a bachelor’s degree in communications from the University of Mobile and a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Seminary. McDuffie served as associate pastor of college ministry of FBC Durham, North Carolina, and as associate pastor of youth of FBC Longville, Louisiana. He and his wife, Kahlie, have two children.



McDUFFIE

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Dwight Wilson** is the new pastor of **Spring Valley Baptist Church, Tuscumbia**. Following his undergraduate work at the University of North Alabama, Wilson received two master’s degrees from Southwestern Seminary. He was previously pastor of several churches in Marion and Colbert counties, and served with the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries from 1998 to 2017. He counsels on Tuesdays at the Colbert-Lauderdale Association office. Wilson and his wife, Virginia, have three children; their middle child passed away in 2021. They have four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



WILSON

► **Todd Wilson** is the new pastor of **Central Baptist Church, Florence**. He previously served as youth pastor of Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, and has a bachelor’s degree from the University of North Alabama.

Wilson was licensed to preach while attending FBC Rogersville. In 2017, as the bivocational youth pastor of Forest Hills Baptist Church, Florence, he was ordained. Wilson and his wife, Amelia, have four children.



WILSON

DALE ASSOCIATION

► **Chad Manion** is the new pastor of **Peniel Baptist Church, Skipperville**, where he had been serving as interim pastor. A native of Gordo, Manion earned his master of divinity degree at Southeastern Seminary. He previously served as pastor of Salem Baptist Church, Brundidge, and interim pastor of Rocky Head Baptist Church, Ariton. Currently, Manion works in environmental services at Dale Medical Surgery Center. He and his wife, Melissa, have four children.



MANION

MUD CREEK ASSOCIATION

► **Lee Marsingill** is the new pastor of **Calvary Baptist Church, Bessemer**. He was licensed and ordained at Calvary and has a bachelor’s of biblical theology from Liberty University. He and his wife, Diana, have one child.



MARSINGILL

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Mitchell Herron** is the new youth pastor of **Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery**. Herron earned a master of divinity degree with spiritual formation concentration, as well as a certificate of spiritual direction from Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, Texas. He is married to Rachel. Tommy Fike is pastor.

RANDOLPH ASSOCIATION

► **Keith Taylor** is the new senior pastor of **First Baptist Church Wedowee**. A native of Ruston, Louisiana, Taylor is a retired U.S. Marine with 20 years of service as a pilot, air officer and staff officer. He holds a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Louisiana Tech University and a master of divinity, master of theology and doctor of philosophy degree in biblical exposition from New Orleans Seminary. Taylor previously served as executive and family pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. He and his wife, Keri, have four children.



TAYLOR

SULPHUR SPRINGS ASSOCIATION

► **Jay Robinson** is the new worship pastor of **New Temple Baptist Church, Dora**. Robinson accepted the call to ministry at Argo Baptist Church, Cordova, in 1987, and became music and youth pastor at Parrish FBC in 1995. Six years ago his position changed to music and administra-

NEWS

tion pastor, a role he kept until his July 2023 retirement. Robinson recently became a special education resource teacher and is working on a master's degree in special education from UAB, where he previously earned his bachelor's degree. Robinson and his wife, Susan, have four boys and two granddaughters. J.J. Creel is pastor.



ROBINSON

SALEM-TROY ASSOCIATION

► **Kenneth Baggett**, serving for more than 12 years as director of missions for **Salem-Troy Association**, retired Dec. 31. "I've appreciated the opportunity to serve and look forward to what God has in store next," Baggett said. A reception was held in his honor Jan. 7 at the association office. Ordained at Goshen Baptist Church, Baggett served as pastor of Ansley Baptist Church, Troy; Springfield Baptist, Brundidge; Salem Seminole Baptist Church, Donalsonville, Georgia; Highland Home Baptist Church; and Siloam Baptist Church in Crenshaw County.

He and his wife, Becky, have one son and four grandchildren.

SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Raymond Blevins** recently celebrated 30 years as pastor of **Flat Rock Baptist Church**. Blevins was called to ministry shortly after God saved him at age 26. He served for a few years at Five Points Baptist Church, Ider, and then became pastor of Flat Rock Baptist. Blevins and his wife, Marie, of 55 years have two children and two grandchildren.



BLEVINS

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Terry Sutton** retired Dec. 31 after 16 years as pastor of **Montevallo First Baptist Church** and many previous years of ministry. He has been active in the Montevallo community, including serving as president of the Montevallo Rotary Club, member of the board of directors for Shelby Emergency Assistance and member of the board of directors for the Parnell Library Foundation. He received the Civic Leader of the Year Award, Rotarian of the Year Award and the Scholarship Award for Leadership Shelby County.



SUTTON

He recently was nominated for "Shelby County Citizen of the Year."

Sutton and his wife, Mary, were honored by the church with a Dec. 17 reception. He is available for pulpit supply and interim pastoral ministry.

SIPSEY ASSOCIATION

► **Gary Bonner**, director of missions for **Sipsey Association** since 2015, retired Dec. 31. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Livingston University (now University of West Alabama). A native of Walker County, Bonner spent most of his 50 years of ministry in Tuscaloosa County and as a teacher at Tuscaloosa County High School for 17 years and assistant principal and principal of Northport Junior High School for three years. He served as pastor of Buhl Baptist Church (19 years); New Hope Baptist Church, Romulus; Hebron Baptist Church, Carrollton; Shepherd Baptist Church, Fayette; Bethany Baptist Church, Coker; and Indian Lake Baptist Church, Northport.



BONNER

From 2001 to 2012, Bonner served as associate director of missions for Tuscaloosa County Association and coordinated the association's Disaster Relief work. He also helped Sipsey Association's DR team obtain its first feeding unit. He and his wife of 54 years, Nancy, have two children and six grandchildren. Bonner is available for supply preaching.

SOUTHEAST ASSOCIATION

► **Chandler Smith** is the new associate pastor of worship for **Cloverdale Baptist Church, Dothan**. He holds a bachelor's degree in instrumental music education as well as a master of music in worship studies from William Carey University. Smith is currently pursuing a doctor of musical arts degree in worship and hymnology from New Orleans Seminary and has worship ministry experience



SMITH

in leading worship and in audio/visual production and media. Alan Bryan is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **David Grier** is the new pastor of **Orr Street Baptist Church, Alexander City**. He graduated from Florida Baptist Theological College (now Baptist University of Florida) and is a teacher at Maplesville High School. Grier and his wife, Daphne, have two daughters.



GRIER

► **Jeffrey McWhorter** is the new pastor of **Horseshoe Bend Baptist Church, Dadeville**. He previously served at Weogufka First Baptist Church and as associate pastor of New Providence Baptist Church and River Road Baptist Church, Alexander City; and youth pastor of New Concord Baptist Church, Dadeville. He attended Southeastern Bible College, Birmingham, and is currently enrolled in Ministry Training



MCWHORTER

Institute classes through Samford University. He and his wife, Gabrielle, have two sons and two daughters.

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **David Williams** is interim minister of music at **Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**. A graduate of the University of Alabama, Williams spent 36 years as music director at Moundville Baptist Church, and two years as interim music director at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. He and his wife, Libby, have one son. Herb Thomas is pastor.



WILLIAMS

Boland honored with Trail Life's Freedom Award

Jackson Boland was recently honored with Trail Life USA's Freedom Award, according to Caleb Davis, troopmaster for Trail Life USA Troop AL-242, which is chartered by CrossPoint Church in Trussville.

Boland received this highest recognition offered by Trail Life after nine years in the organization. The award is the culmination of all the effort put forth by living out the Trailman's Oath to Walk Worthily (Col. 1:10), Davis explained.

The Freedom Award candidate will have demonstrated mastery of a significant skill set including 15 required and 10 elective Trail badges, performed 20 hours of service each year of his involvement and proven himself as a leader among his peers.

Other projects include a focus on faith-building and servant leadership.

Jackson's parents Jeff and Ginger Boland (shown here with Jackson) took interest in Trail



Photo courtesy of Caleb Davis

Life soon after it was launched in 2013. (TAB)

Reginald Calvert



Charles Carter



Jamie Dew



Rob Jackson



Matt Queen



Herb Reavis



FREE ADMISSION 2024 State Evangelism Conference

January 28-29

Sunday-5:30 pm, Monday-8:30 am
First Baptist Church, Pelham

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evangelizeAL.org/sec

MATT QUEEN will be teaching a session on "Getting to the Gospel" (in our conversations).

FREE MONDAY LUNCHEON with a keynote message by Herb Reavis.



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



Can't make it in person?
Sunday evening and Monday morning sessions will be livestreamed at live.alsbom.org.

Christian mentoring influences the next generation

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

The Bible contains many examples of older people mentoring younger generations, helping them become stronger disciples. Every follower of God is called upon to mentor or disciple others. As we invest time and energy in the lives of others, we grow spiritually.

Moses, the great Israelite leader of the Exodus, was mentored by Jethro, his father-in-law. Moses married one of Jethro's daughters and spent the next 40 years tending the flocks of Jethro. During this time, they had time to learn from each other.

Later in Moses' life, we see that because he had disobeyed God, he was not allowed to go into the Promised Land. God spoke to Moses and told him to appoint Joshua as leader over the community who would lead the people in times of war and peace. Moses had mentored Joshua from his earliest days in the wilderness.

The sheep needed a shepherd, and Joshua was ap-

pointed to be the leader.

In 1 Samuel we see that Eli, a judge and high priest, had failed with his own two sons, but he had succeeded with the boy Samuel. They spent hours together talking about the ways of the Lord. While sleeping one night, Samuel had a vision from the Lord. Eli demanded he be told the vision and Samuel revealed what the Lord said.

Paul and Barnabas

Saul — later Paul — was feared by Christians. In the Book of Acts after Paul became a believer, Barnabas became his mentor and vouched for him before the Church.

Also in the New Testament, we see Timothy receiving guidance from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. He accompanied Paul on a missionary journey where he would learn from Paul in daily living.

You can probably think of examples in your own life or community — those who mentored you.

Stephen, a successful businessman in Tennessee,

"It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this."

1 Kings 3:10

Scriptures that support mentoring

- ▶ Proverbs 27:17 ▶ Proverbs 22:6 ▶ Psalm 71:18
- ▶ Titus 2:3–5 ▶ 2 Timothy 2:2 ▶ Proverbs 9:9
- ▶ 1 Peter 5:1–5 ▶ Psalm 145:4 ▶ Proverbs 13:20

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

1 Corinthians 11:1

was grateful to God for his profitable business, so in order to "pay it forward" and share his knowledge, he felt led to mentor a small group of students at a local Christian college.

One weekend each month, Stephen and his wife volunteer their time to meet with these students.

He also provides scholarship assistance to several students in this department. Attendance is not mandatory; they attend on a non-obligatory basis.

Being blessed

Together, they discuss how to be successful in business while following God's rules for how to live and how to make a living.

The mentor is blessed in many ways.

We all have a desire to be needed, and when a young person listens to you, it enables this yearning to be fulfilled.

The mentor does not make decisions for the mentee or learner. Instead, he or she should ask what the Lord is telling the person about this and if he or she has prayed about this decision. God needs to be the one to convince the mentee, not the mentor.

Young people who are mentored should be taught to rely on Romans 8:31 — "If God is for us, who can be against us?" — and to prayerfully ask the Lord for wisdom.

In 1 Kings 3:10, we see that God delights to give wisdom to those who truly seek it.

A group being mentored forms strong bonds with one another. They stay in touch in their professional lives.

Pass it on

One of the greatest aspects as they grow into career-minded adults is that they become mentors to other young people, and they share what they've learned and what they would do differently if they had a second chance.

According to McCarthy Mentoring, 89% of those mentored go on to also mentor, which contributes to a culture of learning.

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Finding the 'sweet spot' best option in leadership transitions

By Jeff Iorg
Gateway Seminary

The pendulum effect — moving from one extreme to another, rather than correcting out-of-balance practices with healthier options — is a common mistake made during leadership transitions. The opposite extreme, however, can also be problematic.

When leadership change happens, find the sweet spot of needed cor-

rection by choosing new people and processes who offset shortcomings and fix resulting organizational flaws — without swinging the pendulum too far in the opposite direction.

Leadership change and organizational adjustments are important inflection points which should lead to a more balanced and healthier organizational function.

(Excerpt from the blog post at thegateway.press)

Someone You Should Know

CHARLIE JAMES

By Leigh Pritchett

The Alabama Baptist

Charles “Charlie” James, 84, of Muscle Shoals has been in ministry 53 years. Forty-eight years were spent as a pastor. In that time, he served six churches, which included twice at one church for a total of 21 years (for which he received a resolution from the Alabama Senate). A Nabisco salesman for 15 years while a bivocational pastor, James also devoted six years to the Army National Guard. He received an honorary doctorate from Biblical Study Theological Seminary, Bible College and Institute in Georgia. Currently, he is a volunteer staff member at Valley Grove Baptist Church in Tuscumbia, where he has been named pastor emeritus.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: I have a great burden for many senior adults who aren’t committed to Christ and the Church.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life?

A: Men from my youth years — the late Pastor C.D. “Charlie” Thorn influenced me for the love of the Bible. He, along with two now-deceased deacons — Cecil Robinson and Elton Amos — influenced me to the Christian faith. The church — North Russellville Baptist Church in Franklin Baptist Association also.

Q: Tell about a “turning point” in your life and how God was involved.

A: My turning point: April 1962. I got saved from a 10-year church

Do you know a person who should be featured as Someone You Should Know?

Send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured as Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209, or to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

MINISTRY:
Retired pastor

CHURCH NAME:
Valley Grove Baptist Church, Tuscumbia, in Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Assoc.



LIFE VERSE: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8).

member to a born-again, new creation in Jesus Christ at age 23. A preacher and pastor from age 31 1/2 years, now 84 years old.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

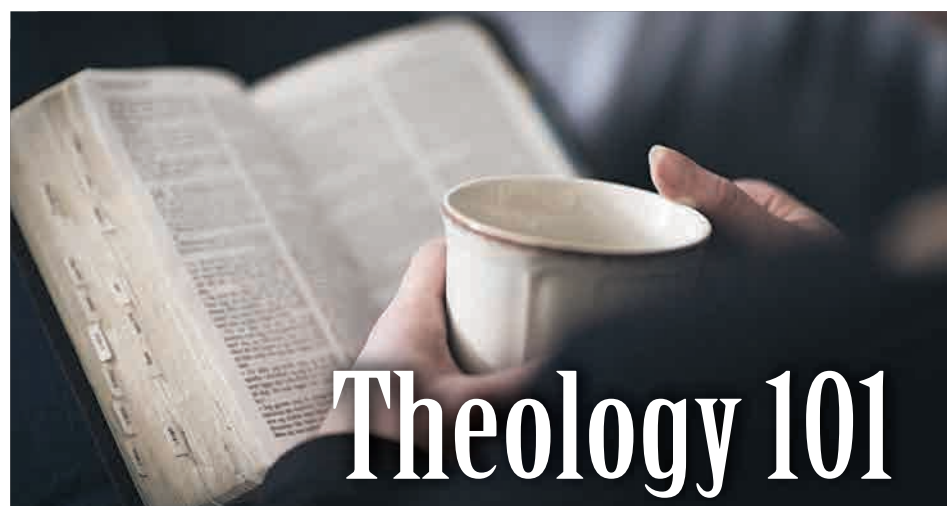
A: The Christian faith is and has been a great and wonderful journey for me for 61-plus years. Stay faithful! Finish well!

Q: If there was one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: It really is simple: Teach and preach for children to understand it. Forty-five years ago, 10-year-old, precious Cindy from Hampton Heights Baptist Church in Tuscumbia thanked me for preaching for her to understand.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?

A: The song “In Christ Alone.” He is all sufficient for earth life and eternal life. My favorite two books, “The Grace Awakening” and “Simple Faith,” by Charles Swindoll. I think both are great books for every Christian and for the seeker.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

A New Covenant

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

The Alabama Baptist

The beginning of a new year suggests the idea of newness — resolutions, beginnings, expectations, achievements and such.

We know our Bibles have two major sections, the second of which is the New Testament. When we recognize that the term “testament” is another way of translating into English the Greek word that also translates as the term “covenant.”

Thus, we might think of the second section of the Bible as being God’s new covenant, just as the first section could be termed God’s old covenant.

Promises and pledges

The Old Testament introduces God as a covenant-making God. As such, He took the initiative and determined the contents of the covenants He made. For instance, He made a covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:8–13). He also made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:18–21; 17:1–13).

Preeminently, God through Moses made a covenant between Himself and the nation of Israel (Ex. 24:3–8). God pledged in that covenant that He would be Israel’s God, and Israel would be His people.

We often think of that old covenant as a covenant of law, the terms of which were spelled out in commandments, ritual ceremonies, animal sacrifices and specification for periodic renewal of that covenant.

In the old covenant — or Old

Testament — God is revealed not only as a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God but also as a covenant-promising God. Through Jeremiah, God promised, “Behold, the days are coming ... when I will make a new covenant ... This is the covenant that I will make: I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:31, 33).

Mediator of grace

A short way of describing the new covenant is to speak of it as a covenant of grace in contrast to the old covenant of law. Chapters 7–10 of Hebrews speak to us at some length about the new covenant. Whereas Moses was the mediator of the old covenant that God gave at Sinai, Christ became the Mediator of the new covenant.

Thus, the new covenant has a better mediator and is based on better promises.

It also has a better Priest (Christ) ministering at a better altar (a heavenly one), having offered a better sacrifice (Himself) that has achieved better results (once for all remission of sins for individuals) while forming a better community (the Church).

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.



‘Strong leader’

FBC Columbiana’s Shelton named to the 2024 National Acteens panel

By **Dianna L. Cagle**
The Alabama Baptist

Sarah Elizabeth Shelton of First Baptist Church Columbiana is among three teenagers named to the 2024 National Acteens panel.

“Serving as an Acteen panelist would give me a platform to share the importance of music as a way to worship God,” Shelton said in her application.

“By writing blog posts and participating in various Acteens events, I can share how God has used music to reach the most intimate parts of my heart. Music is the purest form of praise for me.”

Shelton, age 18, was named to the panel, along with Faith Howard of Retama Park Baptist Church in Kingsville, Texas; and Gracie Stamey of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Hudson, North Carolina.

Platform duties

The young women will be part of WMU’s Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting in Indianapolis in June prior to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.

The panelists also will blog for wmu.com/students and be given leadership and speaking opportunities throughout the year.

Each will receive a grant from the WMU Foundation through the Jessica Powell Loftis Endowment for Acteens.

While Shelton gave her heart to Christ when she was in second grade, she has had three heart surgeries in her 18 years. She admits to succumbing to fear and anxiety especially over some medical issues with her heart.

“At times, (I) have allowed fear and anxiety to rule my life,” Shelton said. “They have been idols that my world revolved around, but not anymore. I still struggle with the temptations of worry occasionally because I am human, but I just give it to God, and He handles it.”

Shelton has been an

Acteen for seven years. She served as a Mission Friend and GA before that.

‘Supportive friend’

Trish Jackson, missions lifestyle strategist for Alabama WMU, said Shelton has a “contagious personality” and was raised “in a church that has a legacy of missions in Alabama.”

Jackson said Shelton is “an empathetic, honest and supportive friend as she gives God glory each day in public school.”

Shelton’s pastor, Michael Miller, also has high praise for her leadership ability.

“She is a strong leader with a creative mind, a

compassionate heart and a warm personality,” he said. “She loves God and loves people.”

Involved in her church’s student ministry, Shelton has participated in missions trips to New York, Miami

and Oklahoma City as well as two trips to Costa Rica.

She has served in a local apartment ministry, parent’s night out, fall festival, Vacation Bible School, Operation Christmas Child, caring for children

and with a migrant camp.

She has been involved in missions trips to Savannah, Georgia; Newark, New Jersey; Skowhegan, Maine; Gulfport, Mississippi and Nashville.



SHELTON

For more information about Acteens and student missions discipleship, visit wmu.com/students.

Upcoming Annie, Lottie missions offering goals set

The executive board of National Woman’s Missionary Union, which is made up of the various state WMU presidents, voted during the Jan. 6–8 board meeting to approve the upcoming missions offering goals:

— The 2024 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal will be \$205 million, a proposal

coming from the International Mission Board.

— The 2025 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goal will be \$78 million, a proposal coming from the North American Mission Board.

The 2024 AAEO goal is \$75 million and promotional efforts are already underway for the current Annie season. (The Alabama Baptist)

BM+DF
Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship



BMDF is hosting it's annual meeting
Feb. 29–March 2 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, 2017 Columbiana Road, Birmingham, AL

Healthcare workers and healthcare students are invited to a reception **March 1, 1:45–5:15 p.m.** at Samford University Global Center.

Anyone interested is welcome to attend the session on “Starting a Free Clinic in Your Church” **March 1, 7 p.m.** at Shades Mountain Baptist Church.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Volunteers needed for Making a Difference Mobile

Throughout March, outreach projects have been planned across Mobile by more than 20 churches, along with the International Ministries at the Port of Mobile and the Metro Mobile Baptist Campus Ministries.

Coordinated through the Mobile Baptist Association and undergirded by the State Board of Missions,

the effort is designed to provide a variety of practical ways for volunteers to come together to cover the

city with a gospel outreach.

Volunteers from around the state are welcome and needed, with a special need for volunteer dentists, hygienists and dental assistants on March 2 and 9.

For a complete list of projects or to register to serve, visit alsbom.org/makingadifference.



For a complete list of projects or to register to serve, visit alsbom.org/makingadifference or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Hunger Offering Sunday is Feb. 18; funds help needy in Alabama, world

God's Word is clear that we are to minister to the poor and needy as part of our Christian lifestyle. The hunger faced by the poor continues to be one of the greatest problems facing our world today.

The primary focus of the Hunger Offering — col-

lected this year on Feb. 18 — is to feed hungry people.

When a dollar is contributed to the Hunger Offering, the first 25% will be used to feed the hungry in Alabama by assisting associations and designated churches with food pan-

tries. The remaining 75% will be distributed through the Global Hunger Fund.

To order free Hunger Offering envelopes and other promotional resources for your church, contact Lynn Graham at lgraham@alsbom.org or 334-613-2383.

Get your tax questions answered

Do you have questions about IRS deadlines and forms?

Are you a pastor wondering about special tax rules for you on topics like housing allowance and dual tax status? The Tax Conference will help answer questions

about those topics and more.

Join us from 9 a.m. to noon on Feb. 8 at the State Board of Missions, Prattville; Feb. 15 at the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association; or Feb. 22 at First Baptist, Scottsboro.

The cost of the event is \$15, which includes lunch and materials.

To register, visit alsbom.org/churchtaxconferences. Questions? Call Lee Wright at 334-613-2263 or email lwright@alsbom.org.

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Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org. To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Seventh St. Baptist Church Cullman, Alabama, seeking full-time pastor at our traditional church. Services Sunday and Wednesday. Cullman is a growing town with excellent schools, parks, shopping. Resumes to: pastorsearch7thst@gmail.com. For more information on the church: seventhstbaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Silver Run Baptist Church in Seale, Alabama, located in rural Russell County, is seeking a bivocational pastor that the Lord would have to serve here. Resumes may be sent to: P.O. Box 8, Seale, AL 36875, ATTN: Kenny Harris.

WORSHIP LEADER/CHOIR DIRECTOR

East Gadsden Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational worship leader/choir director. If interested, please email at eastgadsdenbaptist@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

New Center Baptist Church, Hartselle, Alabama, seeking music minister for blended services, directing choir and coordinating volunteer musicians. Email resume to: raykballew@gmail.com or contact 256-221-6880 for more information.

STUDENT PASTOR

Maplesville Baptist Church seeks student pastor. Email Pastorb@maplesvillebc.org for job description, salary and application details.

YOUTH MINISTER

Montevallo First Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister. Please email your resume for consideration to: mfbc@bellsouth.net.

CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTER/DIRECTOR

First Baptist, Dadeville, located in the heart of Dadeville, Alabama, is seeking God's person to fill the position of children and family minister/director. Full-time job with a competitive salary. Interested individuals should contact John Wilcox at employment@fbcdadeville.com. Resumes may be sent to the same address.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

First Baptist Church of Bir-

mingham is seeking a director of children's ministries. This person should be a devoted believer, gifted in organization and leadership and most of all committed to loving children and their families. Resumes can be emailed to: cjames@fbcbbm.org or Children's Search Committee, 2209 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

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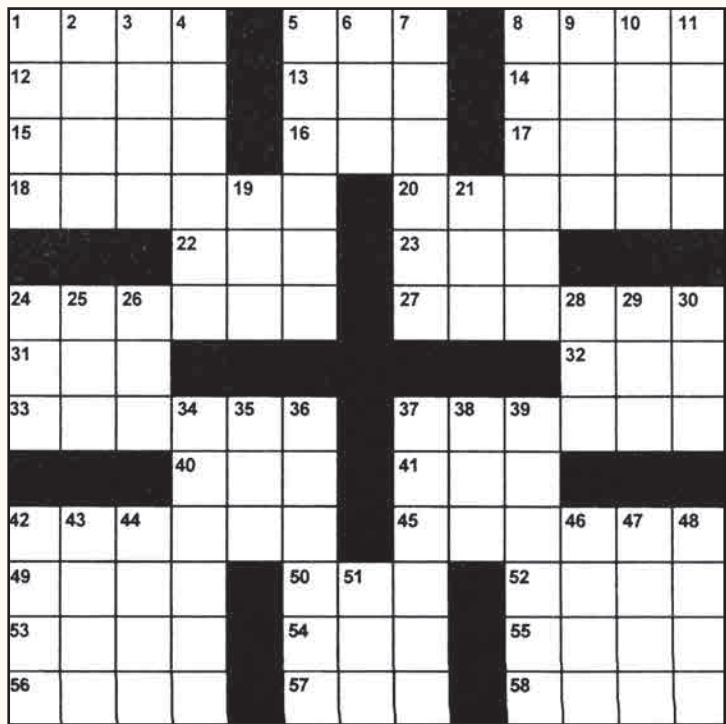
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CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

- 1. ____-a-brac.
- 5. Type of lettuce.
- 8. Canadian Indian tribe.
- 12. Sons of Benjamin ... Ehi and ____.
- 13. Mouth.
- 14. ____ avis; rarity.
- 15. Vapor. (prefix)
- 16. Prominent sea. (abbr.)
- 17. Company that tries harder.
- 18. The ____ of the righteous is only good. (Prov. 11:23)
- 20. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets ... that ____ lies. (Ezek. 13:9)
- 22. West Coast state. (abbr.)
- 23. Greek letter.
- 24. ____ of errors.
- 27. That ye might be partakers of the divine ____.
- 31. Onassis.
- 32. Uncooked.
- 33. Orthodontist's product.
- 37. Death, and mourning, and ____.
- 40. The name of the wicked shall ____.
- 41. Compass direction.
- 42. See that ye ____ not him that speaketh.
- 45. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath ____ (d) me.
- 49. Ammihud, the son of ____.
- 50. Priest's robe.
- 52. Platform.
- 53. Render therefore to all their ____.



By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- 28. Geber the son of ____ was in the country of Gilead. (1 Kings 4:19)
 - 29. His father saw him ____ and fell on his neck. (Luke 15:20)
 - 30. Poor man had nothing, save one little ____ lamb. (2 Sam. 12:3)
 - 34. Ocean trip.
 - 35. Greek goddess of the dawn.
 - 36. Cooks vegetables.
 - 37. Lift up the hands ____ and the ____ knees.
 - 38. Girl's name.
 - 39. A grassy field.
 - 42. Past tense of ride.
 - 43. Australian flightless birds.
 - 44. They shall ____ themselves, and curse their king.
 - 46. Indonesian island.
 - 47. Ye have eaten the fruit of ____.
 - 48. Employee stock ownership plan.
 - 51. Experiment room.
22. ____ Farrow.
54. Bad. (prefix)
55. Margarine.
56. This. (Spanish)
57. South by east. (abbr.)
58. A thready fragment.

DOWN

- 1. Nail with a small head.
- 2. Learning by repetition.
- 3. Belief systems. (suffix)
- 4. God made ____ among us, that the Gentiles ... should hear the gospel. (Acts 15:7)
- 5. Thy cheeks are ____ with rows of jewels. (Song of Sol. 1:10)
- 6. Mine product.
- 7. To cause dejection.
- 8. Tie.
- 9. River in India.
- 10. Ireland.
- 11. Take thine ____, eat, drink. (Luke 12:19)
- 19. Radiation measure.
- 21. ____'s ____ boy!
- 24. The fourth part of a ____ of dove's dung. (2 Kings 6:25, KJV)
- 25. Hockey name Bobby ____.
- 26. ____ Farrow.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.



Photo courtesy of John Thomas

Mike Jackson (left), associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, presents a check Jan. 12 to Jimmy Bolin (center), pastor of FBC Cottonwood, to help his church recover from a Jan. 9 tornado. John Thomas (right), SABA mission strategist, has also been on site directing Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams as they help with cleanup.

FBC Cottonwood amazed at outpouring of love and help

(continued from page 1) people come together in your time of need.”

John Thomas — SABA mission strategist who also served as the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief white hat leader in Cottonwood — was the first to arrive with blue hat Chuck Locke and a team from Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Dothan. In the hours and days that followed, they were joined by Disaster Relief teams from Judson, Geneva, Coffee and Dale Baptist associations.

ABDR crews were allowed to enter the town right away despite a lockdown order put in place by Houston County, Thomas said, noting that it speaks well of ABDR teams, their training and the way they’re known for their work in the state.

By Thursday, teams had “pretty well finished it up,”

Thomas said. They went home ahead of the possible storms Jan. 12 and planned to return Jan. 14 to assess any remaining trees and debris in the area and see if they needed to return.

Representatives from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions also brought a check to the church to provide extra resources during their time of recovery.

Bolin said the outpouring of love and help from Alabama Baptists has been amazing.

“The training that the Southern

Baptist associations have used to prepare these people for this, it’s just a blessing, and you don’t get to see it until it happens,” he said. “When it happens, it’s just overwhelming.”

Bolin said he wanted to “let everybody know that we’re going to make it — the Lord is our helper.”



Photo courtesy of John Thomas

A tornado damaged FBC Cottonwood on Jan. 9, ripping off its steeple and awnings and knocking a tree through the roof of its fellowship hall.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 28

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.

Executive Director of the Center for Christian Calling, University of Mobile



STALLED Genesis 11:1–9

God gave clear instructions for humanity to spread across the earth in order to steward His creation. Genesis 1:28 establishes God's plan, which He reiterates when Noah and his family are the lone survivors of the worldwide flood (9:1, 7).

The descendants of Noah succeeded with being fruitful and multiplying, eventually becoming the 70 people groups that came from the Shemites, Hamites and Japhethites. The family heads of these clans are listed in Genesis 10, often referred to as the Table of Nations.

United (1–4)

Genesis 11 begins with the description of a unified people — one place, one language, one goal. They are intent on following their own agenda, rather than the instructions of their Creator. Rather than focusing on bearing God's image and bringing God glory throughout His world, they choose to exalt themselves and attempt to approach God on their own terms.

The people at Shinar are united in their conspiracy. "Let us build ... a city and a tower with its top in the sky. ... Let us make a name for ourselves." Why conspire together? They are united in their rebellion against God. Rather than following God's clear instruction to fill the earth, they conspire to settle together for their own glory.

Acts 2–7 parallels Genesis in some ways. First, the people are unified, even though they speak diverse languages in Acts.

Second, they stay in one place until an outside catalyst dispersed them. Third, God is glorified through the dispersion.

Reviewed (5–7)

God reviews what humanity is doing at Shinar. Building the city and the tower were not on the agenda. As the people work together with one language and one mindset, there is no telling

how wicked their imaginings and their activities will become. Genesis 6:5 and 8:21 already record that the thoughts and intents of humanity are constantly devising wickedness. How much more wickedness would they plan in unified rebellion?

As an act of grace upon humanity, the Godhead confers and determines to confuse humanity through diverse languages. God's plan will be accomplished, and humanity will be dispersed around the globe.

Dispersed (8–9)

In the earliest Semitic language, the name Bab-El means "door to God." Evidently, the inhabitants and the builders intend to approach God or "the heavens" (in some translations "sky") on their own terms. Humanity can only come to God on His terms.

The word for "confuse" in Hebrew (balal) sounds similar to the name of the city Babel (Babylon).

Like many other Old Testament narratives, word plays are creatively incorporated into the storyline.

Linguistic evidence from the Ancient Near East seems to indicate that after the rise of Sumerian writing, other language systems developed using Sumerian forms but representing entirely new language families.

This may illustrate epigraphic evidence for a confusion of earlier language, though no archeological artifacts empirically can "prove" the activity of God.

As Bible study groups and individual Christians study this passage, they would do well to remember the following: 1. Languages are a gift from God. 2. Language study should ultimately be intended for gospel communication. 3. Jesus commissioned believers to make disciples of all the nations. 4. People from every tribe and tongue and language and nation will be among the redeemed (Rev. 5:9; 7:9).

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



YIELDED FAITH Luke 7:1–10

In desperate situations, we look to Jesus for help. (1–5)

In these verses we read about the Roman centurion who asks Jesus to heal his slave. The centurion is himself one who has authority over 80 men, and this man of authority has come to Jesus for help. The centurion "servant, who was highly valued by him" and who "was sick and about to die" (v. 2).

The centurion was a Gentile (a non-Jew) who feared Israel's God. As we learn, the Jewish elders who spoke to Jesus on his behalf vouched for the centurion. They told Jesus, "he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue" (v. 5).

Faith recognizes the authority of Jesus. (6–8)

While the Jewish elders vouch to Jesus that the Roman centurion is worthy of Jesus' help, the Roman centurion also says through them, "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof" (v. 6).

Since the centurion did not presume to be worthy to come to Jesus, he asks that Jesus simply speak the word and his slave would be healed. The centurion recognizes Jesus' authority and the power of Jesus' word. What makes this recognition of Jesus' authority so startling is that the centurion understands authority very well. He is himself "under authority," and he has soldiers and slaves under his own authority who do just as he commands.

We see Jesus' authority in two ways. The Roman centurion who is one with authority asserts that he is unworthy of Jesus, which showcases Jesus' greater authority. We also see Jesus' authority by the power of His word and the efficacy of His command.

Earlier in Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus' authority in various ways. He has authority to command evil spirits (4:33–37). He has authority over "various diseases" (4:38–40), and the demons recognize His authority knowing that "He was the Messiah" (4:41). He has "authority on earth to forgive sins" (5:24), and He has authority to heal on the Sabbath (6:5–11). As the Messiah — the King of Israel — Jesus has the authority to bring God's Kingdom to earth and to restore creation.

Jesus is pleased when we express faith in Him. (9–10)

Those who submit to Jesus' authority become part of His Kingdom. Jesus is very clear that it is not enough to simply call Him Lord (6:46).

After all, even the demons recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. But Jesus says that it is not those who simply call Jesus "Lord" who will flourish, but it is those who recognize Jesus' authority as the Son of David and who submit to Jesus' authority. As Jesus says, it is the one who "hears My words and acts on them" who pleases Him (6:47).

This emphasis on Jesus' authority continues in the story of the Roman centurion who recognizes that authority and even places himself under it. Jesus is amazed by the centurion's faith, and what makes the centurion's faith so remarkable is that it is a Roman centurion — not even an Israelite — who recognizes that Jesus is the Son of David and King. In Luke's presentation the Gentile (representing the nations), an authority in the great Roman Empire, recognizes Jesus' reign and God's Kingdom as even greater than that of Rome.

"When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.'"

Luke 7:9

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 4

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.

Executive Director of the Center for Christian Calling, University of Mobile



PROMISED Genesis 12:1–5; 13:11–18

God keeps His promises. When God establishes a covenant with humanity, He follows through. Genesis 6:18 records the first mention of covenant (berith), which God promised to Noah prior to the flood and then ratified afterward. Following the Noahic covenant, God's next covenant is with Abram. But who was Abram?

Move (12:1–5a)

Abram was one of three sons of Terah. Terah lived in the region of Mesopotamia, near the southern end of the Euphrates River. He was a descendant of Noah's son Shem and an idol worshipper (Josh. 24:2). The family had moved from Ur in the south to the northern part of Mesopotamia, and the place was named for Abram's brother Haran, who had previously died (11:27–31).

God chose Abram to be the recipient of His promise. Abram would become the father of a multitude, and his descendants would be heirs to the promised land. He was to leave dad and his inheritance behind and go to a land he had not yet seen (Heb. 11:8).

This covenant is multifold. Not only did God promise land to Abram, but He also promised greatness: a great nation, a great name and a conduit of blessing to others. Abram was 75 years old when he left his family, though his nephew Lot also came with him. Together they traveled with Sarai, Abram's wife, toward the land of Canaan.

Separate (13:11–13)

Abram was a man of faith, believing the words that God promised him and acting upon His instructions.

When he arrived in Canaan, he built altars and called upon the Lord when he stopped to set up camp (12:7, 8; 13:4). He was

also aware that the inhabitants of the land were watching him and his family (12:6; 13:7).

When division arose between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen, Abram knew that separation was the best means of protecting family unity and providing for the needs of their flocks.

Family disunity fails to demonstrate living faith, so Abram chose humility and allowed Lot to choose the direction to take his livestock. Lot chose the Jordan valley between the central highlands of Canaan and the Trans-Jordanian highlands east of the river.

Claim (14–18)

Look. What a promise God makes to Abram! North, south, east and west — your descendants will be heirs to this land, He says.

God promised Abram his seed would settle in this land. Many translations choose to translate "your seed" as "your offspring" for these promises, including the Christian Standard Bible.

However, the Apostle Paul explains that these promises about the seed of Abraham are intentionally singular because they are intended to point to Jesus (see Gal. 3:15–18).

Legacy. God promised this 75-year-old man that his seed would inherit this land. Abram trusted God to keep His word, but it must have been hard to imagine having descendants as numerous as dust particles.

Living. Abram received God's promises by faith. Not only did he believe that the Lord would give the land to his descendants, but he also trusted God to bless him during his own lifetime. So he went back near the first place where he called upon the Lord in Canaan — near the Oaks of Mamre — and he settled there with Sarai (12:6; 13:18).

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



EXPECTANT FAITH Luke 8:41–42, 49–56

We can approach Jesus with all our needs. (41–42)

In Luke 8:40–56 we read about the healing of Jairus' daughter. Jairus was a synagogue leader whose 12-year-old daughter was dying, and Jairus came to Jesus to ask Him to come to his house so that Jesus would heal her. We can compare Jairus with the Roman centurion of Luke 7:10.

The centurion had a sick slave who was near to the point of death, and he sent for Jesus to heal his slave.

But whereas Jairus asks Jesus to come to his house to heal his daughter, the centurion said that he was not worthy to have Jesus come to his house and that Jesus only needed to speak the word and his slave would be healed. We see the greater faith of the centurion.

But this is not to denigrate Jairus' faith. That Jairus "fell down at Jesus' feet and pleaded with Him to come to his house" to heal his daughter is a demonstration of his faith. Jairus' act of coming so close to Jesus and asking Jesus to come in his house shows his great faith for Jesus, which contrasts with how the people of the Gerasenes respond when Jesus heals the man possessed by many demons (26–39).

In that incident, when Jesus sent the demons into the herd of pigs, and when the people heard about it and saw that the demon-possessed man was better, "they were afraid" (v. 35) and asked Jesus to leave (v. 37). This is in marked contrast to the healed man himself, who "begged Him earnestly to be with Him" (v. 38), and it is also in stark contrast to Jairus, who exhibits a positive response in falling at

Jesus' feet and pleading that Jesus come to his house.

We can trust Jesus when things seem to go awry. (49–53)

In the middle of the story of Jesus healing Jairus' daughter, we encounter a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. She comes near to Jesus, touches the edge of His robe and is healed.

When Jesus asks who touched Him, the woman trembles. But unlike the people of the Gerasenes who in fear told Jesus to leave their region, this woman falls before Him and confesses that she touched Him, and Jesus affirms that her faith saved her.

We can trust Jesus to provide what we need. (54–56)

But now Jairus receives word that his daughter has now died and that there is no use for Jesus to come. But Jesus reiterates the importance of faith. Just as He commended the woman with the flow of blood for her faith, now Jesus tells Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved" (v. 50).

As the story unfolds, Jesus enters Jairus' house and raises Jairus' daughter from the dead, suggesting that Jairus did in fact believe just as the woman with blood believed.

We learn from this story and the others surrounding it how we must beware that fear does not keep us from Jesus but that we draw near to Him. And we also learn that if we believe, if we trust in Jesus and draw near to Him, like Jairus' daughter we will be raised from the dead, for Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25) and everyone who believes in Him will never die again.

"Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."

Luke 8:52–54

WORD search

ABRAM	MAKE A NAME	SHEM
ASPHALT	MIGRATED	SHINAR
BRICKS	MORTAR	SKY
BUILDING	NOAH	STONE
CHALDEANS	OVEN-FIRED	TERAH
CITY	PEOPLE	THROUGHOUT
CONFUSION	PLANS	TOWER
EARTH	SAME	UNDERSTAND
EAST	SARAI	VALLEY
HUMANS	SCATTERED	VOCABULARY
LANGUAGE	SETTLED	WHOLE

W	B	C	G	W	C	W	R	D	H	S	A	M	E	B
M	Y	E	L	L	A	V	M	C	E	Z	H	G	N	H
M	E	H	S	R	G	Y	Z	W	S	L	S	K	Q	Y
L	A	N	G	U	A	G	E	N	J	N	P	R	P	K
G	G	F	H	A	O	N	A	C	A	C	T	O	N	S
R	N	R	K	B	N	M	I	L	S	H	N	F	E	Q
M	T	W	K	M	U	T	P	H	X	A	T	W	D	P
P	A	O	T	H	Y	I	T	G	S	L	R	K	E	V
L	B	K	W	N	T	K	L	R	F	D	F	A	R	O
R	F	J	E	E	H	X	W	D	R	E	L	M	I	C
L	S	U	Q	A	R	T	J	H	I	A	Y	I	F	A
N	C	N	V	X	N	B	R	D	V	N	T	G	N	B
T	A	D	D	M	Y	A	J	A	T	S	G	R	E	U
U	T	E	R	A	H	M	M	L	E	S	K	A	V	L
O	T	R	K	R	X	G	A	E	E	T	D	T	O	A
H	E	S	M	B	H	H	C	T	M	S	Z	E	N	R
G	R	T	T	A	P	W	T	O	E	A	C	D	T	Y
U	E	A	H	S	H	L	R	N	J	E	C	P	V	L
O	D	N	A	O	E	T	O	Y	G	J	C	L	V	H
R	R	D	L	D	A	T	G	B	R	I	C	K	S	H
H	V	E	Y	R	S	L	K	L	N	G	T	K	C	V
T	K	L	N	O	I	S	U	F	N	O	C	D	J	L

"The Lord scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city. Therefore, it is called Babylon, for there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth."

GENESIS 12:8-9a



You Gotta' Hear This!

Finding humor in the everyday moments

New Year's Reflections

In 1985, when we had been married for 10 years and were happily settled into life with two kids and a new house, God called our family into full-time ministry. Without a doubt, I knew answering that call would mean a life of change.

My parents lived in the same home for half a century. In that same span of time, my family lived in five states and numerous homes. I guess you could say that I embraced change. But I also understand why change is difficult and why so many people resist it. It's especially hard when we like things the way they are.

Change is necessary

But change can be beneficial. Change is necessary to maintain good conditions, because conditions rarely stay good if they are not upgraded and updated. Change can also improve bad conditions, halt a decline and stimulate growth.

Think about this for a moment. What if you never changed the oil in your car? What if you just let the filter in your clothes dryer stay clogged without cleaning it? And nobody is happy if you don't change the baby's diaper!

Before 1945, there was no Tupperware, no pre-sliced bread, no bubble wrap and no post-it notes. Since World War II, we've become accustomed to computers, ATMs, penicillin, ballpoint pens, jets and copiers. Those inventions were new products that have now become essential to our

lives. We wouldn't have those without changes.

God ordained change. We see night change to day every 24 hours. He has given us four distinct seasons that change our perspectives, our activities and even our wardrobes. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the author speaks of the benefits of change. And at the fulfillment of time, there is no doubt we will all be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

At the beginning of a new year, we are prompted to think about change. What might happen this upcoming year? Could the changes of 2024 bring joy or sadness?

Our faithful, loving God knows what He is doing. If He allows change, then you can be sure it is for our best. And if He leads us to change, in our lives or in our churches, then trust Him to provide every resource needed for the change. You can be sure that if He requires it of us, then He will carry us through it, and we will be better for it.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Debbie Childers is a speaker, humorist and author based in Moody. She finds great humor in the fact that all through her school years, she got in trouble for talking and now she gets invited to do it!



MEDIA REVIEWS

By Steve Potts and Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Variety of memoirs, devotionals offer hope, help amid life issues

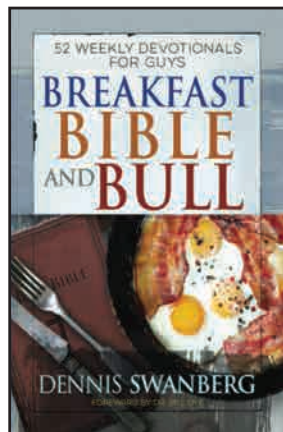
Breakfast, Bible and Bull: 52 Weekly Devotionals for Guys

By Dennis Swanberg
Engedi Publishing, 2021

How do you write a daily devotional that the regular guys in your church would love to read? First, you might get Dennis Swanberg, the “minister of encouragement,” to write it.

His examples are intended to appeal to men, as he references being a barbecue pitmaster, professional baseball, the dangers of pornography, etc. His signature sense of humor shows up frequently, and each section is easy to read. There are also illustrations that pastors and Bible study leaders may find useful.

Swanberg uses life experiences to illustrate biblical truth and weaves in Bible stories and passages throughout the book.



He brings in historical events like the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940, movie scenes and fascinating facts. (“The average person speaks about 7,000 words per day.”).

He calls men to live faithful lives for Christ, and he writes to encourage them rather than to shame them for falling short. (Steve Potts)

Health, Healing and Wholeness: Devotions of Hope in the Midst of Illness

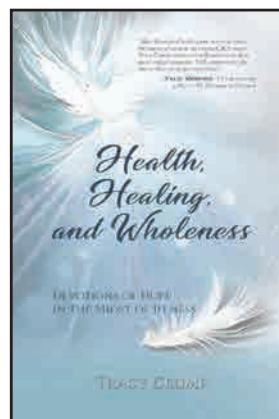
By Tracy Crump
CrossLink Publishing, 2021

If you are looking for a particularly encouraging devotional, especially if you or a loved one is enduring an illness, Tracy Crump’s book was written just for you.

Crump is a former intensive care nurse, and her devotional shares about people in life-threatening situations, heartbreaking experiences and stressful circumstances. She points to the way the Lord worked to bring strength, hope, peace and joy.

In each chapter, Crump relates the faithfulness and goodness of God to those who trust Him. Many chapters recount significant healing from dire circumstances, while some note God’s mercy even when a person’s earthly life came to an end.

This devotional was one of the most uplifting and positive books I have read in some time. If you know someone going through a medical crisis, this might make an excellent gift. (Steve Potts)



Counting the Cost: A Memoir

By Jill Duggar
Gallery Books, 2023

Jill Duggar, one of the daughters of Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar in the TLC series “19 Kids and Counting” and “Jill and Jessa: Counting On,” reveals her experience of growing up in an ultra-conservative family. Her

book is written with her husband, Derick Dillard, along with Craig Borlase.

Though it could be considered a “tell-all,” Duggar doesn’t degrade her parents nor their church affiliation. She simply tells her perspective of the episodes’ backstories during their 21 seasons and 18 specials — including how her parents reportedly helped cover up the abuse by her brother, Joshua Duggar.

Even though there were many negative experiences Duggar lived through, the main takeaway from “Counting the Cost” is how she managed to forgive while simultaneously learning the difference between religion and its rules and a true relationship with God.

After sharing all that she had been through, Duggar says she is still grateful for her flawed upbringing, saying, “But I am also realistic. There is much that I can look back on and smile, but I picked up some wounds along the way.

“It’s like roses and thorns, justice and grace. You can recognize the

beauty and happy parts of your story while also recognizing the more difficult parts. The two can coexist.” (Tracy Riggs Frontz)

God’s Extravagant Grace for Extraordinary Grief: Devotions From the Refiner’s Fire

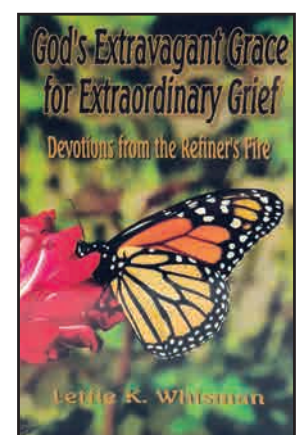
By Lettie K. Whisman
Derek Press, 2018

Sorrow and suffering can be the crucible for experiencing God’s grace in unusual ways. Lettie K. Whisman’s book is part memoir and part devotional written to encourage and uplift others walking through the darkest valleys of life.

The book consists of 32 short chapters that explore issues of grief, reasons for hope, the experience of God’s grace and the importance of receiving and giving mercy.

Whisman’s story involves the deaths of two husbands, a grown daughter and other close relatives. She also reflects on the impact of divorce and spiritual failures and other situations that bring extreme pain into people’s lives. Whisman writes with the sensitivity of someone who has walked a difficult journey and seeks to assist those following a similar path. I appreciated her realism that God allows grief to come at times with no explanation or obvious reason.

This is a book that will encourage and reassure, a book to be read and shared with others. (Steve Potts)



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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More to the story

By Marissa Postell Sullivan

Lifeway Christian Resources

New biography offers unique perspective on Elisabeth Elliot

The view from the audience is not always accurate and certainly never complete. And the same can be said of viewing the life of Elisabeth Elliot.

In the second volume of the authorized biography of Elisabeth Elliot, “Being Elisabeth Elliot” which was released Sept. 12, bestselling author Ellen Vaughn leads readers through “the middle section” of Elliot’s life, which Vaughn describes as the most interesting and least known part of her life.

Before her death, Elliot asked a friend to steward her story and seek out someone to write her biography, Vaughn says. Later, Elliot’s friend and family authorized Vaughn to share Elliot’s story with unique access to Elisabeth’s private, unpublished journals and candid interviews with family and friends.

“It was a treasure trove of all of these materials that were the clues to: Who was this woman? What were her inner thoughts?” Vaughn said.

With journal entries, private papers and private correspondence in hand, Vaughn stewarded unique cooperation with Elliot’s family as she tells Elliot’s story.

“What I loved in these private writings is you can really see the private person,” Vaughn says. “Elisabeth didn’t reveal a whole lot of that in public. And I found that I liked that private person very much, and I found her relatable.”

While writing this second volume, Vaughn says she experienced uncanny parallels between Elliot’s



ELISABETH & JIM ELLIOT

Facebook photo

story of struggle and suffering and her own.

“We, like Elisabeth Elliot in her story, don’t know what’s coming. But God’s grace is absolutely sufficient day by day by day,” Vaughn said. “And that was the faith that sustained Elisabeth through significant suffering.”

In the first volume, “Becoming Elisabeth Elliot,” Vaughn chronicled Elliot’s journey from childhood to the missions field and her eventual return to the States.

Elliot was a young missionary in Ecuador when members of an Amazonian tribe killed

her husband Jim and his four colleagues. Elliot, her toddler daughter and fellow missionary, Rachel Saint, returned to live in the jungle among that same tribe.

continues to pull back the curtain, sharing the heart of the woman who was no longer willing to conform to common ideals in the church that did not have biblical backing.

‘New twists and turns’

While the most unknown to her audience, Vaughn says these years of Elliot’s life brought with them her highest joys and her greatest loss.

“I was surprised by new twists and turns in Elisabeth’s continuing story,” Vaughn said. “I think readers who think they knew the older Elisabeth will be surprised as well.”

In “Being Elisabeth Elliot,” Vaughn seeks to bring readers into Elliot’s life of navigating the world and contemplating what she coined as the “impenetrable mystery” of the interplay between God’s will and human choices, inviting readers to uncover how that strange mystery shaped the rest of Elliot’s startling life story.

“In the reading of it, I hope God will meet you where you are and give you a fresh sense of His love, His presence and His grace for you at such a time as this,” Vaughn said.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published by Lifeway Christian Resources.

Compelled by their friendships and forgiveness, many in the tribe came to faith in Jesus. Describing disappointments, hard relationships, loss and learning impossible lessons about suffering while too young, Vaughn sought to show the real woman behind the famed widow in the first volume.

Pulling back the curtain

But Vaughn wonders if readers have heard what happened after. In this latest volume, Vaughn

“WE, LIKE ELISABETH ELLIOT IN HER STORY, DON’T KNOW WHAT’S COMING. BUT GOD’S GRACE IS ABSOLUTELY SUFFICIENT DAY BY DAY BY DAY.”

ELLEN VAUGHN
AUTHOR



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Disproportionate

By Ken Camp
Baptist Standard

Afghan women suffering brunt of religious freedom restrictions, report says

Religious freedom in Afghanistan has deteriorated since the Taliban seized control two years ago, and Afghan women have suffered most, a report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom stated.

The report, “Issue Update: Religious Freedom and Women’s Rights in Afghanistan,” said all Afghans have seen their religious freedom restricted by the Taliban’s edicts, decrees and circular letters, but “those restrictions have disproportionately impacted women.”

“Despite attempts to project a more moderate stance, they have imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law that purposefully undermines the rights of women and religious and ethnic minorities,” the report stated.

Afghanistan’s government no longer recognizes the legitimacy of its 2004 constitution, because the Taliban view it as “insufficiently” Islamic.

“In the absence of a formal written constitution, the Taliban have repeatedly professed that Shari’a and the Qur’an are the basis for law in the country,” the report stated.

Strict interpretation

Supreme Leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada is Afghanistan’s highest authority for issuing decrees and edicts, based on a strict Sunni interpretation of Islamic law.

A law passed in July replaced the Office of the State Secretary General with the Directorate General of Supervision and Pursuit of Decrees.

The same law gave the supreme



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leader total authority to oversee the implementation of rules, laws and decrees.

When the Taliban came to power in August 2021, it claimed Afghan women would retain their rights “within the bounds of Islamic law.”

However, more than half of the 80 religious edicts issued since then directly restrict the rights of women and girls. Edicts include bans on education, employment and freedom of movement, the report stated. A decree also barred women from driving motor vehicles.

In September 2021, the Taliban replaced the Ministry of Women’s Affairs with the Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of

Vice, which enforces punishment for “un-Islamic” behavior.

“The action allowed the Taliban to enforce regulations on women in society without their participation or input,” the report stated.

In addition to enforcing restrictions on how women dress, the law also has resulted in the arbitrary arrest of women for “moral crimes,” such as participating in public protests.

Education challenges

Since the Taliban came to power, women have not been allowed to attend school in classes with male students or male teachers. They are barred from studying certain subjects, such as journalism, law,

agriculture and the sciences.

In testimony presented to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom at a hearing one year ago, Fereshta Abbasi of Human Rights Watch stated nearly all of the rules and policies implemented in Afghanistan since the Taliban came to power “severely restrict Afghans’ basic human rights, and in particular the rights of women and girls.”

“There is no other country in the world where women face such sweeping violations of their basic human rights,” Abbasi said.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published by Baptist Standard.

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Sexual addiction

By Ken Camp
Baptist Standard

‘I don’t know of a bigger threat to the church,’ therapist says

Given the secrecy and shame surrounding pornography usage, researchers offer widely divergent statistics about its prevalence in the church. But few question the reality of the problem — both in the pews and in the pulpits.

“I don’t know of a bigger threat to the church today,” said Jimmy Myers, a licensed professional counselor and Christian certified sex addiction therapist. “And we are too pious to talk about it.”

In particular, clergy who struggle with pornography or other compulsive sexual behavior are reluctant to discuss it because they fear losing their jobs if they acknowledge a problem in their own lives, Myers said in an interview.

Adina Silvestri, a licensed professional counselor and researcher, agrees. In an online article published by the American Counseling Association, she wrote: “Within the Church, clergy who are sex addicts live with the shame, fear and guilt involved with their compulsive sexual behaviors, while acting as a moral compass for their congregations. It is a lonely journey.”

Compulsive behaviors

The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders — the standard reference source produced by the American Psychiatric Association — does not include sexual addiction.

However, Myers noted, the World Health Organization includes compulsive sexual behavior as a mental health disorder in the latest edition of its International Statistical Classification of Diseases.

Ministers who dare to talk about compulsive sexual behavior as an addiction from which people can recover with the proper therapy — not just a bad habit they can over-



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come with will power — risk being perceived as “soft on sin” by some church members, Myers said.

“We have to change the way we address this,” he said.

Myers served 20 years in church staff positions at Baptist churches before he founded The Timothy Center, an Austin-based Christian counseling center. He sees the use of pornography as destructive in itself and as a first step that can lead to other compulsive sexual behavior.

“Pornography is the marijuana of sexual addiction,” Myers said. “It is the gateway drug to other behaviors.”

Like drug users who crave increasingly stronger drugs, the arousal template for pornography users continues to escalate, requiring more frequent viewing, more hardcore content and other sexual behaviors to get the same results, he explained.

In an article produced for the Utah State University’s couple and fam-

ily relationships extension service, Naomi Brower wrote: “Some of the common damaging effects of pornography for users can include addiction, isolation, increased aggression, distorted beliefs and perceptions about relationships about sexuality, negative feelings about themselves and neglecting other areas of their lives.”

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Mark Legg, a former associate editor at the Denison Forum, agrees about the devastating impact of pornography.

“Pornography carves canals of addiction in our brains, sends a torrent of shame into our hearts, digs up sedentary sin, and wreaks havoc on our relation-

ships,” Legg wrote in an online article.

Compulsive sexual behavior may be rooted in childhood abuse or family dysfunction, and patients often experience anxiety and depression.

“The brain of a person with sexual addiction is physically different,” he

said, adding it explains the condition but is “not an excuse for behavior.”

Fortunately, the brain is capable of changing and adapting, and through proper therapy and treatment, neural networks in the brain can be restructured, creating new neural pathways, he explained.

Rewiring the brain

“Rewiring” the brain’s neural pathways requires time and intensive therapy, he acknowledged.

Previously, The Timothy Center treated compulsive sexual behavior through an intensive outpatient program. Recently, the center introduced a 15-hour weekend intensive program — the only one of its kind in Central Texas. During two days of rigorous therapy, participants learn about the root causes of sexual addiction, and they explore emotional regulation and relapse reduction.

Churches should encourage those struggling with compulsive sexual behavior to seek professional help, Myers said.

That may mean offering a sabbatical to staff members who need therapy rather than immediately dismissing them if their sexual addiction is discovered or confessed.

Churches benefit from learning about the causes and treatment of compulsive sexual behavior, because it helps them differentiate between the person and the person’s behavior, he said.

“Everyone is broken. How can we judge somebody just because they are sinning in a different way than we are?” Myers asked.

“We need to respond with compassion. We need to hit that sweet spot that Jesus demonstrated — not condemning the person and not ignoring the sinful behavior.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published by Baptist Standard.