

The Alabama Baptist

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IMB photo

‘Increased **terror**’

Persecution against Christians rising: Open Doors releases 2025 World Watch List

Persecution against Christians continues to increase around the globe. The number of believers facing high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith rose to more than 380 million, according to Open Doors, which released its 2025 World Watch List on Jan. 15.

Last year, 4,476 Christians were murdered for their faith, 7,679

churches and Christian properties were attacked, and 4,744 Christians were imprisoned, noted the annual report that ranks the top 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution.

Top 10

North Korea remained at the top of this year’s list. Those that followed included Somalia (2), Yemen (3), Libya (4), Sudan (5), Eritrea

(6), Nigeria (7), Pakistan (8), Iran (9) and Afghanistan (10).

While North Korea and Eritrea struggle with either “communist/post-communist oppression” or “dictatorial paranoia,” all of the other countries in the top 10 face Islamic oppression.

In fact, more than half the countries on the current list struggle with Islamic-related persecution.

North Korea continues to spiral

downward in its harsh restrictions.

According to Open Doors, North Korea’s government announced “stricter regulations and crack-downs” in early 2024, increasing terror among the citizens.

Open Doors reported that authorities publicly executed about 30 middle-school students for watching a Korean drama on a USB drive. Several other teenagers were

(See ‘Prayers,’ page 6)

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SCAN ME

Samford receives historic \$5M grant to invigorate rural, small-town churches

Samford University has received a grant of \$5 million — the largest single grant in the university’s 183-year history — from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Ministry in Rural Areas and Small Towns Initiative.

The grant will support the work of Samford’s Center for Congregational Resources, which provides services to help congregations become thriving ministries.

The aim of Lilly Endowment’s initiative is to provide resources to help churches in rural areas and small towns enhance the vitality of their ministries and strengthen the leadership of the pastors and lay leaders who guide them.

Samford University’s Center for Congregational Resources intends to develop the Equipping the Called Leadership Program to help Christian churches cultivate the spiritual formation of congregants and function as anchor institutions that strengthen their local communities.

Variety of resources

Content for this program will be developed in partnership with Samford scholars who have expertise in theological education, practice of ministry, physical and mental health education, business administration and community development.

“This impactful gift from Lilly Endowment ... provides resources to help rural and small-town churches and ministries thrive,” said Dave Cimbor, Samford’s provost and vice



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist
Turnerville Baptist Church in Churchula, near Mobile, seeks to reach its community with a variety of activities and resources.

president for academic affairs. “By partnering in the training of ordained and lay leadership, we foresee this new program invigorating churches to deepen collaborations across their communities.”

Keri Burns, CCR’s director at Samford, shared with The Alabama Baptist that as her team prepared for writing the grant proposal, they discovered the need for training on a wide range of topics.

“Part of the grant implementation will be the creation of an online leadership certificate program to address topics such as church leadership, identifying and responding to community needs, and equipping rural and small-town churches to serve

as anchor institutions in their communities,” she said. “Our work with congregations over the years has revealed that despite the size, affiliation or location, the local church continues to be a source of hope and refuge for communities. We hope this new grant provides an opportunity for congregations to serve God and serve neighbor.”

Among an elite group

Samford University is one of 20 organizations from across the United States receiving grants through the initiative, including colleges and universities, denominational agencies, church networks and parachurch organizations, among others. (Samford, TAB)

Frank Jones celebrates 50th anniversary of his ordination



Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

Frank Jones celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination with a piano concert Jan. 12 at First Baptist Church Hoover. He was minister of music and youth at the church when he was ordained in January 1975.

During the concert, Jones played favorite hymns that he has shared with audiences through the years. Representatives from Samford University, FBC Hoover and Hunter Street Baptist Church also took part in the service. He and his wife, Margaret, have been married 43 years. Jones is senior adult ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. (TAB)

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 11.



Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

 jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

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Are you ever fearful of how the Lord will answer your prayers?

Paralysis of analysis — the inability to make a decision or move forward because of overthinking a situation.

Being overwhelmed by too many choices or continually researching beyond what is reasonable can lead to inaction at best and continual spiraling downward at worst.

Ever experienced it?

It's no fun for the person nor those trying to help them.

To avoid the paralyzed state when faced with decisions, experts suggest practicing with small decisions such as what to have for lunch.

Process of elimination

From there, always set a deadline for when the decision needs to be made and use the process of elimination to weed out as many options as possible early in the process.

I'm a big fan of the process of elimination. It not only narrows down the selections, but also provides a sense of accomplishment because in order to choose

what items are eliminated a decision must be made.

It's also important to own the decision once it's made. Second guessing only takes away joy and energy from whatever decision was made.

Doing the best we can

We'll make the right call sometimes and sometimes we won't, but the best we can do is to do the best we can with what we know and understand.

Of course, remembering to lean on God for guidance provides the ultimate peace and confidence as we make decisions along life's journey.

It sounds simple really, even cliché, to pray about our decisions, but is it possible we sometimes avoid seeking direction from the Lord because of a fear of the answer?

Sensing a call to the missions field, one young believer didn't want to pray about it at first because she feared the answer.

Another young woman knew wholeheartedly she was called to missions, so much so, she

was shocked when the Lord's direction pulled her back from the locations she had pinned on her map.

Recently, a friend shared with me her anger over her health situation and how she desperately wants to be out actively working for the Lord, but she's not able to hold out.

Another friend is extremely capable and able but isn't interested in helping others nor doing anything extra at all really.

The friend admits not praying for growth in this area previously but seems more open now.

Growth in the struggle

A pastor friend shared how exhausting it is attempting to motivate individuals to truly open themselves up and let the Lord work through them — to not fear where it all leads.

However, while it can be discouraging, it's in the struggle that we see the Lord do some amazing things, my pastor friend explained.

That's also where we grow the most, he added.

So, as you are praying for our team as we evaluate and reset during 2025, pray that we will have the courage to truly seek and follow the Lord's mission for our ministry assignment.

We would love to pray the same for you as well as hear your stories of how the Lord is working in and through you, your family, your ministry, your church, your association and/or your community.

Reach out by phone at 800-803-5201, email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org or write us at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

“Leaning on God for guidance provides the ultimate peace and confidence we need as we make decisions along life's journey.”

Your Voice



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

Consider requesting grants for church work, community outreach

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

Grant money exists to help improve people's individual situations as well as provide the assistance needed to build positive, healthy communities.

Churches — along with living out their primary role of sharing the gospel and making disciples — also typically nurture community members with hearts of compassion.

Why not request some of the grant money available from private foundations, corporations and community foundations to help build those wheelchair ramps or stock the supplies needed for free medical and dental clinics?

What might be possible

A grant is not a loan, and grants don't have to be tied to the government.

Think about things in your church that are needed merely to continue serving the members as well as the community. Would it help if items such as playground equipment or updated kitchen essentials were covered outside the routine budget?

Also dream about what might be possible if extra funds were available.

Could your church members offer after-school tutoring sessions or maybe youth music lessons with instruments provided for those participating?

How about apprenticeships in photography or car repairs or other

skills for developing future career opportunities?

Funding from grants truly could be the answer to expanded outreach opportunities and a healthier church routine.

Churches and schools have a federal tax number. If they meet certain requirements, they are automatically considered tax-exempt and do not need to apply for 501(c)(3) status, which designates a tax exemption for nonprofits intended for religious, charitable, educational and other purposes.

So the first thing to do is determine the gap between what you have and what you want to do, then launch an effort to discover what grants are available to a religious institution.

Start with the local businesses in your area and expand from there.

The business owners in your congregation will likely know how to organize a plan for researching and seeking out options.

Along with private companies, area banks, insurance agencies, restaurants, utility companies and hotels or motels, also consider nonprofits and Baptist organizations.

Some grantors release grants annually while others provide them quarterly, and information should be available regarding funding periods and deadlines and requirements for qualifying.

Determining the specifics of what a grantor supports will help narrow the options as well.

Once you have a list of options available, work through the online application process.

Contact the proper people as needed to help guide you, and involve a top-level staff member from the grantor organization in the plan if possible.

Fill out the application as directed. Do not exceed the number of pages requested. If needed, additional information can be provided in an appendix, but the board is not required to read this optional material.

Include two or three digital images or renderings of the planned project (and even people involved) if possible. This is especially important for those requesting repeat funding.

Six key questions

Answers to the following six questions are typically required for most applications:

1. What do you plan to do, and what is the gap between what you have and what you need? How will extra funds help accomplish the goal?
2. How do you plan to launch the project? Will you appoint a committee, work with other churches in the community, etc.?
3. Whom do you plan to serve?

Will it be school-age children in a tutoring program, migrants who need basic supplies, etc.?

4. What do you plan to accomplish? Will you meet a need and tell them about the love of Jesus, give out Bibles, etc.?

5. How will you spend the funds provided through the grant? You will need a detailed list of all items needed with current and credible estimates for the costs of the planned purchases. Always use the funds for what you stated in the application process.

6. How will you give a final report of the grant? Will you outline how and where all funds were used and provide detailed receipts?

Tips for communicating with grantors:

► Always write a thank you note to the granting organization's board chair, no matter the outcome. If you did not receive funding, express gratitude for being considered and note that you plan to apply again (if that is the case).

► Ask children in your church to draw illustrations or write a note to the CEO or manager of the organization that provided the grant.

► Invite a leader from the organization that awarded the funds to attend a service, and present them with a plaque or framed certificate from your church.

Securing grants for your church can provide funds for projects and programs not included in the regular church budget. Research shows millions of dollars in grants are missed out on each year.

You may not always get selected, but the answer is most definitely "no" if you don't ask.

**Research shows
millions of
dollars in grants
are missed out
on each year.**

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“In the midst of this world’s persistent darkness, never lose sight of Jesus. He alone is the hope of the world — and He is your hope as well.”

BILLY GRAHAM
evangelist and minister

“The exact same part of the brain that triggers during anxiety also triggers during gratitude. That makes it impossible to focus on anxiety and gratitude at the same time.”

Shane Pruitt
@shane_pruitt7

“At the core of all of these topics is an identity issue. There is an identity issue in people trying to find their fulfillment and satisfaction in someone or some thing other than Jesus,” said **Luke Taylor**, pastor of Veneration Church in Kalispell, Montana. Taylor shared this during a sermon series, “Culture Clash: a biblical look at culture’s hottest topics.” The series presented and explored several hotly debated, sometimes celebrated and culturally condoned topics like licentious heterosexuality, homosexuality, transgenderism and abortion.

“We want to try to train young people to be future leaders because that’s what we’re going to need. That’s where we started with the DOM job. ... We began to talk in our meetings about what will happen to this association if we don’t have our younger families develop a burden to carry on,” said **David Case**, former DOM of Eleven Point River Baptist Association in Missouri.

“We subscribe to the idea that all truth belongs to God, and so we’re going to evaluate every song based on the song. If so-and-so writes a song and uses truth from God’s Word, they don’t own that song even though they may monetize it,” said **Nate Jernigan**, director of Crescent City Worship, a worship team with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. “So that truth that’s always been true about God — it always will be true about God — is something that’s

worth proclaiming. We want to sing songs; we want to be known as a people who are theologically insightful and thoughtful in the ways that we choose songs based on the truth it represents.”

“The voice of God is a friendly voice. No one need fear to listen to it unless he has already made up his mind to resist it. ... Whoever will listen will hear the speaking heaven.”

A.W. Tozer
Author, “In Pursuit of God”

“Sometimes we are afraid of what Jesus will tell us to do because we don’t understand the why of what He’s telling us to do. We are only afraid when we don’t know the heart of the Rabbi.”

Alex Himaya, pastor
BattleCreek Church
Oklahoma

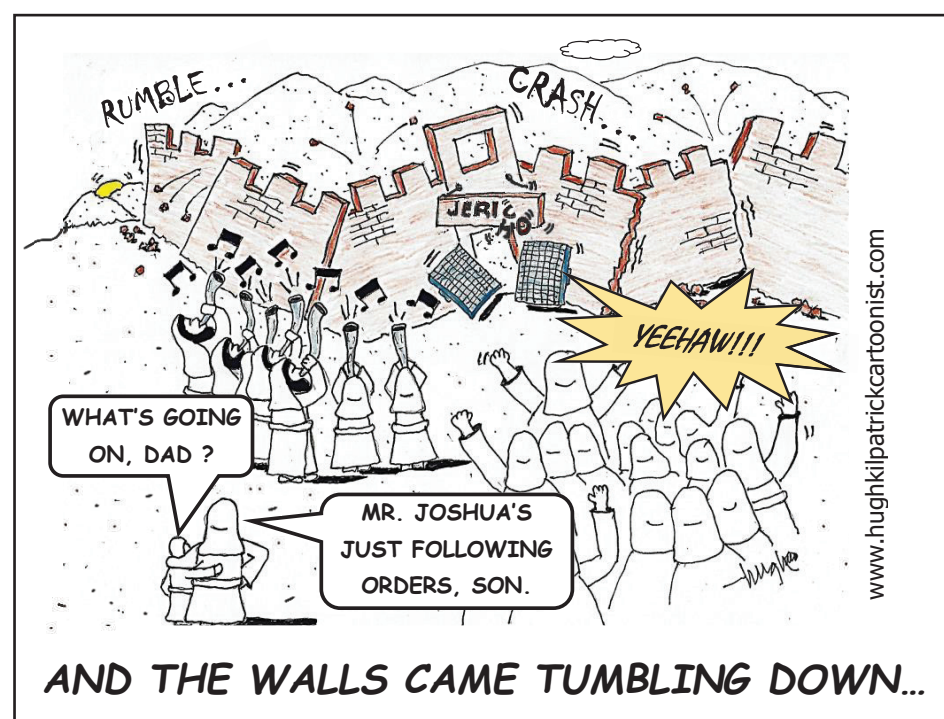
“We desire for the parents to realize that they didn’t cause this situation, learn how to create boundaries for their children and know that they are not alone in this

journey. We want to reach parents who are struggling and whose children have turned away from God,” said **Julie Cordry**. Cordry and her husband, Pacer, serve as director of Prodigal Child Ministries. The ministry seeks to encourage and equip parents of prodigal children.

“We desire to glorify God through this ministry and ask daily for His wisdom and direction in the choices we make and to follow in obedience to Him. The relationships formed in this group are never-ending. There is no beginning, and there is no end. It’s a beautiful picture of the gospel.”

“Romans 8 reveals ... Christians are people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are being led in paths of righteousness, mercy, love and grace. By means of His powerful leadership and provisions, there is the kind of life which God not only promises but also provides to His people. It is a life under the guidance of the Spirit of God. It guarantees no alienation from God.”

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper



Carter's faith helped China's churches

By Bob Terry
Editor emeritus, The Alabama Baptist

Hearing of President Carter's death Dec. 29 brought back memories of a brief press conference from almost 20 years ago.

Why the story he shared that day was never officially recorded I am not sure. But I am thankful for President Carter's willingness to share his faith with China's Deng Xiaoping and for how the Holy Spirit prompted Deng to respond by reopening churches in China even if he chose to not personally believe in Jesus Christ.

Carter shared with Baptist media representatives in 2005 about the incident that happened in early 1979 during the historic visit of Deng to the United States. It was the first official visit to this nation by any leader of the People's Republic of China.

Carter said he shared his Christian testimony with Deng, presented the plan of salvation to him and invited him to accept Jesus as his personal Savior. While Deng declined, he did say he could reopen the Christian churches in China, Carter shared.

During the 13-year-long Cultural Revolution led by Mao Zedong in the 1960s, Christian churches across the mainland had been shuttered.

History affirms Deng kept his word to Carter.

The story of Christianity in China is not without its bumps and setbacks. Christians still face great obstacles in that country. Yet, there are more openly avowed Christians in China today than there are Communist Party members.

Many missiologists point to the growth of the church in China as the greatest miracle of the 20th century.

Read the full version of this article at thebaptistpaper.org.

PRAYERS NEEDED

Vast majority of Christians in countries on the watch list are 'trapped, pressured and attacked'

(continued from page 1)
sentenced to life imprisonment or death for similar violations, and other residents were sentenced to labor reform for "picking up plastic bottles containing cooking rice sent from South Korea."

"While President Kim Jong Un and his family live luxurious lives," the report noted, "the situation for most North Koreans is getting worse. They are suffering hunger and desperate need."

Alarmingly high

While the number of Christians dying for their faith in Nigeria dropped from 4,998 in 2023 to 3,100 last year, the risks for people of faith remain alarmingly high. And persecution against Christians continues to spread in sub-Saharan African countries.

"Sadly, more Christians were killed outside Nigeria, many in sub-Saharan Africa countries like DRC, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Niger," Open Doors reported.

Meanwhile in countries like

Myanmar, Yemen and Sudan, civil wars have "become breeding grounds for targeted attacks against Christians," the report said.

Ibrahim, a pastor in Sudan, shared with Open Doors how he was alienated by his community and arrested and put in prison for his Christian faith. He shared how Christians in conflict zone areas were "eating the leaves of the trees, breakfast, lunch, dinner, dying on a daily basis by random bullets — and imagine their children (being among them)."

He added, "People who have a heart for Sudan, we want to tell them that we receive their prayers and their attention, but we still need more prayer allocated to Sudan."

"My prayer for Sudan is may God wake up the Church and may the peace in heaven reign," he said.

The report also noted that Christians continue to be detained

without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned for their faith. In countries like India, according to the report, 1,629 Christians were detained without trial and 547 were sentenced to prison. Similar imprisonments were also reported in other countries — among them are Eritrea, Bangladesh and Iran.

In summary, the report spotlighted several trends to watch. Among them:

► As multiple countries in sub-Saharan Africa have seen a rise in violence against Christians, 8 of the top 10 deadliest places for

Christians are in this area of the world — and all of these countries, except Nigeria, have more faith-based killings than they did in the 2024 World Watch List report. The latest report also noted, of 34.5 million displaced people across sub-Saharan Africa, about 16.2 million are Christians. "Chronic

government instability has created an environment where Christians can be targeted, and where Islamic militants can use the chaos as cover for their attacks on Christians," the report said.

Driven underground

► Christians in the Middle East and more countries on the World Watch List, are being driven underground. Christian isolation and the decline of churches, the report said, was a recurring pattern in several countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Algeria, China and Christian communities in Gaza and the West Bank.

"We can't forget them," said Ryan Brown, CEO/president of Open Doors US. "The vast majority of people are trapped, pressured and attacked." He noted, "You and I can't do enough on our own, but God can and He's given us an incredibly powerful way to stand with our brothers and sisters in Africa and around the world, joining with them in prayer." (The Baptist Paper)

To download the World Watch List, visit OpenDoorsUS.org. To read the full report, visit opendoorsus.org/en-US/persecution/countries.

Voice of the Martyrs releases prayer guide, daily podcast

The Voice of the Martyrs' Global Prayer Guide details daily life for persecuted Christians living and serving in the world's most difficult and dangerous places. The 2025 edition is now available.

VOM vice president Todd Nettleton noted this tool "helps every reader better understand what our persecuted family members face, and therefore pray with more knowledge and more passion for these dear brothers and sisters."

Since 1997, VOM has tracked and designated

nations where Christians are persecuted as either "hostile" or "restricted."

Designations

VOM's "restricted nation" designation identifies countries, such as China, Iran and Eritrea, where government-sanctioned persecution and anti-Christian laws led to Christians being harassed, imprisoned, killed or deprived of possessions or liberties. It also represents countries where policies or practices prevent Christians from obtaining Bibles or other Christian literature.

VOM's "hostile area" designation identifies nations or large areas of nations, such

as Nigeria and Colombia, where governments may attempt to provide protection for Christians but Christians are still persecuted by family, friends, neighbors or po-

litical or terrorist groups.

Last year, VOM added a third "areas of concern" designation for hotspots around the world where Christian persecution is increasing.



IMB photo

A digital version of the 2025 Global Prayer Guide is available at persecution.com/globalprayerguide.

VOM also launched its new Extreme Devotion podcast Jan. 1. The daily podcast is intended to bring to life the widely acclaimed book "Extreme Devotion; Daily Devotional Stories of Ancient to Modern-Day Believers Who Sacrificed Everything for Christ."

The book has more than 1 million copies in print in 36 languages and features real-life accounts of believers who sacrificed everything for Christ. (Voice of the Martyrs)

Alabama news

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Silverhill First Baptist Church** celebrated its 125th anniversary Nov. 10. Special music was provided by the choir, which also held a special celebration Nov. 9. Rick Barnhart, a former pastor, was the guest speaker. Wendy Westerhouse (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to the church, which was accepted by Steve Pumphrey (right), deacon chair. Pumphrey's wife, Ann, is the great-granddaughter of the Swedish Johnson family who were among the 12 charter members. Until 1930 the morning worship services were conducted in the Swedish language. The original organizing and early documents dating from 1899 to 1937 were on display in the Swedish language.



Photo courtesy of Sandy Patterson

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Charlie Martin** has retired from worship leadership after nearly 50 years serving churches.



MARTIN

His final Sunday in his current role — worship pastor at Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville — was Jan. 12. He had served at NorthPark since 2013 and also was there from 2000 to 2006. Through the years, he served other churches in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Colorado. Martin holds a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance from Mississippi College; a master of music degree and a doctor of education degree with specializations in worship studies and spiritual formation and discipleship from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Lisa, have three children and four grandchildren. A special service and afternoon reception honoring Martin was held Jan. 12 at NorthPark. Bill Wilks is pastor.

► **Dylan Lee** is the new membership pastor for **Grace Life Baptist Church, McCalla**, where he previously served as college and career minister, student ministry leader and ministerial associate. Lee was ordained Dec. 1 and graduated two weeks later from Samford University with a bachelor's degree in mathematics. He plans to pursue a master of divinity degree. Lee has been married to Mikayla since May 2024. Joel Frederick is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Grace Life

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Kevin Jones** is the new pastor of **Antioch Baptist Church, Oxford**. He previously served for 16 years as pastor of Stockdale Baptist Church, Munford. Jones and his wife, Amber, have five children and one granddaughter.



Photo courtesy of Kevin Jones

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Rockford Baptist Church** celebrated its 175th anniversary Nov. 3. The church received three recognitions with Jeff Fuller (left), pastor, accepting the honors. Wendy Westerhouse (right), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque; Matthew Reams, transitional director of missions for the association made a presentation;



Photo courtesy of Tina Fuller

and Brett Oakes, pastor of Central Coosa Cowboy Church, Hanover, presented a monetary gift. Bill Morris, retired church planter/pastor of the Cowboy Church (which Rockford helped establish), was present along with current church leaders and members. Hunter Goff, organist for Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, grew up at Rockford and provided special music. Debbie Mullins, pianist for 48 years, shared the church's history. Former pastor Dennis Manley was guest preacher.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Windol Hare** is the new minister of students for **Citronelle Memorial Baptist Church**, where he has been serving as a deacon. He also works for South Alabama Utilities. Hare and his wife, Gabrielle, have two daughters. Dino Danzey is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Windol Hare

PINE BARREN ASSOCIATION

► Bear Creek Historical & Preservation Association hosted a homecoming celebration Nov. 10 at the **Bear Creek Baptist Church** historical site to honor the legacy of both Bear Creek Baptist and Shiloh Methodist churches, Caledonia, Wilcox County. Martha Grimes Lampkin welcomed more than 60 guests. Steve Dunn, associational missionary, delivered the message. Stephen Smith led the music, and Mary Ann Harrison accompanied on piano. Author Jackson Knight also shared.

NORTH JEFFERSON ASSOCIATION

► **Matt Pope** is the new associate pastor of worship and discipleship for **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Warrior**, where he previously served as associate pastor to students. He also has served as pastor of West Blocton Baptist Church; associate and student pastor of The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla; and worship intern at Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Leavell College, New Orleans, and a master of arts degree in pastoral ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Kayla, have three children. Jacob Elliott is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Matt Pope

SULPHUR SPRINGS ASSOCIATION

► **Dustin Mahaffey** is the new pastor of **Cane Creek Baptist Church, Warrior**. He previously served as outreach pastor for Soul City Church, Jackson, Mississippi. Mahaffey also works with Regions Bank. He holds a bachelor's degree from Belhaven University, Jackson, Mississippi, and is pursuing a master of arts degree in Christian leadership at New Orleans Seminary.



Photo courtesy of Dustin Mahaffey

He and his wife, Carly, have one son.

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► After more than 37 years of Christian ministry, **Joe Armour** retired Dec. 31. Armour's last 18 years of ministry were at **First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa**, where he served as minister for adult education, pastor to adults and connections pastor. Armour was honored at an afternoon reception Jan. 5 in the church fellowship hall. He and his wife, Lynn, have three children and one grandchild.



ARMOUR

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Bruce Pruitt** is the new minister of music for **First Baptist Church Selma**. He previously served in ministry as a minister of music for 19 years and media director for 11 years. Pruitt holds a master of church music degree from New Orleans Seminary. He has four adult children. Timothy Mathis is pastor.



PRUITT

Childhood church experiences influenced volunteers of year

Debra Abston and Kimberly Posey are the current recipients of the Mission Volunteer of the Year Award presented at the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in November at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne.

Each year the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions selects a Volunteer of the Year. The award is given to someone who has participated in volunteer Acts 1:8 missions opportunities in their home county, the state, North America and internationally.

"We look for people who exhibit a passion for missions and have a missions lifestyle," said Scotty Goldman, director of the SBOM's office of global missions.

Abston and Posey were nominated for the award by

Claren Dease, an International Mission Board emeritus missionary who served 23 years in Uruguay with her husband, Lyle, who is director of missions for Pickens Baptist Association.

'Worthy recipients'

"When Dease submitted how they (Abston and Posey) exhibit their missions opportunities, it was obvious these two ladies would be our selection this year because of their regular participation in missions. They are two worthy recipients," Goldman said.

Posey said receiving the award was "very humbling."

"I honestly didn't know the award existed," she said.

Posey has been on mission in Honduras, Mexico, Romania, Brazil, Peru and several places in the United States.

She discovered a love for missions at Flatwoods Baptist Church in Northport. Through Mission Friends and missions discipleship classes, she learned to share the gospel. She is thankful to her parents for taking her to church when she was young.

"God tells us to go wherever the door opens and take the gospel to the nations," Posey said.

"Whenever a door is opened, I share the gospel. A lot of people have influenced me since I was a child and helped me learn to love missions. If it weren't for my parents, Flatwoods and most of all God, I wouldn't have gotten this award."

Abston said it was "an honor to be chosen" to receive the annual award.

"All the glory goes to God, not to me, because without Him none of this would be



Photo courtesy of Kimberly Posey

possible," Abston said. "I am thankful God placed that calling on my life and that I was obedient and answered the call because it has been a blessing to be His hands and feet."

Local and beyond

Abston has been a Girls in Action teacher for over 30 years. She also has worked in the local food pantry and with the Pickens Association's Missions Council. She has been on several North American missions trips to Kentucky, Pennsylvania and

Montana and has been on trips to Brazil since 2013, with the exception of 2020. She has also been to the Amazon, Guatemala, Honduras, Romania and Mexico.

"I've been in church my whole life," said Abston. "My Sunday School teachers did a great job of teaching me about Jesus."

EDITOR'S NOTE – This article was written by Donna Bain and originally appeared in the Pickens County Herald. It is reprinted with permission.

OFFICE OF
LeaderCARE

Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat

February 21-22, Shocco Springs

Led by Mark Clifton, revitalization specialist at the North American Mission Board. COST: \$40/couple or \$30/person (includes supper and breakfast). For more information, visit leadercareal.org/events or contact Ministry Assistant Lori Lockett, llockett@alsbom.org, 334-613-2218.




These events are made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

'Proclaim the gospel'

Students 'serious about their faith,' BCM 'community' efforts at Montevallo, Jeff State

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

Lee Lawson said if he's honest, his first impression was that they were just weirdos playing board games outside.

"But I had finished a test and had nothing else to do," he said.

So he joined them just to see what was going on. And Lawson, then a student at

Jefferson State Community College's Shelby-Hoover campus, found out quickly he was wrong.

There was a lot more to it than that.

Jacob Freeman, Baptist campus minister for the University of Montevallo and the Shelby-Hoover location of Jeff State, had been coming over for a while to try to start a Bible study on

Lawson's campus, but so far it had been difficult to get a group going.

"So I would set up a tent and table and chairs and have pizza and games," Freeman said. "It was a time for relationship building and engagement with a short Bible study. We could ask, 'What are you doing tomorrow for lunch?' and that was basically an inroad to a further conversation."

Lawson bought in.

"I found out it was actually an opportunity to share the gospel, and I asked how I could help," he said. "I became a believer during the COVID-19 pandemic — a lot of us were just sitting alone and thinking about the hard questions of life," he said.

Every Thursday for three



Photo courtesy of Jacob Freeman

During Spring Break 2024, Lee Lawson (fifth from left) serves at the University of South Carolina with a team of students from the Baptist Campus Ministries of the University of Montevallo and Jefferson State Community College in Hoover.

years, Lawson helped with the effort. Now, Lawson is at Montevallo as a student working alongside Freeman and preparing for ministry.

"I really want to be a part

of the ministry. I just have no idea what avenue yet," Lawson said.

For more information about the university's BCM, visit montevallobcm.com.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

MinistrySafe workshop

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions is partnering with MinistrySafe to offer crucial training to help make your church a safer place. Join us at First Baptist Church Montgomery on Feb. 20 to learn more about existing and emerging challenges in protecting children from sexual abuse.

The workshop will be led by Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris, cofounders of

MinistrySafe, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The day will conclude with your choice of one of two focus sessions:

- Focus Session A — An Effective Safety System
- Focus Session B — Effective Screening: Keeping the Wolf out of the Sheep Pen

The cost is \$15 per person. To register, visit safe.alsbom.org/event/ministrysafe-training.

To register, visit safe.alsbom.org/event/ministrysafe-training or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Alabama Association of Baptist Ministry Assistants Conference

The Alabama Association of Baptist Ministry Assistants — formerly known as the Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries — will hold its annual conference March 2–5 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

The conference will fol-

low the theme *Tis the Season* based on Ecclesiastes 3:1 and will offer times of corporate worship and fellowship as well as breakout sessions offering professional development, training and spiritual renewal.

During the event:

- Lee King will be the conference speaker.

► Chevas Phillips will lead worship for the conference.

► Cade and Jennifer Faris will lead worship for the banquet.

For more information or to register, visit alsbom.org/event/alabama-association-of-baptist-ministry-assistants-conference.



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Andrew Britt, Committee Chairman
Fairview Baptist Church
Selma, Alabama

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Pisgah Baptist Church, Sipsey, Alabama, is searching for a full-time pastor. pisgahbaptistal@gmail.com

PASTOR

Pineview Baptist Church, Brent, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Pineview Baptist Church, 10291 Highway 5, Brent, AL 35034, or email pineviewbaptist@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Dogwood Grove Baptist Church in Adger, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. To apply or inquire, please contact us at: Dogwoodgrovebaptistchurch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Life Baptist Church located in Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor who unashamedly preaches the Word of God. We are prayerfully seeking the pastor God has chosen for our church to help lead our congregation into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Please email resumé/profile to: newlifebaptistch@att.net or mail to: Pastor Search Committee, 15011 Glasgow Lane, Bay Minette, AL 36507.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Enon Baptist Church, located in Wilcox County, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquires/resumés to: enonbccamden@gmail.com or mail to: Enon Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, P.O. Box 4, Camden, AL 36726.

BIVOCATIONAL PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Pineview Baptist Church, Brent, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational part-time children's minister. Send resumé to: Pineview Baptist Church, 10291 Highway 5, Brent, AL 35034, or email: pineviewbaptist@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church Rogersville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music responsible for overseeing the music ministries of the church, including planning and conducting blended worship services,

directing the choir/praise and worship team and coordinating volunteer musicians. Request interested candidates submit resumés to Corwyn Tiede at tiedeinal@aol.com.

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Tour the Sites of the Seven Churches of Revelation, Colossae and Istanbul! March 21–30. \$3,670 per person — all-inclusive. Email jimandsusanglass@hotmail.com for more information.

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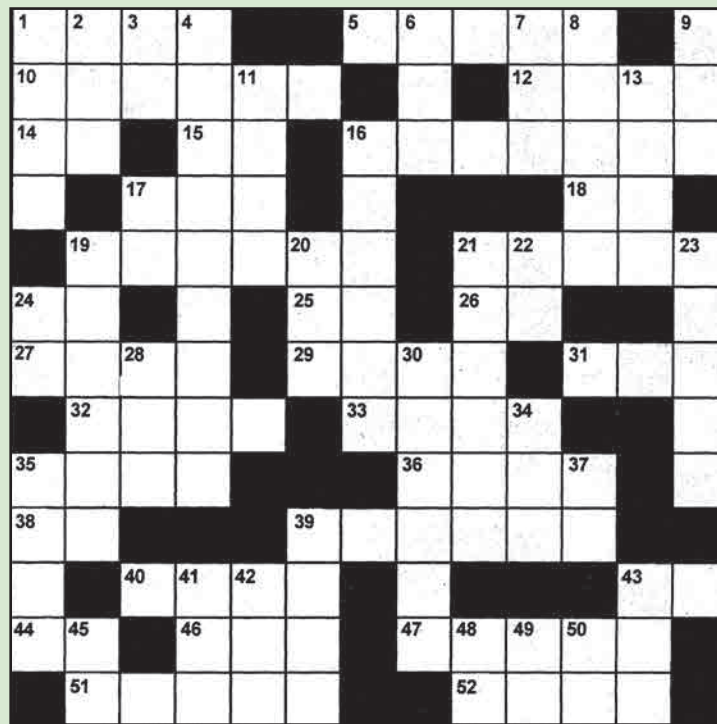
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CHRISTIAN Crossword

ACROSS

1. Hid from ___ and from generations. (Col. 1:26)
5. ___ is your reward in heaven. (Matt. 5:12)
10. The ___ shall come and take ... our place. (John 11:48)
12. I will not ___ to speak (Rom. 15:18)
14. For example.
15. Missouri.
16. ___ thy son, he shall build my house. (1 Chron. 28:6)
17. David ... feigned himself _____. (1 Sam. 21:12,13)
18. ___ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
19. The power of _____. (Esther 1:3)
21. As ___ obeyed Abraham. (1 Pet. 3:6; alt. spelling)
24. How can these things ____? (John 3:9)
25. Truth ____ Consequences.
26. Ambush between Bethel and _____. (Josh. 8:12)
27. All sailors can tie a ____.
29. An authoritative standard.
31. Into captivity unto _____. (Amos 1:5)
32. Where are the gods of ... Hena and ____? (2 Kings 18:34)
33. Amos, ... the son of _____. (Luke 3:25)
35. A middle point between extremes.
36. A unit of dry measure.
38. Above-ground subway.
39. ___ and Bartholomew. (Matt. 10:3)
40. ___, Tekel, Upharsin. (Dan. 5:25)
43. Let us ___ over unto the other side.



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- (Luke 8:22)
44. These ___ght Milcah did bear to Nahor. (Gen. 22:23)
46. Prefix having to do with the earth.
47. I write not these things to ___ you. (1 Cor. 4:14)
51. Simeon that was called _____. (Acts 13:1)
52. In the top of the rock _____. (Judg. 15:8)
- name of the place _____. (Gen. 32:30)
20. An atom.
21. Hannah ... bare a son called ... _____. (1 Sam. 1:20)
22. They fled before the men of _____. (Josh. 7:4)
23. Speed it up!
24. Book. (abbr.)
28. Eggs.
30. Whitewater.
34. 1,101 in Roman numerals.
35. What the hand wrote on the wall. (Dan. 5:25)
37. Kitchen Police. (abbr.)
39. Balak brought Balaam unto the top of _____. (Num. 23:28)
41. In the white of an _____. (Job 6:6)
42. Formerly.
43. Jewel.
45. I am glorified ____ them. (John 17:10)
48. Cursed is ___ that curseth thee. (Num. 24:9)
49. But also to die ___ Jerusalem. (Acts 21:13)
50. Mom.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.



Feb. 16 is Hunger Sunday

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 — collected this year on Feb. 16 — is to feed hungry people.

When a dollar is contributed to the Hunger Offering, 50% will be used to feed the hungry in Alabama

by assisting associations and designated churches with food pantries. The other 50% will be distributed through the Global Hunger Fund.

Hunger Sunday is a great time to let your church know about the hunger crisis and how Alabama Baptists are responding.

To order free Hunger Offering promotional resources for your church, contact Lynn Graham at lgraham@alsbom.org or 334-613-2244.

Praying Alabama

Praying for revival in your area? Gather with others! Praying Alabama 2025 is designed to be an opportunity for your community to gather over the needs of your community and ask God to make a difference in them.

Each Praying Alabama event will be 6–7:30 p.m.

► Jan. 23 — FBC Enterprise

► Jan. 30 — FBC Bay Minette

► Feb. 6 — FBC Greenville

► Feb. 13 — Greensboro Baptist

► Feb. 20 — Parkway Baptist in Auburn

► Feb. 27 — Meadow Brook Baptist in Birmingham

► March 6 — Central Park Baptist in Decatur

► March 13 — Iron City in Anniston

► March 20 — Imago Dei in Lowndesboro

For more information, visit evangelizeAL.org/prayingalabama.

Central Alabama Library Conference: March 15

Do you serve in a library of any kind — church, public or school? If so, you're invited to the Central Alabama Library Conference.

The conference will be held at Shoal Creek Baptist Church in Deatsville on March 15, 8:30 a.m.– 3:30 p.m. Sessions will cover many aspects of library work

including administration, promotion, collection development, disciple making, and space and furnishings.

There is a \$10 charge, which includes lunch.

To register, visit churchhealthal.org/event/central-alabama-library-conference-2. For questions, contact Marcia Woodall at 334-296-1899.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies, University of Mobile



For January 26

TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS Exodus 25:1–9; 31:1–6

Immediately after God communicated covenant living instructions through Moses, He gave extensive details regarding the tabernacle (Ex. 25–40), the sacrifices to be offered (Lev. 1–7) and the priests who would serve as intermediaries (Lev. 8–10). Israel would not obey God’s commands, so He made plans to teach them about substitutionary sacrifice. God was preparing Israel for the once-for-all atonement that came through Jesus.

The Mishkan (tabernacle) was to be a moveable meeting place for God and man. Fathers would bring their sacrifices and ceremonially pass on to the animals the guilt for family sins. Priests would receive animals, sacrifice them, burn incense, pray and make atonement for the sins of families. Once each year, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place to make atonement for the entire nation. These passages introduce the physical structure of the tabernacle and the artisans who were gifted to create it.

The Task (25:1–7)

Giving. Building a place for worship required materials, and those materials were to be donated. God had already provided the people of Israel some of the necessary materials from their Egyptian neighbors, who had given them gold and silver jewelry before they left Egypt (11:2–3; 12:35–36).

Good will. The materials were given as freewill gifts for the benefit of all Israel. They were donated out of devotion to God: “So the Israelites brought a freewill offering to the Lord, all the men and women whose hearts prompted them” (35:29).

God’s Presence (8–9)

Presence. God would manifest His visible presence over the tabernacle. Once it was constructed, the tribes would know when to travel and when to remain where

they were. In time, the Levites would bear the responsibility to transport the contents when the Lord’s presence lifted off the tabernacle.

Pattern. God revealed the heavenly pattern of the tabernacle to Moses. The material construction of the earthly tabernacle was to represent what Moses had seen. The writer of Hebrews addressed this in his commentary: “These serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was warned when he was about to complete the tabernacle” (Heb. 8:5).

Equipped (31:1–6)

Leader. Bezalel, from the tribe of Judah, was a particularly gifted artisan. Though his skilled hands qualified him for the required tasks of this labor, it was the Spirit of God in his life that uniquely qualified him to lead in the task of creating objects for use in worship. This infilling of the Spirit also equipped him to teach the other artisans (35:31, 34).

Laborers. Oholiab was entrusted with the task of assisting Bezalel, while the other artisans labored with them. They were willing workers skilled in woodwork, metalwork, needlework and gemwork. See Exodus 36 for additional details about the laborers.

List. There were three sets of objects that made up the tabernacle. First were the stands, rings and curtains that marked the outer courtyard. Second, the objects in the courtyard included the bronze altar and the water laver for washing. Finally, there was the covered inner dwelling that included the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The details for each of these areas are found in the chapters that follow this passage.

I’d like to recommend Mishkan Galleries in Theodore to our readers visiting or living in the Mobile area. This beautiful location provides guests an opportunity to view full-scale artifacts that represent the type of artistry called for in Exodus.

For February 2

INHABITED Exodus 40:16–21, 34–38

The previous lesson focused on an overview of the tabernacle and the artisans who created its holy contents. Exodus 40 records the organization of these contents into a unified whole.

In the intervening chapters, several significant events occurred. Israel created and worshipped a golden calf idol in chapter 32, and Moses broke the first set of stone tablets out of anger.

The descendants of Levi were chosen to be the priestly tribe. In chapter 33, God revealed His glory while Moses was protected in the cleft of a rock.

God also introduced Himself to Moses as being compassionate, gracious, patient, faithful, forgiving, just and punitive (34:6–7). This introduction is quoted or alluded to multiple times throughout the Old Testament and exemplified in the life of Jesus.

Instructions Followed (16–21)

Moses demonstrated his faith in God by following His instructions. Jesus provided related counsel to us: “If you love me, you will keep my commands” (John 14:15).

On the first anniversary of their escape from Egypt, Moses focused Israel’s attention upon this sacred meeting place.

Rather than following the idolatrous practices of their past in Egypt, they were to turn their faith upon the God who had led them to Mount Sinai.

Moses assembled all the materials as he had previously seen in a vision. The outer courtyard was established and arranged, then the Holy Place — also known as the Tent of Meeting — was assembled with its contents.

Finally, the Ark of the Covenant was placed with the Ten Commandment tablets inside.

No words from Moses are recorded in this final chapter; rather, actions were necessary to demonstrate Moses’ faith.

Tabernacle Inhabited (34–35)

God communicated His acceptance of the tabernacle by manifesting His glory within and a cloud above the Tent of Meeting. Moses was unable to enter the tent because of the weight of the manifest glory of God.

Guidance Given (36–38)

God-led movement. Israel was to follow God’s direction.

If the manifest glory lifted off the Tent of Meeting, the Levites knew that it was time to pack up, and the rest of the tribes were to prepare to move. God’s people had to pay attention to what God was doing and follow Him.

Human-led movement. Today, we often change to please ourselves or others, not because we are consciously following the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

We switch jobs, schools, homes and even churches out of personal preferences or better benefits. We treat church as if we are consumers choosing from a menu instead of a family of Christ-followers. We focus on which Bible translation, which style of music and which style of clothing are used in worship. We ask how entertained our children and grandchildren are.

Technology-led movement. Due to technology, many people today have a difficult time discerning between reality and virtual reality and between online friends and actual friends. Breakthroughs in artificial intelligence technology make it difficult for many people to communicate for themselves. This is one further step removed from being led by the Spirit of God.

What if we built our lives upon the teachings of Jesus and the apostles with the commitment that Moses showed in building the tabernacle? We do not labor in vain when the Lord builds up our lives and as we walk in humble faith and obedience (Ps. 127:1).

EDITOR’S NOTE — The Sunday School lesson outlines are provided by Lifeway.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Adam Winn, Ph.D.
Chair and Professor, Department of Biblical and Religious Studies at Samford University



For January 26

THE INSPIRATION FOR WORSHIP Psalm 25:4–15

Because of His love, God forgives. (4–7)

The psalmist is waiting on God to act and to respond to a particular need, although the need is not specified. The theme of waiting for and trusting in the Lord to act dominates the first three verses of the Psalm.

Verses 4 and 5 pick up the theme of God guiding the psalmist in the way and truth of the Lord. In this time of uncertainty, the psalmist seeks to know and understand God's ways and realizes that God — the God of his salvation — is the only one who can teach him.

In the latter half of verse 5, the psalmist returns to the theme of waiting, saying he is willing to wait because of the Lord's goodness. The nature of this goodness is further expanded upon in verse 6, where the psalmist asks God to remember His former acts of mercy and loving-kindness.

It is because of God's past faithfulness that the psalmist waits for God to act on his behalf in the present moment. In verse 7, the psalmist asks God for forgiveness of his former sins, to not hold those sins against him but rather to bestow upon him loving-kindness.

Because of His goodness, God shows us the right way to live. (8–11)

The next three verses address the guidance God gives even to His sinful people. In particular, God guides the humble and shows them His way. To those who keep His covenant, the paths God has for them are both loving-kindness and truth. The psalmist, who is humbling him-

self and waiting on the God of the covenant in this very Psalm, presumably is seeking to be the recipient of this favor from the Lord.

In his situation, he does not seem to be experiencing God's guidance and loving-kindness and thus is reminding the Lord of these truths and urging the Lord to act on them now, in the present moment.

In verse 11, the psalmist returns to a plea for God's forgiveness of his sins, which he identifies as great. This request further illustrates the humble posture of the psalmist.

***“All the paths of the
LORD are steadfast
love and faithfulness,
for those who keep***

***His covenant and
His testimonies.”***

Psalm 25:10

**God guides us
to lead lives
of goodness.
(12–15)**

These verses
turn their atten-

tion to the blessing of the Lord upon the faithful. The psalmist declares that those who fear the Lord will dwell in prosperity and that their offspring shall inherit the earth — a promise that likely envisions God's future restoration of creation and the righteous who inherit this new creation from God.

Additionally, those who fear the Lord have the very friendship of the Lord, a friendship expressed in the covenant relationship between God and His people.

Again, the psalmist is expressing hope for his current troubling situation, one in which he feels he is not experiencing God's friendship. With this hope, the psalmist boldly declares that his eyes are constantly on the Lord because it was the Lord who, in former times, freed his feet from a previous difficulty.

It is because of God's past faithfulness, both to the psalmist himself and to God's people, that the psalmist will continue to look to the Lord for his help.

For February 2

THE ATTITUDE IN WORSHIP Psalm 40:1–11

Worship with a humble and trusting heart. (1–5)

The opening line of this Psalm evokes the theme of the previous lesson — that of waiting on the Lord. Yet while Psalm 25 expressed the psalmist's willingness to wait on the Lord for help without any resolution to his trouble, this Psalm is written from the perspective of the Lord responding to the psalmist's waiting and bringing the longed-for aid and blessing.

The psalmist, who here is David, has been rescued by God from his troubles (the pit) and placed in a good and secure place (the rock). The psalmist immediately connects his deliverance with praise for the God who delivered him, claiming that God placed a new song of praise in his mouth.

As a result, others will see God's faithfulness and place their trust in the Lord. Thus, we see the praise and worship of God having a missional result.

The author now contrasts his trust and reliance on the Lord, which took patient endurance, with those who trust in other gods for deliverance. It cannot be stressed enough that ancient people closely connected the events of their lives — the good they experienced and the evil — with the work of supernatural beings. If one god was not bringing them the result they desired, they would turn to other gods for aid. Those who worshipped only one God and waited on that one God for deliverance would be viewed as foolish.

The psalmist declares that God's deliverance proves His greatness over all other supernatural powers, claiming that none can compare to the God of Israel. God's deliverance of David leads to effusive praise.

Worship with willing obedience. (6–8)

Here David reflects on the true desire of God for His people. He claims that God does not desire sacrifice or offering. Instead, God desires His people to do His will, for the law of God to be one with the will of the people. This verse might seem odd in that it is God who set up the sacrificial system, and it is the very law of God that demands sacrifice.

There are two ways of looking at this text. First, from the vantage point of the author, these verses likely do not mean that sacrifices should be abandoned but rather that sacrifices are meaningless if one is not truly seeking to do the will of God. In other words, by comparison, the latter is far more significant than the former.

Yet this text also seems to foreshadow a future reality, namely one in which the sacrifices are no longer necessary and the people of God are transformed by the law of God written on their hearts (Jer. 31:31–34), a reality brought about by the death of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Worship unashamed. (9–11)

In these verses, the psalmist shows evidence of his gratitude through his proclamation to everyone about the salvation that God has brought to him. He is not keeping silent, but he is telling everyone of God's greatness and goodness.

Again, his worship is both missional and evangelistic. It seeks to draw others to the God of Israel, to abandoning anything else they might be placing their faith in and waiting on the Lord alone for deliverance.

Verse 11 ends with a request that the salvation the psalmist is now experiencing not end and that the love and faithfulness of God remain with him forever.

***“He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.”***


Psalm 40:3

WORD search

- ARROWS
BLESSED
BUILD
CHILDREN
COMPASSION
DELIVER
DOMINION
ENDURE
ENEMIES
FLOURISH
FOREVER
- GATE
GLORY
GOLD
GRASS
GUARD
HERITAGE
JUSTICE
KING
LABOR
LORD
NATIONS
- OPPRESSED
PEACE
PRAYER
QUIVER
RAIN
REST
REWARD
SLEEP
WARRIOR
WATCHMAN
YOUTH

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

Lass
WORDS



BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Don't worry, be happy

You are either an optimist or a pessimist. There is no in-between. Either you go through life seeing the best in people and situations or expecting and anticipating the worst.

When you drive through a packed parking lot, do you expect a convenient space to open up? Or are you already convinced you'll have to park somewhere in the next county? When the weather forecast calls for a 50% chance of rain, do you take an umbrella with you? Or just trust it will hold off until you're back home? When you look in the mirror and decide to lose 20 pounds, are you excited because you know you can do it? Or are you already reaching for that chocolate muffin, telling yourself you'll try again next week?

I find I am mostly a pessimist.

Feeling prepared

Hey, it's not all bad. When I watch my favorite football team play, I go into the game convinced they're going to lose. That way, if they actually do lose, I'm prepared for it. If they win, it's a wonderful surprise! When a morning begins cloudy and overcast, I assume it will stay that way all day long. So when the sun comes out in the afternoon, it's a bonus!

I bring this up because I've

been studying the adventures of the apostle Paul. This guy was an optimist. God blinded him, told him to go preach to his enemies, and they responded by plotting to kill him, beating him, putting him in chains and throwing him into prison. If anybody had reason to have a gloomy outlook on life, it was Paul. Instead, he was singing hymns to his fellow prisoners. He figured, what's the worst that could happen? If they kill me, I go to heaven. If I survive, I get to win more people to Jesus. I win either way!

Glass half full

You know, if we could get to that level of trust, nothing could ever get us down. I'd really like to become more like Paul. It's hard to transition from a lifetime of pessimism. But the more I study about him, the more I feel like I could become a person who sees the proverbial glass half full. And if I can do it, you can certainly do it too.

See? We're sounding more optimistic already!

MEET THE AUTHOR

Ken Lass is a retired Birmingham television news and sports anchor and an award-winning columnist for numerous publications and websites.

A New Day in Healthcare.

Committed to Our Community

Baptist Health is now strengthened by award-winning healthcare leader Orlando Health. Together, we embrace a deep commitment — not just to expanding care, but to building stronger relationships with physicians, enhancing healthcare access and uplifting community well-being. And we share a foundation of common values that will guide our future together as Baptist Health.

"Their mission aligns really well with our mission," said Amy Allen, president and chief executive officer of Baptist Health System. "Their mission is to improve the health and quality of life of the individuals and communities they serve. Our mission is to extend the healing ministry of Christ."

As a private, not-for-profit healthcare organization rooted in faith, giving back is at the core of everything we do. From increasing access to healthcare for underserved populations to reinvesting resources into local programs, we're dedicated to strengthening the fabric of Central Alabama. And we can more quickly and nimbly implement those positive changes as an independent entity.

Our community impact efforts will focus on addressing critical health needs, promoting wellness and collaborating with local partners to create lasting change — whether it's supporting mental health services, tackling food insecurity or ensuring vulnerable populations have access to essential care. We look forward to working with our local partners to identify areas where we can best serve our community.

Further, our financial reinvestment into facilities, technologies and initiatives ensures our care remains innovative and accessible. Funding innovative programs, life-changing technology and specialized experts means patient outcomes improve, physician collaboration thrives and team members are empowered to make a difference. We are dedicated to improving the healthcare of our neighbors, friends and families here in Central Alabama.

As a healthcare system whose roots extend back more than 100 years, Baptist Health continues a faith-based legacy of compassion and a steadfast commitment to Central Alabama that only grows with our new partnership with Orlando Health. Together with the community, we all aim to create a healthier, more vibrant city driven by a shared vision for a brighter tomorrow.



"Developing meaningful relationships with local residents and community leaders is one of my top priorities as I lead Orlando Health's efforts in the Central Alabama region."

*—Thibaut Van Marcke
Senior Vice President, Orlando Health
President, Baptist Health*

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MEDIA REVIEWS

By Steve Potts and Tracy Riggs Frontz

The Alabama Baptist

Poetry, ministry in the home, end times topics of recent releases

Christian Rhymes for Trying Times: Finding Hope Through the Storms of Life

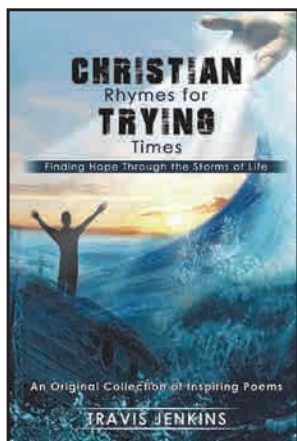
By Travis Jenkins

Independently published, 2023

Poetry has a way of communicating truth in memorable and arresting ways. Travis Jenkins has released a book of his poems called “Christian Rhymes for Trying Times.”

Jenkins, who lives in Mobile, has been a sports writer and journalist and has a special love and skill for softball. He played ball at the University of Mississippi and Union University. Following a back injury he started writing poetry, and this collection reflects that new passion in his life.

The poems in this volume are openly Christian and reflect the blessings and challenges of life.



Jenkins writes accessible poetry rather than seeking to impress with flowery or obscure terms. His poems focus on heaven, the nature of God, the saving work of Christ, daily struggles and the hope believers can hold to at all times.

There is a strong devotional quality to this collection that uplifts and encourages the reader. Jenkins is no stranger to pain and struggles, and his words touch the heart. Readers who enjoy poetic writings will experience through these short stanzas a vivid reminder of the grace of God that heals hurts and redirects our lives to fresh hope. (Potts)

Every Home a Foundation

By Phylicia Masonheimer

Thomas Nelson, 2024

Everyday tasks around one's home can feel like they are taking away from time that can be used to serve others. But that's not actually the case.

In the introduction to Phylicia Masonheimer's new book, “Every Home a Foundation: Experiencing God Through Your Everyday Routines,” she shares ways that readers can be equipped to use their homes to “love others well.”

After a career and ministry that involved a lot of travel, Masonheimer found herself working from home. She also found that “it was possible to be home a lot — yet not be home at all.”

“My mind was not content there. Each month had one or two speaking engagements or commitments to pull me out of the house — away from my young children, away from the repetitive work of dishes and laundry for the ‘real, important’ work of ministry. I lived in the home; I even loved my home, but ultimately my attitude toward home was one of ingratitude.”

Through 13 chapters divided into two parts — “A Theology of Home” and “A Liturgy of Home” — Masonheimer teaches how to find purpose in a person's home, and she gives practical tips on ways to use mundane tasks to make a

home a place of belonging, connection and service.

“Every Home a Foundation” also includes a bonus chapter with practical

advice called “Hosting with Young Children.”

Her goal for the book is perhaps best stated in the epilogue, where she writes: “I believe the world will be transformed not by more people on stages but by more people on mission, starting on the kitchen floor.” (Frontz)

Are We Living in the Last Days? Four Views of the Hope We Share about Revelation and Christ's Return

By Bryan Chapell

Baker Books, 2024

Eschatology, or the study of end times, can be fascinating and frustrating. Many believers are truly curious about what the Bible says concerning the return of Christ and what follows (and precedes) this glorious biblical promise. Yet there are major differences even among conservative evangelical Christian teachers and theologians.

To help Christians carefully sort through the major positions, Bryan

Chapell has written “Are We Living in the Last Days?”

In this accessible volume, he explains four influential perspectives concerning end time events: the dispensational premillennial view, the historic premillennial view, the amillennial view and the postmillennial view.

Chapell is president emeritus of Covenant Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Church in America) in Creve Couer, Missouri, and pastor emeritus of Grace Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Illinois.

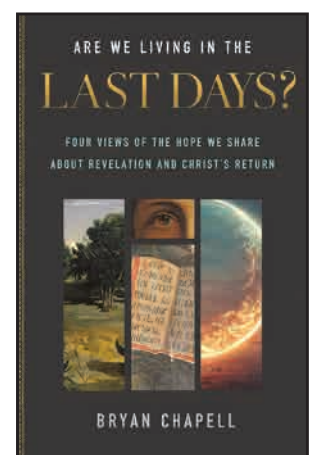
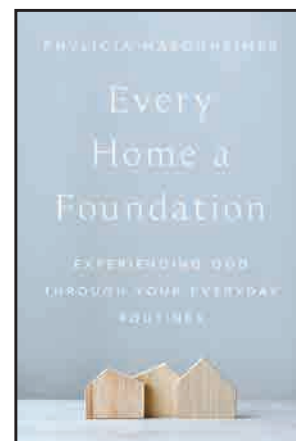
He leads Unlimited Grace Media and is the author of numerous books, including the highly regarded “Christ-Centered Preaching.”

Evangelical Christians from across the denominational spectrum will find this book on eschatology very understandable.

Chapell presents each view in its most persuasive form and shows the strengths and weaknesses of each. He is evenhanded in his approach and does not slant the presentation in favor of his preferred view.

“We don't serve God's interests by assuming those who differ with us in these perspectives are less holy or less intelligent,” he observes.

He shows how many biblical themes about the end times are held in common despite the different views, and he stresses the essentials all believers should prioritize whatever their perspective. (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.

Question of color

By Mark MacDonald
BeKnownforSomething.com

Help for leaders designing website, social media posts or print materials

Understanding colors can be complex, especially when navigating the differences between print and screen colors.

Knowing the right color model is crucial when designing a church website, creating social media content or preparing print materials.

Here are the major color models used today:

1. RGB (Red, Green, Blue) Best for digital screens (computers, TVs, smartphones)

Colors in the RGB system are created by combining varying intensities of red, green and blue light.

16 million colors

Each color channel can have a value from 0 to 255, resulting in over 16 million possible colors.

Benefits:

- Vibrancy: RGB allows for highly vibrant and bright colors, perfect for digital screens.
- Flexibility: Widely supported by most digital platforms and software.

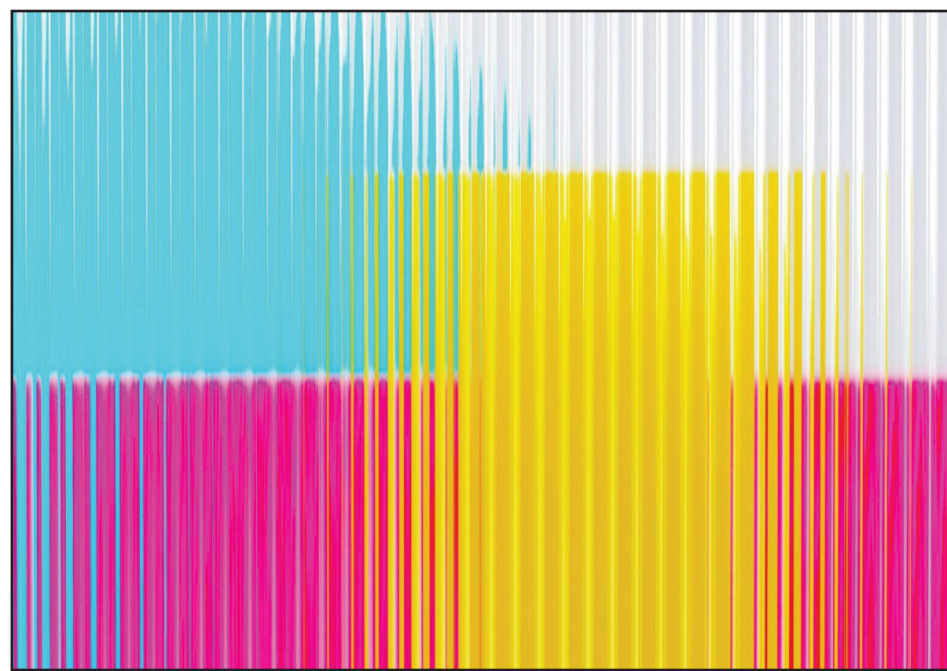
2. HEX (Hexadecimal) Best for web design

HEX is a six-digit code used in HTML, CSS and other web design languages to specify colors. It's essentially a shorthand version of RGB, converting RGB into hexadecimal format (e.g. #FFFFFF for white).

Benefits:

- Precision: Offers the same range of colors as RGB but in a simple 6-digit format (starting with a hashtag).
- Web-friendly: Used in web design code so it's easy for developers to implement.

3. PMS (Pantone Matching



Unsplash.com Photo

System) Best for spot-color printed materials

PMS is a standardized color system widely used in the printing industry.

Each color in the PMS palette is identified by a unique number, ensuring exact color matching across printed materials.

As most printing is moving towards a four-color (CMYK) process and away from spot colors, PMS is being used less.

Benefits:

- Consistency: Ensures color uniformity across various printed materials (often crucial for branding).
- Specialty Colors: PMS includes metallics and fluorescents not achievable in CMYK.

4. CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black) Best for large, full-color, print projects

CMYK combines four ink colors — cyan, magenta, yellow and black — to create a wide range of colors.

Unlike RGB, which is light-based, CMYK relies on ink blending. And because a printer selects the density of colors printed, the final color can shift between print jobs and printers.

NOTE: PMS is more accurate but must be run as an additional spot color (e.g. CMYK + PMS 185 to get a precise color). This costs extra.

Benefits:

- Print Accuracy: Designed specifically for print, it provides inexpensive color reproduction on paper.
- Cost-effective: Efficient for large-scale church printing projects.

NOTE: Converting Brand Colors to Paint Colors

As part of a church branding project, you'll usually get RGB, HEX, PMS or CMYK values for your church colors.

This doesn't help if you want to paint a church wall!

Contact your local paint store and use a color-matching tool or

software to find the closest corresponding paint color (they may suggest one).

Check with paint store

Alternatively, bring a printed sample of your brand color (or a PDF) to a paint store, where they can use a special scanner tool to match the color precisely. Remember, it'll only be as accurate as the printed sample you supply. So, always test a small amount of the paint on the intended surface, since the final appearance can vary based on the material and lighting conditions. "Close" is often good enough.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author and church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com, empowering thousands of pastors and churches to become known for something relevant (a communication thread) throughout their ministries, on their church websites and social media. His church branding book, "Be Known for Something," is available at BeKnownBook.com.



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Encouraging

By Brian Koonce
Missouri's The Pathway

Oklahoma City girl's prayers lift up St. Louis church

You never know who might be praying for you. Just ask Michael Byrd, the pastor of Faith Community Bible Church in north St. Louis.

Or you could ask Bethany Chapin, an 11-year-old from Oklahoma City.

Byrd, his wife, Traci, and Faith Community were featured last summer as part of LifeWay's Vacation Bible School curriculum, highlighting North American missions. Byrd said it was humbling to know people were praying for them from all over the nation.

"During the time we received several letters, videos, and even emails of how people were praying with us and for us," he said. "And it really just seemed like those things came at the right time when we needed the encouragement the most."

Continued ministry

But when VBS was over in 2023, one young lady — then 10 years old — never stopped praying. Bethany, a member of Southern Hills, Oklahoma City, said she felt drawn to the Byrd family and the church planter.

"I thought it was cool how they were ministering to their neighborhood," she said. "And I just liked them as a family. I also liked how Miss Traci started a cooking class for all the ladies around her."

So she and the others in her VBS class prayed for the Byrds. At the end of the week, Bethany asked the missions teacher if she could have the poster of the Byrd family. That poster found its way to her wall, and the family and church found their way into her prayers each night.



Photo courtesy of Missouri's The Pathway

Eleven-year-old Oklahoma Baptist prayer warrior Bethany Chapin displays the poster of St. Louis church planter Michael Byrd, his family and his church. The poster reminds her to lift them up in prayer on a regular basis.

"I would pray for their community, church and their family every time I saw the poster," Bethany said.

That was a year ago. In summer of 2024, when the Chapin family began planning a vacation to St. Louis, the poster got the wheels in Bethany's mind spinning.

While her parents were tossing around ideas like going up in the Arch or sailing on a river boat, she



NAMB photo by Ben Rollins
Michael and Traci Byrd — both St. Louis natives — serve as North American Mission Board missionaries in north St. Louis.

suggested visiting Byrd's church.

"I wanted to see the places I'd seen in the VBS videos," Bethany said. "I wanted to go to their church, meet them in person and see them worship and share the gospel."

Surprise visit

The family looked up the Byrds on social media, but their messages never reached Michael. But they figured out the church's address, and decided to pop in on a Wednesday night Bible study.

Byrd said the sight of Bethany and her family walking through the door caught him off guard, then brought joy.

"We were at church preparing for Wednesday night prayer and Bible study when this new family walks in," Byrd said.

Byrd said he was shocked to find out they'd come all this way and

that he still had prayer warriors praying for him, his family and the church.

"We were extremely encouraged by their sacrifice," he said. "They took time out on their vacation to not just visit us, but encourage our hearts. It was priceless."

The family got to worship and study with Faith Community Bible Church — the topic that Wednesday night was, appropriately enough, prayer — as well as have BBQ with Byrd and one of his sons the next day.

"To know that even that far away, people are still praying, still lifting up me and my family to the Lord, and also calling out our church to the Father is extremely encouraging," Byrd said. "It was just a reminder that God will always send you what you need right when you need it."

Byrd said he hopes Bethany — and others — keep praying the gospel would continue to be proclaimed in his corner of St. Louis.

"As we continue to serve Jesus, pray that we remain faithful to the mission and vision that God has entrusted to us," he said. "We desire to see leaders developed and churches planted all throughout the inner city. With the leading of the Lord and the prayers of the saints, God's will be done."

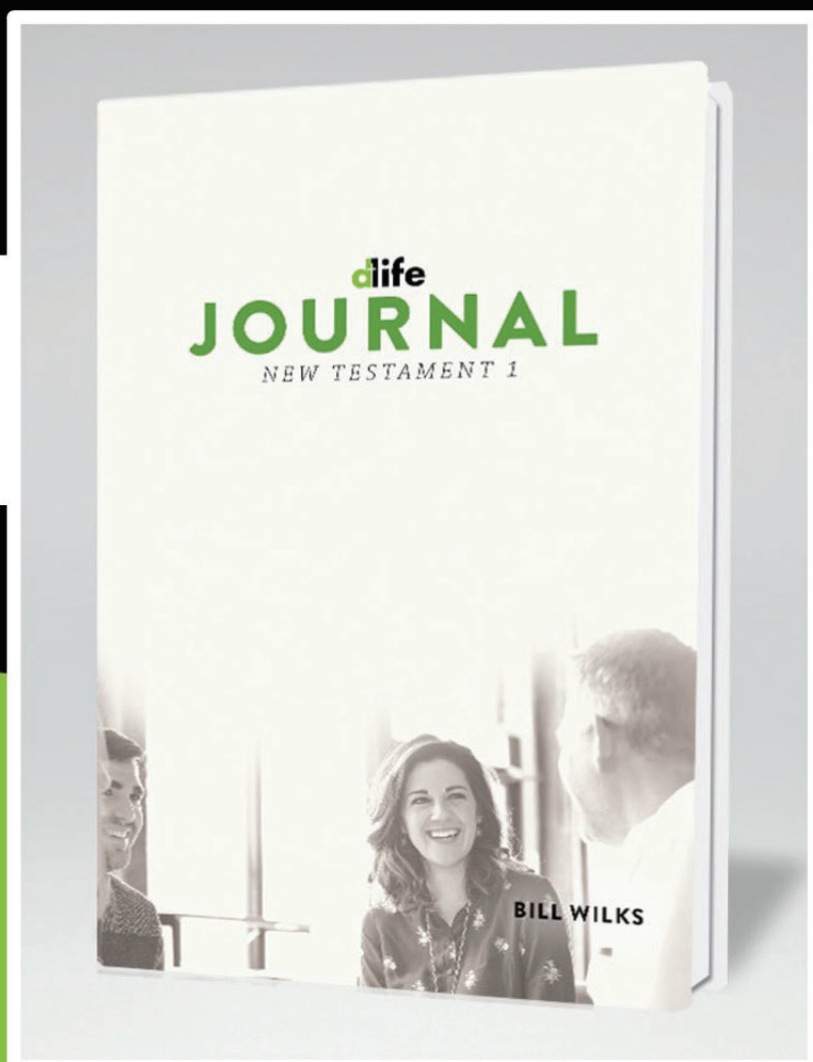
For her part, Bethany has promised to keep praying, and the poster remains on her wall.

"He told us prayer requests, so I'm definitely going to keep praying for him, his church and his family."

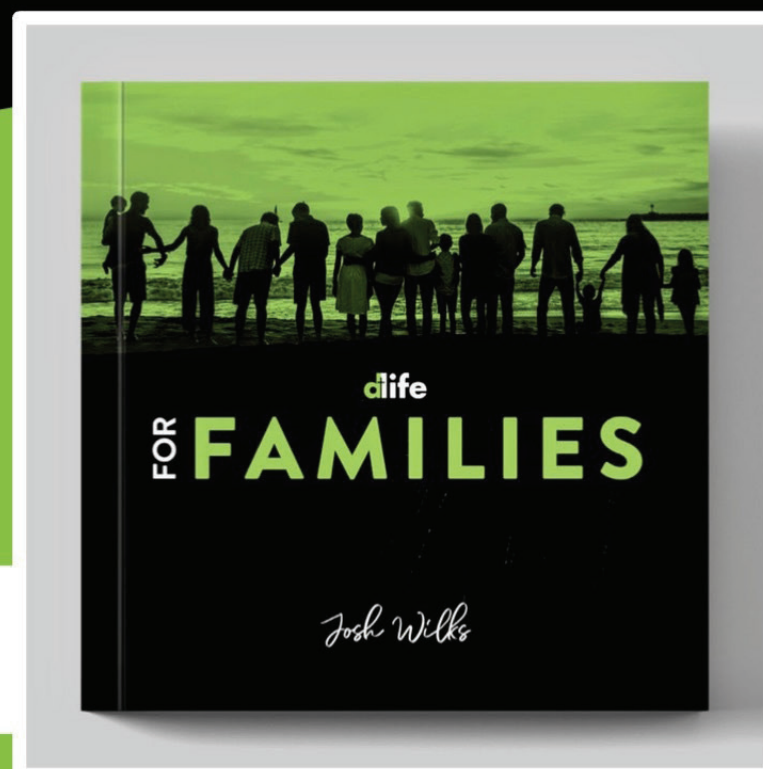
EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was written by Brian Koonce and originally published by The Pathway.

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• *Spotlighting* SIN areas

By Jonathan Hayashi

Missouri's The Pathway

First person: What drives church leaders out of ministry?

No, no, no. Not him!" was my first thought when I heard the tragic story. It was one of my close pastor friends who was terminated from a church. I couldn't believe the news. "Why, God? Why?"

What are the sin areas that get pastors out of ministry?

1. Is it sexual immorality?

My professor talked about his first pastorate as an associate, and soon the senior pastor was caught committing adultery with a children's worker in the nursery.



HAYASHI

The church called a special business meeting on a Wednesday night and forced the senior pastor out of the church.

Even recently, a spiritual giant of a leader I looked up to was caught committing the act of adultery.

Now the wife and the children are mourning as the father needed to leave the home. The entire church body was taken back by the tragic news and struggled to process the hurt and distrust from the leadership.

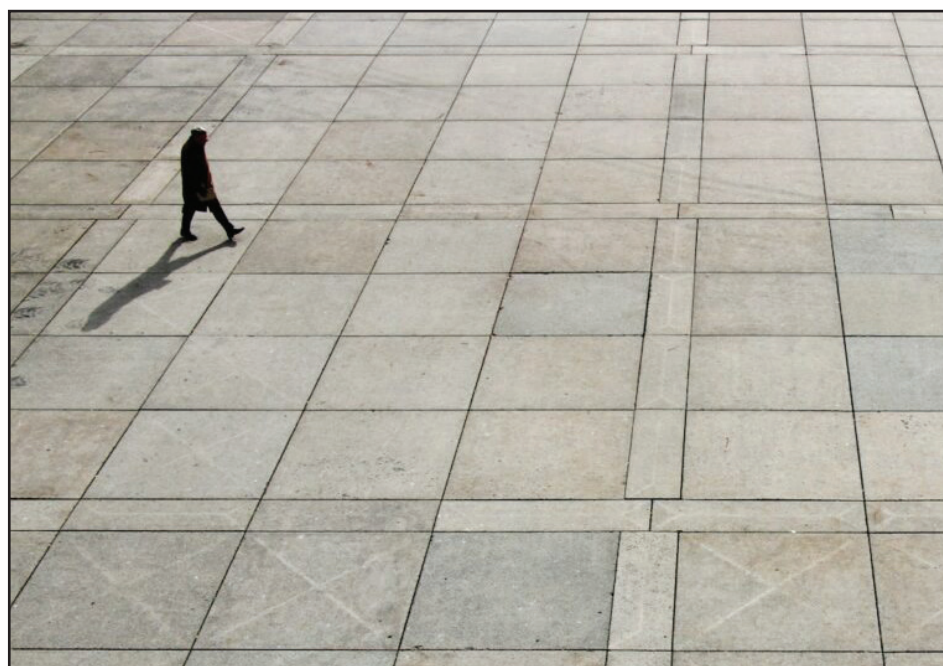
Financial irresponsibility

But I think there's more that gets pastors out.

2. Is it financial embezzlement?

I think this shocking news makes it most to the social media feeds or article posts by big news groups.

I remember even recently when a pastor in the area was caught by taking money secretly out of the church's reserve account in the



Unsplash.com Photo

amount of \$250,000. He was immediately removed, and the church is still facing the consequences.

However, this doesn't happen very often. I think there's something a little more common.

3. Is it bitter roots?

I remember going through a rough time in ministry at one point and said, "I'm worried I am going to just end up as a bitter, gloomy, angry pastor and forget what it was like to first enter into ministry and the joy of serving Jesus."

I guess it makes sense, right?

The pressure of ministry, sleepless nights, carrying the weight of the flock.

Hebrews 12:14-15 is so helpful here, "Strive for peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled."

I have read many different leadership books, but they rarely talk about the struggle against bitter-

ness. What do angry, cynical, bitter pastors look like?

'Anger turned inward'

Someone once told me, "Depression is anger turned inward." Why?

For they have allowed the sin of emotional bitterness to take rampant control over their lives. Paul says in Romans, "Do not let sin control the way you live" (Rom 6:12).

Bitterness is scary because it can eat you for lunch, like cancer taking up your whole body.

The greatest weapon to battle against the root of bitterness is trusting in the sovereignty of God.

How should pastors respond against bitterness in their hearts?

Our faith in Christ must triumph over our feelings in self. The best way to counter bitter thoughts is to trust and embrace the comfort you find in the glorious doctrine of God's sovereign grace.

Why?

Satan only has certain limits, like in the story of the book of Job. He is not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent like our Creator God.

The book of Hebrews says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb 13:5). God in His infinite love does not unfriend us or walk out on us because we mess up.

Be encouraged in Christ, my friend. Though yet still a wretched, vile, rebellious, wicked sinner, you are purchased and redeemed by Christ who came and died for you.

"Bitterness is scary because it can eat you for lunch, like cancer taking up your whole body. The greatest weapon to battle against the root of bitterness is trusting in the sovereignty of God."

Jonathan Hayashi
lead pastor
Sola Church, Kearney, Missouri

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was written by Jonathan Hayashi and originally published by the Pathway.