

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



VBS participants play a books of the Bible game during recreation time.

Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

‘Old-time religion’

Second annual 55-plus Vacation Bible School blesses senior adult ministry

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Great ideas for church activities are found in many places — association newsletters, newspapers like The Alabama Baptist, word of mouth at meetings and conferences and from church members themselves.

The second annual 55-plus Vacation Bible School recently held at

First Baptist Church Birmingham was a result of the latter.

Retired couple Sonny and Joy Peery moved from their home in Meridian, Mississippi, to Birmingham to be nearer to their children. They had previously attended FBC Meridian and kept up with the church’s ministries.

“They learned First Baptist (Meridian) was doing this (55-plus VBS), and they came to me and

said, ‘Look at this. This looks like fun,’” said Jim Cooley, senior pastor of FBC Birmingham, of the Sept. 8–10 event. “They got materials from them and said, ‘Can we do this?’”

Revitalizing

Cooley loved the idea but added one condition — that the Peerys would be in charge.

They wholeheartedly agreed and

ran with it. In fact, the event has revitalized the church’s senior adult ministry. It is called the 55-Plus Ministry, which easily defines this group.

The premise of the 55-plus VBS is to bring back the VBS that many in this age group experienced as children. Vacation Bible Schools are now more contemporary, and although changes may have been (See ‘FBC Birmingham,’ page 3)

Christmas in Alabama

See pages 8–9 for upcoming Christmas programs and presentations at churches across the state



The Baptist Paper

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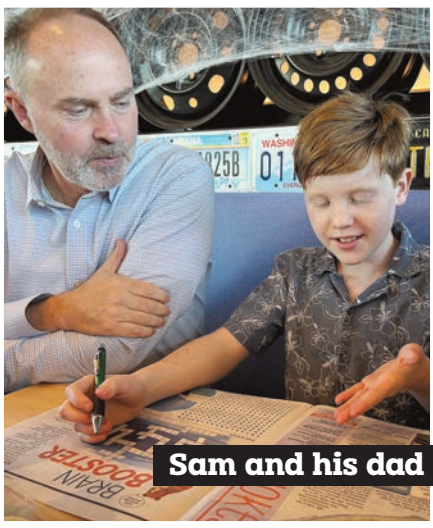
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The Alabama Baptist

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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 11.

OPINION

RASHIONAL
THOUGHTSConsider TAB
when selecting
charitable gifts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief, The Alabama Baptist

Required minimum distribution — if that phrase is part of your life each year, then we at TAB Media Group would love for you to consider helping underwrite the media ministry efforts we are working hard to sustain.

You might be interested in supporting our Kids Edition (see page 2) by helping fund the resources needed. We are already experiencing tremendous success, but keeping the annual price reasonable for subscribers could be a challenge.

Or maybe you see the need — like our team does — of investing in the equipment, training and personnel to provide high quality, quick turnaround video news and feature segments on our social media channels. We've got a plan and a willing partner. Now all we need is the seed money.

And then there's the potential of a book publishing arm along with the already-established website development resource, Hosted Church.

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We ask you to pray for us as we continually seek the Lord's direction in how we are to live out the ministry assignment of TAB Media Group.

I'd love to talk more. Email me a jrash@tabmedia.group or call 800-803-5201.



FBC Birmingham brings VBS elements back to those who appreciate them most

(continued from page 1)

needed to reach today's generation, elements of VBS programs from the 50s, 60s and 70s — like taking a missions offering — have been lost in some cases.

The Peerys' goal was to bring them back for those who would most appreciate them.

One of the traditions that was a priority to be included was how each day started — with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag, the Bible and the Christian flag.

Continuing the tradition of the old-time opening assemblies, a music time was included. But instead of rousing choruses of "This Little Light of Mine" and "Do Lord, Remember Me," the 55-plus VBS attendees enjoyed singing classic hymns.

A large group Bible study led by Cooley followed.

Then another hit of nostalgia came — snack time with old-fashioned snacks. RC Cola, windmill cookies and those butter cookies with the hole in the middle that children used to stack on their fingers were fun reminders of childhood VBS. They snacked while reminiscing with other participants.

Recreation time followed, but there was no running, dodge ball or tag.

Instead, one game had pool noodles cut into pieces, each with a book of the Bible written on it and a long rope. A throwback to the days of Bible drills, the teams worked quickly to arrange and place them in order.

Another beloved time for many was craft time. The smell of rubber cement or Elmer's glue along with a plethora of Popsicle sticks, various colors of construction paper and yarn, and a lot of imagination was mirrored by activities not quite as messy but still very meaningful.

One craft time involved making bookmarks. Craft sticks still came



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Attendees sing classic hymns during First Baptist Church Birmingham's 55-plus Vacation Bible School.

into play for those who wanted to transfer images to their creations. Tassels of various colors could be added.

Though not a part of VBS from their youth, these seasoned citizens finished the three-day adventure with a Southern Baptist staple — a delicious lunch that allowed even more fellowship time before the fun ended.

And just like VBS from years back, all ages helped make it possible.

Instead of the church's minister of music leading the music, they invited a couple of retired ministers of music to lead. Two Beeson Divinity School students who work with the youth at FBC Birmingham led the recreation.

"One of the things that we love about our church is that it's a genuine fellowship, kind of the way churches used to be. But what I love is our senior folks know our college kids by name," Cooley said.

During a recent after-church activity on Labor Day weekend, the church provided grilled chicken, and church members brought sides and desserts.

"We probably had 20 of our college kids stay," Cooley said. "I told our college minister, 'What that means is, this is my church. I stay at my church and eat dinner when they have it.'"

For churches that want to incorporate this activity into their calendars, Sonny and Joy Peery have some advice.

"We have a team that works on Bible school on and off during the year," they said. "The internet and brainstorming help us come up with theme ideas. This year's theme was 'Give Me That Old-Time Religion,' where we followed the same nostalgic-based concepts with a few time improvements to the schedule. The curriculum was based on Hebrews 11 and 12. We ended the week with dinner on the grounds."

Being organized

"To make things go smoothly, we have a kitchen team, a craft team, a recreation leader, a director, a song leader and, of course, our Bible study leader.

"We found being organized was helpful. For example, following a daily schedule worked well. Just be ready to adjust it!" the Peerys said.

"We have loved being a part of First Baptist and the Bible school. Everyone seemed to enjoy it and has already asked about next year! It does take time, preparation and prayer — but it's well worth it."



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

VBS participants make bookmarks during craft time.

Your Voice



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

Overcoming the challenge of launching inventive ideas

By Karen Moore

karenmooreauthor.com

Human beings are blessed with brilliant minds. Sometimes they even amaze themselves with their inventive ideas and inspiring perspectives.

They feel strong and excited as they run toward their possibilities, only to be stopped in their tracks before they ever get to step one. What happens? What gets in the way of the inspiration and confidence they were feeling one minute and the choice to turn back, put the manuscript under the bed, set the invention aside or stop the presses?

Maybe we're possibility procrastinators. God gives us an amazing idea, and it feels like something we should run with, but then we hesitate.

We decide to ask our spouse or a good friend what they think about our idea. They are mildly supportive, but not enthusiastic. Since they don't exactly encourage us, we go on and find someone else to share the idea with. We just know someone will see the utter brilliance of it and suggest ways we should run with it. At least, that's what we hope for.

Different spin

Unfortunately, other people put their own life experiences and spin on an idea. They look at you and they know your past failures and accomplishments. They remind you that you haven't been successful in this way before, so why should you be now? They hold up your shortcomings and try to save you from embarrassing yourself by trying

something that might be bigger than you are.

They are not remembering that any idea worth its salt needs to be so big it can never come to fruition without God's help. After all, you're not the only part of the idea that could make it succeed.

What else stops you from growing, changing, trying new things?

Why do you believe so much in what other's say that you don't believe in what you say, what you feel God has shared with you?

It seems to me this is a common dilemma. Ideas are fragile, and humans are even more fragile. We don't want to fail. We don't want to appear foolish to the world. When the light of inspiration fails and doubts prevail, we feel more comfortable to put the idea back in a box and simply let it go. It must not have been a God idea after all.

Here's a thought. What if you played with your idea a little bit longer? What if you took one step all by yourself to grow it? What if you thanked those who shared their opinions and then kept praying. After all, if you and God are going to build this idea, it may turn out to be something unstoppable.

You can always give up, but maybe that's not the answer.

Maybe you have to step past the naysayers, the practical ones, and choose to open doors they cannot see. Maybe you and God together are a force to be reckoned with!

You can do it!

"[Church libraries] supply Christian value-based materials for children and adults, along with uplifting encouragement and resources for parents and grandparents as an incentive to read to their children," said **Bev League**, church library ministry coordinator for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board. "As it is often said, 'The lap is better than any app!'"

"If we talk about the First Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening ... the entire trajectory of religion in America changed in those moments," said religious trends researcher **Ryan Burge**. "My definition of revival is a whole lot more people going to a house of worship this weekend than a year ago."

"AI doesn't give your church a voice, it can amplify the one you already have. Use it wisely, align it with your brand thread and let your community hear something worth listening to," said church communication expert **Mark MacDonald**.

Excellence and leadership [are] not circumstantial — it's habitual. It doesn't wait for the perfect role or platform. It shows up wherever the leader serves.

Chris Crain, executive director, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

Samford ranked among best Christian colleges

Samford University is ranked in the 2026 list of "Best Christian Colleges in America" by the school search platform Niche.com in its annual rankings of colleges and universities.

The rankings are based on analysis of academic, admissions, financial and student life data from the U.S. Department of Education, along with millions of reviews from students and alumni.

According to the company, the Best Christian Colleges rank-

ing features "leading academic institutions that offer students an education and college experience rooted in Christian traditions and faith."

Samford is also featured in the Niche 2026 ranking of "Most Conservative Colleges in America" based upon direct student input of their own political leaning and their perceptions of the campus political preferences.

To learn more, see Niche.com. (Samford University)

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ANNIE F. DOWNS
author, speaker and podcast host

The only way we can be who we should be is if God Himself puts a new heart and spirit inside of us, and not just any heart and spirit. He gives us His own heart and His own Spirit. This is nothing short of miraculous. Do you know someone who has a heart of stone? Pray today that the Lord would replace it with a new heart of flesh purchased by the work of Jesus.

Lindsay Allen
Mobile, Alabama

One of my worst aggravations is that I am a professional worrier. Since it's not an outward sin, I find it easier to commit. It is so common in my life that I often forget to ask forgiveness for it. Am I alone in this quandary?

John Marshall
@john316marshall via X

Pastor, you may have crushed your sermon [Sunday], or the sermon may have limped along.

Regardless of how you saw it — you proclaimed the Word of God, encouraged the church of God and you brought glory to God.

Leave the fruit to the Father and know you served well [Sunday].

Daniel Ritchie
@DanielRitchie via X

“All the pain, all of the differences, all the different cultures, different approaches and the language, all of that is there, but the love of Jesus kind of unites us in such a special way,” said bivocational pastor **Victor Akhterov**, describing how Russians and Ukrainians worship together in his church. Akhterov serves alongside two other bivocational pastors — one Ukrainian and the other Russian — at River of Life Dallas-Church, which is composed of Ukrainians, Russians and people from across the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

“I’m convinced the best response is not retreat but engagement,” Researcher **George Barna** said. “Bible-believing Christians must be more candid and bolder in engaging friends and family in dialogue about critical moral issues. We cannot let unbiblical views go unchallenged.”



Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Taking the gospel to the streets

I was driving around town taking care of a few errands when I came to a red light at a busy intersection. As I pulled to a stop, I heard the intense voice of a man saying, “Have you been saved?”

I glanced to my left, and there on the sidewalk was a gray-haired, bearded man. He was wearing what we used to call a sandwich board — one of those double tablets that slips over your head so it can be read in front and back.

On the tablets were written things such as, “Jesus is the only way to heaven” and “Repent and be saved.” The man was pacing back and forth along both streets, and when cars stopped he would shout at the occupants, asking if they know Jesus Christ as Savior, and other spiritual messages.

Mix of emotions

Some drivers and passengers would smile and wave at him. A few honked their horns (I’m assuming that was a sign of approval!). Many just ignored him and waited for the light to turn green.

I found myself with a curious mix of emotions. Part of me felt as though I should park the car and get out there with him. But another part of me acknowledged that I don’t have the courage to display such a bold profession of faith. And yet another part of

me — the skeptical part — wondered if his street preaching was really doing any good. Was he really making any kind of difference? Or were passersby just laughing at him?

In less than a minute, the light turned, and I was on my way. As I drove off, I could still hear him shouting at cars.

Model the lifestyle

I found myself thinking a lot about him. Clearly, he didn’t care what others might think. He was focused on fulfilling the Great Commission: “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations.”

Laugh at him? Ignore him? Do so at your own risk. He couldn’t care less. He was called to a certain form of ministry, and he was living it.

We might not be comfortable in such a ministry, but all of us can model a lifestyle that resembles a sandwich board around our bodies.

We all have our own streets to walk.

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

KEVIN McCRELESS

Kevin McCreless, longtime pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Rainsville, died Oct. 16. He was 67.

A graduate of Corner High School, McCreless held a bachelor's degree from Samford University, a master's from Beeson Divinity School and a doctorate from Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary, Boston, Massachusetts.

In February, Broadway Baptist honored McCreless and named him pastor emeritus upon his retirement after 33 years of ministry there. The church sanctuary also was named the McCreless Worship Center.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Terri; son, Luke; daughter, Katie; and four grandchildren.

BOB POSEY

Bob Posey, pastor, evangelist and church planter, died Oct. 11 in Tupelo, Mississippi. He



McCRELESS

was 95. Posey earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Mississippi and a master's from New Orleans Seminary. He served as pastor of several churches in Alabama, including First Baptist Church Red Bay and Elkdale Baptist Church in Selma.

He spent 10 years as a full-time evangelist while a member of FBC Center Point in Pinson. As a church planter, Posey started Westwood Baptist, Selma; Carson Road Baptist, Center Point; Pioneer Baptist, Pinson; and was one of five people to start The Church at Lay Lake, Columbiana. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Bobbie, and is survived by his second wife, Nelly; children, Steve and Karen; three granddaughters; and eight great-grandchildren.

TOM WHATLEY

Tom Whatley, longtime pastor of Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, died Oct. 22.

Whatley originally thought he would have a military career, but then he answered the call to ministry he felt God had placed on his life. His



POSEY

father, T.W., was an Alabama Baptist pastor at the time and volunteered him to preach at a nearby church. Whatley said preaching that sermon "was the happiest I'd ever been in life."

He still had an obligation to serve three years in the military, but after he finished he resigned his commission and attended Southwestern Seminary.

During that time, he served as pastor of a country church, then Leighton Baptist Church near Muscle Shoals called him as pastor.

Whatley spent five and a half years at Leighton Baptist until he returned to Southwestern to get his doctorate in ministry. After finishing his degree, he served as pastor of Central Baptist Church, Florence, for five and a half years.

He then accepted the call to serve as pastor of Woodward Avenue Baptist and stayed there 27 years until he retired in 2005.

He is survived by his wife, Roslyn; children, Steve, Stacy and Jennifer; eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.



WHATLEY



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choose well.

NEWS

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Sammy Gilbreath** was officially recognized as pastor emeritus of **Hill Crest Baptist Church, Anniston**, Oct. 12.

The staff presented Gilbreath and his wife, Carol, with a special commissioned painting. Pictured are (l to r) Pastor Richard Sego, Gilbreath, Milton Harris, Tim McFather and Phillip Haynes.



Photo courtesy of Hill Crest Baptist Church

COLBERT LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Shandy Dill** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Center Star, Killen**. Previously he served as lead pastor of First Baptist Church Scottsboro. Dill and his wife, Lindsey, have two children.



Facebook photo

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Max Buttram**, senior pastor, and **Todd Dean**, associate pastor of First Baptist Church Oak Grove, Sylacauga, were honored Oct. 26 during the worship service for their 25 years of ministry at FBC. Wes Johnson, director of missions for Coosa River Baptist Association, presented letters



Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

of commendation from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. A luncheon was held in their honor following the service. Pictured are (l to r) Charlene and Max Buttram and Cecelia and Todd Dean.

MOBILE NETWORK

► **Mack Morris**, who was serving as interim pastor of Union Baptist Church, Grand Bay, has taken the position of interim pastor for First Baptist Church Lucedale, Mississippi.

PINE BARREN ASSOCIATION

► **Jamie Agee** (shown here with his wife, Taylor, and their three children) is the new senior pastor of **Camden Baptist Church**. Previously he served as the church's youth pastor. Before coming to Camden, Agee served as a lay preacher and deacon at Pine Hill Baptist Church.

► **Pine Barren Baptist Association** celebrated its 175th anniversary at the association's annual meeting Oct. 12 at Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden. Pastor Charles Autery served as moderator. Special music was provided by Rebecca Hicks, director of worship and children's ministries at Camden Baptist. The association was honored



Submitted photo



Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

with a special presentation by Jim Lambert (right), a commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, with Autery (left) accepting the plaque. Several Alabama Baptist entities shared about their ministries. Greg Davis, president of ALCAP, was the guest preacher. Steve Dunn is the associational missionary.

SULPHUR SPRINGS ASSOCIATION

► The churches of **Sulphur Springs Baptist Association** will hold a special Thanksgiving celebration service at Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, Nov. 25, 6:30 p.m. Joe McKeever, preacher, cartoonist and blogger, will be guest speaker with music by the association choir, directed by Jay Freeman. McKeever will draw character sketches prior to the event. Rodney Puryear is director of missions.

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Jason Potvin** is the new pastor of **Shiloh Baptist Church, Sardis**. He previously served as the church's interim pastor. Potvin and his wife, Ashley, have three children.



Photo courtesy of Ashley Potvin

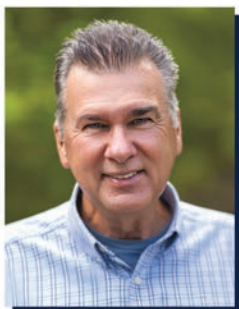
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Submissions that include complete details of the event, celebration or honor; at least one high resolution photo of the event or honoree; and the name and phone number of a contact person at your church are greatly appreciated.

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY DIANNA L. CAGLE AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL



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Fire damages Mobile church's sanctuary

A fire at 3Circle Church Midtown in Mobile was caused by an apparent electrical issue, according to Mobile police.

More than 50 firefighters from Mobile Fire-Rescue Department responded to the two-alarm structure fire shortly after midnight Oct. 23.

"Thanks to the quick and diligent response of Mobile

Fire and Rescue, the blaze was contained to the sanctuary," Kevin Blackwell, executive director of the Mobile Baptist Network, said in an Oct. 23 Facebook post.

The fire caused extensive damage to the building, but no injuries were reported.

"We're just glad nobody got hurt," church member Henry Faith told a local

news station. "That's all we can ask for. You know all of this can be rebuilt."

3Circle Church is a five-site network with locations in Mobile and Baldwin counties. Campus pastor Micah Gaston said the community has been supportive of the church in the aftermath of the fire, and church members have found ways to serve.

A Nov. 1 barbecue fundraiser was a great success, Gaston told local news outlet WKRG.

"There's going to be a lot of ... logistics hurdles [to] figure out," he said. "And so today was just about providing a great meal for people and helping support those next steps for us." (TAB)

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Christmas in Alabama





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Resources to help you slow down and focus on Christ this Advent season

The Advent season reminds Christians to slow down and reflect on the coming of Christ as celebrated in our Christmas traditions.

Advent 2025 begins Nov. 30. Looking for resources to help guide your personal Advent worship? Here are a few suggestions:

► **The Christmas Code** by O.S. Hawkins — This seasonal favorite in Hawkins’ Code series includes 25 devotions on the birth of Jesus from prophe-

cies in the Old Testament to salvation. This inexpensive paperback is also available in bulk for churches or individuals to distribute during the holiday season. All proceeds support GuideStone’s Mission:Dignity ministry.

► **Call Him By Name: A 25-Day Advent Devotional Celebrating the Names of Jesus** by Jeff Redmond — Pastor Jeff Redmond dives deep into the meanings of the many names bestowed upon Christ. Each

reading includes a dose of encouragement to help readers make the name of Jesus known during the holiday season.

► **Waiting for Christmas: An Invitation to Wait, Wonder and Worship** by Janet Denison — In her new book, Janet Denison explores the contemporary search for hope and peace in God’s presence even when life feels uncertain. Each day’s reading includes Scripture, a reflection and encouragement to remind readers that God is always at work, even in times of waiting. Denison is the author of several digital Bible studies and leads the ministry Foundations with Janet Denison.

For more selections for families or small groups, visit lifeway.com/advent and crossway.org/articles/advent-devotionals to browse their offerings.

In addition to books, there are many free digital resources available.

This year, Lifeway Kids has a free family Advent guide available for download. The guide moves through Luke 1 and 2 and is a companion to “Behold the Savior,” a four-week Advent study with versions for men and women.

Churches wanting to offer

resources to their members or to the community might produce a collection of devotionals written by church members or a Christmas Scripture reading plan. Check out the blog of Calvary Baptist Church in Warrior (calvarybaptistwarrior.org, search “Christmas”) for an example of the latter.

Finally, make plans to attend at least one Christmas event or celebration at another church this year. Advent traditions are a reminder that Christians are part of a greater Church family that has existed for generations and continues to exist across the globe. Believers are still united in joyful anticipation of the day the Light of the World will return for His children. (TAB)

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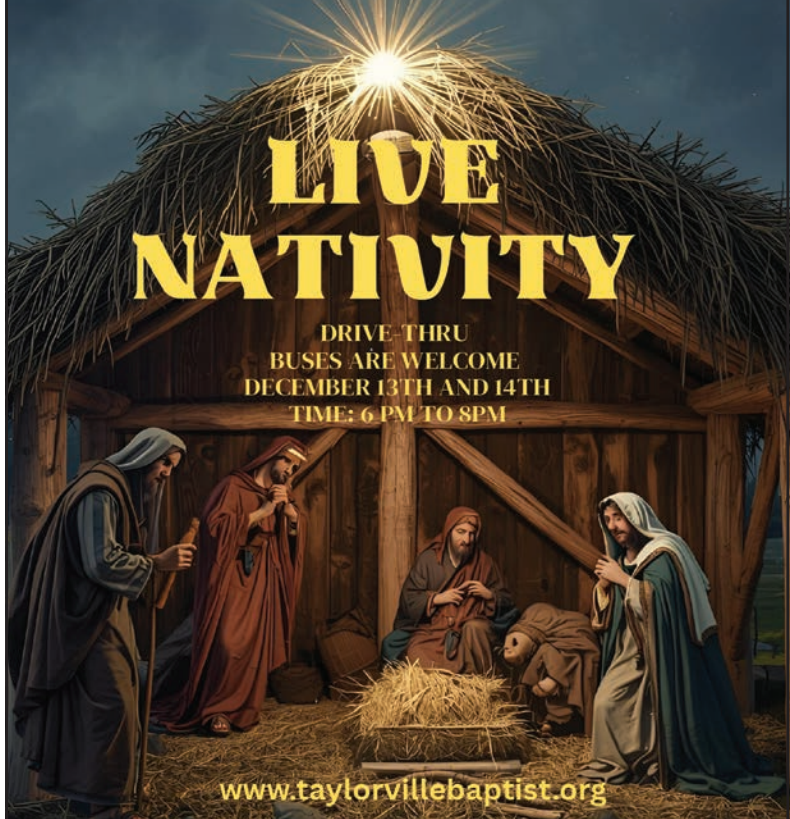
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December 14, 2025 at 6:00 PM


ONLY + JESUS



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UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions



SBOM photo

Swanberg brings joy and encouragement to senior adults

Dennis Swanberg, “America’s Minister of Encouragement,” brings laughter and joy to the more than 325 senior adults gathered for

the Saints Alive event, held Oct. 23 at First Baptist Church Prattville. Organized by Frank Jones, state missionary in the office of Sunday School

& discipleship, the event also featured the gospel music of Bob Jones, minister of seasoned adults at First Baptist Church Trussville.

Alabama Hunger Ministry Support

During November, 100% of gifts designated to the Hunger Ministry Fund will be used to ensure families across Alabama receive help when it’s most needed. Your State Board of Missions actively partners with 60 hunger ministries in our state. Every dollar given will provide much needed

support this month as they work daily to meet physical needs and share the gospel and the love of Christ. Anyone who wishes to donate may send a check to: Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 681970, Prattville, AL 36068-1970, for: Hunger Ministry Fund Debit card and credit

card users may contribute by filling out the form at alsbom.org/hunger. Please note: Churches are asked to make their donations by check rather than by credit card in order to maintain the accuracy of church giving reports. Individuals may choose to donate online or by check as described above.

Bivocational Minister and Spouse Retreat at Shocco Springs

Bivocational ministers, bring your spouses and join us for this time of encouragement, fellowship, inspiration and prayer,

including a Friday evening session with pastor and associational missionary Craig Carlisle. This retreat will be held

Feb. 6–7 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. For more information or to register, visit leadercareAL.org/bivo.

WORD search

- BAPTIZE

BELIEVERS

CALLING

CHAINS

CHANGE

DIRECTION

EARTHQUAKE

FIRE

FREEDOM

GROWTH

GUIDE

JOURNEY

LYDIA

MACEDONIA

MISSION

OBEY
- PAUL

PETER

POWER

PRAYER

PREACH

PREPARE

PROMISE

PURPOSE

REPENT

SILAS

SPIRIT

TRUST

UPPER

VISION

WIND

WITNESS

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

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith
and increased in number daily.”
ACTS 16:5

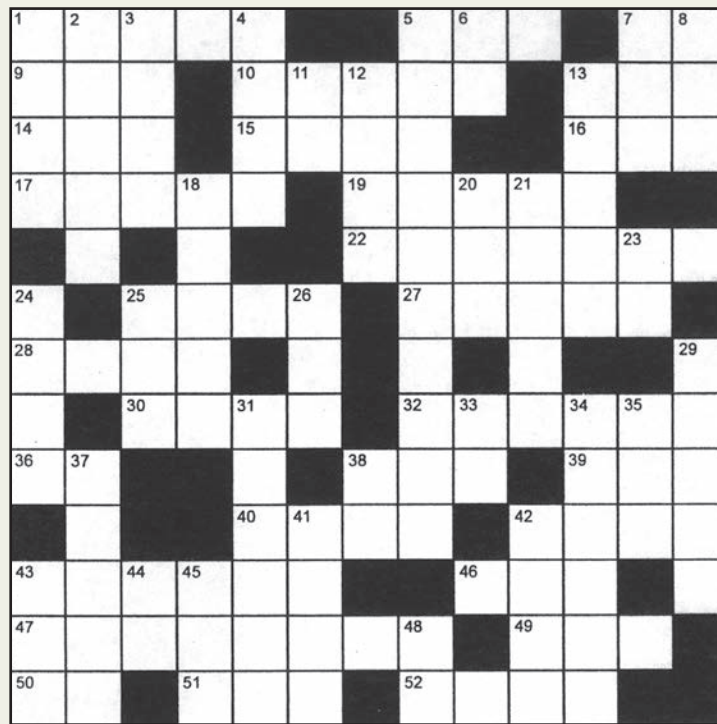
CHRISTIAN Crossword



UPCOMING EVENTS
sponsored by the State Board of Missions

ACROSS

1. ___ as a grain of mustard seed. (Matt. 17:20)
5. I have ___ you with milk. (1 Cor. 3:2)
7. For ___ Jonah was three days and three nights. (Matt. 12:40)
9. Opposite of "young."
10. Heavenly messenger.
13. He is of ___; ask him. (John 9:21)
14. What foolish virgins forgot to take. (Matt. 25:3)
15. The lilies, they ___ not. (Matt. 6:28)
16. The ___ that was washed to her wallowing. (2 Pet. 2:22)
17. Plural of "tooth."
19. They shall be one ___. (Gen. 2:24)
22. Inflict suffering.
25. Capable.
27. Unlearned and unstable ___. (2 Pet. 3:16)
28. Painful sore under skin.
30. Hollow-type grass.
32. The Lord is my ___, and I will not fear. (Heb. 13:6)
36. O ___ of little faith? (Matt. 6:30)
38. Number before seven.
39. Large body of water.
40. My doctrine shall ___ as the rain. (Deut. 32:2)
42. A type of eagle found in North America.
43. ___ my soul from



By Joann Horn Copyright 1994

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18. Furniture we eat at.
20. To go astray.
21. An odor of a sweet ___. (Phil. 4:18)
23. New Testament. (abbr.)
24. Children, ___ your parents. (Col. 3:20)
25. What we breathe.
26. Finish.
29. Swap.
31. I ___ all things for the elect's sakes. (2 Tim. 2:10)
33. Exodus. (abbr.)
34. ___ and hymns and spiritual songs. (Col. 3:16)
35. Snakelike fish.
37. Chosen of God.
38. For God ___ loved the world. (John 3:16)
41. I will give you ___. (Matt. 11:28)
42. A coffin.
43. Male sheep.
44. Southern state. (abbr.)
45. Vessel for drinking.
48. Is it lawful to ___ good? (Mark 3:4)

DOWN

1. Twelve inches.
2. Foreigner.
3. They learn to be ___. (1 Tim. 5:13)
4. For whosoever ___, to him shall be given. (Matt. 13:12)
5. No ___ with ... works of darkness. (Eph. 5:11)
6. Election. (abbr.)
7. Four days ___ I was fasting. (Acts 10:30)
8. Stitch.
11. Opposite of "yes."
12. The ___ of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 10:45)
13. Remainder of burnt wood.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Upcoming Tax Conferences

It's already time to start thinking about taxes, and your state missionaries have got you covered with a number of ways to learn more up-to-date information about taxes for churches and ministers.

► **Early Bird Tax Conference** — This conference will cover special emphases including IRS forms and deadlines, what is taxable, contribution rules and special tax rules about ministers and housing al-

lowances. It will be held Dec. 2 at the SBOM in Montgomery.

► **Church Tax Conferences** — Numerous changes are expected for 2026. This conference will cover basic IRS forms such as the 941 and W-2, deadlines, what is taxable and more. There are three opportunities available for this event — Jan. 8 at the SBOM, Jan. 15 at Calhoun Baptist Association and Jan. 29 at Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association.

► **Ministers Tax Conferences** — Learn how to save money on your taxes, maximize the housing allowance and more. These conferences will be held Feb. 5 at the SBOM, Feb. 12 at Calhoun Baptist Association and Feb. 26 at Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association.

For more information or to register, visit alsbom.org/events and search by date.

For more information or to register, visit alsbom.org/events or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



There's still time to give to the Myers-Mallory Offering

Remember it's not too late to give to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. Gifts are received until the end of the year and help support Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, disaster relief, church planting, church revitalization and partnership missions.

For more information and resources, visit Myers-Mallory.org.

For more information and resources, visit Myers-Mallory.org or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



For November 23

FULLY COMMITTED Deuteronomy 30:11–20

The Command (11–14)

Moses tells the Israelites that what God wants them to do is not difficult. He says, “But the message is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may follow it.” The Israelites were told by God to study His Word and keep His commands.

Christians ought to be reading God’s Word and meditating on it so we know it and so living it out becomes a normal part of life. We do not have to question what God’s will is because the Bible is full of commands.

For example, the Bible tells us to be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks (1 Thess. 5:16–18) and work at what we do as for the Lord, not men (Col. 3:17, 23).

If we read the Bible, these types of commands become known to us, and fellowshiping with believers gives us strength to actually follow them.

We also have the benefit of the Holy Spirit residing in us to convict us so we know when we are off track or disobedient.

Of course, when we do go off track, we repent and receive forgiveness.

This is the gospel. Even when we sin, God forgives us because of Christ’s death in our place on the cross, which then gives us encouragement to go back to living for God and neighbor.

The Commitment (15–18)

Living the Christian life is not always the easiest thing to do. Satan tempts us in many ways so we often do not want to follow God’s law.

For example, it is easier to cheat and be lazy than to work hard. However, we all know from experience that when we do what is right, we benefit in many ways.

God is pleased with us and blesses us.

Working hard at whatever task we are given, loving our neighbor and helping those in need blesses us with the knowledge that God is pleased. The Holy Spirit convicts us to do what is right, and we have joy when we do because we show we are loving God.

The Challenge (19–20)

Society often thinks the Christian life is one that is dull, bland and joyless.

However, we can see from the Bible and from history that when God’s laws are followed, families, communities and nations flourish.

Much of the modern ethic of our society is that if you do what you want and no one gets hurt, the activity or action is acceptable and good.

But we can see that this attitude has destroyed families and society in general.

People often think the government is needed to fix the problems of society, but they never address the root of the problem, which is people’s sinful hearts. Drug addiction, fatherless homes and blaming others for your problems all have miserable consequences.

We see this every day in our society, but when we look at the Church and the authentic Christians in the country, we see the benefit of following God’s laws. It leads to joy in life, a desire to see others prosper, laws passed that help society and the family and overall prosperity for the community.

Even from a pragmatic view, the Christian worldview benefits all of society.

We should not be shy or apologetic about this but tell others about the source of our satisfaction — Jesus — so that they too hear the gospel and accept Christ.

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

For November 30

GOD’S POWER Deuteronomy 33:1–5, 26–29

King (1–5)

As the Israelites prepare to go into the promised land, the author of this section of Deuteronomy recounts the final words Moses said to them. Moses began by recounting how God came to Mount Sinai to give them His law.

The writer follows this by telling how God loves His people. God demonstrates His love to us by giving us His Word. People throughout time have sought to know what God wants from them.

For example, the Romans would look at how birds flew in the sky as a type of omen to know what to expect.

People would also want to get in God’s good favor by offering various sacrifices, including the sacrifice of humans — even their own children — in order to get their gods to do something special or act a certain way.

The Romans forced all of their people to sacrifice to the gods to make sure they would bless the empire, help in battle or prevent famine.

When we compare the Bible with these attempts to understand God, we can see how loving God is. Instead of leaving us to our own primitive and incorrect views of who God is and what He wants, He tells us in His Word. This is a true act of love.

By giving us His commands, He is preventing us from having to guess what He wants.

Many people today say how much they don’t like the Bible because it is a list of rules they have to follow, and they just want to do what they want to do.

If they understood the Bible, they would realize that the rules are not arbitrary; they are for our own good.

Similar to a parent telling a child not to run into the street, the commands of God are a demonstration of His love for us. He wants us to prosper both physically and spiritually, and following His law is how this takes place.

The next time someone complains about the Bible being “a bunch of rules to follow,” explain how the rules are meant for our good and are a blessing.

Dwelling Place (26–29)

The final part of chapter 33 provides comfort that God is going to accomplish His promises. If the Israelites drive out the people in the promised land, then they will prosper in their new setting.

But the Israelites failed to do this, which led to many problems that we can read about later in the Old Testament.

Likewise, if we are obedient to God’s Word and obey His

commands, we will also prosper. It does not always mean that things go the way we want or that our circumstances are always pleasant. Those who teach this present a false gospel, and we need to be wary of those who allude to this kind of prosperity.

However, we will always prosper spiritually and have a joy that surpasses understanding. Our ability to be joyful in the midst of our circumstances is one of the best ways we can show a lost world that there is hope in God and that it is only through the gospel that we can be made right with God and have abundant life now.

*“The eternal God is your dwelling place,
and underneath are the everlasting arms.”*

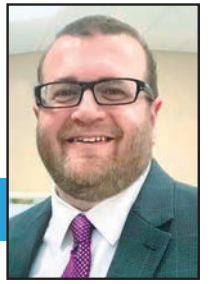
Deuteronomy 33:27

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Bobby McKay

Pastor, New Liberty Baptist Church in Morton, Mississippi



For November 23

WHEN DOING GOD'S WORK IS INTERRUPTED Acts 16:4-15

**It's encouraging
to see how God is working
through us. (4-5)**

These verses follow three significant events in the Book of Acts. The first event is the Jerusalem Council, at which the apostles and elders of the Church met in Jerusalem to determine whether Gentile believers needed to follow the law of Moses, with the circumcision of Gentiles being the primary issue. It was decided that Gentiles should not be required to be circumcised or follow the law of Moses, yet they were told to abstain from certain aspects of the pagan world around them.

The second event is Paul and Silas beginning Paul's second missionary journey. The third event is Paul and Silas meeting Timothy in Derbe and Lystra and Paul taking Timothy on as a disciple. Thus, verses 4 and 5 describe the work of Paul, Silas and Timothy, who are visiting churches and relaying to them the decision of the Jerusalem Council. This work strengthened the churches in their faith, resulting in their numbers increasing daily.

God can change the course of even a productive ministry. (6-10)

This missionary team worked their way west through what is modern-day Turkey but was then known as Asia Minor. Galatia was a province in the center of Asia Minor, with Phrygia to its north-west. Yet we are told that they were not permitted by the Spirit to enter Asia or Bithynia. Thus, they went to the region that lay between those two provinces, Mysia, and a major port city there, Troas.

The reason they were prevented by the Spirit from going to two major provinces soon becomes clear. Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man pleading with him to come and help them in Macedonia, a major population center and

a region adjacent to Greece. We do not know how the Holy Spirit prevented Paul and his companions from entering these provinces. Natural obstacles seem likely and as such, these missionaries might have felt defeated in their thwarted plans. But God had a larger purpose in their frustration.

This is a good reminder for us when our own plans — even ones that seem righteous and good — are thwarted.

An interruption could be God's way of opening a new avenue of ministry. (11-15)

After landing in the port city of Neapolis, Paul and his fellow missionaries went to the city of Philippi. Because Philippi had no synagogue, Paul went to a nearby river outside the city where he hoped he might find Jews praying.

Paul found a group of women there and began to share the gospel. Whether these women were Jews is unclear, but one woman named Lydia is described as a "God-fearing woman." We are also told that she was a dealer in purple cloth, a detail that indicates she was a woman of great wealth, as purple garments were incredibly expensive. Lydia received the gospel and was baptized, along with her entire family.

In this way, Lydia became the first known Christian convert on the continent of Europe. After her conversion and baptism, Lydia invited Paul and his missionary companions to stay with her and they accepted her invitation. Here we see God's design to lead Paul to Philippi and bring him to a woman with a heart open to the Lord, a woman who also likely had significant influence in her community who would be a strong representative of the gospel.

*EDITOR'S NOTE —
This lesson was written
by Adam Winn, Ph.D.,
chair and professor
for the Department of
Biblical and Religious
Studies at Samford
University.*



For November 30

FROM PROBLEMS TO PRAISE Isaiah 38:9-20

If you could create the perfect life, what would it look like? What would you change? Would it involve a new career, a different location or a new home?

Many would want to improve their current health or financial situation. Even something as trivial as your favorite football team going undefeated could be on your list of perfect things.

No matter what you consider perfect, none of us would intentionally choose a life filled with problems, pain and adversity. Still, all of these things and more are a constant reality for each of us.

When things go our way, we might feel tempted to forget to thank God and even neglect our prayer life or spiritual disciplines. You will learn the hard way that the more you neglect your private times with God, the less you'll trust Him in everyday life. That is tragic and can lead to weak faith or, even worse, a shallow testimony of God's goodness.

Everyone faces problems. The question is, will you praise Him during your difficulties when life feels far from perfect?

When despondent, look to God. (9-14)

Hezekiah was down in the dumps! The thought of what was coming next filled him with deep sadness and depression. It's overwhelming to feel hopeless.

In times like these, we must be vigilant in guarding both our hearts and minds. Hezekiah saw himself as a young man with much life left to live, and now he is facing Sheol.

Note that this use of Sheol is not what some refer to as hell. In this context, it refers to the grave or a place of death. Have you or someone you love faced death? It is an

incredibly humbling experience and one God can use to draw us closer to Him.

Acknowledge how God responds out of His love. (15-17)

There is no pain a Christian experiences that goes unseen or uncared for by God. Every painful moment in your life has a purpose. You may never fully understand that purpose, but God's trustworthiness remains.

Praising and worshipping God during difficult times does not guarantee that the hardship will disappear, but it does help you gain the right perspective and strengthen your faith and reliance on God. The severity of your situation does not reflect God's love for you.

Hezekiah recognizes the incredible love of the Father and His grace shown in the forgiveness of sins.

Express your thanks to God publicly. (18-20)

The people we often respect and listen to the most have faced the most challenging situations. Hezekiah directs us to the only One worthy of worship and praise. He called on everyone to join him in thanking God.

Trials and hardships can either make you bitter or better, and only you can decide how to respond. Hezekiah understood that no matter his circumstances, God can always be thanked.

No, we cannot create a perfect life for ourselves, but we can have the assurance from our perfect and loving Heavenly Father who cares for us beyond what we can understand.

Only God can take you from struggles to praise. Do not become complacent in your prayers to Him. Keep praising Him no matter what. He will see you through.

**"Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great
bitterness; but in love You have delivered my life ..."**

Isaiah 38:17

UM celebrates record enrollment

The University of Mobile experienced record enrollment this fall, and UM leaders are celebrating new academic leadership, thriving chapel and student life programs, and capital improvements that are igniting a spirit of excitement and purpose on campus.

During their Oct. 24 meeting, UM's board of trustees appointed Jason K. Lee to the new position of provost and vice president for academic administration. Lee will serve alongside Pamela Buchanan Miller, vice president for academic affairs, starting Jan. 1, 2026.

Trustees also approved new academic programs, including undergraduate degrees in cybersecurity and natural science; master's degrees in instructional leadership (online) and fine arts

in creative practice; and a bachelor's to MBA program in cybersecurity.

University officials reported surpassing its enrollment goal and welcoming 2,092 students for fall 2025 with a 14% increase in new students.

Capital improvements include updates to Ingram Dining Hall, Bedsole Commons, Weaver Hall/Enrollment Services, Martin Hall classrooms and landscaping at several outdoor spots around campus.

UM recently was recognized in several categories by Niche.com, and a new partnership with C12, a national organization of Christian business leaders, brought a Faith at Work panel discussion to UM to explore the intersection of faith and work. (UM)



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Making Medicare Simple — With Someone Who Truly Cares

By Abigail Jackson Bradford

*Many of the Medicare plans have changed for 2026. The Annual Enrollment Period is here, making it the perfect time to ensure your plan is best for you. That's where I come in. My name is **Abigail Jackson Bradford**, and I would be honored to evaluate your current plan and provide options for you.*

Why I Do This

Some of you may know my father, **Rob Jackson**, who teaches, pastors, and serves Alabama Baptists as Director of Evangelism. He taught me to live with integrity and do everything for the glory of God. **That's the foundation of my work with River Valley Senior Solutions (RVSS).**

Our former chairman of deacons and I are committed to helping people like you find peace and confidence in Medicare decisions. We are local — from Alabama for Alabama.

What You Can Expect from Me

- **Step-by-step guidance** — so you never feel lost or overwhelmed.
- **Trust you can count on** — I take something complicated and make it clear.
- **Protection from mistakes** — avoid costly errors and missed deadlines.
- **Plans designed for you** — because I represent multiple companies, you'll have real choices.
- **Peace of mind** — confidence in the decisions you make.
- **Long-term support** — not just this year, but every year moving forward.



Contact Me Today
The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period ends December 7.
Contact me so we can look over your plan together.

We are With You.
For you. Always.

Call or text me today at 256-476-4211 or email Abigail@thervss.com

For official information about Medicare, visit [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov) or call 1-800-MEDICARE.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

Full-time pastor — Jasper, Alabama. Pastor retiring. Prayerfully seeking a pastor to preach the inerrant Word of God and shepherd our flock. (SBC) Resumé: northsidebaptistchurchjasper@gmail.com

PASTOR

Cypress Shores Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time senior pastor. Please email resumé to: cypress9631@comcast.net or mail to: 4327 Higgins Road, Mobile, AL 36619.

PASTOR

Pintlala Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. The candidate should be a self-starter, enthusiastic about the Word of God, and excited for opportunity to bring new members to the church. Pintlala Baptist Church, which is located in the southwestern portion of Montgomery County, has a loving church family that is here to share the good news of Jesus Christ to serve our community (and beyond) in His love. We are genuine in our atmosphere and enjoy supporting one another. For more information, please go to: <https://pintlalabaptist.com/ministry-position-open>.

PASTOR OR BIVOCATIONAL

Snow Road First Baptist Church, Semmes, Alabama, seeking experienced, seminary trained man. Contact Douglas Kaul: 251-591-5525, or church office: 251-649-7722. Send resumé to: drkaul7100@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Brent Baptist Church in Bibb County, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a part-time pastor (up to 20 hours a week) who has a heart for missions, outreach and growing disciples. Please email resumé to our church office at brentbaptist.office@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Fairview Baptist in Samson, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please email resúmes to: fairviewbaptist.samson.al@outlook.com or via USPS to: 3159 N State Highway 87, Samson, AL 36477.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Clanton First Baptist Church (Clanton, Alabama) is prayerfully seeking a full-time minister of music. This position will be

asked to lead both choir and congregational worship and oversee all aspects of music in the life of our church. A degree and/or formal training in music is preferred. Candidates should have experience with digital sound equipment, ProPresenter and live-streaming services. Clanton FBC is an active, mission-minded church in a growing area. Additional information about the church may be found at clantonfbc.org. Resúmes may be emailed to: justin.nelson@clantonfbc.org.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF WORSHIP MINISTRY

Mexia Baptist Church of Mexia, Alabama, is seeking a part- or full-time associate pastor of worship ministry to lead all aspects of the church worship ministry. Applicants should have a bachelor's degree in a related field, though seminary degree is preferred. Please submit resúmes to: office@mexiabaptistchurch.com or call 251-575-4398.

MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER

Cedar Bluff First Baptist Church in search of a music/worship leader, bivocational. Email resumé to: CBFBC@tds.net or mail to: Cedar Bluff First Baptist Church, 3500 Old Hwy 9, Cedar Bluff, AL 35959.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

New Center Baptist, Hartselle, Alabama, (newcenterbaptist.org) seeking bivocational music minister for blended services, leading choir and coordinating volunteer musicians. Email resumé to: raykballew@gmail.com or contact pastor at 256-221-6880 for more information.

PASTOR OF WORSHIP AND EQUIPPING MINISTRIES

First Baptist Church of Tallassee, Alabama, is searching for a full-time pastor of worship and equipping ministries. For more information and to send a resumé, please see fbctallassee.com/jobs.

YOUTH MINISTER

Seeking youth minister at The Baptist Church at McAdory (McCalla). Candidate must be SBC member with passion for discipling students and leading Christ-centered ministry. Submit resumé: Personnel Committee, 4954 Eastern Valley Rd., McCalla, AL 35111, or tbcam.bcm@gmail.com.

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGN

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

LARGE BEACH HOUSES

Planning reunion at the beach in the 30A area? Large houses for between 18-35. Short beach walk, private pool, arcade, beach chairs provided. Owner managed, 877-868-4659, <http://www.funretreats.org>.

LOG CABIN

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to <https://paradisevistatravel.com/2024/08/20/paradise-vista-cabin-to-see-pictures>. Email Karen for reservations at kwlwdc@gmail.com or call 205-540-3600.

TAB EXTRAS

MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Alabama Baptist serves as a drop-off location for Love Packages, which collects Bibles and used Christian literature to ship to developing, English-speaking countries. Volunteers are needed to deliver donations to the warehouse in Decatur and assist the Love Packages team with unloading and sorting.

TAB HIGHLIGHTS EMAIL NEWSLETTER

TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered every Monday-Wednesday-Friday at noon with the day's top stories from the world of faith-based news. The news items come from international, national, state and Baptist coverage. To sign up, email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

MINISTRIES

THE WELLNESS KITCHEN

The Wellness Kitchen is a blog and e-newsletter focused on healthy living, ingredients and recipes. The Wellness Kitchen was started by Pat Terry, a registered dietitian and nutrition professor at Samford University for 30 years. Visit thewellnesskitchenrd.com to read more and subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter.

Persecuted church

Pastor jailed 13 years dies two days after release

Zafar Bhatti, a pastor imprisoned in Pakistan for 13 years, died Oct. 5, two days after being released, rights group British Asian Christian Association told Christian Daily International-Morning Star News.

Bhatti was released Oct. 2 after his conviction on a blasphemy charge was overturned in Lahore High Court. Bhatti was the founder of the ministry Jesus World Mission Church.



BHATTI

Christian woman, mother attacked by relatives

In July, a young woman in India was raped and her mother severely beaten by relatives who were upset that the women had become Christians.

The mother had several surgeries and remained bedridden from her injuries more than two months later. Police arrested four perpetrators.

Residents asked to report religious activities

ChinaAid reports that officials in a city in China's Henan Province are requesting residents report any "illegal" religious activities, which includes church meetings not approved by the government.

Residents were encouraged to provide photographic, video or audio evidence of such activity, and an award is being offered.

In recent years, other cities in Henan Province — Mengzhou, Jiyuan and

Shangqiu — have had similar campaigns, urging residents to "report any gatherings of three or more people," ChinaAid stated.

China's Constitution formally guarantees freedom of religion, ChinaAid said, but "in practice, all religious groups and activities must be registered with the government and supervised by authorities."

Easter to become national holiday in Egypt?

In January, the State Commissioners Authority in Egypt is expected to consider the decision of the country's prime minister not to recognize Easter as a national holiday.

People from across various religious backgrounds have expressed concern about the prime minister's decision. Alliance Defending Freedom said the Egyptian government already acknowledges Orthodox and Muslim celebrations.

Approximately 10 million Christians live in Egypt, representing about 10% of the country's population.

Attacks upon Christians follow conversion bill's OK

Passage of an "anticonversion bill" in India's Rajasthan State appears to have prompted attacks upon Christians there.

The bill was passed Sept. 9 in the Rajasthan Assembly, reported Morning Star News, and awaits approval of the governor. However, harassment and assault have been directed toward Christians in at least nine incidents since the bill's passage, stated Morning Star.

Eleven other states in India have anticonversion laws.

BOOK REVIEWS

By Leann Callaway and Steve Potts

The Alabama Baptist

Selections include post-apocalyptic fiction, modern evils, Keller's impact

Delivered: A Postal-Apocalyptic Tale

By Jason Nelson

Independently published, 2024

In his novella "Delivered: A Postal-Apocalyptic Tale," Jason

Nelson writes a unique story of a man who pursues his job even in the most discouraging circumstances.

A catastrophic event has hit the world and a man named

Franklin, who works for a post office in a small town, continues to deliver the last of the mail to addresses where the inhabitants are either gone or dead. Despite difficulties, Franklin perseveres until he finds a letter that changes his eternal destiny.

Nelson writes with both humor and sadness. The reader is left to wonder about the specifics of the events that led to the setting of the story, but the bleak emptiness of life is well-conveyed, along with hope from the gospel.

The book has an intriguing conclusion that leaves the reader with much to consider.



The first half of "Delivered" is about Franklin, and the second half is a virtual "how to" for writing and getting published. Nelson is helpful in guiding aspiring writers to keep a number of elements in mind when going through the process.

The book is both unusual and distinct as a story and instruction.

Nelson is a husband, father and writer who lives in Alabama and attends Church of the Highlands Birmingham. (Potts)

It's Not About the dEvil

By John DiGirolamo

Covenant Books, 2024

In his latest book, "It's Not About the dEvil," author John DiGirolamo gives personal accounts of the enemy's schemes to steal, kill and destroy. But most importantly, the book reminds readers that our only hope in life and death is Jesus.

"My fourth book is a dramatized nonfiction account of three compelling individuals," DiGirolamo said. "I spent about a year writing the book and another nine months getting it published."

"The devil is busy in our modern society, and his greatest trick is convincing us that he doesn't exist. I was inspired to write about three people who fight modern evil, showcasing these true stories which are an inspiration for people to stand up against evil in our society."

DiGirolamo profiles a police officer who battles online predators, an abortion doctor who becomes a pro-life advocate and an insider's view of an exorcism.

"Before writing the book, I was not an expert on these topics," DiGirolamo said. "I learned a lot through my research and included many pieces of information which are woven into the plotline."

He noted the chapter about the

police officer who goes undercover online as a 13-year-old girl is a story every parent should read. "It shows a real-life example of how a predator goes after a young teen," he noted.

"These are real stories based on interviews, testimony and case files. ... I worked closely with the person profiled to ensure an accurate representation of their life."

DiGirolamo hopes the book gives readers several takeaways including being on guard for spiritual warfare, the dangers of occult practices and life-transformation detailing the account of the abortion doctor now advocating for the unborn. The book also provides tips for parents on ways to protect children from online predators and teen sexting.

DiGirolamo said he has been on a journey to deepen his relationship with Christ for the past decade.

"I participated in several Bible study classes, read many books and spent time in reflection, which influenced me to write about the topics that I do, including protecting the most vulnerable in our society," he said.

DiGirolamo's other books include, "It's Not About the Predator," "It's Not About the Badge" and "It's Not About the Sex." (Callaway)

Tim Keller on the Christian Life

By Matt Smethurst

Crossway, 2025

Until he died in 2023, Timothy Keller was among the most influential American evangelicals. His work as a church planter in

New York City, where he started Redeemer Presbyterian Church, inspired a generation of conservative Christians to see the possibilities of evangelistic outreach even in very secular communities.

His apologetic writings, sermons and other books are popular and well known. Baptist pastor and author Matt

Smethurst has written "Tim Keller on the Christian Life" to give a summary and overview of Keller's biblical teaching about how Christians are to live. The result is a helpful and valuable guide that would benefit any Christian.

The book begins with a discussion of how Jesus Christ is central to understanding all of Scripture.

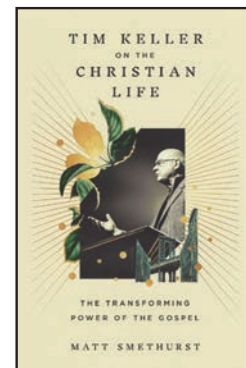
This chapter is one of the best, most concise explanations of how the Bible fits together that I have ever read, as Smethurst gives wisdom about how to discern the ways in which Scripture points to Jesus.

He is a reliable guide to both Keller's teaching and, more importantly, Scripture's instructions about living for Christ.

The chapters address the problem of sin and the idols of the heart, the importance of grace, the value of our vocations, the necessity of compassion, the blessing of prayer and the reality of suffering.

Smethurst is especially powerful in describing Keller's lessons from his battle with cancer and how he handled his approaching death.

I found this book to be so full of insight, wisdom and encouragement that I began rereading it once I finished it. (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.