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Baptists ODAY

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real pastors
to shape TV role

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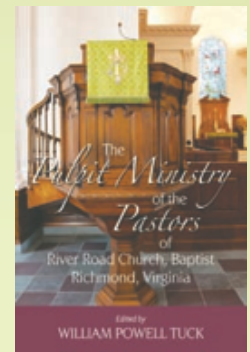
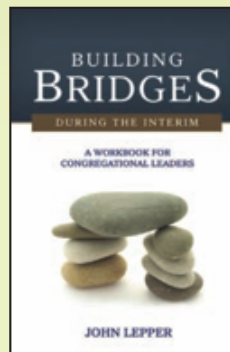
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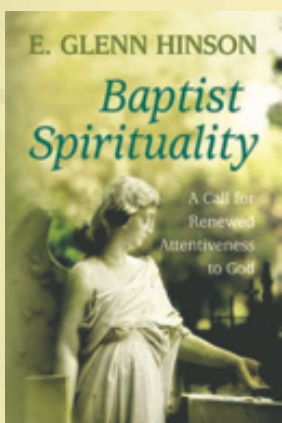
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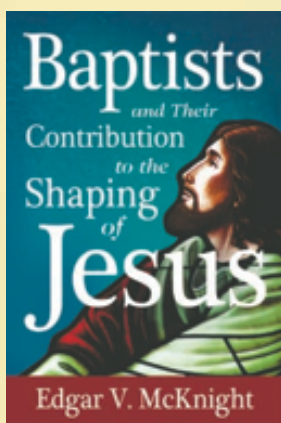
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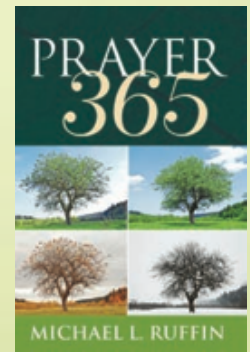
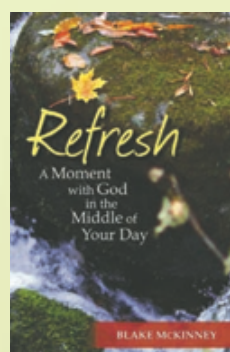
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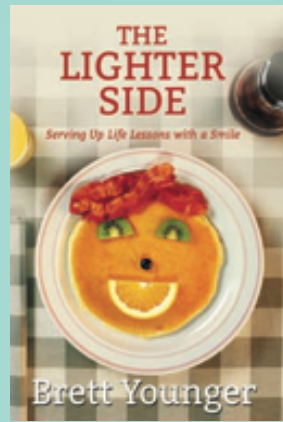
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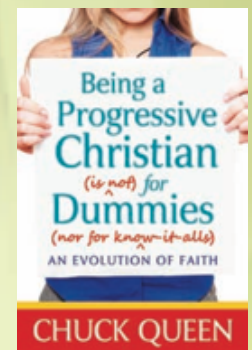
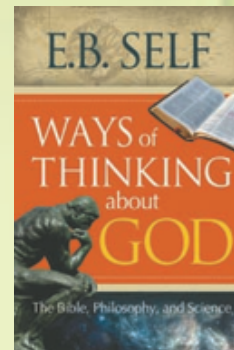
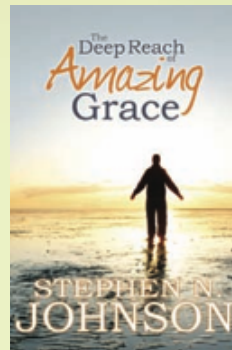
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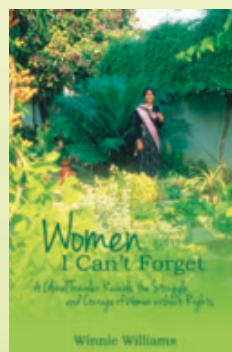
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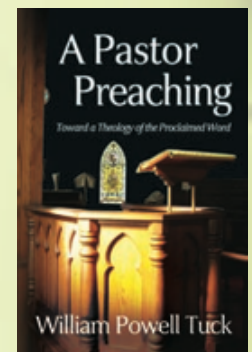
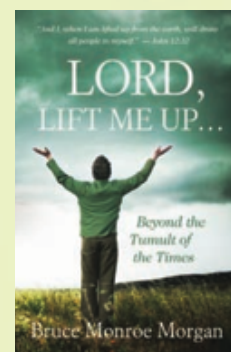
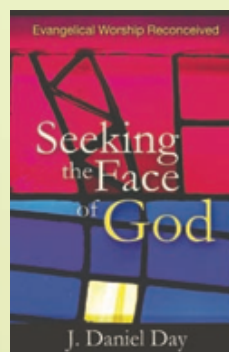
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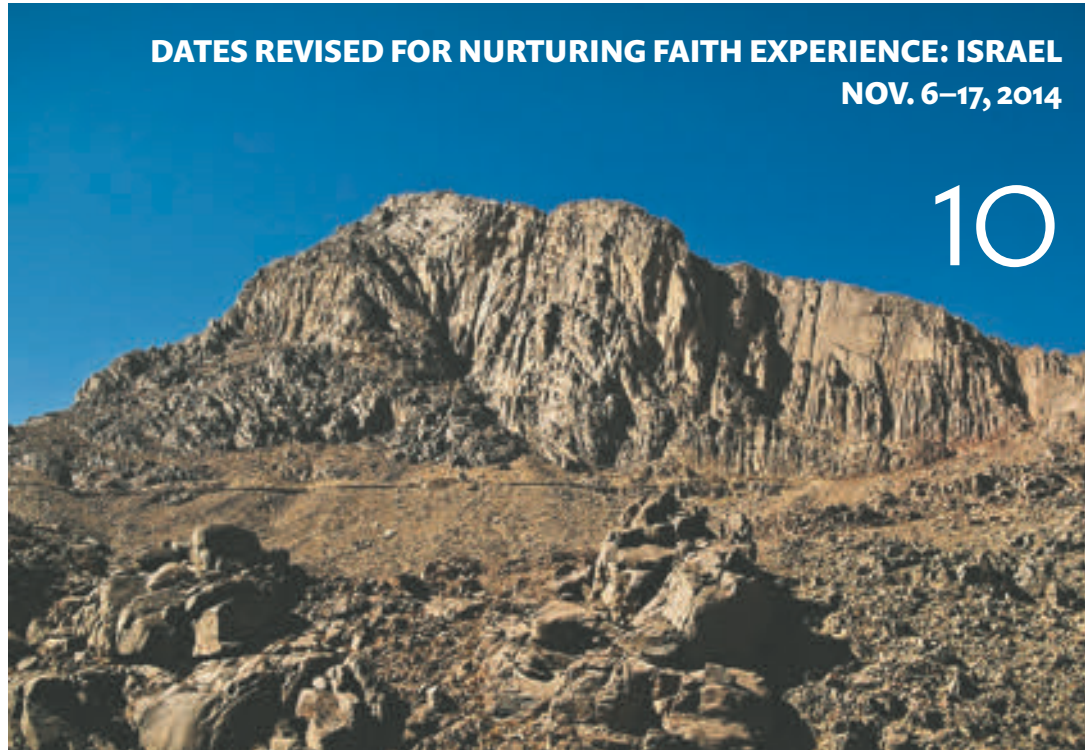
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Cover photo by Tony W. Cartledge. Terri Stratton's balance of toughness and compassion serves her well as the first female senior chaplain at North Carolina's Central Prison near downtown Raleigh. **Story on page 38**

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Complex Character

Actor looks to real Baptist pastors to shape television role

ATLANTA — **Mark Hildreth is not a Baptist preacher, but he plays one on TV.** In the new ABC fantasy drama *Resurrection*, he is a young pastor in a small town where persons who have died start returning to earth. Remember, it's a fantasy show.

“On *Resurrection*, we are lucky to have wonderful scripts written by some amazing people...” Hildreth told *Baptists Today*. “The characters all have such rich lives and backstories, and the character of Tom Hale, the Baptist pastor I play, was no exception.”

The show, which premieres March 9, is set in Missouri but filmed in Atlanta.

“Tom was written as a compassionate, thoughtful man — someone who had difficult struggles as a child, including the loss of his best friend Jacob when he was only 8 years old,” said Hildreth. “When Jacob returns to him and the town of Arcadia, Mo., he is forced to face his deepest fears, and to try to continue to be the town’s spiritual leader at the same time.”

The native Canadian, now based in L.A., said the role was “written in such a deeply human way, it made my job easy to find the moral compass of this complex character.”

But he wanted to know more about what a Baptist pastor might be like.

GOING TO CHURCH

When in Atlanta last spring to film the pilot episode, Hildreth and actress Frances Fisher (known for many roles including the mother in *Titanic*) left their Buckhead hotel on Sunday morning to attend nearby Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church.

After the service, Mark introduced himself to Dock Hollingsworth, the interim pastor who now has become the senior minister.



Actor Mark Hildreth, left, and pastor Dock Hollingsworth built a friendship after Mark’s visit to Atlanta’s Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church seeking help with developing his character as a minister in the ABC series *Resurrection*.

Pastors are used to hearing all kinds of confessions, comments and questions following a service — but this was a new one.

Mark asked Dock if they could meet to talk about his role as a Baptist minister. They did — and formed a friendship.

“We have joked often about the serendipity of his church being the closest to my hotel,” said Hildreth.

In their first meeting, over Mexican food, Mark peppered Dock with questions for two hours. He asked everything from what kind of education a minister might have to what kind of car he would drive.

More difficult to answer, said Dock, were questions such as what motivates someone to become a pastor.

“He’s a very professional student of his craft,” said Dock.

Mark noted that honing his TV role as a minister carried some responsibility for the vocation as well.

“I expressed to Dock that I felt a certain amount of responsibility to Christian pastors, and to spiritual leaders in general, to be at least respectful and, at best, accurate to what it means to have that role in society in my portrayal.”

After the meal, Dock drove Mark back to his hotel. Mark expressed thanks and added: “May I keep your contact information? If ABC picks up the show, I’ll have more questions.”

DEFINING A ROLE

During the summer, Dock received an email from Mark saying they were returning to Atlanta for three months to shoot the first season. Mark continued to visit the church and to meet with Dock.

Because Mark’s character was a small-town pastor, Dock and his wife, Melissa, invited him to dinner with three pastor friends in North Georgia: Carlton Allen of First Baptist Church

“[Mark] was willing to take the time and make the effort to do research so that he could bring a sense of integrity to the role.”

“There were lots of practical things Dock and his friends shared with me that helped us answer questions on the set.”

of Commerce, Jonathan Barlow of Royston Baptist Church and Michael Helms of First Baptist Church of Jefferson.

“There were lots of practical things Dock and his friends shared with me that helped us answer questions on the set,” said Mark. One of those: his character’s clerical collar disappears after the pilot episode.

Barlow, 30, is the same age as Hildreth’s character. So he shared about having to win the trust of older people and to overcome the stereotype of being a young naive pastor.

“I also spoke about the inner questioning that goes on because of this reality — the idea that you are asked to know much about topics that are quite a mystery,” said Jonathan.

That was the kind of “backstory” or “real thing” that Mark said he was looking to discover.

Mark told the pastors about a scene in which a group of laity meets behind the pastor’s back. He wanted to know if that was a realistic possibility and if it would make the minister uncomfortable.

The question was probably best answered by the “uncomfortable chuckle” from all of them, said Jonathan.

“He was also interested in hearing our call stories,” said Jonathan. “He wanted to know what motivated us, and wanted to listen to the frustrations.”

Several questions had to do with the day-to-day routine, said Carlton. So the pastors talked about how they develop sermons, and how they interact with both the congregation and the larger community.

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES

Mark asked good questions about the struggles of walking with someone through difficult situations. How many questions do you ask? Is it all right to say you don’t know?

The next morning, Mark attended worship in Commerce to experience a small-town First Baptist Church firsthand. Later, he and Carlton Allen played golf and continued the conversation.

The premise of the fantasy show — a boy who died years ago suddenly is alive at the age at which he died — is not something pastors deal with, Carlton noted. But he tried to explore with Mark how a congregation might

respond to unexplainable, traumatic experiences in their community.

“I suggested a way that the pastor might deal with this would be to affirm the belief that God holds the power of life and death and, if this has really happened, the role of the Christian community is to try to understand what God is saying through this,” said Carlton. “I think we all communicated that there is more mystery to the Christian faith than many like to admit and that we shouldn’t be afraid of that mystery, nor should we presume that we can answer all the questions or solve all the mysteries.”

Carlton said he was impressed that Mark wanted to do more than present a caricature of a small town pastor.

“He was willing to take the time and make the effort to do research so that he could bring a sense of integrity to the role,” he said.

Michael Helms said he shared about what it is like for a pastor to live in a fishbowl.

“Having a private life is difficult,” he said. “Whatever we do affects how people view us in the pulpit, so the pastor is never off duty.”

He also noted that “first church” ministers in small towns, however, are often given platforms to shape public life. The pastor has to use that wisely, Michael said.

Mark described the pastors and their spouses as gracious, inviting and open.

“Their kindness and generosity with their time and with sharing their experiences were a privilege I will not soon forget,” he said. “Aside from all the wonderful ways these folks contributed to our wonderful show, their willingness to let me into their homes and share their hopes, fears and dreams with me was a perfect example as I set out on the journey of



bringing a pastor to the screen who is relatable, inspiring and, most of all, human.”

PLAYING BAPTIST

Early in their relationship Dock explained that had Mark dropped into another Baptist church to ask the same questions, he would likely hear a very different version of what his character should be. His fellow pastors reiterated that their understanding and practice of ministry wouldn’t fit all Baptists.

Jonathan said Mark indicated he wanted his character to have room to grow.

The ministers also tried to convey that they are not so different from other people in the community.

“We, too, have our struggles and doubts,” said Carlton. “We also talked about the tension of being like other folks and yet sometimes viewed as different by people in the community, particularly as it affected our families.”

Michael said that perhaps the most help the pastors could offer was for Mark to see them as real people who joke and laugh, have a variety of interests outside of their work, and experience burdens and frustrations like everyone else.

But he added: “He could see that we have a passion for what we do as we seek to love God and others — and that we do what we do only because we have a calling. This isn’t a job you take on otherwise.”

THE POWER OF WORDS

Beyond conversations that helped shape a television role, pastor Dock Hollingsworth and actor Mark Hildreth explored how their crafts have similarities and differences. One contrast, Dock noted, is that actors speak to large unknown audiences.

“We don’t speak to audiences like you do,” he told Mark. “We speak to congregations. They’re not unknown to us, but people we love.”

After filming the first season of *Resurrection*, Mark treated Dock and his wife Melissa to dinner in Atlanta to express appreciation for their help and hospitality.

He gave Dock a copy of *Hamlet*, saying: “You’re obviously someone else who cares about the power of words.” **BT**

“As I take this journey, I am sustained by my conviction that God does not cause our trouble and pain, but God loves us too much to waste them.”

—Pastor Guy Sayles of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., telling his congregation that he has multiple myeloma and will enter assertive treatment

“I think it’s very bad science and even worse theology — and the theology is far more offensive to me. I think there’s a lot of focus on fear, and I don’t think that’s a very Christian message.”

—Lisa Park, professor of paleontology at the University of Akron and a Presbyterian elder, on visiting the Creation Museum that includes flashing images of war, famine and natural disasters blamed on belief in evolution (*phys.org*)

“There’s absolutely nothing in policy or code that prohibits a chaplain from praying according to the dictates of their faith.”

—Virginia Penrod, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military personnel policy, to the House Subcommittee on Military Personnel Jan. 29 (RNS)

“Congregations must develop the capacity to try and fail, and we must avoid punishing staff ministers when experiments don’t ‘succeed.’ Every ‘failure’ is simply discovery of a way that does not work in the present context. Remember the words of Thomas Edison: ‘I’ve tried everything. I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won’t work!’”

—Terry Maples, field coordinator for the Tennessee Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (ABP)

quotation

remarks

“The problem is that too many religious institutions have built their lives around maintaining legacy facilities. They haven’t built the community and shared mission that would enable them to abandon the Gothic pile and still have a reason for being. Take away their facilities, and suddenly there isn’t anything binding them.”

—Tom Ehrlich, church consultant and Religion News Service columnist

“When 50 percent of our prison beds are occupied by nonviolent offenders, we have prison overcrowding problems and violent offenders serving shortened sentences, I have a problem with incarceration for possession of marijuana. None of that’s to say I favor free and rampant marijuana use.”

—Evangelical spokesman Mark DeMoss, who admitted his view would not be widely held by Christian leaders (RNS)

“Not only am I appalled and utterly ashamed, I am frankly disappointed that they would even entertain the thought of selling these precious items.”

—Bernice King, a minister and youngest child of Martin Luther King Jr., rebuking her brothers Martin III and Dexter for reportedly seeking to sell their late father’s Nobel Peace Prize and the family Bible on which President Obama was sworn in for his second term (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

“I mentioned Roger Williams a couple of times because Williams based his notions of religious freedom upon the sovereignty of God. I said because God is sovereign, I can’t violate God’s sovereignty by telling you what to believe. My point to them was that there is room for freedom of religion even if you espouse the sovereignty of God, and even if you hold the belief that your understanding of God is the right understanding.”

—Rob Nash, professor of missions and world religions at Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology, on dialogue with Iranian academics in Tebran in January (ABP)

“No society can truly succeed unless it guarantees the rights of all its people, including religious minorities.”

—President Obama, speaking at the 62nd National Prayer Breakfast, held Feb. 6 in Washington (White House Press Office)

“It focuses ministry away from helping people find their way toward God and onto accommodation. It makes us ask ‘why are people leaving and what can we do to get them back?’ ... When I accommodate your needs and preferences, those needs and preferences become paramount.”

—Craig Nash, community minister at University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, on the effects of declining church attendance in America (ABP)

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By John Pierce

The often-mindless sin of social elitism

One of the good, early lessons veteran editors taught me years ago came as a warning against using editorial space to jump on a favorite soapbox repeatedly. Opinion writing, they wisely advised, should be broader and more constructive than just venting against a few pet peeves.

This editorial puts me dangerously close to failing to heed such warnings. For it concerns the one thing I observe almost daily that raises my ire (whatever that is).

It has to do with those who profess to be Christian (and sometimes profess to be more Christian than most other Christians) yet relate socially to other persons — particularly those they perceive to be “below them” — in condescending and disrespectful ways.

It is the sin of social elitism, and in many places it appears almost epidemic.

Such social behavior, in many cases, seems to be unrecognized by those who exhibit it most often. Perhaps their thoughts are elsewhere — focused on their wants (elevated to perceived needs) and their convenience.

The root of the problem is precisely that: a sole focus on oneself.

Expressions of self-focused elitism take on various forms and often occur during the routines of daily living.

One is treating service people with

disrespect — such as demanding rather than asking kindly for something from a server in a restaurant. And the “magic words” of “please” and “thank you” still have power.

It is embarrassing to see how condescending some customers can be to those who provide needed service to them.

Also, there are those who park repeatedly in the fire lanes at grocery stores — because, well, it’s more convenient than parking and walking.



Or, they bypass the orderly carpool line to squeeze into the front rather than wait in line like others — suggesting that “my” time is more important than yours.

Something gets disconnected for those who consider themselves to be Christian yet exhibit such public behavior. And often the symbols and stickers on their cars suggest that these persons consider themselves to be Christian.

Yet acting in self-centered ways that convey clear messages of superiority contradict and override any stickered affirmations of faith. A greater impression is conveyed through actions.

The well-exhibited, unwritten message comes across as simply “My desires and convenience trump those of others.”

That is the most ire-raising part.

It is hard to imagine any attitude or behavior being less like Jesus than those that convey a position of superiority over others.

Jesus was the great equalizer — the lover and affirmer of all humanity.

A person’s value in Jesus’ eyes was never tied to race, ethnicity, gender, education, wealth — or whether someone belonged to “right” social or religious organizations. In fact, Jesus got in a lot of hot water with the elitists of his day for seeing and treating persons in the ways he did — and for calling out those who saw themselves as superior.

Many, many years ago I was told that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. It is something I still believe to be true. **BT**

An ‘Inklings’ correction

EDITOR: In Mr. [Trevor] Grundy’s article (“C.S. Lewis’ legacy shines in U.S., not in homeland,” December 2013, p. 42), he stated that it was under the influence of J.R.R. Tolkien and G.K. Chesterton, “who met every Tuesday morning at a local public house in Oxford and formed a debating club called the ‘Inklings,’” that led to Lewis’ conversion.

The two friends were Tolkien and Hugo Dyson (not Chesterton). It is an understandable error since Lewis was influenced mightily by the writings of Chesterton. I do not think that Chesterton was ever a member of the Inklings.

—Clem Peterson, a Lewis fan



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ISRAEL

with Dr. Tony Cartledge

REVISED DATES: November 6-17, 2014

Nurturing Faith Bible Studies writer Tony Cartledge, who holds a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies from Duke University, will lead Sunday school teachers and other interested persons on a personal tour of Israel Nov. 6-17, 2014.

Join Tony and other *Baptists Today* staff on this unique opportunity to see firsthand the places where biblical stories came to life and to gain insights into the culture and languages of this remarkable setting.

DESTINATIONS will include Megiddo and other ancient cities, the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth, Capernaum, the Mount of the Beatitudes, the Golan Heights, the Jordan River, Jericho, Qumran, Masada and the Dead Sea.

In Jerusalem, view the city from the Mount of Olives, walk down the Palm Sunday Road, visit the Garden of Gethsemane, and follow the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Then visit the City of David and slosh through Hezekiah's Tunnel, pray at the Western Wall, and walk around the Temple Mount.

In Bethlehem, visit the Church of the Nativity and Shepherd's Field — then venture through the Valley of Elah to Moreshah for an archaeological dig, bringing pottery and other finds to light for the first time in 2,000 years. Other highlights will include the Israel Museum and Israel's Holocaust memorial.

COST is \$3,800 and includes airfare (from select cities), lodging, breakfasts and dinners, and travel on a luxury motor coach for the entire trip. The group will be joined by one of Israel's most experienced and sought-after guides, Doron Heiliger.

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Indicate your departure city as Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham or Dallas-Ft. Worth. If from another region of the U.S., we will try to secure a closer departing city.

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Executive editor of *Baptists Today*

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What's abortifacient?

Disputes over birth control fuel Obamacare fight

WASHINGTON — Conception. Pregnancy. Abortion. Abortifacient.

Those words today are in a rhetorical swamp where contesting religious, medical and political views muddy understanding. And soon the U.S. Supreme Court will wade in.

On March 25, it will hear challenges to the Affordable Care Act's provision that employers must provide insurance coverage with no co-pays for contraception.

A fundamental legal question in *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* is whether corporations, like individuals, have a right to religious speech. Hobby Lobby is owned by devout evangelical Christians who say they should not be forced to provide contraception services that they find immoral.

While Hobby Lobby officials say they don't object to all contraception, they refuse to provide access to "abortifacient" (causing an abortion) drugs. Since the mandate covers all contraceptive methods approved by the Food and Drug Administration, how these methods work and whether they are abortifacients matters.

The FDA's descriptions never mention the terms "abortifacient" or "abortion." It spells out the primary ways each method works:

- Many prevent a woman from releasing eggs (ovulation).
- Many prevent sperm from reaching or fertilizing the egg.
- A few interfere with a fertilized egg attaching (implanting) in the womb (uterus), which is essential for a viable pregnancy.

That last one is key to the objection by Hobby Lobby's owners, and it gets to the very heart of debates over when life begins, how to define pregnancy and what constitutes an abortion.

Hobby Lobby already provides insurance coverage for 16 other forms of birth control, including pills that prevent ovulation. But they contend their religious freedom rights would be violated if they are required to cover four specific forms of birth control — implanted devices such as intrauterine devices (known as IUDs), a contraceptive rod implanted in a woman's arm and two forms of emergency contraception commonly called "morning after pills."

They say those four methods are abortifacient because, in the words of Hobby Lobby President Steve Green, "We believe life begins at conception." In their view, fertilization, conception and pregnancy are synonymous.

The federal government and major medical voices, such as the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association, disagree.

"A pregnancy exists once a fertilized embryo has implanted in the uterus. Prior to that implantation, we do not have a viable pregnancy," said Dr. Barbara Levy, vice president for health policy for the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Levy's group argues that emergency contraception "cannot prevent implantation of a fertilized egg," and that it is "not effective after implantation; therefore, it is not an abortifacient."

Drugs such as RU-486 or methotrexate combined with misoprostol were designed specifically to bring a medical end to a pregnancy and are clearly abortifacient. But those are not contraceptives, Levy said, and they're not included in the mandate.

Levy contends that her group's definition of pregnancy, established in 1970, "is scientific. By the time I was in medical school, it was crystal clear to all of us."

Public policy has been shaped accordingly.

The Guttmacher Institute, which tracks abortion and public health data, points out that federal regulations that block the use of public funds to pay for abortion nonetheless allow funds for "drugs or devices to prevent implantation." The Department of Health and Human Services' official definition of pregnancy is "the period of time from implantation until delivery."

However, some physicians and researchers

stand firm on the pre-1970 view that pregnancy begins at the moment of conception, when a sperm unites with an egg. From that perspective, any method that prevents implantation of that fertilized egg (essentially, everything except barrier methods such as condoms) is abortifacient.

If a woman believes life, conception and pregnancy all begin with the fertilized egg, the ethics of informed consent should require doctors to tell patients about this possibility when patients seek prescriptions for birth control pills or an IUD, said Dr. Joseph Stanford.

Stanford, a professor in family and preventive medicine at the University of Utah, is co-author on two research studies on "post-fertilization implantation" and informed consent.

He prefers to avoid both rhetorical battles. "People define conception and pregnancy different ways and no one can say definitively what is or isn't so," said Stanford.

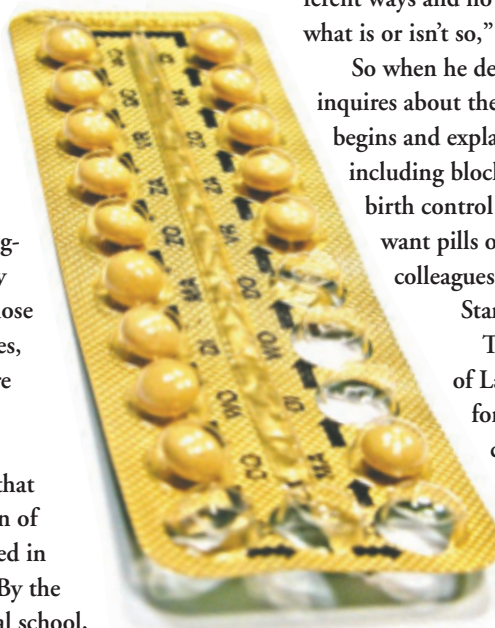
So when he deals with patients, he inquires about their beliefs on when life begins and explains all the possible ways — including blocking implantation — that birth control could work. If they still want pills or an IUD, he refers them to colleagues.

Stanford is Mormon.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no formal statement on contraception, so his decision is personal, he said: "I am not willing to prescribe anything that may, even some of the time, prevent the further development of a human embryo."

John Di Camillo, an ethicist with the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia, said any artificial birth control method — from condoms to pills or devices — deprives a husband and wife of the full meaning of sexual intercourse. Both the act and the intention — to be fully open to each other — are meaningful, he said.

"If you prevent implantation of a life, that is, essentially, an abortion," he said. "Even if it is only in a tiny percentage of cases, it still has moral weight." **BT**



Poll finds younger Christians are less supportive of the death penalty

On Jan. 17, one day after the state of Ohio executed a man for murder, a new poll showed younger Christians are not as supportive of the death penalty as older members of their faith.

When asked if they agreed that “the government should have the option to execute the worst criminals,” 42 percent of self-identified Christian boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, said “yes.” Only 32 percent of self-identified Christian millennials, born between 1980 and 2000, said the same thing.

The poll conducted by Barna Group this past summer and released to Religion News Service recently, surveyed 1,000 American adults and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.6 percentage points.

It showed an even sharper difference in support for the death penalty among “practicing Christians,” which Barna defined as those who say faith is very important to their lives and have attended church at least once in the last month.

Nearly half of practicing Christian boomers support the government’s right to execute the worst criminals, while only 23 percent of practicing Christian millennials do.

Other polling organizations, such as Gallup, show similar generational trends

among Americans in general.

Heather Beaudoin, national organizer for Equal Justice USA, a national organization working to reform the criminal justice system, said the Barna research confirms what she sees: a growing desire among younger Christians to abolish the death penalty.

“The question for them is no longer ‘Is it right or wrong?’” said Beaudoin. “They are seeing how it is actually functioning in our country — the race issues, the risk of executing the innocent, the fact that if you can afford an attorney you’ll probably not end up on death row — and they are changing their minds.”

Roxanne Stone, vice president for publishing at Barna, said capital punishment may increasingly be seen as a human rights or social justice issue.

“This parallels a growing trend in the pro-life conversation among Christians to include torture and the death penalty as well

as abortion,” Stone said. “For many younger Christians, the death penalty is not a political dividing point but a human rights issue.”

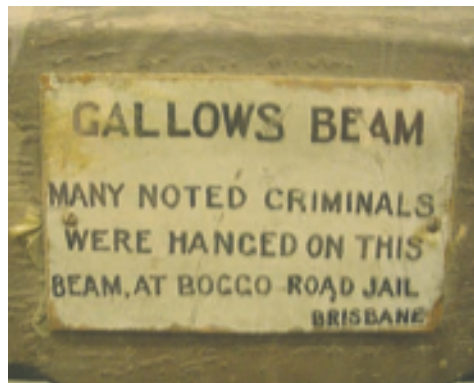
And what of that age-old question, “What would Jesus do?”

According to the Barna study, only 5 percent of Americans believe that Jesus would support government’s ability to execute the worst criminals. Two percent of Catholics, 8 percent of Protestants, and 10 percent of practicing Christians said their faith’s founder would offer his support.

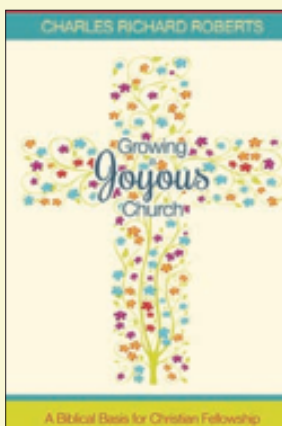
“People use Jesus as their ideal and what they aspire to,” said Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center in Washington. “But in practical day-to-day living they know they will fall short and be less than ideal. They might think that the ideal is to turn the other cheek or not throw the first stone, but they do. They are more pragmatic.”

Comparatively lower support for the death penalty among young Christians stands in sharp contrast to the way conservative Christian leaders such as Ralph Reed, Gary Bauer and Jerry Falwell backed state executions in the 1990s.

“Certain things come to a moment and then become accepted all of a sudden very quickly,” Dieter says. “From apartheid to women’s rights, we’ve seen this throughout history. I think we’re coming to a moment on this issue now that will lead to the death penalty being outlawed in the United States and around the world.” **BT**



NEW RELEASES from *Nurturing Faith* books

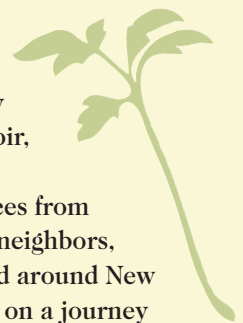


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Evangelical campaign says everyone reflects God's image

NEW YORK — A group of Christian leaders has set up a new campaign to emphasize that all people — gay, liberal, undocumented or otherwise — reflect the image of God.

Six Christian leaders, including Focus on the Family President Jim Daly, *Touched by an Angel* star Roma Downey and her producer husband Mark Burnett, have created a coalition called “Imago Dei,” Latin for “image of God,” to encourage people to treat each other with respect.

“If we had the image of God in mind for every human being, we could change the world,” said Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, who is leading the cause.

“I want Christians to not be known for what we oppose but for what we propose.”

The campaign, also joined by Liberty Law School Dean Mat Staver and *Life Today's* James Robison, is intended to include all humans, but it offers specific examples.

“For the image of God exists in all human beings: black and white; rich and poor; straight and gay; conservative and liberal; victim and perpetrator; citizen and undocumented; believer and unbeliever,” the campaign states.

Rodriguez said it's not intended to target a specific group or issue, even as the campaign has raised eyebrows for attracting the support of conservative leaders who have vocally opposed gay rights in recent years.

“We intentionally listed groups to capture the idea that there's no exception to the rule. Our emphasis is not LGBT or political ideology or color of skin,” he said. “It's not germane as to whether or not people can change sexuality or not. It's not about condoning a lifestyle, political ideology, worldview.”

Rodriguez said he got the idea for the campaign when he was at a restaurant with his family in Sacramento, Calif., and saw girls as young as 12 and 13 who he believed were involved in sex trafficking.

“I looked at my wife and said, ‘That girl has the image of God,’” he said, before



launching a sex trafficking ministry in his church and eventually in NHCLC.

The biblical emphasis of Imago Dei stems from Genesis, where God said he would make mankind in his own image. Evangelicals have signed similar kinds of statements in the past, but this campaign is more focused and simple, said Glenn Stanton of Focus on the Family.

“If someone says something out of line, someone else can say, ‘Hey remember this, how you signed it?’” Stanton said. “Each one of us are image bearers in the sense that each one of us bear the image of God that others don't.”

Rodriguez and Daly were included in a movement of religious leaders that created the Manhattan Declaration, a 2009 manifesto that emphasized protecting religious liberty and resisting abortion and gay marriage. The document included a section on the idea that humans bear the image of God.

“We shouldn't forget that the doctrine of Imago Dei necessarily leads to other commitments, especially as it relates to life, marriage and religious freedom,” said Eric Teetsel, director of the Manhattan Declaration. “Christians have been emphasizing the Imago Dei for a long time. It's often fallen on deaf ears. If this movement causes people to hear it for the first time, that's a wonderful thing.”

Rodriguez declined to disclose how much money is involved in the campaign, saying they are creating financial support, eventually aiming to hire Danielle Jones, who currently leads NHCLC's initiative on sex trafficking. He said Imago Dei plans to create wristbands and launch public service announcements next fall. **BT**

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Lecturer

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SCHEDULE

Tuesday, April 1

11 a.m. worship

J. Beent Walker, Executive Director, Baptist Joint Committee

Paul W. Powell Chapel

Host: Truett Theological Seminary

Tuesday, April 1

3:30 p.m. lecture

Michael I. Meyerson — "The False Divide:
Religious Support for Separation of Church and State"

Draper Academic Building, room 172

Host: Baylor University Religion Department

Wednesday, April 2

2:15 p.m. lecture

Michael I. Meyerson — "Freedom of Religion:
The Framers' Extraordinary Compromise"

Sheila and Walter Umphrey Law Center, room 122

Host: Baylor Law School

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BY SUSAN CODONE



Profile your church on Faithstreet.com

Faithstreet.com, a new church listing website, encourages churches to create a free profile and then consider setting up online giving for their membership and other fee-based services through the site. Individual users and churches can sign up manually or with a Facebook account.

Faithstreet.com rocketed off the startup pad in 2011 and already lists nearly 13,000 Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic churches across the U.S. The goal is to help users find churches near where they live.



Susan Codone

A church's profile can include a photo, map and directions, and statements of "Who We Are" and "About Us." A description of "What to Expect" should focus on making newcomers feel comfortable.

Other information (leadership, staff, language spoken, membership size, worship format, schedule, etc.) may be provided along with a link to the church website. Members may also write reviews to share why they attend the church.

An "Interested in Visiting?" section allows persons to provide their email addresses to receive more information from the church.

Recently, Faithstreet.com acquired the religious blog of the *Washington Post*, called "OnFaith." The editorial staff is seeking new voices to add to the writers already connected to OnFaith. Interested users can sign up as a subscriber or potential contributor on the Faithstreet.com site under the OnFaith link. **BT**

—Susan Codone is an associate professor of technical communication at Mercer University, which offers a specialization in ministry media and technology to students earning the B.S. degree in technical communication in the School of Engineering.

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The Bible Lessons that anchor the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies are written by **Tony Cartledge** in a scholarly, yet applicable, style from the wide range of Christian scriptures. A graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div) and Duke University (Ph.D.), and with years of experience as a pastor, writer, and professor at Campbell University, he provides deep insight for Christian living without "dumbing down" the richness of the biblical texts for honest learners.



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April lessons in this issue

Psalms 130

Songs for Serious Seekers: Hope
April 6, 2014

Psalms 118:1-4, 19-25

Songs for Serious Seekers: A God Who Delivers
April 13, 2014

Matthew 28:1-10

Easter Sunday: Who's Afraid?
April 20, 2014

1 Peter 1:3-9

The Challenges of a Changed Life: Hopeful Faith
April 27, 2014

Youth Lessons are on pages 22–23.



Adult teaching plans by **Rick Jordan** of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina are available at nurturingfaith.net

Thanks, sponsors!

These Bible studies for adults and youth are sponsored through generous gifts from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (Bo Prosser, Coordinator of Congregational Life) and from the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation. Thank you!

Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Psalm 130

April 6, 2014

Hope

Have you ever felt totally guilty before God, overwhelmed by a sense of sin and failure, longing for the blessed release of forgiveness? You would not be the first: today's text is the story of a person who felt just that way.

The season of Lent is designed as a seven-week period of penitence preceding Easter. During Lent, Christian believers are challenged to take a close look at their lives, to identify areas in which they have fallen short of God's desire, and to seek a new start through asking forgiveness and turning away from their sins.

As we approach the end of the Lenten season, the deeply stirring psalm known as *De Profundis* is a most appropriate text for study. 📖 Psalm 130 is the sixth of seven "Penitential Psalms" designated by the early church to be recited on Ash Wednesday (the others are 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, and 143) and considered most appropriate for any time of confession and repentance.

A penitent prayer (vv. 1-4)

The psalm's designation as a "Song of Ascent" goes back to Jewish tradition and some of our earliest manuscripts. 📖 The psalm appears to have originated as a testimony of an individual's private devotion, but it could also have found a place in worship as a corporate prayer of penitence. 📖

The psalmist appears to be deeply troubled by his failures, but gives no clue as to the nature of his sin. We don't



Psalm 130:3 –
"If you, O LORD, should
mark iniquities, Lord,
who could stand?"

know if he was under conviction about a particularly egregious error, or if more frequent foibles had mounted up. Whatever the case, he had a sense of being in deep water, caught up in the chaos of sin and struggling to keep his head above water, knowing that God was his only hope: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD" (v. 1).

The word translated as "depths" could possibly refer to the abode of the dead in the depths of the earth, or to the deep waters of the ungoverned sea, which represented chaos to the ancients. Hebrew has several words that convey the sense of something deep, and the one used here often appears in negative circumstances: for those who hide the plans "deeply" from Yahweh (Isa. 29:15), or who are urged to hide from Yahweh in the "depths" of Dedan (Jer. 49:8). Hosea 5:2 appears to speak of those who are "deep" in depravity.

It's not surprising, then, that the psalmist would use this word to

describe the extent of his shortcomings.

Perhaps you can remember feeling overwhelmed by failure, emotionally at sea, floundering for a footing. You may have sought the ear of a friend or counselor – or you may have prayed to God, as the psalmist did (v. 2).

Fully aware of his faults – and of the pervasive nature of sin in human life – the poet sought divine mercy rather than judgment. To his plea for mercy, the psalmist adds a rational appeal: "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?" (v. 3). 📖

The word translated as "mark" is also used to mean "watch," "guard," or "keep." In essence, the psalmist is saying that if God kept score and judged our errors accordingly, no one would be left standing.

Many believers hold to the view of a judgmental God who keeps meticulous records of wrongdoing, and I've occasionally heard teachers or preachers take an almost perverse delight in

Additional background information
online where you see the "Digging
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drawing a picture of judgment day in which our every sin would be revealed for all the world to see (1 Cor. 4:5 is sometimes cited as support for this view).

The psalmist understood, however, that God has better things to do than compile an individual encyclopedia of failures for every person on earth. He understood that God is gracious and forgiving, and that forgiveness means – well, forgiveness.

If we truly forgive someone of hurting us, there's no need to hold on to the offense or remind them of it or keep records for future reference. If God kept a daily tally and punished us for every sin, few of us would survive for very long.

Rather, the poet affirmed, "there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered" (v. 4).

What good would it do for God to wipe out all who sin and have no one left with whom to fellowship or for whom to have hopes and dreams? How can God be praised if there is no one left to sing hallelujahs? If anyone is to worship and pay reverence to God, it must be sinners, because there is no other type of person. And if sinners are to live and serve God, it must be because God is gracious and willing to forgive.

Many people – both believers and unbelievers – have difficulty in forgiving other people, or even forgiving themselves. They keep a running tally of wrongs that amounts to a heavy load of misery. To find the joy that God wants for us, we must learn to forgive and to be forgiven, to stop keeping score and find true freedom.

A longing hope (vv. 5-6)

Believing that God is gracious and actually experiencing forgiveness are two different things. Having confessed his sins and expressed confidence in God's forgiving nature, the psalmist waited for a sign of absolution. Verse 5 consists of three brief clauses: "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word

I hope."

A surface reading of the verse might lead some to think "in his word I hope" is a reference to trusting in the Bible, but the psalmist had no Bible. In Old Testament contexts such as this one, terms such as "his word" or "the word of God" refers to a direct word of God, usually delivered as an oracle through a prophet or priest who spoke in God's behalf.

The preposition before "his word" usually means "to" or "for" rather than "in." The psalmist is voicing a longing for a word from God to indicate that his sins have been forgiven. The poet may have hoped for something as objective as a priestly oracle declaring that God had heard his prayer and granted clemency. Or, he may have sought a more subjective sense of inner peace and release through a divine response.

The verb for "waits" does not appear in v. 6, as in many translations. The line poetically carries forward the sense of hope and longing from the previous verse, which ends with "I hope ..." and is followed by "... my soul, more than watchers for the morning, watchers for the morning."

"Watchers for the morning" could refer to guards or others appointed to keep watch through the night, but also echoes the sense of someone who suffers deep anxiety or guilt and cannot sleep. The psalmist longs for God's forgiveness even more keenly than an insomniac or troubled person watches through the night, waiting for the light of day. ⬇️

A relieved testimony (vv. 7-8)

With vv. 7-8, the psalm turns from speaking to God (vv. 1-4) and speaking about God (vv. 5-6) to speaking for God, urging the people of Israel to seek God and find the same sense of forgiveness that he apparently received. ⬇️

Some interpreters see vv. 7-8 as spoken by a priest or prophet who exhorts the congregation to follow the example of the person who speaks in vv. 1-6 and turn to God so they may also experience forgiveness and renewed faith.

Whoever the speaker, vv. 5 and 7 both stress the importance of hope. If we think about it for a moment, we have to realize that we live on hope. We awake each morning hoping for a good day. We enter relationships hoping to find love and companionship. We hope that our lives might have some significance and that our children will appreciate us. We hope to stay healthy and to live a long time.

Furthermore, we hope for a meaningful existence that extends beyond this earthly life, though we have no human means of making that happen or any proof that it will. The basis for such a hope is found in the promises of a dependably loving and forgiving God. Just as the psalmist called on Israel to "hope in the LORD," hope is what keeps us going.

The closing verses of the psalm are addressed to Israel, but God's promise of forgiveness extends far beyond the covenant people of the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible depicts God as gracious to all who repent, with the book of Jonah being a prime example of God's willingness to forgive, even when a prophet thought they didn't deserve it.

Viewing the text through the lens of the New Testament, we are reminded that God offers grace to "whosoever" (John 3:16), and that "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

All of us know what it is to fall short of God's expectations. Some of us have known or may now know the psalmist's feeling of drowning in failure. Even from those chaotic depths – and perhaps, especially from the depths – we can learn from the psalmist to trust in God's steadfast love and find the redemption we crave.

May it be so. **BT**

Bible Study

Psalm 118:1-4, 19-25

with Tony W. Cartledge

April 13, 2014

A God Who Delivers

Palm Sunday is a day for celebration, often marked with a gospel reading, joyful hymns, and even the waving of greenery in worship. Since Palm Sunday begins Holy Week, however, it can't be fully separated from thoughts of the loneliness and suffering that Jesus experienced before Easter.

Psalm 118 also reflects themes of suffering and salvation, prayer and praise. It's not surprising, then, that quotations from this psalm would find their way into the New Testament story of Jesus' "triumphal entry," and hence into the lectionary for use on Palm Sunday.

A God who is good (vv. 1-4)

Psalm 118 is a favorite for other reasons, too, though we're more likely to remember specific verses than the overall message of the text.

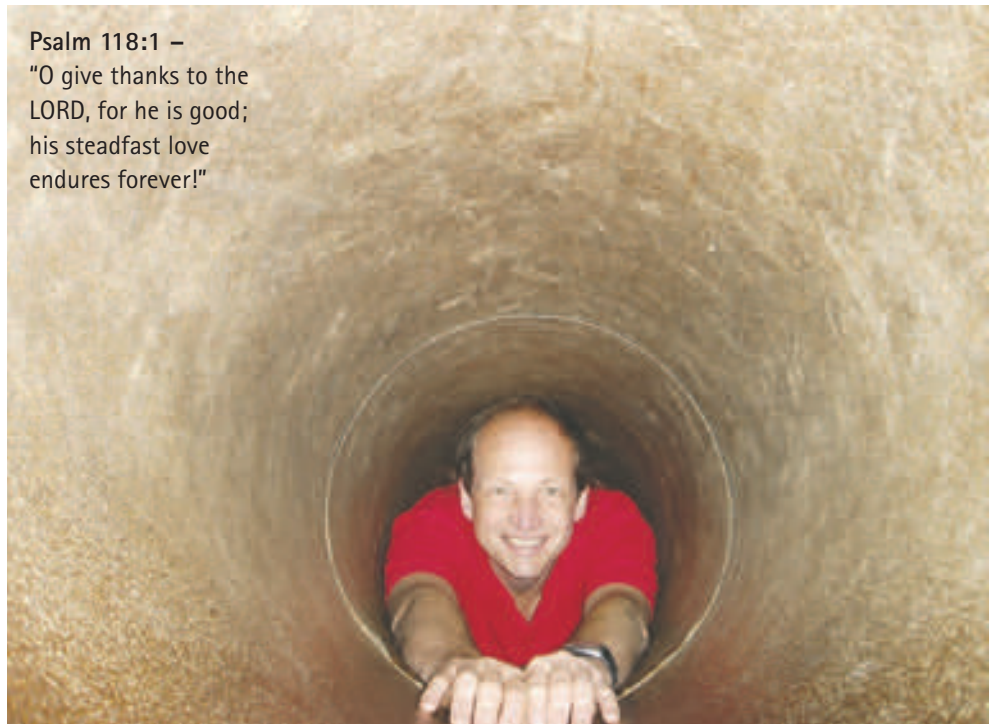
Perhaps you have memorized v. 14: "The Lord is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation." In the New Testament, we find parts of v. 22 ("Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD") either quoted or referenced in all four of the gospels. And, many believers have a special fondness for the familiar v. 24: "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

The psalm tells us why we have cause to rejoice: It is the testimony of one – probably to be thought of as a king of Israel – who was beset by enemies and in danger of death, but who believed he or she had been delivered by the grace of God. 🇺🇸 🇺🇸

Additional background information online where you see the "Digging Deeper" icon



Psalm 118:1 –
"O give thanks to the
LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love
endures forever!"



Thus, the psalm begins with a reminder to all persons that God is always present, and always loving. The poet emphasizes this by a careful use of both repetition and word order.

Look closely at the first verse, which begins with an imperative call for all who hear (or read) to praise Yahweh because of God's inherent goodness, revealed through steadfast love: "O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!" (v. 1). The same refrain will be repeated as the last verse in the psalm, framing the entire poem with gratitude for God's dependable love.

In the next three verses, the psalmist calls on three specific groups to praise Yahweh – the personal name God revealed to Moses – for the same reason: because "His steadfast love endures forever." 🇺🇸

Though the psalmist was a Hebrew through and through, he recognized that such love is offered not only to the priests or to Israel, but also to all who "fear God," whatever their background (vv. 2-4).

We do not have to live in isolation, with the feeling that we are somehow detached from the universe. There is a God who not only loves us, but whose love is eternal.

The psalmist came to know the presence and the power of the Lord through his own religious tradition. He had been taught that God's name was Yahweh. In ceremonies of worship and celebration, he had often relived the ways in which God had brought deliverance to Israel.

God called Abraham from Haran, brought him to the Promised Land, saved him from enemies, and granted him a son.

God delivered the children of Abraham from the bondage of Egypt, cared for them in the wilderness, gave them his good laws, and brought them again to the Promised Land.

Israel's spiritual path had been uneven, but God's love and grace had been constant. Those who followed the psalmist in putting their trust in God learned that they were never fully alone, never isolated, never unloved, never

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separated from the lingering, comforting touch of the Spirit of God. That is the way God is. God's steadfast love endures forever, no matter what.

The good news of scripture is that we can know this same God. As the psalmist knew the wonderful stories of Yahweh and Israel, so we recall the stories of Jesus and his followers.

We have learned how the Lord God came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. We have learned how Jesus loved the poor, healed the sick, and comforted the afflicted.

We have learned how Jesus died on the cross but rose again, atoning for our persistent sins in a way that only God could do.

If we trust the word of the psalmist, the love of God is not an issue. The only issue is our response to the offer of God's redeeming presence in Christ Jesus, a presence that Paul declared could never be taken away (Rom. 8:37-39).

A God who delivers (vv. 19-25)

While Psalm 118 appears to recount the experience of one of Israel's kings – and hence to have been written before the exile – it could have been used in later periods by anyone who wished to commemorate God's past deliverance as well as to express hope in God's future care.

The psalm was probably employed in worship as a processional liturgy, sung or acted out as worshipers entered the sanctuary on certain days. Perhaps we are to imagine a victorious king returning from battle with his entourage and coming first to the temple, where he called to the priests: "Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD" (v. 19).

In later usage, a worship leader might have taken the role of the king in leading worshipers through the gates and into the temple. ⚓

Note the interplay between vv. 19 and 20, which probably represents an exchange between the returning king and the priest in charge of the temple.

The king calls out to the gatekeeper, demanding that he open the "gates of righteousness" (v. 19), but is reminded that the gate belongs to Yahweh, and only the righteous should enter through it (v. 20). ⚓

Neither gates nor ground can be righteous or unrighteous. If the portal to the temple is a "gate of righteousness," it is because righteous people enter through it. The word translated as "righteousness" (*tsedek*) describes those whose behavior is just and correct, honoring God. ⚓

The psalmist's metaphor of a stone rejected by the builders being ultimately chosen as the cornerstone is so familiar from its New Testament usage in reference to Christ that we often forget that it originally referred to the king for (or by) whom this psalm was written.

The psalmist thanks God for divine deliverance (v. 21). Though rejected or considered useless by others, God had made him the chief cornerstone, the most important foundation stone in a building (vv. 22-23). This terminology was adopted by New Testament writers and applied to Christ, who was also rejected by humankind, but exalted by God as the cornerstone (cf. Luke 20:17, Acts. 4:11, 1 Pet. 2:4, 7). ⚓

Careful readers may have a sense of surprise with v. 25, as the psalm turns from praise to plea. After celebrating "the LORD's doing" in bringing deliverance (v. 23) and rejoicing in the present day – which is also God's doing (v. 24) – the singer prays for God's saving work to continue in every trying circumstance (v. 25): "Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!" ⚓

A God who blesses (vv. 26-29)

"Save us!" is from the Hebrew expression "*hoshi'ah nah*," which comes into English as "Hosanna." Though

technically a request for help, the expression came to be used as a word of praise, a shout of acclamation to the one who is able to save.

It is no surprise, then, that the crowds who followed Jesus during his triumphal entry shouted "Hosanna" in conjunction with their quotation of v. 26: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matt. 19:9, Mark 11:9-10, Luke 19:38, John 12:13).

The spreading of branches during the Palm Sunday entry may also reflect v. 27, which speaks of leafy boughs being used in the festal procession, or to adorn the large outdoor altar that stood before the temple.

While we typically read these verses as if the people are blessing God, it is likely that v. 26 should be read as if spoken by the priests, who pronounced a blessing on the victorious king and his retinue who had entered the temple in God's name: "We bless you from the house of the LORD."

In later years, the psalm could have been used as a blessing for any worshipers who gathered in God's name to offer praise and seek God's favor.

They, like the king in the psalm's initial setting, would be moved to declare allegiance and praise to the author of their salvation: "You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, and I will extol you" (v. 28). ⚓

Today we may continue to express our devotion to God, who has worked out our ultimate redemption through Jesus Christ. As the psalmist confessed, "You are my God," so Paul reminds all people "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

The psalm begins and ends with praise to God, whose steadfast love endures forever. These words were written hundreds of years before Jesus walked the earth, and thousands of years before our own pilgrimages began, but we may still echo its words and declare our praise to the one whose steadfast love has saved us all and who sticks with us for all time. **BT**

Youth

April 6 — April 27, 2014

Youth Lessons by
David Cassidy
and online youth
teaching resources
(at nurturingfaith.net) by **Jeremy
Colliver** build off



of the Bible lessons by Tony Cartledge.

Youth lessons are made possible through the generous support of the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation.

Waiting

Psalm 130

You send the text and wait for the reply. You practice the conversation over and over in your head as you wait for the phone to be answered. You submit your application and start counting the days until you will hear back.

In a world where we have access to people and information in a matter of seconds, most of us are not good at waiting. Hope will sometimes disappear because we don't yet know the outcome. The writer of Psalm 130 proclaims a different type of hope: The people of Israel know that the outcome will be God's redemption.

The psalmist begins with a feeling of failure, a feeling that led him to "crying

out from the depths" to the Lord. But the cry is not for judgment but for mercy, a mercy he knows will come with the Lord. His appeal ends by acknowledging that he is not worthy of the mercy he will receive because if the Lord kept score, neither he nor anyone else would be left standing.

As the psalmist cries out, admitting his faults and seeking mercy, he waits on forgiveness. But his waiting is one of expectation and hope. He believes it will arrive as soon as the morning. The psalmist speaks of forgiveness coming in the morning, reminding us of the sense of newness that comes with being forgiven. He knows he will be renewed through the forgiveness of God. His personal cries become an exclamation of joy to the people of Israel for a God who redeems.

APRIL 6

Think About It:

Psalm 130 is a personal testimony of someone who knew he had made mistakes but was confident in the grace of God. When you mess up, how confident are you that God will forgive you?

Make a Choice:

When we mess up, we can choose to turn inward over the problems, or we can admit our guilt and call out to God. What choice will you make the next time you mess up?

Pray:

Where in your life do you need to ask for forgiveness? Offer your prayer to God and, like the psalmist, expect forgiveness.

Steadfast

Psalm 118:1-4, 19-25

Steadfast ... even after you say it a couple of times in your head, it doesn't sound right. It's not one of those words you use — or even hear — very often. Even when you break it down into the compound words, it doesn't help to understand the word's meaning. And it's not a slang word that you might look up on UrbanDictionary to find the meaning. But it is one of those words that describe God, and it is used repeatedly in Psalm 118.

The psalmist isn't the only one who claims that God is steadfast; it is Israel, the house of Aaron, and even those who fear the Lord. They all cry that God is steadfast, but steadfast to what? God is

unwavering in being present and loving to all people. The presence and love of a steadfast God is available to each of us.

In v. 19 it becomes clear that those who enter into this relationship with God are righteous people. But they are not righteous on their own but because of the steadfast love of God. As the psalm continues, we read that salvation doesn't come through righteousness but through and because of God. The stone that was once rejected has now been redeemed by God and delivered to a place of honor.

The refrain at this section, in v. 25, is one that we can each cry out: "Save us!" It is a feeling we all know from time to time. Psalm 118 reminds us that our steadfast God is there for us in our time of need.

APRIL 13

Think About It:

It is easy to be around someone when all is well, but we feel stressed and tested when times get rough. How does the declaration of God's steadfast love from Psalm 118 comfort you?

Make a Choice:

There are many things we may put our faith in to help us get through life. Some of these will fade, and some will stay. How do you choose what to rely on in your journey of life?

Pray:

Think of a part of your life that is in need of stability and comfort. Offer a prayer to God, seeking God's steadfast love and presence.

Afraid

Matthew 28:1-10

Confession: I scare easily. So much so, that people sometimes apologize when they walk up on me to tell me something and I jump in surprise. My wife won't go see scary movies because she'll have bruises from where I squeeze her hand and leg during the scary parts. But maybe I'm just jumpy, because I'm not afraid to meet new people or to try something new. Let me hold a snake or a spider; just don't sneak up on me.

The same might be said for Mary Magdalene and the other Mary when they went to the tomb to care for Jesus' body. They undoubtedly jumped as the earth began to quake and then an angel descended to roll back the stone where

Jesus lay. If that weren't enough, the angel looked directly at them and spoke.

But they weren't the only ones who were afraid that morning. The men who had been guarding the tomb were afraid. It is ironic that they are described as being "like dead men" since their fear arose from a dead man who had come to life.

The women, though, were the ones who were comforted. The words of the angel gave meaning to what had happened, even if the women did not completely understand them. The words also gave the women direction for what to do next: Jesus has been raised, and he is going to Galilee. The women left with fear, but their fear was not limiting but empowering. Instead of being stopped cold, they were motivated by their encounter with God.

APRIL 20

Think About It:

It is not every day that we have to face our fears, but when we do, what gives you the strength to overcome them? Like the angel helps the women, how can you help someone else overcome their fears?

Make a Choice:

After the women heard their instructions from the angel, they had a choice to go and tell or to go and hide. Our choice is much the same today. Will you go and hide your faith, or will you go and tell?

Pray:

God, who has overcome death, may we find freedom in knowing that you are for us.

Hope

1 Peter 1:3-9

The game is over. The cheers have faded into memories. The confetti has been cleared away. The trophies have been taken home. Quiet and calm remain. And then there is the question: What do I do now?

It's after Easter, and the feeling is much the same. Jesus has risen. The Easter flowers are gone. The anthems have been sung. The new outfits have been washed and put away. Jesus brought hope, but hope for what? First Peter seeks to answer this question.

The writer begins by reminding us that the resurrection of Jesus occurs because of the mercy of God. It brings a hope that is no longer in the future but in the present as Jesus' presence; a living hope, the mercy

that God gives us a fresh beginning. The resurrection convinces the disciples that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the one who births the church and brings eternal life.

The hope of the resurrection of Jesus expands on the idea of hope we sometimes hear from Old Testament prophets. No longer is there only hope for the body to be resurrected after death, however, but hope is alive among us in this life. This offers abundant living in the present instead of waiting on a life to come after death.

The living hope that is promised does not mean life will be easy. The writer of 1 Peter knew of the pain that was being endured by early believers. Their hope in the living Christ would help them grow through their pain.

APRIL 27

Think About It:

Peter spoke of the pain associated with purifying the faith of the believers. How can hardships and suffering lead to your faith growing abundantly instead of fading away?

Make a Choice:

Each of us will encounter some hardship or pain in life. This may be self-induced or brought on by another person. What will you do to grow out of this pain instead of wilting away?

Pray:

God, help me find strength through the living hope I have been given in Jesus.

Bible Study

Matthew 28:1-10

with Tony W. Cartledge

April 20, 2014

Who's Afraid?

Easter: for many believers it is the highest and holiest day of the year. It is a day that, more than any other, reaffirms our faith and renews our hope. It is the day a crucified teacher rose from the dead and was transformed from the earthly Jesus to the cosmic Christ. It is a day made for celebration.

What are your favorite memories of Easter? Are they more likely to involve sunrise services and stirring hymns, or new clothes, egg hunts, and a basket of candy from the Easter bunny? Like Christmas, Easter has come to us with mixed messages, an amalgam of secular and sacred, or pagan and prophetic. (See "The Hardest Question" online for more on this.)

As an adult, what makes a meaningful Easter celebration for you? Do you like to attend passion plays or watch *Jesus Christ Superstar* on DVD? Do you look for a local concert of Handel's *Messiah*, or attend lunchtime Holy Week services offered by many churches?

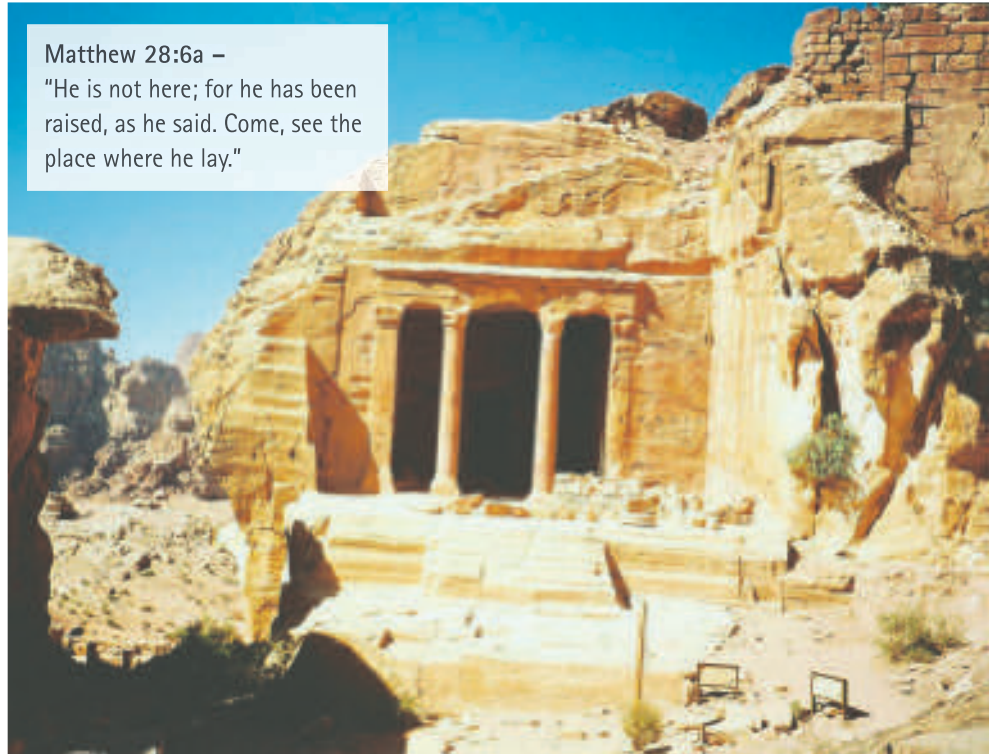
It's hard to imagine an Easter Sunday passing without attending some sort of worship service, even for those who rarely warm a pew. A student once described his religious background by telling me he came from a family of "C&E Christians." I thought he was talking about an obscure denomination until I realized he meant "Christmas and Easter."

Whether we celebrate Easter through drama, music, or preaching, our focus is the same: We want to remember the story, the amazing Easter story

Additional background information online where you see the "Digging Deeper" icon



Matthew 28:6a –
"He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."



of death and resurrection, of shock and awe, of sad desperation and exuberant hope.

An earth-shaking discovery (vv. 1-4)

Details of the Easter narrative vary in the four gospels, but are nonetheless familiar. They all begin with the aftermath of Jesus' shocking and unexpected crucifixion, leaving his followers, family and friends at a loss for what to do next. The gospels agree that a man named Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57-61) had the resources, the position, and the presence of mind to step forward and request custody of Jesus' body, offering his own tomb as a resting place. Only the very wealthy could afford to construct a rock-cut tomb in the side of a stone cliff, with a rolling stone for a door.

In Jerusalem, tourists can visit such tombs, including one that is just outside the walls of the old city. Called the "Garden Tomb," it is located near Gordon's Calvary, and revered by many as

the traditional site of Jesus' burial. The tomb is cut into a sheer limestone cliff. It no longer has its rolling stone, but a carefully fashioned gutter more than a foot wide marks the track where one could have stood.

Jesus was buried on a Friday, just before the sundown that marked the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath (from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday). The two Marys had watched as Jesus' body was laid in the tomb (Matt. 27:61), but they could not return to add traditional burial spices on the next day because of rabbinic rules preventing travel on the Sabbath. As dawn of the following day approached, however, they hurried to the tomb.

Matthew says nothing of the women bringing spices, as do Mark and Luke, only that "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb" (v. 1). Only Matthew reports that their visit was accompanied by an early morning earthquake, or that the women were witnesses to it. Likewise, only Matthew describes an angel descending

from heaven, rolling the stone aside, and then sitting on it. The angel's appearance was "like lightning," Matthew said, "and his clothing white as snow" (v. 3). The other gospels report one or two angels appearing inside the tomb, after the stone was moved.

The blazing appearance of the angel and the special effects contributed by the earthquake left the guards trembling in fear (v. 4), as well they should be. The guards were symbolic of Jesus' enemies, who had cause to fear. They thought they had gotten rid of him, but now they faced an enemy who wouldn't stay dead, and who was far more than an impersonal zombie. Jesus had returned to life.

There is amusing irony in Matthew's comment that the guards "became like dead men." As the dead man in the tomb arose to new life, the living soldiers who were set to guard him acted as if they were dead. The power of God can turn things around very quickly.

A world-changing commission (vv. 5-10)

The women, no doubt, were also shaking with fear, but the angel immediately comforted them, and announced that Jesus had risen from the dead "as he said" (vv. 5-6). Matthew does not describe the women's entrance into the empty tomb, but leaves the reader to assume they accepted the angel's invitation to "see the place where he lay."

As Matthew tells the story, however, there is no pause between the invitation to see the empty tomb and the commission to go and tell the disciples. The two women were to bear this message: "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him" (v. 7). Luke and John describe resurrection appearances in Jerusalem, but for Matthew the most important manifestation of the risen Christ was to take place in Galilee.

The region of Galilee was some eighty miles north of Jerusalem, a walking journey of several days. Bordered

on the south by the Jezreel Valley and reaching as far north as Lake Huleh (now a drained area of fertile farmland), the hills of Galilee and the shores of Lake Kinneret had been the location for much of Jesus' ministry. 🇺🇸

The Galilee is a large area. How were the disciples supposed to know where to find Jesus there? Perhaps we are to assume that they would choose a favorite rendezvous from earlier days. Matt. 28:16 implies that Jesus had directed them to a particular mountain, but vv. 7 and 10 do not mention it. Faith would be required for this journey, for Jesus would not be alongside to show them the way. Rather, according to the angel, Jesus was going on ahead.

As Matthew tells it, the women accepted the angel's commission and ran from the tomb with a stomach-churning mixture of both "fear and great joy" (v. 8). They must have been totally shocked when Jesus himself stepped into their path. His one word of greeting, apparently, was enough to convince them that it was he. As one, the women fell to their knees, took hold of Jesus' feet, and worshiped him (v. 9). In John's gospel, Jesus instructed Mary not to touch him, but Matthew speaks of no such warning. The word for "took hold" can also mean "seize." The two Marys took a firm grip on Jesus' feet, and did not want to let him go.

Jesus would have understood their desire, but had other work for them. Repeating the angel's instructions for the disciples to meet him in Galilee (v. 10), Jesus sent them on their way, no doubt with even greater joy.

Matthew does not describe the women's reunion with the other disciples. After speaking of a priestly plot to claim that Jesus' body was stolen (vv. 11-15), Matthew has the disciples immediately hit the road to Galilee and "to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them" (v. 16).

Though Matthew makes no mention

of the other disciple's doubt (unlike Luke, who says they thought the women were telling "idle tales" [24:11]), the women's testimony would have been hard to accept, despite the evidence of the empty tomb. Faith would have been required to leave Jerusalem and begin the long walk to Galilee in hopes of finding Jesus there.

As Matthew tells it, though, this was not the first time Jesus had mentioned a post-resurrection meeting in Galilee. Near the end of the Last Supper, Jesus had predicted that his disciples would desert him and that he would be killed. "But after I am raised up," he had said, "I will go ahead of you to Galilee" (26:32).

After the crucifixion, the disciples knew they had indeed abandoned Jesus. Perhaps they wondered if the Lord would ever trust them again. For this reason, Jesus' invitation and his choice of words were especially significant. He said to the women, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee ..." Jesus' love was unchanged by the disciples' desertion: their brotherhood had not dissolved. Jesus understood their fear, but saw beyond it. He believed in the men and women who had devoted their lives to him even more than they believed in themselves.

It's good to know that Jesus believes in us, too. He knows that we have many doubts and questions. Though we may sometimes live as if we have given up on him, Jesus doesn't give up on us. Our rendezvous may not be in Galilee, but we are also called to go and meet the risen Lord. As for the first disciples, our journey toward encountering and following Jesus requires faith, but is well worth the effort.

Jesus calls each of us to be Easter people – to experience our own spiritual resurrection through Christ, and to share the joy and hope we have found with others.

Our text tells us that the women who first met the risen Lord overcame their fears and did as he asked. How will we respond? **BT**

Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

1 Peter 1:3-9

April 27, 2014

Hopeful Faith

We have just celebrated Easter, the high point of the church year. But what do we do after Easter, when the hallelujahs have faded and routine returns? The book of 1 Peter offers encouragement for Christ-followers who may flounder a bit in the wake of the resurrection, and it will be the source of our studies for the next several weeks.

Being Christian is not always easy: Jesus promised his followers a comforter, but also a cross. Peter's letter to Christians of the late first century addresses the difficulties faced by those who try to live the Christian life in a pluralistic culture that in some ways was not so different than our own.

Scholars are divided on the subject of whether the Apostle Peter wrote the letter that bears his name, as well as the date. 🇺🇸🇺🇸 For simplicity's sake we will refer to the author as "Peter," while acknowledging that one of his disciples or another believer may have written the book in Peter's name.

When Christians changed their lifestyle and no longer participated in their pagan cultures, opposition was inevitable. Remember, for example, how idol-makers in Ephesus started a riot when their business suffered because of the Christian movement (Acts 18:23-41).

The writer of 1 Peter sought to encourage and comfort those Christians whose changed lifestyle had made them unacceptable within their cultural world. We may experience some of the same pushback in our own society, whether from non-Christians or from



1 Peter 1:3 –

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ..."

fellow believers who hold to different doctrines or values.

A living hope (vv. 3-5)

The letter begins with a salutation (1:1-2) in the style made popular by Paul, replacing the typical word "greetings" with "grace and peace." The letter is addressed to the "exiles of the Dispersion" (NRSV), which refers to the "diaspora," or scattering of Jewish exiles throughout the known world. Internal evidence in the letter suggests that the churches contained both Jewish and Gentile Christians. This special terminology is a reminder that all Christians have connections with God's covenant people.

The address mentions the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, all in the northern half of what used to be called Asia Minor and is now the country of Turkey.

It is likely that the writer did not know the churches personally, but intended for the letter to circulate

among churches in the region so that all might learn and be encouraged (5:12). Its message was so helpful that it was also distributed in other areas and eventually came to be accepted as Scripture, inspired by God and instructive for churches and Christians in all places and all times.

Christian letters often included a prayer of thanksgiving after the greeting, so we are not surprised that vv. 3-12 offer a prayer of praise for what God has done in the lives of believers. 🇺🇸 The writer begins, appropriately, by offering thanks for God's great mercy. It is because God is merciful that we are freely offered a new birth (literally "re-begotten"), made possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This gives to believers a living hope.

We can't overemphasize the importance of hope, and for Christians, that hope is firmly grounded in Christ's resurrection. If there had been no resurrection, there would have been no church. It was Christ's resurrection that

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convinced his disciples that Jesus truly was the Son of God, victorious over death and evil. The resurrection led them to trust in his promise of eternal life to those who are “born again” (John 3:3).

Some Old Testament prophets hoped for a resurrection sometime long after their deaths, at the end of the age. In contrast, the resurrection of Christ gave to Christians a living hope, a confident assurance of life beyond the grave.

The new birth can lead to an abundant life here on earth, but also to “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (v. 4). We normally think of an inheritance as something we receive when someone else dies, but this inheritance comes when we die.

The author uses three adjectives to describe this eternal inheritance: it is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. The writer adds a nice alliterative touch, for the three words all have a similar sound: *aphtharton*, *amianton*, *amaranton*. ↓

The word for “imperishable” means “not subject to spoiling.” The term translated “undefiled” was also the name of a valuable mineral used to treat cloth so it would not burn and could be cleansed with fire. The word for “unfading” derives from the name of a flower, the maranth, with a negative prefix attached. It is used only here in the New Testament, but appeared in Greek literature to describe a flower whose beauty never fades (Daniel Arichea and Eugene Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the First Letter from Peter* [United Bible Societies, 1980], p. 18).

Peter also thanked God for the protective promise of salvation that ensures our future (v. 5). We usually think of salvation in the context of one’s initial experience of trusting Jesus and being assured of eternity (cf. Luke 19:9). Paul sometimes speaks of it as a present possession being worked into a finished product (Phil. 2:12). At other times, “salvation” refers to the consummation of God’s redeeming work at the second

coming of Christ (Rom. 13:11; Heb. 9:28), and that is probably its meaning here. Christians experience this sense of security through the living hope of committing their lives and their eternity to the power of God.

**Trial by fire
(vv. 6-7)**

Peter emphasized the importance of rejoicing and pointed his readers to a future hope because he knew that many were facing very real persecution: “In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials” (v. 6). This theme will recur throughout the letter. ↓

The writer did not spell out the “various trials” his readers had suffered. Persecution is not limited to violent or physically harmful acts. The word here translated as “suffer” was most commonly used for “grieve.” It speaks of the emotional effects of suffering more than physical pain. Peter knew that the distress of grief may seem overwhelming, but in comparison to eternity, it is but “a little while.”

Pain, whether it arises from persecution or misunderstanding or heartache, is not just to be endured: it can be tapped for self-growth and increased maturity. Like a fire that burns away impurities and renders gold more pure and valuable, Peter said, the heat of public derision or opposition could serve to purify the believers’ faith and prove it genuine, like gold that has been tested by fire. That kind of faith will result “in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (v. 7), he said.

The metaphor of gold is helpful, but falls short of describing true faith. Gold is fireproof, but not destruction-proof. In contrast, genuine faith that has been through the fire is imperishable. Counterfeit faith is inherently worthless and brings shame upon both Christ and the church. Faith that has been tested

and proven to be genuine brings greater glory to the author of our faith.

**The outcome of our faith
(vv. 8-9)**

Faith involves believing in something for which one has no visible proof. ↓ In trying times, faith may falter, or it may grow stronger. Peter recognized the tested and true faith of the Christians in Asia Minor by affirming “Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy” (v. 8).

If the apostle Peter wrote these words, the author would have been an eyewitness to Christ’s life, work, and resurrection. In contrast, the people to whom he wrote had not heard Jesus teach, seen his miraculous works, or witnessed his resurrection – yet they believed. They walked by faith and not by sight (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7; John 20:29).

The believers not only believed in Christ – they loved him. Through the experience of faith and love, they experienced the joy of knowing the presence of Christ’s spirit and the assurance of their final salvation, the ultimate outcome of faith (v. 9). Suffering is not required for faith, but can strengthen it along the pathway to our ultimate salvation. ↓

Scholars have often noted that 1 Peter has many similarities to the writings of Paul. This is particularly evident in this moving introduction to Peter’s letter. The author begins with an affirmation of the Christian’s living hope (v. 3), then speaks of genuine faith (vv. 5, 7), and finally moves to joyous love (v. 8). These are the three things that remain when all else fails, aspects of Christian maturity that Paul often emphasized (1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3, 5:8). For Christians who face the intense pressures of an unbelieving culture, these three virtues are central.

Does living in your world ever leave you with a level of tension between the life you live and the one to which you are called? Don’t give up: in Christ we have a hope that lives. **BT**

Classifieds

Senior Pastor: Immanuel Baptist Church of Wiesbaden, Germany, seeks a dynamic, flexible and passionate servant to lead as the pastor of our international English-speaking congregation. Immanuel is a diverse faith community whose membership represents more than 20 nations and multiple traditions. We partner with the International Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance. The ideal candidate will be able to minister cross-culturally and work effectively with disciples from across the theological spectrum. He should have a seminary degree and at least 5 years of ministry experience. Any previous ministry or travel abroad or experience with internationals is a plus. Interested candidates should contact the pastor search committee at secretaryibcwi@gmail.com.

Senior Pastor: The Vienna Baptist faith community seeks a strong pastoral leader to guide us, to minister alongside us, to cast the vision, and to join our journey of spiritual growth and discipleship. For further information, see the pastor search page at vbc-va.org. Send résumé and cover letter to VBCpastorsearch@vbc-va.org.

Pastor: Godwin Heights Baptist Church of Lumberton, N.C., is seeking a full-time pastor with five or more years of ministry experience and who holds a seminary degree or a Master of Divinity degree. The ideal candidate should be an effective communicator and preacher who works well with the church family and community, a strong leader who promotes the spiritual interest of the church, and a caring individual who is gifted in pastoral care. Interested candidates should submit résumés to Pastor Search Committee, Godwin Heights Baptist Church, 704 Godwin Ave., Lumberton, NC 28358. Position is open until filled.

Pastor: Wake Forest Baptist Church, a progressive Christian community on the campus of Wake Forest University, seeks a dynamic full-time ordained pastor. As a multi-generational, multi-cultural congregation, we value prophetic worship, thoughtful religious education, social justice, peacemaking, and welcoming and affirming of all people. Please visit our website at wakeforestbaptist.org for more information and instructions on how to apply by March 30.

Minister of Music: First Baptist Church, Augusta, Ga., is seeking a qualified, spiritual and creative candidate for the full-time position of minister of music. First Baptist is a large faith community with a diverse and extensive music program. The minister of music is responsible for leading and directing all aspects of music within the church. This includes planning and leading

worship services (traditional and contemporary), leadership for adult and children's choirs, instrumental music, selecting music content, organizing special music services, supervising music program staff, overseeing worship technology, and pastoral care. A seminary (or equivalent) degree is required. Experience in growing and maintaining an expansive music program is also preferred. Résumés will be accepted until April 1, and should be sent to dedemaddox@fbcaugusta.org or to Attention: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 14489, Augusta, GA 30919.

Associate Pastor: First Baptist Church of Monroe, N.C., a downtown church affiliated with CBF and CBFNC, is seeking an associate pastor who will focus on children, youth and their families, with strong concentration on discipleship for all age groups of the church. Emphasis will include leadership in education with fresh and creative approaches to meet changing needs of the church community. Additionally this position includes, but is not limited to, visiting, counseling, and administrative details, and requires a high energy level. This is a full-time position, preferably requiring a seminary degree and ordination. Interested candidates may send résumés to staffsearchcommittee@monroefirstbaptist.org.

Minister of Youth and Recreation: First Baptist Church Laurens, dually aligned with the SBC and CBF and located in Upstate South Carolina, is seeking a minister of youth and recreation. This person will join three other full-time ministerial staff members in serving our growing congregation that averages more than 400 in weekly attendance. The candidate should be a graduate of an accredited seminary and have a minimum of two years of experience in working with students. The position offers a very competitive salary and benefits package. Résumés will be received until March 30 at First Baptist Church Laurens, 300 W. Main St., Laurens, SC 29360 or at rickey@fbclaurens.org. Interested candidates are encouraged to visit our website at fbclaurens.org.

Associate Minister to Students: Greystone Baptist Church (greystonechurch.org), located in a diverse and growing area of North Raleigh, N.C., is prayerfully seeking a full-time associate minister to students for grade 6 through college. GBC is affiliated with the Raleigh Baptist Association, CBFNC, CBF National, and local ministries for mission opportunities for our 750+ members. Our church affirms men and women to serve in all roles within the church. We are seeking an outstanding relational minister, caring spiritual leader, and provocative teacher to lead a student ministry that will be the presence of Christ in the lives of our students and their families. This minister will engage parents and other adults to develop and sustain programs in missions, fellowship, and discipleship to build relationships and guide students along their personal faith journeys. Candidates should have earned a four-year degree from a college or university and a graduate degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school. Ordination and experience are preferred, as well as proficiency with social media and web-based technology. If you feel God is leading you to our church, please send a résumé by March 31 to Associate Minister to Students, 908 Tanworth Dr., Raleigh, NC 27615 or to GBCsearch2014@gmail.com.

Executive Director/Treasurer: Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina seeks an executive director/treasurer. The candidate must be mature in faith, experienced in WMU, and an active member of a Christian church; have strong written and oral communication skills; be able to motivate and network, manage a complex budget, and supervise staff; and have technology proficiency. A master's degree is preferred. Send résumé with cover letter by March 31 to WMUNC. edt@gmail.com or to Kimberly Overton, WMU NC, P.O. Box 18309, Raleigh, NC 27619-8309.

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Losing it

“You should wear a hat.”

Carol and I have been married for 29 years. This is the first time I have heard her say, “You should wear a hat.”

I respond appropriately, “Huh?”

“Like when you were in college. You wore hats then. Maybe you should get a fedora.”

Carol and I did not meet until after college, but I let it pass. My beloved thinks it is time to start covering my bald spot. “Spot” may not be the right word. Spot sounds like a barely visible dot. My bald area is yarmulke-sized and is threatening to become a bald head rather than a bald spot. By age 50, half of all Caucasian males begin to lose their hair. This is true for only one in four Chinese men. I should have eaten more egg rolls.

Men have long been frightened of looking like light bulbs:

A doctor’s prescription written in Egypt around 1550 BCE recommended applying the fat of a hippo and a crocodile to the scalp for four days.

Aristotle suggested goat urine for the follicly challenged.

Cleopatra implied that Julius Caesar’s thinning dome could use a lotion of ground up mice, horse teeth and bear grease.

A Viking legend advocated smearing pates with dollops of goose poop.

India had the simplest prescription for retreating hair: do a headstand.

In 1896, *Scientific American* concluded that listening to stringed instruments prevents hair from falling out while brass instruments cause hair loss.

Nineteenth-century French psychologist Emile Coue believed positive thinking could bring back curls.

In 1988, Swiss farmer Gerhardt Flit claimed that bat milk — which he sold for \$3,500 per ounce — cures baldness.

During the Middle Ages, choir boys with particularly beautiful voices were castrated before reaching puberty to keep their voices from changing. Researchers found that none of these castrated choir boys grew bald — which suggests to me that baldness is a sign of sexual

potency. Even so, when you see that you are going James Carville, you go through the stages of grief:

- (1) Denial — “This can’t be happening to me. The barber must have made a mistake.”
- (2) Anger — “Why me? Justin Bieber has his hair! I didn’t do anything wrong.”
- (3) Bargaining — “The guys in the Rogaine ads look good. Why not?”
- (4) Depression — “My life with hair is over. What’s the point?”
- (5) Acceptance — “Sean Connery is handsome.”

Scientists used to claim that baldness was due to one’s mother’s genetic makeup, but now they are unsure. Baldness could be the next step in our evolution from a furry ape.

I’m getting used to my androgenic alopecia. My hair is going from parted to departed. I don’t own a blow dryer. My remaining hair dries in the time it takes to brush my teeth. I get colder when it rains and sunburned when I play tennis. When children count bald men in church, I make the list. I cannot become a faith healer, because no one trusts a bald one.

When I go to my stylist at Super Cuts I ask, “How much more like Sinead O’Connor do I have to look to be eligible for a discount?” My barber laughs and offers to trim my eyebrows, while I notice that haircuts are \$15 and shaves are \$10. Shaving my head will be cheaper.

I’m still some distance from Daddy Warbucks, but I am now the guy people ask for directions. Apparently bald men are more likely to know street names. We look more mature, less angry.

I am making peace with becoming Mr. Clean. I feel some camaraderie with Bruce Willis, though I still wonder why God would want me bald.

The Bible helps. Leviticus 11:22 tells us we can eat the “bald locust” — which must be the tastiest of locusts. Leviticus 13:40 offers a promise that should be cross-stitched, “If one loses the hair from his head, he is bald but he is clean.”

Second Kings recounts this touching story about Elisha: “Some small boys came

out of the city and jeered at him, saying, ‘Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!’” This is ancient Israel’s version of “Are you really that bald or is your neck blowing a bubble?” Elisha cursed them and “two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys.” (This heartwarming story is seldom included in children’s Bibles.)

Most of us want to keep our bald spots out of sight. We know the feeling of wanting to cover our head or being in way over our head, but we might be better off admitting that something is missing.

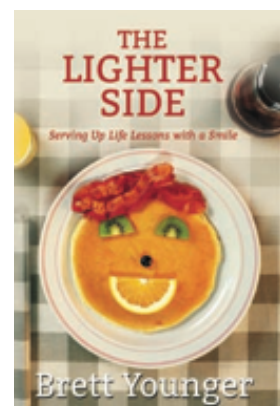
According to *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a book written 60 years after the New Testament,

Paul was “bald-headed, bowlegged, strongly built, a man small in size, with eyebrows that met, and a rather large nose.” There’s no growing back, so I’m joining St. Paul, Tony Campolo and the Dalai Lama — though I do look good in a fedora. **BT**



—Brett Younger is associate professor of preaching at Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology.

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By J. Daniel Day

The aroma of worship

For several decades the only worship issue most people have cared about has been its sound. Will it be J.S. Bach or Paul Baloche, the vibrations of an Aeolian pipe organ or an acoustic guitar?

Those debates are not without merit, but perhaps it's past time to consider another sense of worship — its aroma.

Once we get past the pleas of allergy sufferers to remove Easter lilies from the sanctuary, the aroma of worship doesn't concern us. But for our Hebrew ancestors it was most important.

From the beginning

We know that Israel's worship included the use of incense. In the NRSV of the Old Testament, the word incense appears more than 60 times, with a large cluster in the instructions given at the time of the introduction of the use of incense — and its accompanying anointing oil.

Precise recipes for both incense and oil are dictated. The anointing oil was to be made from specified amounts of “the finest spices”: myrrh, cinnamon, aromatic cane and cassia, blended “as by the perfumer” with a hint of olive oil (Exod. 30:23-25).

The ingredients for incense are a bit more exotic: sweet spices, stacte, onycha, galbanum and pure frankincense blended “as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt” and beaten into a powder (vv. 34-37).

How these were to be used is also prescribed. The anointing oil was to be placed on everything that stood within the temple's holy place, including an anointing of the priest Aaron and his sons.

As for the incense, some was to be cast every morning and evening on the burning coals of the temple's prominently placed incense altar, “a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations” (v. 8).

Most important, these aromatic accompaniments to Israel's worship were not to be duplicated for use in any other setting.

“Whoever compounds any [oil] like [this] or whoever puts any of it on an unqualified person shall be cut off from the people” (v. 33). The same principle applied for the incense:

“whoever makes any [incense] like [this] is to be cut off from the people” (v. 38).

The meaning seems to be that these aromas were restricted to this place and to its personnel; they were to be “holy [set apart] to the LORD.” Associated only with the worship of Yahweh (Israel's distinctively named covenant God), these distinctive smells were to be encountered nowhere else but in the precincts of the LORD.

For whose nostrils?

All this specificity about the ingredients, use and misuse of these substances prompts a question about whose benefit this was intended. Was it for God's nostrils or for another's?

Given the frequent anthropomorphic portrayal of God in the Old Testament, it's not wholly frivolous to imagine that this specificity was for God's sake. If so, this would suggest that Yahweh found the aroma arising from one specific recipe for oil and for incense to be especially pleasing, and therefore those precise formulas were prescribed.

But if this were the case, we might reasonably expect to find subsequent texts commending or reprimanding Israel for not following the mandated recipes. But such texts do not appear.

Once, the LORD does threaten Israel by saying, “I will not smell your pleasing odors” (Lev. 26:31), but this warning doesn't specify which pleasing odor will go unnoticed; it only threatens a refusal to inhale or “smell” whatever is being offered.

This silence about God's opinion of the specific fragrance of Israel's worship at least permits the question if, in the final accounting, the precise recipe was ever really that important to Yahweh.

Perhaps it is the case that the prescribed “smell” for worship wasn't for God's sake but for the sake of the Israelite worshipers. Thus, the recipe was of importance to God, but not in the way we might first think. Rather, this olfactory prescription was meant to establish and

maintain in Israel's mind an associative uniqueness regarding the worship of Yahweh.

Who can forget?

The strongest of our senses, we're told, is our sense of smell. Odors trigger our memory's deepest stores.

The smell of fresh-mown grass awakens for some of us memories of golden summer days at a grandparent's farm. Alcohol or tobacco breath perhaps recalls for others a feared adult. The aroma of a library stirs memories of heady student days, even as the smell of a certain brand of furniture polish might call to mind the living room of an otherwise forgotten relative.

Could it not be that the oil and incense of Israel's worship were prescribed with a similar intent?

Archaeologists and historians inform us that Israel's worship had many similarities with the worship of its pagan neighbors. But if, whenever Israel worshiped, it did so within an aromatic environment that was consistently “different,” that experience would be branded in her memory as distinctive.

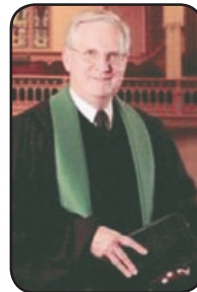
Israel's worship encounters with Yahweh would be memorably different and distinguishable. They would quite literally “smell” different.

If there is any plausibility to this way of understanding the significance of anointing oil and incense in Israel's worship, then its relevance for today's worship is clearer. I am not lobbying for the expanded use of oil and incense in our worship — though I don't oppose it — but I do think the institution of these unforgettably distinct worship smells authorizes a plea for a Christian worship that is also unmistakably distinct from any other gathering.

Perhaps what we can legitimately infer from the distinctiveness of Israel's oil and incense is that what transpires on Sundays within Christian places of worship ought to “smell” different from what transpires anyplace else.

Worship ‘smells’

For decades, church leaders have been told we must make our worship more compatible with the culture. The academic term has been to “indigenize” our worship, while church growth



practitioners have insisted we must make worship more “user friendly.”

As essential as this counsel has been (and continues to be), the result has too often been an unfortunate loss of the otherness of worship. With the best of intentions, Sunday’s worship often becomes only a poorly baptized version of what may be heard and seen and done more expertly on stage and theater.

It “smells” pretty much the same as other large group gatherings we attend, except that at church the performance has some religious lingo thrown in to make us feel spiritual. Too little speaks a caveat to those who attend: “You are entering a distinctly different zone; this is unlike any other place. This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.”

Worthy worship will do more than be culturally sensitive. It will be just as concerned with striking a dissonance with its culture.

It will heed Dean William Inge’s observation that the church that weds itself to one generation [or culture] will find itself a widow in the next.

This suggests worship services that will lead worshipers to engage in disciplines that “smell” different, for example: openly confessing one’s sins and receiving from fellow sinners “the peace of Christ”; listening to a crucified first-century rabbi as the authority for life; ingesting bread and wine that are so much more than the fruit of field and vineyard; praying to a putative “God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth” to ease the groans of a writhing creation; professing a scientifically preposterous belief in the “communion of saints ... the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting”; and doing all this week after week, century after century, believing that somehow such worship actually matters.

Worship leaders who embrace this mindset as they plan worship will begin with a conviction that this gathering will be offered in homage to a very distinctly different God (the Triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit), through rehearsing a very unique story (the biblical drama of God’s redemptive march through history for the salvation of God’s creation), to the end that God will be glorified through worshipers who become a distinctly different people (servant-representatives of God, striving to effect God’s mercy, justice and peace “on earth as in heaven”).

At its heart, this kind of worship will be governed by a commitment to the subversion of the reigning culture, and will inevitably be counter-cultural because the God it worships and the stories it cherishes and the goals it pursues are the precise antithesis of the kingdoms of this world.

Such worship will go about its work differently than the entertainer or entrepreneur goes about hers; it will not be concerned with being impressive or with attracting a crowd. Its goals will be the “useless” goals of glorifying God and fashioning a minority people who perceive and act in a quirky reign-of-God manner.

Its passion will be to accomplish the work of an assembly of priests, interceding for the world and its sufferings even as it offers glad thanks for the bounty and beauty of God’s creation and grace.

Such worship will not squander its sharp saltiness by becoming so much like the world that it becomes good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Such worship will “smell” different. For, in spiritual fact, only if *it* is different can it help *us* become different.

Important Scent

Homiletician Fred Craddock tells of a 28-year-old woman at St. Mark’s church in Atlanta who told him this was her first time ever to attend a church service.

“Really?” he asked. “Well, how was it?”

“Kind of scary,” she said.

“Why?”

“It just seems so important,” she said. “You know, I never go to anything important. This just seemed so important.”

Something different had been “smelled” — and it left its deep impress.

The most distinctive worship aroma we can offer, of course, is to present our very selves as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). Lest we spiritualize this away, it would be wise to recall an event from our Protestant past.

On Feb. 29, 1528, Patrick Hamilton was burned at the stake by the Catholic Cardinal of Scotland for his evangelical convictions. Such executions had been extremely rare in Scotland’s recent history, so Hamilton’s burning caused many to question the Cardinal’s harsh verdict.

One of his own counselors advised him: “If you will burn them [the Protestants], let them be burnt in deep cellars, for the reek of Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon.” In a handful of years Scotland’s religious identity swung to Hamilton’s “reek.”

For too many years the “sound” of evangelical worship has been our only concern. Perhaps the question of its “smell” holds more promise. **BT**

—*J. Daniel Day, an experienced pastor and professor in Raleigh, N.C., is author of Seeking the Face of God: Evangelical Worship Reconceived (Nurturing Faith Books).*

In the Know

Laura Barclay is working in communications and networking with the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship.

Ira V. (Jack) Birdwhistell died Feb. 7. He taught New Testament, Baptist studies and church history at Georgetown College in Kentucky. Before joining the faculty full time in 1997, he was campus minister.

Yvonne Carter is executive minister for the Cleveland Baptist Association in northeast Ohio. She comes from the missional life and leadership division of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

Greg Henson began serving as president of Sioux Falls Seminary on Feb. 3.

Bryant Hicks died Jan. 12 at age 88. He was retired professor of Christian missions at Southern Baptist Seminary and a missionary to the Philippines for 10 years.

Dewey Hobbs died Feb. 5 at age 88. He was retired as director of the School of Pastoral Care at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. His pastorates included First Baptist Church of Marion and Wingate Baptist Church in North Carolina.

Evelyn M. Huber died Jan. 3. She was a former area minister of American Baptist Churches of Ohio. She had served churches in Haverhill, Mass., Los Angeles and Salt Lake City.

Capt. Gerald Hutchinson is chaplaincy and pastoral care services manager for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He has served as a U.S. Navy chaplain since 1988, including deployment to Afghanistan. He has served as associate pastor and church administrator at Culpeper Baptist Church in Virginia.

Tom Ogburn is pastor of First Baptist Church of Knoxville, Tenn., going from First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City where he served for nine years.

Drew Phillips is associate campus minister to Chowan University in Murfreesboro, N.C.

Gus Reyes is director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. He has been director of the Hispanic Education Initiative/Affinity Ministries for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. **BT**

Ready to go?

By Bill Wilson

"Our hope is that when you leave here, you are ready to go." It was just a brief comment during the early welcome portion of the worship service. At first I thought he misspoke. But, knowing this pastor, it was a deliberate and thoughtful comment.

I've had many times when I had to leave, but wasn't ready to go. I recently raced out of the house on a three-day journey without a power cord for my computer. When I was unable to find a replacement, it made for an interesting couple of days of making presentations and doing work. Thank God for a long-lasting laptop computer battery.

Of course, this pastor was offering more than some bland encouragement about gathering up your things and not leaving items behind. He was talking about how worship is intended to prepare us for life outside the walls of the sanctuary.

To be sure, worship is an event at a specific time in a specific place that has no other agenda than to provide sanctuary, praise God, and inspire the church to deeper faith. However, healthy worship reminds us to keep one eye on the door as well as one eye on the altar.

In healthy congregations, worship pulls us in for transformation and then propels us out the door as ambassadors. Our personal transformation into the person God intends us to be is more than a private affair. Such a transformation necessarily impacts the people and the world around us.

One issue every church must address

is whether or not our worship is actually changing us. Far too often, worship simply entertains or distracts us.

Fully experiencing our personal shortcomings and being challenged to deeper faith takes a back seat to our observations about the music style or lack thereof, clothing choices of others, or the thermostat setting in the room.

I thought about this recently as I processed the hard news that two more friends had been forced from their jobs as pastors by an unhappy contingent in their respective congregations.

In both cases, the primary complaint of the unhappy coalition was a version of unmet expectations. The pastor had not done anything overtly wrong, but had simply not met the specific expectations of some.

In our consumer culture, it is no surprise that people want a minister shaped to their tastes and preferences. Sadly, in both of these cases, the pastor had served for more than a decade under a cloud of anxiety and simmering dissatisfaction.

At the heart of the conflict was an immature and shallow understanding of biblical faith and Christian community.

As a pastor, I often dealt with lifelong Christians who encountered some significant hardship or challenge to their faith. I was always amazed at those who gracefully managed the hard news with deep faith and a sense

of peace beyond understanding.

I prayed many times that, if I ever found myself in a similar situation, I would exhibit just a fraction of their faithfulness.

Sadly, I also frequently watched lifelong believers who reacted to a harsh reality in life with almost no faith or evidence of having learned anything from their years of regular worship attendance. I remember wondering: "How is it possible to sit through dozens, even hundreds, of worship services and emerge without having absorbed the bare essentials of faith and Christian community?"

Some of us have not listened to the invitation: "When you leave, you need to be ready to go."

People who are "ready to go" when they leave worship are equipped to live as transformers rather than conformers. Healthy worship produces believers whose lives bear the unmistakable marks of having spent time in the presence of something bigger and more meaningful than the narcissistic American culture of the 21st century.

Churches that leave worship "ready to go" will talk, love, work and play differently because of our time in the sanctuary. We carry with us the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:14) that permeates every part of our world.

We do justice, love kindness, and walk through life in humility (Micah 6:6). We love one another in such a way that those around us are stunned by our behavior, and point to us as examples of what the good Christ brings to a community (John 13:35).

We outdo one another in showing honor to others (Rom. 12:2). We lift Christ up to others, rather than our agendas or opinions (John 12:32).

We live out and show to a skeptical world what abundant life is really about (John 10:10). We endure suffering without whining or complaining, knowing that it is producing an enduring faith and genuine character and unending hope (Rom. 5:3-4).

Next Sunday, I hope that what takes place in your sanctuary prepares you to go. **BT**

—Bill Wilson founded and directs the Center for Healthy Churches.



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BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

As winter slowly recedes, this month witnesses a series of strategic moves on the part of the United States. Evidencing a desire to bring the war to a quick, successful close, the U.S. Senate confirms Gen. Ulysses S. Grant as the commander of all Union forces. Meanwhile, President Abraham Lincoln signs legislation allowing Colorado and Nevada to become states. The states' production of gold and silver is crucial to the war effort.

While the Union focuses on military leadership and financial resources, few military engagements take place. A force of 500 Union cavalrymen approaches within two miles of Richmond, the Confederate capital, before being driven back. Conf. General Nathan Bedford Forrest makes raids into Kentucky, capturing the city of Union. Federals strengthen their presence in Arkansas, while in Louisiana Union forces advance toward Alexandria.

In southwest Georgia, Andersonville Prison assumes full-scale operations. An open-air prison, Andersonville soon gains notoriety among Union ranks as the worst of the Confederate prisons. There is little sanitation, while prisoners attempting escape are summarily shot. The tall, tight-fitted log walls of the facility allow not even a crack for viewing outside. Only the sky is visible to the prisoners, a blessing and a curse: a blessing in that a view of the heavens is at times reassuring, a curse in that the men huddled below are as imprisoned to the elements of the sky as they are within the impenetrable walls.

Many Baptists are incarcerated at Andersonville during the war. Years later, a former Baptist prisoner from the 7th Tennessee (Union) speaks of the enduring legacy of the prison:

The end of the war did not erase the bitterness caused by the 7th Tennessee's experiences. Thirty years after the war when one of Forrest's men was called to be minister of the Bethel Baptist Church in Carroll County, one of the former prisoners at Andersonville protested. He was admonished to forgive as Jesus did. Alfred D. Bennet of Huntingdon replied "the Lord was just crucified, he never had to go to Andersonville Prison."

Currently, forgiveness is far from the hearts and minds of Confederate soldiers. A Southern



Andersonville Prison, 1864

150 YEARS AGO

March 1864

Baptist army missionary from North Carolina speaks of how serving in the Confederate Army makes better Christians of men, invoking, perhaps inadvertently, Constantinian imagery:

Under the light of religion a fact has been observed now for the first time (I believe), that there is something in the stern duties of a soldier and in his perilous trials that stirs his heart to meet at once the solemn duties of religion. Hence, he, with a noble magnanimity of soul, at once rises up in moral courage to do his duty to God. What proof of the power of religion thus to enable a man to bear the cross in the army....

Northward, Baptist minister and Union soldier William Elgin views God a bit differently. The chaplain of the 14th U.S. Colored Infantry, Elgin believes God is on the side of African Americans, his will expressed in the march for freedom for southern slaves. Stationed at Chattanooga, Elgin teaches black soldiers to read and write, in addition to the skills of soldiering.

One of thousands of slaves fleeing to freedom this month is Baptist Peter Barrow. Born into slavery near Petersburg, Va., Barrow at a young age had been taken to a plantation near Cosita, Ala. Escaping bondage behind Union

lines at Vicksburg, Miss., he enlists in the 66th U.S. Colored Infantry, serving through the remainder of the war. Thereafter he becomes active in politics, in addition to co-founding the Calvary Baptist Church of Spokane, Wash., the city's first black congregation.

Also this month, North Carolina Baptist layman Jonathan R. McHargue enlists in the Union's 50th Pennsylvania Infantry. A mere six months earlier McHargue had enlisted as a Confederate soldier in the 4th North Carolina Infantry, only to be wounded and subsequently captured by Union forces. His capture appears to have been a blessing in disguise, as following his recovery the North Carolinian took an oath of amnesty and was released, after which he voluntarily enlisted in the Union Army.

Collectively, the stories of Elgin, Barrow and McHargue, representative of many thousands of other stories this month, reflect the already-doomed trajectory of the Confederate States of America. Freedom for blacks is marching onward with quickening pace, while many white southerners, soldiers and civilians alike, are accepting Lincoln's offer of pardon in return for pledging loyalty to the Union. God, it seems, has chosen sides, a dawning realization perhaps reflected in Southern Baptists' growing anxieties concerning the fate of the Confederacy. **BT**

—Bruce Gourley is executive director of the Baptist History & Heritage Society. For a daily log of "This Day in Civil War History," see civilwarbaptists.com.

Final lessons

Bill Hull left insights and a good example for faith to the end

People are constantly telling us how to live better. William E. (Bill) Hull, who died Dec. 10, 2013 at age 83, used his brilliant mind and deteriorating condition to teach us about living and dying. Throughout his courageous battle against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), he wrote, preached and shared his journey with great faith and insight.

Hull's final book, *The Quest for a Good Death: A Christian Guide*, will be published later this year by Samford University Press as part of Mountain Brook Baptist Church's Hull Legacy Series.

The book was written most specifically for those living with life-threatening disease as well as those who share their journeys. Yet since everyone will die, a reality Hull often affirmed, his insights and inspiration have the widest possible audience.

With the brilliance, sensitivity and thoroughness that marked his long life and ministry, Hull's book offers "helpful strategies for negotiating the final stage of life in light of the practices that I have observed, basing my approach on a biblical understanding of the Christian faith."

Death is a "sensitive subject," he acknowledged, but also a reality. Therefore, the questions are not about "if" but "when" and "how" one dies.

"We can do nothing about how we are born, when or where or to whom," he wrote in the book's epilogue. "But unless the death comes very early in life or is sudden and unexpected, there is a great deal we can do about how we die. One repeated emphasis of this book is to make the most of the only chance you will get to bid farewell to the life you have lived."

Conversation revisited

A visit to his Birmingham, Ala., home in 2009 resulted in a lengthy feature in *Baptists Today*. Many readers expressed appreciation for the



insights and inspiration found in his words at that stage.

A brief portion of that interview follows as a tribute to a bright and caring man who never stopped discovering and sharing the mysteries and hope of faithful living. The full interview can be found at baptiststoday.org/back-issues (May 2009).

BT: What word — other than give attention to strong, relevant preaching — would you say to pastors who feel like they are juggling so many issues, even conflicts, and often deal with the fact they are not the biggest show in town?

HULL: I want to hitchhike on that. In my own experience I'm finding there is a hunger for unvarnished honesty — candor in the pulpit.

People think they've been given a kind of "preacher talk" — sort of pious phrases that preachers have always used. But people don't use it on Tuesday or Thursday. Talk about the kind of things that don't get mentioned.

I'll give a personal example. I've got this ALS — which is a life-threatening disease. It will kill you.

I've been theologian in residence at Mountain Brook [Baptist Church] all of these years. They said: "You've been telling us all of this theology. How are you going to deal with what has happened to you?"

So I preached a sermon on it. It's amazing how many people said, "You have talked about what you really feel like in the dark — when you know you're going to die. No one has ever talked to me like that."

They may say their parents or grandparents are facing this or they are facing that. People get pancreatic cancer diagnoses everyday.

So one thing I'd say is to be very honest and don't spend all of your time making the church look good. The church's almost greatest asset is its ordinary people struggling through mistakes to be a people of hope embodying a better future.

Go ahead and talk about it. Paul does. We just so easily mess up and never admit how we mess up.

I'd say to pay more attention to realistic hope. What can we do to take one, two or three baby steps from the way we are doing things to a way of doing them better?

Clearly we messed up race relations. We just ran slavery and segregation — they both were horrible.

Well, why did we do it? How do we get over that — radically, deeper?

How do we get over mistreating women — putting them down, subordinating them? Saying: "You work in the kitchen and nursery, and we'll do all the important things."

How do we get over the way we stereotype ethnic groups?

If we could be honest and figure out how to call a church to take realistic steps, people could say: "We can do that."

So to the pastor [I would say], get very open with a handful of key people. Go ahead and tell the people where you hurt and where you're disappointed....

Those who study management and leadership say you learn far more from your mistakes — if you get it out as a mistake and if you have an honest peer group where you can share your mistake.

Everything lives to die. This world is an apprenticeship or a journey within limits.
So I came to terms with that... I've tried to see death as a closure.

If I were that pastor, I would find two or three kindred spirits, four or five at the most, in the ministry — and they all don't have to be Baptists — for a sharing group that I could really be honest with. I'd level with them and they with me. I'd have a way, if necessary, to just go in and cry.

Then I would have a core in the church — not a power kitchen cabinet — that you could really let down your hair with. Some believe if we ever admit failure, then we haven't done it right because this is such a wonderful thing. But we are treasures in earthen vessels.

BT: You made reference to the failure of Baptists and other Christians regarding race and women's roles. A few years ago, in *The [Alabama] Mainstream Baptist newsletter*, you wrote: "You tell me why you no longer believe what the Bible teaches about slavery and I will tell you why I no longer believe what you think the Bible teaches about women." Can you play that out a little bit more?

HULL: Mark Noll, the fine evangelical historian, has done some excellent work on how and why the South "missed it" on slavery. They had the Bible, believed it was inerrant, and followed it slavishly.

And, of course, the Bible didn't condemn slavery. It allows in the Old and New Testaments. Paul said if you're a slave, stay a slave.

So they accused the abolitionists of being liberals. As Noll put it, "What [Southern Christians] would not learn from their Bible they learned from those relentless theologians called Grant and Sherman."

In retrospect, what we have done is come to a post-slavery position not from the Bible but because slavery lost. Now, we made a mistake. We butchered the way we should have used the Bible.

The answer is you have to be Christocentric. Jesus viewed humans in such a way that obviously makes no place for one person to own another person.

So I would say to [SBC leader] Paige Patterson — in fact, I've said to Paige — "You are not advocating slavery, but it is in the Bible. By your hermeneutic, how do you keep from doing that? If you will tell me how you can dispense with slavery, I will tell you how I can dispense with female subordination."

Because they both belong to the same worldview, which is hierarchal. They bow to

the view that there are masters and those under them.

That was the view in the ancient world and for 1,500 years: the king, pyramidal, as head of the government; the pope, pyramidal, as head of the Church; and the father, pyramidal, as head of the family.

Then all of the sudden you begin to turn the pyramid upside down. Finally, we came to what you can call "the right of the people." But Jesus called it "being servant of all."

The people who want to cling to [women's] subordination verses — for every one of those verses I can show them a verse that says it's OK to have slaves. You tell me how you get rid of that, and I will tell you how I get rid of the other.

BT: How have you dealt with your disease spiritually and theologically?

HULL: Theologically, I've gone to the Psalms — a tremendous treasure — and to the rest of the Bible, which is very realistic about the fact that death is an integral, essential, inescapable part of life.

Everything lives to die. This world is an apprenticeship or a journey within limits. So I came to terms with that... I've tried to see death as a closure.

In the Bible there is a tremendous correlation between birth and death, beginning and ending. Jesus, in John, calls it "whence" and "whither."

"... [F]or I know whence I came, and whither I go" (John 8:14 KJV).

Well, birth is a death to the womb. It's traumatic; you cry. They cut a cord and you bleed a little.

And, is earth a womb? And will we be expelled into a vastly greater world?

So I rest in the fact that God in his wisdom made us to die and, therefore, we are to seek a good death.

How do you cope? Because there is tremendous pain in leaving behind [family], leaving work unfinished.

But I've been amazed at the capacity of people for sheer goodness. I have been swamped with letters, phone calls and visits from people I haven't seen in 50 years...

So I have to ask, "Are the fears, frustrations and even regrets over a terminal illness as great as the love and acceptance and support I have found?"

Which is stronger: love or fear? "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18 KJV).

I have been loved royally. And I'm not going to destroy that in frenzied bitterness.

When I think of what to live for ... if I were to use this to become relentlessly selfish, it would deny something bigger than me. Call it the Spirit of God. Call it Christian commitment.

So, am I coping by just living up to expectations? No. These expectations were created by some hopes to which I gave myself, and I'm not going to abandon them in the 11th hour. **BT**

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7 reasons to love old stuff *(and you won't believe no. 6)*

By Tony W. Cartledge

Have you noticed how many web stories have titles such as “17 Life Hacks for Girls,” “10 Foods You Should Never Eat,” or “8 Places To See Before You Die?” Often they include subtitles such as “You won’t believe number 4!”

They are written and pitched that way for several reasons. They’re easy to write (no real development of an article or essay is required) and easy to read — appealing to the short attention spans of many web surfers.

Also they are designed for maximum ad content, whether between each numbered entry or on the side. Often one must click to see each element, bringing a new page with new ads. And they’re all tagged to be easily shared on social media sites.

Those are good reasons to dislike the format, so there’s a bit of sarcasm in my adopting it here. But, a number of interesting articles have come across my screen recently, and I thought I’d share a few highlights.

1 Some tour guides in Jerusalem claim they’ve found a 740-foot ancient water tunnel beneath east Jerusalem that dates back to the pre-exilic period, before 586 BCE. We’ve long known about the quarter-mile-long Hezekiah’s tunnel and an older tunnel beside it, both designed to bring water from the Gihon Spring into the city. The discovery of another tunnel is bound to stir excitement among those who want to know more about the history of Jerusalem.

2 Animal dung played a key role in a recent excavation designed to discover how a substantial city managed to survive deep in the Negev about 5,000 years ago. The land, a mountainous region in the southernmost part of Israel, was a wilderness then as it is now, but several large settlements rose and fell during the Intermediate Bronze age. How did they make a living? At a site called

Mashaabe Sadeh, excavators sifted a large urban site for coprolites — fossilized animal dung — as evidence that residents relied on farming and animal husbandry. Finds of fossil feces were few, however, suggesting that the economy must have been based on something else, such as trading or mining.

3 Google Earth helped one researcher establish trade routes and to measure the economic influence of ancient Antioch, in Syria. Kristina Neumann took data about locally minted coins found in excavations of surrounding areas and plugged it into Google Earth, creating a map that shows how the coins were distributed, indicating Antioch’s reach in terms of commerce.

4 An Israeli scholar claims to have discovered the remains of an ancient palace that may date as far back as King David. Binyamin Tropper says the discovery of a massive proto-aedic capital (a type of column) indicates that an unexcavated monumental building could lie beneath it. He asserts that the Israeli Antiquities Authority has known about the site for some time, and told him to keep quiet about it. Stay tuned for further developments.

5 An international research group is studying mummies for evidence of atherosclerosis, the primary cause of heart disease. In a project known as the Horus study, researchers are attempting to do whole-body CT scans on as many mummies as possible, looking for evidence of arterial calcification. So far, mummies from a variety of sites around the world have been studied, and most of them show some level of calcified arteries, leading researchers to question whether humans are genetically disposed to atherosclerosis, regardless of diet. The team has scanned 137 mummies thus far and hopes to scan many more, but the study has been delayed by political instability in Egypt. Don’t go back to the full-fat diet just yet.

6 Egypt’s King Tut suffered a number of indignities after his death. Not only was his mummy and its case covered with a thick layer of black ooze that may have spontaneously combusted, but he was also buried without a heart or a replacement heart scarab. In addition, he was mummified with his penis in an erect position, at a 90-degree angle to his body. (Not surprisingly, it broke off.) A recent paper by Salima Ikram, a professor at the American University in Cairo, proposes that the priests who prepared his body wanted to portray the boy king as the personification of Osiris in order to combat his father Akhenaten’s attempt to introduce a monotheistic system that worshiped only Aten, the solar deity. Osiris, among other things, was sometimes portrayed as the dark god of the underworld, known for his fertility. Now you know.



7 An Israeli team of scientists has analyzed core samples drilled from the bottom of the Sea of Galilee, counting various types of pollen grains embedded in the sediment. By analyzing the amount and types of pollen as clues to changes in vegetation at different periods, they were able to demonstrate that a severe drought more than 3,000 years ago (about 1250-1100 BCE) may be the prime cause behind the collapse of several major civilizations during that period.

... Fascinating stuff! But the one most readers will remember is number 6. Some things never change. **BT**

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Terri Stratton, the first woman to be appointed senior chaplain at North Carolina's Central Prison, shows visitors one of eight pods on death row. Inmates are not shown due to confidentiality.

Tough love in a hard place

Prison chaplain offers firm words, needed compassion

RALEIGH, N.C. — “This is not Motel 6. We do not leave the light on, and I do not want to see you here again.”

Blunt warmth and a “Mama-means-business” attitude are trademarks for Terri Stratton, named recently as senior chaplain for North Carolina’s Central Prison in Raleigh. The young man in her line of fire was about to be released after several years in prison, and Stratton had other words for him, too.

“I like to see you leave here young,” she said, “so you’ve got an opportunity to go forward and make a life for yourself.” When she added “This is not Motel 6 ...,” he knew exactly why she didn’t want to see him back behind bars.

A passion and a call

For most of her life, prison chaplaincy was not on Stratton’s career radar screen. Her first love is music, and she served churches in a variety

of roles ranging from youth minister to organist and minister of music for 33 years.

“That was my passion and I loved it,” she said, “but this is my calling.”

Terri is married to David Stratton, who is pastor at Woodhaven Baptist Church near Cary, N.C. Terri is good at her chaplaincy work, David said, because she’s compassionate but tough: inmates learn quickly not to mess with Chaplain Stratton.

Stratton’s journey to Central Prison included studies at Campbell University Divinity School, where she completed a Master of Divinity degree in 2008, and New Hanover Regional Hospital in Wilmington, where she trained in Clinical Pastoral Education.

“I had never thought of working in a prison,” Stratton said, but with hospital chaplaincy jobs in short supply, she applied for two open positions in the North Carolina correctional system. By January of 2010, she found herself at Harnett Correctional Institution in Lillington, N.C.

“The minute I walked in the gate, there was a peace about that whole place,” Stratton said. “It didn’t seem like a prison anymore. I realized that these were people and not numbers. They were real humans who had made bad choices, not bad people.”

“I have never felt afraid,” Stratton said, “respectful, but not afraid.”

The majority of men at Harnett Correctional were middle aged or older black men, Stratton said, and “the people they tend to respect more than anyone are their mama and their preacher.”

“I quickly became both of them,” she said. “I was their mama because I told it like it was, and they also accepted me as pastor.”

At Central Prison, the age range is wider, but the tendency is the same. “When referring to personal property, it’s always ‘Mama’s’ because they identify me with the tough love that, in some instances, they wish they had had.”

And Stratton is trained to be as stern as

necessary. When the N.C. legislature slashed the budget for prison chaplains in 2011, Stratton was “rifted” (from “reduction in force”) after just 18 months on the job. She had fallen in love with the work at Harnett Correctional, though, and applied for a position there as a case manager.

To prepare for that position, she was required to go through “basic training” for correctional officers. Over several weeks she was trained in many areas including self-defense, firearms and the use of pepper spray — an exercise that included being sprayed.

While still in training, she was offered a chaplaincy position at Central Prison, where she became one of three chaplains serving a population of 1,000 or more inmates.

Stratton’s background in hospital chaplaincy made her an ideal candidate, as Central Prison is the only male prison in North Carolina with a hospital and mental health unit. She was assigned primarily to those units, but all chaplains work in each of the prison’s six units, including the state’s death row.

Stratton quickly established herself as competent, compassionate and as tough as she needed to be. When the senior chaplain retired at the end of December 2013, Stratton was chosen, from a pool of several candidates, to replace him and became the first female senior staff chaplain in the 130-year history of Central Prison.

Services for all

Many inmates at Central Prison are transient — hospital and mental health patients may be there for only a week. Most inmates in the hospital and mental health units are in medium custody, but many of the others are under maximum security, including the 150 or so men on death row.

Death row inmates are housed in a separate wing and don’t mix with the general population, so separate religious programming is held for them. To have religious programming in either setting, at least three inmates belonging to a particular faith group must request services, and an approved volunteer must be willing to come in and lead them.

Religious life in prison is surprisingly diverse, with 15 faith groups recognized in the North Carolina correctional system. Stratton and her staff currently supervise 22 religious programs per week, including services for Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, American Indians and Rastafarians.

Even though Stratton would like to believe that all who attend religious services

have sincere intentions, it is a fact that some will attend for non-religious reasons. Chaplains are trained to recognize gang signs, colors or code language to prevent non-religious conversation during services.

Inmates sometimes switch their religious affiliation so they can participate in special occasions, such as the Muslim feast of Eid al-Fitr at the close of Ramadan, when volunteers from the Muslim community bring in extra food. Some who don’t like the meat offered in the chow hall choose to be Buddhist or Rastafarian so they can get peanut butter and beans as an alternate source of protein.

Inmates of varying ethnicities choose to observe American Indian religion in part because their worship service includes smoking a pipe, Stratton said. Tobacco is not allowed in any prison except in the American Indian worship service.

Chaplains may suspect that those who change religions at fairly frequent intervals have other than religious motives, but religious freedom has to be respected, she said.

Stratton and other chaplains are trained to provide for the needs of various faith groups. In some cases, the chaplains know the inmates’ faith practice better than they do.

“When I got to Central Prison, some American Indians didn’t like it because I was female and supervising them,” she said. When they asked how their worship compared to the services at Harnett Correctional, Stratton explained proper worship practices, such as lifting the smoldering sage and blowing smoke

to the four directions.

“Once the group knew I was interested in their faith and willing to take the time to learn the proper practices, I was viewed in a new light.”

On another occasion she upbraided a group on Death Row because they were using their worship time as a place to complain about a new inmate. They thought they were better than him because he had killed a child.

“I’m not playing that game with you,” Stratton told one of them. “We’ve all sinned and come short. Both of you committed crimes that put you on death row. Both of you are wearing red jump suits. We’re not here to judge other people.”

That kind of straight talk earns Stratton the kind of respect she needs to be effective. On one occasion, at Harnett Correctional, an inmate who was high on “spit drugs” jumped a four-foot fence around the chapel and came inside while she was there alone.

“He got in my face,” Stratton said, “but I told him to get out and jump right back over that fence.”

“Spit drugs” are prescription medicines that some inmates will pretend to swallow, then spit out and sell to other inmates.

Stratton occasionally catches inmates with contraband items that someone has smuggled in. Even though her report may send them “to the hole” (solitary confinement), they respect her authority.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



Terri Stratton (right) and Edison Etienne (center) talk with Kareem Rahman, a community outreach volunteer with the Islamic Association of Raleigh. Etienne and Stratton are graduates of Campbell University Divinity School.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

Grace, and change

While many inmates treat faith as a means of attaining privileges, others are very serious, and Stratton's role as chaplain can become particularly rewarding.

Chaplains are called on to break the news to inmates when a family member has died, and Stratton recently called in a man who has been in prison for almost 30 years to tell him his father had died. It was late in the day and she was anxious to leave for the Wednesday night program at Woodhaven Baptist, where she leads a Bible study and the youth choir.

She allowed the man to call home while monitoring the call according to policy, making sure he didn't ask for money and documenting how the conversation went.

The man became quite emotional, she said, and wanted to talk. He told her how many banks he had robbed while in his twenties, and said he had intended to rob one more when he got out. But, something had happened when he turned 50, he said, and he decided it was time to grow up.

"I don't know anything about this God or Jesus," he told her. "I'd like you to tell me about him."

"You can guess I was late for church," Stratton said. "Every other day now he will stop me in the hall and tell me 'Thank you,' and that he's planning to attend church with some friends when he gets out."

A younger man was brought to her office recently so Stratton could tell him his girlfriend had been diagnosed with cancer.

"He began to cry," Stratton said, but since he had been in solitary, his hands were shackled behind his back.

"Tears were streaming down his face and making big wet spots on his knees. I took a tissue and wiped his tears with his permission," she said. "We're not allowed to physically console and sometimes this is all we can do, but in most situations, it's very appreciated and allows the residents to see that we are humans who care."

"At that point, he's not an inmate," Stratton said. "To me, they're never just inmates. They're people."

Stratton prefers to speak of her charges

as "residents," and cringes at words such as "convicts."

Conversations with men on death row can be particularly intense. The state has not executed anyone since 2006, and a 2009 Racial Justice Act gave North Carolina inmates the right to appeal if their sentences may have been influenced by racial discrimination. The result was a virtual moratorium on executions, but the legislature repealed the Racial Justice Act in June last year, leading to speculation that the stay could soon end.

Stratton says she tries not to remember the specific crimes for which inmates were convicted, because she doesn't want that to influence the level of care she offers.

"Because of the time I've been able to spend with some of the death row inmates, they have allowed me to know that they have been rehabilitated because of religious programming," she said.

In one conversation, a man who was nearing execution when the stay was put in place told Stratton: "I know what I did was wrong, but I know because of programs you all put in place that when I die I'm going to heaven."

"Religious programs have allowed these men to grow in their faith, whatever their faith is" Stratton said, "and because of that growth, they're not the same people now that they were when they committed the crimes."

As providers of spiritual care to inmates, and as an interface between them and family or friends, chaplains play a major role when executions take place, and rehearse needed steps periodically.

Prison life can take a toll on correctional officers and other staff members as well as the inmates, and chaplains are charged with offering care and counseling to them, too. Central Prison has more staff than inmates: about 1,300 personnel, divided into four groups who work rotating 12-hour shifts.

Chaplains typically work during the day, but are always on call in the event of a crisis, or if there's a death in the prison. Sooner or later, inmates who have been sentenced to life without parole will die in prison. By the time that happens, Stratton said, they may have outlived all of their family members, and there's no one left to contact.

As long as Stratton and her staff are on the job, however, there will always be someone to care. **BT**

"To me, they're never just inmates. They're people."

Pete Seeger was an American prophet

Since 2007, my youngest daughter, Rebekah, and I have made annual summer expeditions to, mostly, take in minor league baseball games. Each year we come up with a theme for our travels.

Last year, perhaps our final journey due to her graduating from high school this spring, we titled it “the hippie trip” — since we took in the Kent State Memorial, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, and Woodstock.

After the baseball portion, including Cooperstown, we visited Bethel, N.Y., where the Woodstock Festival was held in the summer of 1969. We took in a concert by Joan Baez, who had performed at the original festival.

For much of the trip we listened to Pete Seeger. By singing along on “This Land Is Your Land,” “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” “If I Had a Hammer,” “We Shall Overcome,” and “Turn, Turn, Turn,” as well as listening to lesser-known ballads of the Labor movement of the 1930s and 1940s, our spirits were prepared by this iconic musician to experience much Americana of the 20th century.

When Seeger died recently, I grieved. He



was a great musician, “converted” to the five-string banjo while listening to Bascom Lunsford at the 1936 Folk Dance and Music Festival in Asheville, N.C.

Lunsford, founder of the festival, was born in Mars Hill, N.C., where his father was a music teacher at Baptist-related Mars Hill College (now University). A later relative, Dan Lunsford, serves as the current president.

Seeger was a complex man. A member of the Communist Party of the USA for about a decade, he left the party and served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

In 1955, having been subpoenaed to testify before the House on Un-American Activities,

Seeger was one of the few who did not invoke the Fifth Amendment. Banned from radio and TV during the ’50s and most of the ’60s, Seeger finally appeared on *The Smothers Brothers Show* and sang “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” an anti-war ballad.

During that same era, when his music provided inspiration for the culture of protest, Seeger, disappointed with the generational divide, recorded “Be Kind to Your Parents.”

My mom taught me to pull for the underdog. And Seeger’s music championed the underdog: from children working in textile mills, to the poor and black disproportionately fighting and dying in Vietnam, to those who suffer from environmental harm.

My daughter, whose grandparents and great-grandparents worked in textile mills and whose great-uncle fought in Vietnam, lives in a better world because of Pete Seeger. “To everything, there is a season....” **BT**

—John Bridges is associate vice president of advancement for religious studies at Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina.

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A Century Ago

Revisiting Henry Ford, morality and the Baptists of 1914

One hundred years ago, automaker Henry Ford announced that he would pay employees a minimum wage of \$5 a day, about twice what other plant jobs paid. Ford's decision was necessitated by labor unrest.

Most workers hated assembly line work, and the turnover rate at Ford's plants was approaching an astonishing 400 percent annually. Lack of worker loyalty due to low pay and mindless, repetitive tasks was preventing the technologically advanced Model T from becoming a profitable, mass-market product.

Ford's decision to increase worker pay infuriated other industrial magnates, who realized they would also have to raise wages. At the same time, the wily and overbearing Ford sought to keep the upper hand over his workers: about half of the new wages consisted of profit-sharing, while employees were forced to submit to private investigations of their lifestyles carried out by the company's "Social Department."

Employees were required to exhibit good character and morality (heavy drinking, gambling and irresponsible parenting were not allowed) and remain loyal to the "Ford family."

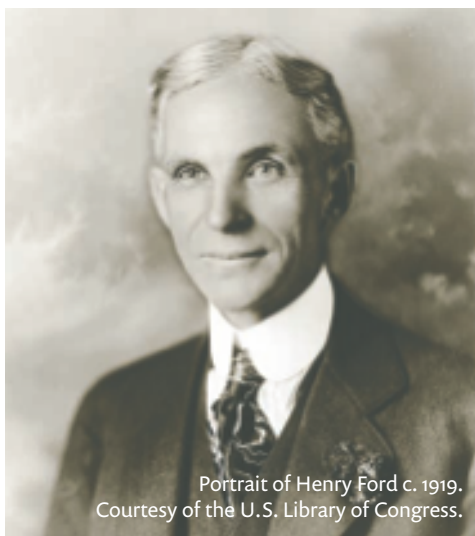
The pay raise led to a plunging turnover rate among workers and achieved Ford's objective of significantly greater profits. Later the auto magnate called the pay raise "the smartest cost-cutting move I ever made."

Over the long run, however, Ford's efforts to control the morality of his workers created a backlash that contributed to the growth of labor unions.

Threaded within the story of Ford's pay raise are many of the overarching themes facing America and the Baptists of America in 1914: amazing technological advances, low-paying and rote jobs, labor unrest and a lack of worker rights, a growing wealth gap, a relentless pursuit of corporate profits, and religious and moral expectations in society and culture.

As if to underscore the underlying economic chasm between the masses of wage workers and the rarified upper class, the brokerage firm Merrill Lynch was founded the day after Ford made his announcement.

Concern over economic inequality and a lightly-regulated workplace extended even to



Portrait of Henry Ford c. 1919.
Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress.

the conservative Southern Baptist Convention. Meeting in Nashville, Southern Baptists addressed social issues in a manner similar to that of their more liberal northern counterparts.

The first report of the denomination's new Social Service Commission formally pointed Southern Baptists in a new, broad, socially progressive direction by addressing the church's responsibility to speak to the excesses of the marketplace by opposing "private greed" that resulted in "class antagonisms:"

It (the Church) must erect the Christian standard in the marketplace, and insist that the labor of women and children be regulated in the interest of the well-being of the race, that the industrial system provide the minimum of necessary working hours with the maximum of wholesome life conditions, and that the workers have a fair share in the prosperity which they produce.

These words, a first for the denomination, validated concerns that had been bubbling up for some time from many individual Southern Baptists who were opposed to corporate abuses of the working masses, including the ongoing practice of child labor.

The same technological advances changing the workplace also empowered remarkable transformations in the larger corporate and scientific world. The year 1914 marked the

opening of the Panama Canal, the first commercial airline route, the first blood transfusion, the first transcontinental telephone service, the invention of the first color photographic process, the first full-length color film, the first patent for a liquid-fueled rocket, and a patent for a "dew control" system that was a prelude to air conditioning.

Within this bifurcated world of economic disparity and stunning technological advances, Baptists were the new king pin of Protestant Christianity. Collectively the largest non-Catholic denomination in the U.S., Baptists were yet transitioning from their historical outsider, minority faith status to that of a powerful, majoritarian faith.

The Southern and Northern Baptist conventions each claimed between 2.5 and three million members, while black Baptist conventions were collectively comprised of about two million members.

Amid the ascendancy of technology as the driver of efficiency and innovation, the SBC flexed its corporate might in its 1914 annual convention. No concern seemed too small in a quest to shape the convention into a model of efficient, business-like operation.

Convention leaders expressed the need to harmonize the work of various boards, proclaimed that state newspapers yet under private ownership should be acquired by state Baptist conventions, and announced the development of convention-written Sunday school lessons designed for uniform use by local congregations.

In addition, a committee on the "Material Equipment of Pastors" sought to "stimulate the churches to provide equipment of a material nature for the pastors. We would induce them to provide adequate residences, well-equipped studies and libraries of high-grade standard books; this equipment to be the property of the church for use of pastors through the years."

Exuding a confidence that transcended their regional-bound presence, the Southern Baptists gathered in Nashville also took to speaking for American Protestants at large. In so doing, they walked a tightrope between a historical commitment to church-state separation and an impulse to ensure that Christian morals

fashioned the foundation of an advancing, progressive American nation.

Striving to affirm church-state separation while insisting upon an explicitly Christian-infused nation, the inherent tension bore evidence in the report of the Social Service Commission, which in part echoed the standards of morality demanded by Ford of his workers:

As a social institution embodying the divine ideal and responsible for its fulfillment in all the sections and activities of human life, the Church imposes its standards upon all other social institutions:

(1) The family it protects by insisting upon the single standard of purity and health, and by maintaining everywhere Christ's limitation of divorce.

(2) The state has nothing to do with the Church except to guarantee to it freedom of religious opinion and worship and the equality of religious denominations; and the Church has nothing to do with the state except to insist that its government be humane and democratic under the Christian law of fraternity and justice, and that its legislation suppress unrighteous practices, restrain evil men, and give life its opportunity.

(3) The institutions of education, the school and the press, train capacity and fix ideals, and so deal with the foundations of social life. The Church recognizes the privilege of the state and the private citizen to provide the means of education; it rejoices in the public school and the free press.

But it cannot leave education wholly to the hazard of individual initiative or to the limitations of public provision. It must maintain the Christian school and the Christian press, and, as far as may be done, supply to all educational agencies positive Christian standards and teaching and guidance.

In advancing an agenda that demanded Christian morality in public institutions, white Baptists of the South joined their northern

counterparts in addressing the most notable social issue of the day: alcohol.

Despite their denominational heritage of tolerating alcohol (including the use of alcoholic wine in communion services) while condemning drunkenness, the growing, nationwide prohibition movement of the late-19th and early-20th centuries had seemingly converted most Baptists to teetotalers.

Northern Baptists, meeting in Boston in 1914, condemned the liquor traffic, as did Southern Baptists gathered in Nashville. Southern Baptists voiced support of a Constitutional amendment “forever prohibiting the sale, manufacture for sale, importation for sale, exportation or transportation for sale of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes, or foods containing alcohol.”

Northern Baptists also spoke against the use of cigarettes by church members and condemned “moving-picture exhibits” as a “vice” and a “crime,” urging the “national censorship of all films.” For their part, some black Baptist groups voiced disapproval of alcohol, although their convention meetings did not receive the level of press coverage as did white Baptists.

Relations between white and black Baptists of America were strained in 1914, although one would not know it by the formal cordiality expressed by the Southern Baptist Convention in the form of praise for “Colored Baptists” and a pledge to support the formation of a “Colored Baptist Theological Seminary” by raising \$50,000.

The Social Service Commission's determination that a “Christian” marketplace should support the “well-being of the [white] race” plainly underscored the accepted racial apartheid of the time.

Unstated by white Baptists, south or north, was the fact that 1914 marked the point at which every southern state, as well as many northern cities, had enacted Jim Crow laws that harshly discriminated against black Americans.

While racial integration was abhorrent in the minds of many white Baptists in America in 1914, foreign mission work remained front and center.

In conjunction with their annual conference, Northern Baptists held a Judson Centennial celebration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the American Baptist

Foreign Mission Society. Meanwhile, Southern Baptists boasted of Foreign Mission Board income of \$587,458, a sum that today would equal \$259 million in comparative marketplace wealth (the entire 2013-2014 SBC Cooperative Program budget is \$190 million) according to one calculation.

While white Baptists focused on the conversion of souls, black Baptist foreign missionary efforts expressed concern for both the material and spiritual welfare of the African peoples to whom they ministered.

Against the backdrop of economic tensions, labor problems, technological marvels, a quest for efficiency, opposition to personal immorality, demands for a Christian society, and the finalization of racial apartheid throughout America, Northern Baptist Convention attendees departed for home on June 25.

All in all, on that date the year 1914 seemed full of promise for white Baptists and white Americans at large, with the relatively progressive agenda of believers and the nation's leaders moving forward.

Three days later, however, the course of the nation and the world took a marked turn for the worse. June 28 witnessed the assassination of Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to Austria-Hungary, and his wife, Sofia. The killing took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia, by a Serb nationalist, an event that led to the beginning of World War I exactly one month later.

For the remainder of the decade, the progressive momentum of American politics and Baptist life — both minus significant advances in racial relations — competed with the moral, ethical, and national security concerns of a vast and devastating global conflict, the most destructive war known to that date in the Western world.

Progressivism among many white Baptist leaders proved resilient in the face of the First World War, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression and the Second World War. Some Baptists, however, turned away from the relatively progressive trajectory established in 1914, derailed in the early 1950s by fears of Communism in the Cold War era and strident opposition to court-ordered racial desegregation at home. **BT**

—Online editor Bruce Gourley is a historian and Internet entrepreneur living in Bozeman, Mont.

Within this bifurcated world of economic disparity and stunning technological advances, Baptists were the new king pin of Protestant Christianity. Collectively the largest non-Catholic denomination in the U.S., Baptists were yet transitioning from their historical outsider, minority faith status to that of a powerful, majoritarian faith.



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National Heights Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ga.
North Stuart Baptist Church, Stuart, Fla.
Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.
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Oakmont Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C.
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