

Contains **JULY** Nurturing Faith Lessons



A conversation
with
Suzii Paynter

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JUNE 2013

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for adults and youth
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Kate Campbell's musical inspiration added to the 30-year celebration of *Baptists Today*.

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Cover photo: By David Cassady
Drawing 300 persons to the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga., on April 25, a celebration of the 30-year history of *Baptists Today* focused on the news journal's influence, evolution and hopeful future.
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Turning 30

News journal celebrates three decades of ‘enabling, recording and shaping a Baptist movement’

GAINESVILLE, Ga. — An April 25 dinner event at the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga., recalled the beginnings of an independent, national news journal in April 1983 and celebrated its evolution and expanding roles over the past 30 years.

First named *SBC Today*, the news journal was founded by veteran communicator Walker Knight who left a prestigious journalist role with the Southern Baptist Convention to launch the new publication. He found strong support within his congregation, Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., and from Baptist laypersons and ministers from many states concerned about the free flow of information during a time of upheaval in denominational life.

Under the second editor, Jack U. Harwell, who had been forced into retirement from the state Baptist newspaper in Georgia, the publication was renamed *Baptists Today* and given a redesign and wider appeal outside SBC life.



Anne Green (right) of Dahlonega, Ga., hosts a table of friends at the celebration dinner.

Knight and Harwell attended the celebration.

Nurturing Faith, Inc., the book and church resources arm of *Baptists Today*, premiered Knight's recently published memoirs, *From Zion to Atlanta*, at the event. Knight has given the rights and all proceeds from the book to *Baptists Today*.



Founding editor Walker Knight greeted guests and signed copies of his memoirs, newly published by Nurturing Faith, at the 30-year celebration. Proceeds from the sales support *Baptists Today*.

“This book is a moving account of his life from growing up in Kentucky, to serving in World War II, to charting a course in courageous journalism,” said current editor John Pierce in presenting the author's copy to the founding editor. “Walker is as honest in this book as those of us who know him would expect him to be — as he deals with life's challenges including both the positive and negative influences of his father. You'll want to read it.”

Nashville-based singer-songwriter Kate Campbell, whose music ranges from familiar hymns she learned as the daughter of a Baptist preacher to her own calls for justice and hope, moved the gathered crowd of 300.

Letters of tribute were read from Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, a member of the Gainesville congregation, and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, a longtime subscriber and supporter of *Baptists Today*.

Board Chairman Walter Shurden presented the author's copy of a new book commemorating the news journal's three decades of influence to Bruce Gourley, online editor for *Baptists Today* and executive director of the Baptist History & Heritage Society. The coffee-table book, sponsored by an estate gift



William Powell Tuck of Richmond, Va., participates in the book signing during a reception prior to the dinner celebration. He has two books published by Nurturing Faith, *A Pastor Preaching* and *The Pulpit Ministry of the Pastors of River Road Church, Baptist*.

“On behalf of the State of Georgia, it is a great pleasure to congratulate you on reaching this exceptional milestone ... Our religious heritage is highly valued and helps to define our guiding principles as a people. I thank the writers, editors, publishers and other stakeholders of Baptists Today who have dedicated themselves to helping meet the spiritual needs of so many of our citizens.”

—Letter from Nathan Deal, governor of Georgia and member of First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga.

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from and dedicated to the memory of W. Reaves McCall of Hartsville, S.C., and titled *Baptists Today at 30: Enabling, Recording and Shaping a Baptist Movement*, was given to those in attendance.

A video of the same title, produced by Ben McDade, executive vice president of *Baptists Today*, and Cliff Williams of Argyle Multimedia, was also premiered featuring a variety of readers and supporters speaking of the news journal’s impact.

Calling for “regular and generous support for *Baptists Today*” as it moves into a bright future, Shurden noted that the new commemorative book recounts “scores of Baptist laypeople [who] gave untold hours and dollars to keep this ministry vibrant.”

“Here is a rule of thumb,” he added. “If you ever wonder where to give, give where your friends have sacrificed and invested some of their lives.” **BT**



“Young folks need something to grab onto to really grasp why they’ve chosen to be in a particular denomination,” said Liz Isandoro of First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga., here attending the 30-year celebration, in a video tribute, “...and if *Baptists Today* can help them understand that, then I think it serves a very important purpose.”

“My wife Rosalynn and I have been dedicated and avid readers of Baptists Today since its earliest publication, and have shared this blessing with other members of our church congregation. Not only does this fine publication keep us informed about events that are of interest and concern to all Baptists, but it provides inspirational news and articles of daily benefit to our lives. We are deeply grateful to those who have made Baptists Today available to us, and look forward to many more years of sharing its Good News.”

—Letter from President Jimmy Carter, a longtime supporter of *Baptists Today*



Editor John Pierce presents the Judson-Rice Award to Virginia Connally as her friend and fellow physician Drayton Sanders looks on.

Tribute to Virginia Connally

Note: *Baptists Today* presented its annual Judson-Rice Award to 100-year-old physician and missions advocate Virginia Connally during the news journal’s 30-year celebration. These excerpts are from the tribute given by Executive Editor John Pierce.

Dr. Virginia Connally is a person of deep conviction and great compassion. She was one of only three women in her medical school class at LSU. Then she spent her internship and residency years in New Orleans, where her compassion for the poor and suffering was strengthened by Catholic nuns.

In 1940, Dr. Connally moved to Abilene, Texas, where she had graduated from college at Hardin-Simmons, and opened her medical practice specializing in eye, nose, ear and throat. She was the first female physician in that part of Texas.

As Virginia once told me, that was not a big deal to her. And the timing was great, because many of the male doctors were being shipped off to war.

One of my favorite Virginia Connally lines comes from her response to someone asking her: “Were there people back then who wouldn’t come see you because you were a woman?”

Virginia shrugged and responded: “How would I know? I didn’t see them.”

She continued that practice for 41 years. In addition, she traveled the world, befriending missionaries and serving one good cause after another. When her husband Ed died in 1975, she assumed the presidency of Connally Oil Co. while continuing as chief of staff at the local hospital.

Dr. Connally’s love of God, her church,

missions near and far, and the causes of freedom that mark the Baptist movement are well known. She established a chair and missions center at her alma mater and purchased the home next to hers to serve as a missionary residence.

She has been a generous supporter of many good causes that she holds dear. She is an avid reader, a deep thinker, and a kind and caring person who is easy to love — and one who makes others feel loved when around her.

On Dec. 4, 1912, a baby girl was born in Temple, Texas, and given the good name Ada Virginia Hawkins. It was the beginning of a remarkable life that we celebrate a century later.

Dr. Connally, this award has been given to some of the finest leaders within Baptist life. But none is more deserving than you.

So on behalf of the Board of Directors of *Baptists Today*, the Judson-Rice Society, and all who have gathered to celebrate the 30th birthday of this publication, I present to you this award, which reads:

“Paying tribute to influential Baptist leaders Adoniram Judson, Ann Hasseltine Judson and Luther Rice, this annual award is presented to Virginia Connally, M.D., in recognition of providing great influence as a Baptist leader while consistently demonstrating the highest Christian integrity.”

Congratulations! **BT**

Why I regularly, generously support *Baptists Today*

In asking you to become a regular, generous donor to *Baptists Today*, I want to engage in testimony, to tell you a few of the reasons why I give to *Baptists Today*.

FIRST: I give because of history.

Baptists Today was the first child of the moderate Baptist movement. I still have the first issue in my files, dated April 1983.

Thirty years ago, there were no other new moderate Baptist ministries. No Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. No Baptist Women in Ministry. No ABP. No new seminaries.

I started giving to *Baptists Today* because it was the first of the moderate Baptist children. My giving became a habit.

SECOND: I give because it is unique.

It is the only independent, national Baptist news journal in North America. The only one!

Dr. Kirby Godsey has said often and passionately, "If something happened and *Baptists Today* went by the wayside, we would have to turn around and create it all over again." He is right.

I give because *Baptists Today* is a unique ministry among Baptists. This uniqueness now involves the publication of Sunday school curriculum and books. *Baptists Today* has become a needed publishing enterprise, anchored in a news journal.

THIRD: I give because it represents the sacrificial ministry of some of my good friends in Baptist life.

It would take too long to call the roll. But Walker Knight gave blood to get *Baptists Today* off the ground. Jack Harwell came over for fortification.

Scores of Baptist laypeople (that you will read about in *Baptists Today at 30*) gave untold hours and dollars to keep this ministry vibrant.



Chairman Walter Shurden presents the author's copy of *Baptists Today at 30: Enabling, Recording and Shaping a Baptist Movement* to Bruce Gourley. The commemorative gift book, dedicated to the memory of W. Reaves McCall, was given to those in attendance.

If you ever wonder where to give, give where your friends have sacrificed and invested some of their lives.

FOURTH: I give because *Baptists Today* knows how to handle a dollar.

I have never been caught up in spiritual ecstasy while reading a budget, but I know a good steward when I see one. Our Board of Directors should be called a Board of Stewards.

I have sat in on conference calls of the budget committee, and have heard the voices of good stewards using good words such as frugality and integrity. *Baptists Today* will not waste your money. They know how to handle a dollar.

FIFTH: I give because of leadership.

The staff at *Baptists Today* is nothing less than stellar. I trust them.

They work hard. They work smart. They work with each other and with other moderate Baptist partners. You can trust them, too.

SIXTH: I give primarily because of mission.

I consider *Baptists Today* to be a kind of "pastor" of moderate Baptists. A pastor is a generalist who does many things.

Baptists Today campaigns for religious liberty, advocates for women in ministry, pleads for a democratic priesthood and the role of the laity, lifts up historic Baptist principles and a treasured Baptist heritage, champions quality theological education, and promotes a broad understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It teaches a holistic spirituality that involves a warm heart, a critical mind and a helping hand. Like a good pastor, *Baptists Today* informs, interprets, inspires, confronts, consoles, counsels, teaches and leads.

Subscriptions provide but a small percentage of our budget. We rely on the gifts of those who support this mission. So I urge you to please become a regular, generous donor to the "pastor" of moderate Baptists. **BT**



Baptists Today at 30

Enabling, Recording and Shaping a Baptist Movement

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“It’s almost an embarrassment to be celebrating 150 years. But it’s also an affirmation of faith in Christ’s return.”

—*Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, director of education for the Seventh-day Adventists who emphasize the return of Christ (RNS)*

“Christian freedom means more than spiritual freedom from sin. It means freedom from the necessities and priorities of the world. It means freedom to love, forgive and work for reconciliation. And, lest we forget, love is not a natural or necessary thing; it is a choice.”

—*Adam English, associate professor of religion at Campbell University, Buies Creek, N.C. (ABP)*

“No matter how good the intentions are by those thinking they are doing the Lord’s work, violating one’s rights tramples the Constitution, deludes the meaning of the Gospel, and causes harm to both the afflicted and the agitator. Both the church and government are better off when left to their separate objectives.”

—*Pastor Mitch Randall of NorthHaven Church in Norman, Okla., who as a Native American grew up in eastern Oklahoma and whose relatives suffered from state-sponsored religion (Report from the Capital)*

quotation remarks

“I said, ‘We agree to disagree,’ and he said, ‘No, I’m right and you’re wrong.’”

—*Green Bay Packers safety LeRoy Butler, on a conversation with the pastor of a Wisconsin church that canceled his upcoming appearance over Butler’s support of NBA player Jason Collins who came out as gay (Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel)*

“As is often the case in American history, immigrants become more committed to God and the church upon arrival here as traditional faith provides avenues of comfort and security in a new world. The American religious future will be made as Christians engage these emerging cultures in meaningful, life-giving ways.”

—*Author and historian Diana Butler Bass (HuffPo)*

“We God nerds hardly even acknowledge the realities of the church we’re talking about. Rather, we’re stuck on the old post-WWII community church model, which increasingly only exists in our minds.”

—*Blogger Christian Piatt (patheos.com)*

“Across the ideological spectrum, Washington is filled with people at the height of political power who are practicing their faith seriously and profoundly, but largely out of public view ... In coffee shops, vibrant local congregations, congressional offices, and White House corridors — God is far more present in Washington than most Americans realize.”

—*Joshua DuBois, former director of the White House faith-based initiative (Newsweek)*

“Not everything you write will last. And you won’t know which ones do, because you’ll not be here. But you hope that some of them will stick.”

—*Hymn writer Kristyn Getty of Nashville (USA Today)*

“In the history of an institution, 25 years is not that long. Yet in all of our lives gathered here today it is a significant stretch of time.”

—*Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George, speaking at the anniversary celebration of the interdenominational theological school of Baptist-related Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. (ABP)*

“One of the challenges in the past as a youth minister was whether the students remembered to bring [a Bible] to Bible study. With apps, they always have their phones and they always have their Bibles.”

—*Youth leader and professor Kirk Brothers, noting the value of Bible apps but the challenge in knowing whether teens are reading scripture or doing something else on their phones (Jackson Sun)*

“You can tell they’re living differently because of how they talk, act and respect each other compared to *Jersey Shore* or insert whatever crazy reality TV show here. It’s nice to see someone get recognized for the right thing for a change.”

—*Senior Alexander McMeen of Lipscomb University in Nashville, who let his beard grow out before attending a campus event featuring stars of the *Duck Dynasty* TV show that is highly popular among evangelicals (USA Today)*

By John Pierce

How conservatives (and others) can win the marriage debate

While the news buzzes about the first prominent professional athlete to reveal he is gay and the Supreme Court weighs two cases involving the legality of same-sex marriage, public opinion keeps moving quickly in but one direction.

Those who suggest a bias against social conservatives in such reports might consider polls taken by conservative groups such as LifeWay Research, tied to the Southern Baptist Convention. The evidence of a quick and sure societal shift is clear.

One may argue over a percentage point or two but, undeniably, support for legal equality for same-sex couples has grown and is growing at an astonishing rate. Also revealing is the demographic breakdown showing that the strongest opposition comes from the oldest citizens. So we know how that plays out over time.

Also of note, geographically and religiously, the strongest opposition to gay marriage comes from evangelical Christians in southern states. So all of this raises a very important question:

Do evangelicals and other social conservatives want a solution or just another losing battle that grants nothing but a sense of martyrdom?

I recommend an obvious solution. And here it is.

Devoted Christians (as well as those of other faith traditions) should readily acknowledge their belief that marriage is a spiritual

commitment made in the presence of God. That's why it is called holy matrimony.

Holy matters belong to communities of faith, not the government. Only someone who completely misunderstands either the role of government or church or both would deny such a conclusion.

So social conservatives have a great opportunity to take a strong stand for what is right — and have all kinds of folks shouting “Amen.” It is a position deeply rooted in the Baptist tradition that helped shape the American experience regarding religious liberty.

Simply demand that government get out of the marriage business — because holy matrimony belongs to the church (and other religious communities), not justices of the peace or any other government official. Bug out, Big Brother!

Then the discussion over benefits and rights for those couples entering into a secular contractual agreement can play out in the public arena and courts. It takes the whole question of “preserving traditional marriage” out of the public discussion. In fact, it does more to protect “traditional marriage” than anything resulting from courts, polls or protests.

Let the justices consider, debate and

decide whether a same-sex couple in a decades-long relationship that involves shared home ownership and other exclusive commitments to one another should have the same government benefits that were granted to Britney Spears during her 55 hours of marital bliss or the many serial brides and grooms who trade partners like cars. But don't call any such government-issued license or contract something that is elevated to and makes a mockery of holy matrimony.

Churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious bodies are fully capable of determining their own rules for marriage. Already the heftiest book in many churches is not the pulpit Bible but the wedding policy manual.

Churches can choose to marry or not marry according to their own interpretations of scriptures and any other rules they wish to set regarding age, gender, counseling requirements, cost, size of wedding party or tacky tuxedos.

Right now, there is an open door for conservatives to stand up for holy matrimony — by insisting that such an important spiritual commitment between two persons in the presence of God and God's people belongs to the church and not a secular government.

It is a simple and sure solution for those who genuinely want a resolution rather than continuing engagement in another losing battle in the public arena.

Conservatives can win!
Along with everyone else. **BT**



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Why?

*Answers to
Baptist questions
from a historical
perspective*



QUESTION:

Why do Baptists have altar calls at the end of worship services?

If you've ever stood at the end of a worship service and endured eight stanzas of "Just As I Am," chances are you are (or were at one time) a Baptist.

While not universal, most Baptist congregations are conditioned to expect an invitation or altar call to accept Jesus following Sunday morning preaching. Yet historically, "Just As I Am" (or some other hymn encouraging a stroll to the front of the church) has not always signaled the spiritual decision time in Baptist worship services.

In fact, one strain of Baptists in the 17th and 18th centuries often avoided trying to convert individuals to Christian faith. Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptists were convinced that God, before the foundations of the world, had predetermined who would be admitted into heaven and who would be condemned to hell. In effect, Jesus died only for the elect — that is, particular persons. In the eyes of many Calvinists, efforts to convince hell-bound persons to follow Jesus were not only useless but also an affront to God's sovereignty. Other Calvinists preached to all comers but tried to convince none of their salvation.

Accounts of conversion experiences during those early decades did not include walking the church aisle. Whether Calvinistic or Arminian (those who believed Jesus' offer of salvation was to all persons and could be received freely by individuals), persons converted to the Baptist faith typically heard

gospel preaching and then embarked upon a months-long, oftentimes years-long, private spiritual journey toward a feeling of internal security. John Leland, one of the most prominent Baptist preachers of the 18th century, wrote at length of his own struggle toward salvation. He also lived long enough to witness the birth of a new conversion paradigm: the altar call.

The story of "walking the aisle" to "accept Jesus" can be traced back to rural Kentucky and Tennessee at the turn of the 19th century. Around 1800, a revival (the Second Great Awakening) began on America's rural frontier, lasting for some three decades and initially expressed in camp meetings held in the open countryside. This revival era marked the ascendancy of Arminian theology and the weakening of Calvinism.

Individual revival meetings would often continue for weeks or months, with frontier families camping out and attending daily services. The camp meeting preachers were usually Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian or Disciples, and often several would be loudly vying, within earshot of one another, for the attention of the crowds at a given moment. Passion and excitement filled the air.

Yet the manner in which listeners often responded to the emotional revival preaching in the earliest years of the awakening was unusual. Shrieking, groaning, fainting, swooning, running around, twitching and loud

weeping were common. While some preachers viewed such manifestations as the evidence of the Holy Spirit's working, the task of converting listeners to the gospel of Christ too often was subsumed by bodily convolutions.

By 1805, in an attempt to measure listeners' responses to gospel messages, many preachers began employing an "invitation to the altar," a nearby fenced area where persons under conviction could congregate and be implored to seek salvation.

As the revivals later moved indoors, Presbyterian minister and revivalist Charles Finney is credited with moving the altar call from open field to church house. Although a Calvinist, Finney came to believe that Christ's death made salvation possible for all. Accordingly, he used the altar call as a persuasive tool, calling listeners to the "anxious seat" to receive Christ. Finney's embrace of emotional, persuasive preaching angered many Calvinists, who rejected the altar call as unscriptural and unholy.

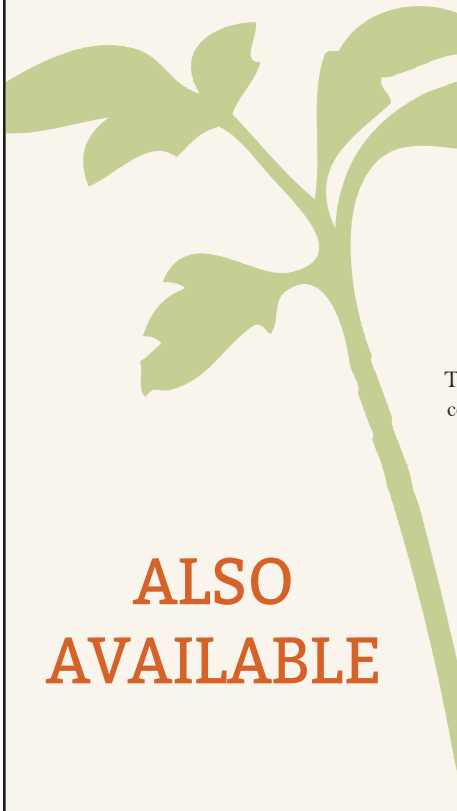
Nonetheless, the altar call survived and became normative in much of Christendom. By the second half of the 19th century, "walking the aisle" was common in many Baptist churches, particularly those of Southern Baptist persuasion. The 20th century witnessed the pinnacle of popularity of the altar call in Baptist worship services, an indication of the effectiveness of the preacher's sermon and evidence of a growing congregation. And although walking the aisle may not be quite as common a practice now as last century, "Just As I Am" is yet the most sung hymn in many Baptist churches. **BT**

—This series is provided in partnership with the Baptist History & Heritage Society. Bruce Gourley serves as executive director of the society and as online editor for Baptists Today.

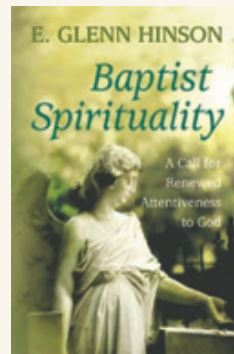
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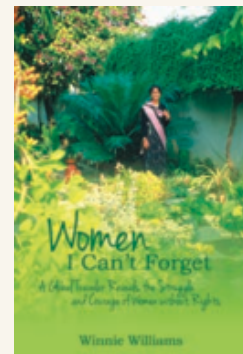
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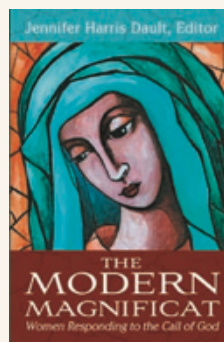
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Pentagon debunks reports of anti-Christian policies

By David Gibson
Religion News Service

Christian conservatives have grown increasingly alarmed recently over reports and rumors that the Pentagon is considering new policies aimed at discriminating against Christians and disciplining or even court-martialing those who share their faith.

But the Department of Defense on May 2 sought to debunk that speculation, saying that while aggressive proselytizing is barred, evangelization is still permitted and the rights of all believers — and non-believers — will be protected.

“The U.S. Department of Defense has never and will never single out a particular religious group for persecution or prosecution,” Pentagon spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen said in a statement. “The Department makes reasonable accommodations for all religions and celebrates the religious diversity of our service members.”

Christensen added: “Service members can share their faith (evangelize), but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one’s beliefs (proselytization).”

The latest statement was aimed at refuting widely circulated reports in conservative media outlets that Christian soldiers could be court-martialed for sharing their faith.

Whether the pushback will be successful

in dispelling suspicions, even within the ranks, is uncertain. Even as Christensen released his statement, Rear Adm. William D. Lee of the U.S. Coast Guard warned of threats to faith within the military while speaking at National Day of Prayer observances on Capitol Hill.

“I am not talking about proselytizing; I am vehemently against that,” the admiral said in remarks that drew a standing ovation. “I’m talking about gently whispering the gospel.”

The current controversy seems to have originated with Fox News contributor Todd Starnes, who wrote about a Pentagon meeting on harassment and tolerance issues; among the attendees was the head of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, Mikey Weinstein.

Weinstein told *The Washington Post* after the April 23 meeting that proselytizing in the military is akin to “spiritual rape,” among other things.

The Fox News report on Weinstein’s remarks also cited a statement from Christensen, the Pentagon spokesman, who reiterated the preexisting policy against proselytizing. But the Starnes piece went on to claim that the policy also applied to evangelizing, or sharing the gospel. In addition, the story highlighted court martial as a possible penalty.

Outlets like Breitbart.com then amplified the reports with stories such as “Pentagon May Court Martial Soldiers Who Share Christian Faith.” The Washington-based Family

Research Council then launched a petition drive to urge the Pentagon “to scrub plans to court-martial Christians.”

In recent years the U.S. military has become a battleground in the culture wars as the growing pluralism of the armed forces, along with increasing assertiveness of both Christian and secular activists, have led the Pentagon to clarify and develop policies of neutrality.

Those policies often do not sit well with some conservative Christians.

Then in early April it was reported that during a U.S. Army Reserve presentation, an outside contractor had included Catholics and evangelicals in a PowerPoint show listing possible “extremists.” While the Army removed the offending slide, the incident was reported as another example of anti-Christian bias.

Just three weeks later, when some soldiers and chaplains complained that they were blocked from logging onto the website of the Southern Baptist Convention, Christian conservatives accused the military of targeting evangelicals for censorship.

Even after it turned out that the problem lay with a glitch in the SBC’s own website, the Family Research Council and others still insisted the incident revealed a troubling pattern of military antipathy to Christians — a charge that critics said was akin to crying wolf. **BT**

—Adelle M. Banks contributed to this report.

Baptist historian Leon McBeth ‘inspired many’

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

H. Leon McBeth, a Baptist historian and scholar and the author of nine books, died April 29 at age 81.

The retired chair of the history department at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary received numerous awards for his contributions to Baptist history, including a *Festschrift*, *Turning Points in Baptist History*, in which colleagues paid tribute to his life’s work. His books included *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*, published in 1987.

In 1990, the Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention — since renamed LifeWay Christian Resources — contracted with him to write an interpretive history for the publishing house’s 100th anniversary. McBeth wrote the book during a

yearlong sabbatical and was paid \$18,000 for his work, but after seeing the final version the agency’s board of trustees halted publication.

Some trustees reportedly believed the book was biased against conservatives, and specifically too sympathetic to the agency’s moderate president at the time, Lloyd Elder.

The Sunday School Board retained copyright, and the book was never published.

Media reports labeled it censorship. McBeth stood by the manuscript, calling it “a balanced interpretive history of the first 100 years of the Baptist Sunday School Board.”

McBeth grew up in Plainview, Texas, and

graduated from Wayland Baptist University, where he later served as trustee. He earned his master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

His funeral was held May 4 at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth. He was recipient of the 1989 W. O. Carver Distinguished Service Award from the Baptist History and Heritage Society.

“His life and work profoundly inspired and impacted many of us,” said Bruce Gourley, the society’s executive director, in an email to members. **BT**

Editor’s note: On the day of Dr. McBeth’s death, the Baptist History & Heritage Society released its spring journal, A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth. This issue is available for \$15 by contacting bbhs@baptisthistory.org or 406-600-7433.



Leon McBeth

Symposium considers the ‘church in the digital age’

By Ken Camp
Associated Baptist Press

Social media may link people across the globe, while at the same time segmenting them generationally, one of America’s foremost scholars on technology and the church told an April 29 gathering at Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

“It’s increasingly easy to communicate across geographic space and increasingly difficult to communicate across generations,” Quentin Schultze, chair of the DeVos Communication Center at Calvin College, said at the symposium titled “iFaith? The Church in the Digital Age.”

As a result, he said, those people conversant with newer technologies are often segregated from the wisdom of the ages.

Ironically, he noted, congregations that adopt projection technology in sanctuaries over the objections of older members believing it will attract younger worshippers often discover they miss the mark.

“After a while, the older members most appreciate the user-friendly technology, and the youth see it as cheesy,” he said.

Schultze said practically everyone feels over-messaged, and that communication overload can create a “cultural ADD” and shallow understanding of other people. “Biblical friendship requires time and proximity, even in a digital age,” he said.

He said easy access to alternative viewpoints via digital media contribute to “intellectual skepticism and cultural agnosticism,” because when media present multiple versions of “truth,” people tend to withhold judgment on propositional claims and trust more in feelings and personal experience.

In light of that context, Schultze urged church leaders to focus on four timeless practices: listening, authenticity, hospitality and leisure.

“Listening means attending to reality,” he said. “It is the ground for all good, loving communication.”

Schultze said in a digital culture where many assume artificial personas and concentrate on creating an image, young people particularly are attracted to adults who are real

and who admit their own faults and doubts.

While digital-based communities generally develop around what people have in common, Schultze said churches can model intergenerational life together with people who have varied perspectives and come from all walks of life. “Make room in our hearts and minds for those who are different,” he advised.

Also, in a digital age of almost-omnipresent mobile devices, he said people need Sabbath rest and a respite from incessant messaging.

A responder to Schultze’s address, Chris Seay, pastor of Ecclesia in Houston, an emergent church that incorporates ancient liturgy and modern media into worship, said nearly any technology can be an effective tool, but no church should become enthralled by it.

“If it’s about being cool or uncool, the line for cool keeps moving,” he quipped.

A key question churches should ask is whether any technological tool enhances or inhibits its ability to touch lives. “A potential pitfall is the belief you can relate to people without having to touch them,” Seay said.

While technology can create distance, it also can draw people closer, he noted. For example, his church shows video from mission projects around the world that the congregation helps support. Video can help members who may never travel abroad feel more closely connected to global ministries and the people whose lives are touched by them.

Seay said technology should serve a purpose, not call attention to itself. “When you use technology well, it becomes invisible,” Seay said.

Doug Henry, professor in the Great Texts program at Baylor University, echoed that theme. He suggested that as churches evaluate the use of any type of technology in worship, they should ask whether it serves as an icon that draws attention to the divine or a spectacle that draws attention to itself.

The program was co-sponsored by Baylor’s Center for Ministry Effectiveness and Educational Leadership and the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching. **BT**

—Ken Camp is managing editor of the *Baptist Standard*. Baylor University’s Terry Goodrich contributed to this report.



Photo from darylrobinson.com

Young musician says church organ is thriving

By Jeff Brumley
Associated Baptist Press

HOUSTON — South Main Baptist Church organist Daryl Robinson is tearing it up in the music world, winning awards and dazzling venues both sacred and secular.

“Daryl brings freshness and excitement to the hymn singing” and “is equally strong accompanying ensembles of all sizes,” said Stephen Bedford, interim music director at the Houston church.

Robinson’s age, 29, also challenges the common assumption in church music that the church organ is extinct. He said many church members still appreciate what the organ brings to worship.

“I really do think (the organ) is on the upswing for traditional worship, and I think there will be a great reenergizing for the organ and organists,” he said.

That comment jibes with consistent and recent statements by experts across the sacred music realm that the organ, after plateauing for a couple of decades, is on the upswing. Many congregations are refurbishing, upgrading or adding the instruments to their sanctuaries.

Robinson said it’s happening just in time for a new generation of musicians who are drawn to the organ.

Robinson, South Main’s organist and artist-in-residence, is among those capitalizing on the trend. He took two top prizes in the 2012 American Guild of Organists’ National Young Artists Competition and is recognized for innovations in programming and artistic skill. **BT**

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Inspired Creativity

SBC's Richard Land gets new job

By David Gibson
Religion News Service

Richard Land, the evangelical culture warrior who was set to leave his job with the Southern Baptists after a series of controversies, will step down early to take over as head of a seminary in North Carolina that focuses on defending faith in the modern world.

“Over the years, it has become increasingly clear to me that the way you spell evangelism, discipleship, missions, and Christian education in the 21st century is ‘apologetics,’” Land, 66, said in an April 11 statement confirming reports that he would become head of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, N.C., in July.

“My goal is to join with the SES family to produce an ever-increasing number of graduates who will be the green berets and paratroopers of God’s army, and who will be used by him to win tremendous victories for Christ and his kingdom,” added Land, who



Richard Land

has for years been the point man — and often lightning rod — on public policy issues for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Apologetics is a method of arguing on behalf of Christianity in order to evangelize and to defend the faith, and it is often marked by the sort of polemical style that Land perfected during nearly a quarter century as head of the SBC’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Yet if Land’s willingness to mix it up in the public square contributed to his renown, it also helped lead to his downfall: A year ago he made controversial comments about race and the Trayvon Martin shooting case that resulted in a reprimand from the SBC and the loss of his radio talk show. Land was also found to have lifted passages, without attribution, from another source for his radio commentaries.

Following those controversies, Land announced last summer that he would retire as head of the ERLC in October 2013 when he would have marked 25 years in that post.

But he has now opted to take the SES job, which will start on July 1 — and it will still provide him a chance to fight in the culture wars that he has described as “a titanic spiritual struggle for our nation’s soul.” **BT**

Cohabitation more common

(RNS) — Unmarried couples who live together are staying together longer than in the past — and more of them are having children, according to new federal data that details just how cohabitation is transforming families across the U.S.

For almost half of women ages 15-44, their “first union” was cohabitation rather than marriage, says the report from the National Center for Health Statistics.

“Instead of marriage, people are moving into cohabitation as a first union,” said demographer Casey Copen, the report’s lead author. “It’s kind of a ubiquitous phenomenon now.”

Among the findings:

- As a first union, 48 percent of women cohabited with their male partner, up from 43 percent in 2002 and 34 percent in 1995.
- 23 percent of first unions were marriages, down from 30 percent in 2002 and 39 percent in 1995. The percentage of women who cohabited as a first union increased for all races and ethnic groups, except Asian women. Among

Hispanics, the percentage increased 57 percent; for whites, 43 percent; for blacks, 39 percent.

- 22 months is the median duration of first cohabitation, up from 20 months in 2002 and 13 months in 1995.
- One in five women (19 percent) became pregnant and gave birth in the first year of a first premarital cohabitation.
- Within three years of cohabiting, 40 percent of women had transitioned to marriage; 32 percent remained living together; 27 percent had broken up.

“The United States has long had the shortest cohabiting relationships of any wealthy nation and now these relationships are lengthening,” said sociologist Andrew Cherlin of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Sociologist Sarah Hayford of Arizona State University in Tempe, who studies cohabiting relationships, said they are complicated. (indent) “It seems like cohabiting unions are playing different roles for different people,” she said. **BT**

'Stop hiding'

Church leaders tackle the stigma of mental illness

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (RNS) — Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, was getting ready to work in the yard in the fall of 2009 when the phone rang. His daughter was on the line.

"Daddy, I love you," she said. "Tell Mama and the girls I love them, too."

Then she was gone.

Melissa Page Strange, 32, took her own life just after hanging up the phone with her dad.

"I do not want you to imagine what that is like," he said.

For years, Page did not share the painful details of Melissa's death, fearing some Christians might speak ill of her if they knew. Mental illness and suicide were taboo topics for many churches, seen as a kind of spiritual failure.

But that may be starting to change.

Page and several other Baptist leaders are more intently addressing mental illness, prompted by the Newtown, Conn., school shooting. The issue gained more urgency after the April suicide of Matthew Warren, the 27-year-old son of pastor Rick Warren.

Page, now president of the convention's Nashville-based Executive Committee, is telling his daughter's story in a forthcoming book called *Melissa*.

He hopes the book will help other families who are grieving from suicide. He also hopes to take away some of the stigma and shame that surrounds mental illness.

"There is a sense that everything you have tried has failed," he said.

Bill Ritter, author of *Take the Dimness of My Soul Away: Healing after a Loved One's Suicide*, said people affected by mental illness often steer clear of church. Some feel ashamed, and others are just overwhelmed.

"For as much as we talk about the church as the place you turn when life is falling apart, the reality is that people often stay away from church when life is falling apart," he said.

Ritter was pastor of First United



Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, with his daughter Melissa Page Strange, 32, who took her own life in 2009. Photo courtesy Frank Page

Methodist Church in Birmingham, Mich., in the early 1990s when his 27-year-old son, Bill, took his own life. A few weeks after the funeral, Ritter talked about his son's struggles in a sermon.

Sharing his story made it easier for other people in the church to talk about how mental illness had affected their own families, he said. "You can't heal what you can't name," he said.

Ed Stetzer, president of Nashville-based LifeWay Research, wants to see more churches discuss mental illness openly. A longtime friend of Warren's and Page's, he knew of Matthew Warren's struggles with depression, which resisted treatment.

In a blog post after learning of Matthew's suicide, Stetzer wrote about how mental illness has affected his own family. Several of his relatives have taken their lives, as did a parishioner in a church that he served as a young pastor.

"We need to stop hiding mental illness," Stetzer said.

Stetzer said some evangelical Christians think that if they pray enough or become more spiritual, then their mental illness will go away. But they don't look at other health issues the same way.

"People who become a Christian and have a broken leg will still have a broken leg," he said. "We tend to think that Jesus fixes what is in our heads and medicine fixes what is in our

body. Sometimes what is in our heads needs medicine."

David McKnight, a physician, leads the Celebrate Recovery support group at Belle Aire Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The group, which is about 10 years old, draws between 35 and 60 people to the church on Tuesday nights.

The program is part of a national movement, first started at Warren's Saddleback Church. Some members are dealing with addiction, while others have depression or other mental illness. Some had been told faith could solve their problems, said McKnight — but it's not that easy.

"We would never tell someone who is nearsighted that it's because they don't have enough faith," he said. "We do that with people who deal with depression."

McKnight helped start Celebrate Recovery at his church because of a personal meltdown about 10 years ago. At first he was resistant, thinking his troubles weren't as bad as those of people dealing with drug addiction or other issues.

Then the light bulb came on, he said, and he realized that he, too, had struggles and it was OK to admit to them. McKnight said that growing up in church he'd learned to keep up appearances, even when life was difficult.

"Too often in churches there is this belief that you have to be perfect — that you have to keep a smile on your face when your world is falling apart," he said.

David Thomas, director of men's and boys' counseling for Daystar Counseling Ministries in Nashville, hopes churches will discuss the issue in church services as well as support groups. He said many churches have started talking about finances in recent years because of the economic downturn. Thomas thinks churches need to do the same for mental illness.

"We have very defined resources for families that are struggling financially," he said. "We don't have defined resources for families who are struggling emotionally — and we need them." **BT**

—Bob Smietana writes for USA Today and The Tennessean.

Getting health care right requires compassionate relationships

By Gary Gunderson

A century ago Baptists in Alabama, Florida, New Orleans and other places were inspired by their sense of mission and appreciation of modern science to start hospitals. In North Carolina, Baptists not only raised the first money, but even volunteered to sew sheets for the beds for what is now an 850-bed academic medical center in Winston-Salem.

The idea was that the hospital would express the same healing hopes for the people God so loved.

Medical science is now capable of things that could not be imagined those few decades ago, and medical institutions such as Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center have grown to dwarf their birth mother in financial scale. But while miracles do occur on an hourly basis for patients arriving by helicopter, the dream of healthy neighborhoods remains painfully distant.

In Winston-Salem, literally in the shadow of the huge hospital, neighborhoods experience rates of infant mortality and premature death from chronic conditions such as diabetes and even hunger. The challenge is not miracles of technology, but the fundamental miracle of compassionate relationship with the people God so loved in the first place.

If the problem arrives by helicopter, you need a trauma center (and we have a great one!). But if the problem is a neighborhood, you need another kind of miracle entirely, one that looks more like a congregation.

This turns the whole orientation of health institutions inside out. But don't miss the point: It is science driving the reversal.

The real miracles of the 21st century are how many conditions that were only recently fatal can be prevented, or at least managed over many years of life. The combination of pharmaceuticals (not surgeons), extraordinary advances in imaging and detection of early conditions are being extended by the rapidly developing reach of connective technology for monitoring of those conditions.

Tests that once needed a hospital now can be done by a monitoring device on a bracelet connected to an iPhone.

But that will not bring health without personal relationship and the miracle of compassion, empathy and presence.

The real promise is weaving the whole tapestry in a partnership that includes the high-end interventions of hospitals with all the intermediate levels of care, including those impossible to buy but possible to nurture through congregations.

That dream is exactly what has come visible in Memphis through the 500 (and still growing) covenant partners of the Congregational Health Network. Hard data indicates that patients from those congregations cost less and have way better outcomes than match-controlled patients.

In a time of enormously expensive change, that has inspired many faith-based hospitals to create their own partnerships, including ours based at Wake Forest Baptist Health called FaithHealthNC. Every community is different, as is every church (as is every church committee), so there is enormous variation in exactly how this works on the ground.

A recent White House conference convened the Health Systems Learning Group that reported success demands a) moving toward the "socially complex" patients in their

neighborhoods, but b) only in large scale partnership with faith and neighborhood groups already there and c) investing money proactively rather than reactively.

Who would know how to do all that? That's the upside-down part of what is going on.

Inspired by Memphis, I came to Wake Forest last July in hopes of adapting CHN to this very different reality. In effect, we hoped to put Memphis sauce on Carolina pig.

We were stumped about how to move in Winston-Salem, with its very peculiar and twisty racial history. As we pondered, a miracle happened, turning us upside down.

In a meeting considering "outsourcing" (firing) 267 janitors and housekeepers, we realized that many of them lived in exactly the neighborhoods where much of our "charity care" is focused. We decided to see if we could save as much money on providing better, more timely, and thus cheaper care to those streets and thus save more money than by replacing our employees with cheaper strangers. That is what is happening with the design emerging through a partnership with the "environmental workers" and chaplains, social workers, case managers and clergy on the ground.

Upside down is right side up, smart enough for even the toughest streets. Those streets are the way they are because of decades of wickedly complex dynamics that demand blending all of the intelligence and diligence to be found. And they can be found right where they've been all along; right where God has planted them, us, together.

That's what we're made for. For God so loved the neighborhoods that God has made us for this purpose. And in moving toward our purpose, we find our life, too. Of course we do. **BT**

—Gary Gunderson is vice president of faith and health ministries at Wake Forest Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.



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Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Psalm 30

July 7, 2013

Mourning into Dancing

Have you ever felt “down in the dumps”? How about *really* down, so far down that you felt in danger of dying ... so down that you could almost smell the fresh earth of your grave?

That’s not a good feeling, but imagine the rejoicing if you came close to death but later made a full recovery.

That’s the situation reflected in today’s text: The psalmist had been convinced that the jaws of death were snapping at his heels, but cried to God for help and fully believed God had lifted him back into the land of the living.

He also believed he’d learned an important lesson in the process.

I will praise God ... (vv. 1-3)

Psalm 30, like Pss. 40, 92, 116 and 138, is an individual song of thanksgiving to God. Like many other psalms, it begins with a superscription that provides a supposed setting for the psalm’s origin, but the superscriptions were almost certainly added by later editors and any historical accuracy is suspect. 📖

The psalmist had known both ups and downs in life, and wrote during an “up” period, celebrating what he believed to be divine deliverance. In the first line he employs clever wordplay, promising to uplift the God who has lifted him up.

The word translated as “extol” (NRSV) or “exalt” in most other versions literally means “I will make you high.”

And why does the psalmist want to elevate God? Because he believes



Yahweh has “lifted me out of the depths” (NRSV). The word behind “lifted me out” is elsewhere used for drawing water from a well (Exod. 2:16, 19; Prov. 20:5).

As God had drawn him up from the doorway to death, the psalmist wanted to lift God up with words of praise.

The life situation he recalls seems to involve an illness or injury, for he declares in v. 2 that he had called to Yahweh for help, and “you healed me.” His condition had been so grave that it led to grave-oriented thoughts.

“You brought me up from the grave” (NRSV) translates “you brought my life up from Sheol” (v. 3a). The ancient Hebrews had no notion of heaven or hell as many modern believers do; they believed that all who died went to a mysterious underground place called Sheol (*Hades* in Greek), where the dead carried on a sort of shadowy existence. Although the dead did not suffer, neither did they remember or rejoice; it was not a fate that people desired.

In typical Hebrew poetic form,

the second line of the verse repeats the thought of the first, but in different words. A more literal version would be “you kept me alive among those going down the pit” (v. 3b). “The pit” is a common euphemism for the grave or for Sheol. 📖

Because of Yahweh’s healing, the psalmist was saved not only from death but also from the ridicule of his enemies, he said. Had he been wounded by people who tried to kill him? Were there political or economic rivals who wanted his position or his money? Or did he have in mind a situation like that of Job, when even friends become enemies because they assume that one’s suffering is due to sin and therefore deserved?

You should praise God ... (vv. 4-5)

Having summarized his experience, the psalmist calls on others to join him in praising God, utilizing the key words “sing praises” and “give thanks” (v. 4; they will be repeated in v. 12).

Note the parallelism typical of Hebrew poetry: Singing praises to the

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LORD and giving thanks to God's holy name are two ways of saying the same thing, slightly nuanced. The word translated as "name" (*zeker*) really means "remembrance." ↓

The psalmist had spoken of enemies waiting to rejoice in his death in v. 1. Now he calls upon the faithful to join him in praising God for his deliverance. ↓

In v. 5 we find a beloved phrase that may reflect a less-than-accurate rendering of the author's meaning. "For his anger is but for a moment, but his favor is for a lifetime" (NRSV) is an appealing thought, but the word translated as "moment" could also mean "repose" and in some circumstances may carry the thought of death (Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 16 [Doubleday, 1995], 182).

Thus, the intended sense may be "For in his anger is death, but in his favor is life." This is in keeping with the basic theology of the psalmist, as in much of the Old Testament: the belief that rebellion against God would lead to cursing and death, while faithful obedience would bring blessing and life (see Deut. 30:15-20).

When interpreted as the result of God's anger, suffering could lead one to repentance and renewed health. Thus, while the weeping associated with suffering might last through the night, joy might yet be known in the morning.

In this sense, night and day should be understood metaphorically. The dark of night represents God's anger that leads to suffering, while repentance leads to salvation or deliverance, seen as the dawn of a new day (Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 19 [Word Books, 1983]).

... and this is why (vv. 6-12)

Having declared his purpose of praising God for saving him from death and having called on the faithful to join him in praise, the psalmist gives a more detailed testimony of his experience in vv. 6-12.

Now we find clear evidence that the author believed his sickness had been

God's way of teaching him a lesson. He had known success in life, and believed he had become too self-assured: "As for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved'" (v. 6).

The writer recognized that Yahweh had blessed him, making him like a strong mountain (v. 7a). ↓ But the psalmist had become overconfident. While everything was going well, he assumed the good times would continue. He boastfully said, "I shall not be moved!"

And then everything moved.

Illness struck, and suddenly his situation had changed radically. Life can be like that. The psalmist believed that his smug self-assurance had offended God, who withdrew divine favor: "You hid your face, I was dismayed."

The metaphor of God's face bestowing favor is a common biblical expression, as in the famous Aaronic blessing, which includes a wish that "the Lord make his face to shine upon you ..." ↓

Without God's favor, disaster struck. The psalmist offers no details of his illness, but it was enough to leave him distressed and convinced that death was near. Fortunately, however, the psalmist believed that the situation could be reversed. If God's favor could be withdrawn, it could be restored.

So, he cried out and "made supplication" to God (v. 8, compare Ps. 28:1-2, 142:1), hoping for healing.

At first the writer tried bargaining with God – appealing to God's desire for praise by offering the logical argument that the dead do not praise God. What good would it do for God to consign him to the grave? Could he praise God or testify to God's faithfulness if he'd been reduced to dust (v. 9)? ↓

Ultimately, though, the psalmist knew that logic was not enough. He must entreat God's mercy alone, pleading for Yahweh to "be gracious" and to "be my helper" (v. 10), or as we might say, "Lord have mercy: help me!"

The psalmist's plea implies that he had confessed his prior sins of pride and self-congratulation, and dared to seek God's grace because he had repented and sought to begin anew.

God's response is described in memorable words: "You have turned my mourning into dancing" (v. 11a). The penitent's clothing of sackcloth was exchanged for robes of joy, with the result that "my soul may praise you and not be silent" (v. 12a). ↓

The psalm closes with words that echo earlier verses. The verbs "praise" and "give thanks" hark back to v. 4, where both are also used, providing a nice frame to the main body of the psalm that includes a call to praise and a testimony of thanksgiving.

Of greater interest, perhaps, is the repetition of the word "forever." The psalmist had confessed earlier that in his overwhelming pride he had once said "I shall never be moved – forever" (a literal translation of v. 6b). Having learned his lesson through sickness and deliverance, he now promises to praise God – forever.

Modern readers, with the added light of the New Testament, no longer need to think that every illness or misfortune is a sign of God's anger sent to punish us or guide us back to the straight and narrow. We don't have to interpret trouble as the hard hand of an angry God.

That does not mean we cannot benefit from the psalm, however. Whatever the cause of sickness or other trials, they may serve the important purpose of helping us to refocus our lives and put our trust in God.

When life is good and we find ourselves prosperous and healthy, it's easy to forget the one who has blessed us and to take full credit for our own success. When adversity comes, however – especially when we sense that the future is no longer in our hands – are we not more likely to turn our hearts toward God?

And if we find healing or renewed prosperity, as the psalmist did, will we remember to praise God for the blessings we have received? **BT**

Bible Study

Colossians 1:1-14

with Tony W. Cartledge

July 14, 2013

Triple Strength

Is Jesus enough for you? I don't mean that in the sense of whether you'd be perfectly fine to live in the desert with no one to talk to but Jesus, or some other extreme separation from all but faith in Christ. But, when you think about things such as salvation, spirituality, a guideline for living, a sense of ultimate meaning for life – is Jesus enough for you? Can you sing along with the old hymn, "I am satisfied with Jesus"? ↓

That's not always the case in our world. We live in a very pluralistic society in which we are exposed to multiple religious traditions and people are more likely than ever to develop their own sense of spirituality from a smorgasbord of ingredients. Hence the rising number of people who consider themselves "spiritual but not religious."

When Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, he had many things to say, but mainly he wanted them to understand that "Jesus is enough."

So far as we know, Paul had never been to Colossae, and when he wrote this letter to the church, he was confined to a prison cell, probably in Rome.

But he had heard.

He had heard that the Christians in Colossae and their neighbors in Laodicea were being confronted with a syncretistic form of the faith that included Jesus but demanded more. Paul wrote to oppose this competing form of the gospel and to insist on this belief: Jesus is all you need.

We'll be studying texts from the book of Colossians – and Paul's insistence on the sole supremacy of Christ – for the next four weeks. ↓

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



Colossians 1:10 –

"...so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God."

Faith, love and hope (vv. 1-8)

Paul typically opened his letters in a standard form that began with a greeting and prayer. In the greeting (vv. 1-2), Paul identified himself as the author, noted that Timothy was with him, and addressed his words to the "saints," the faithful brothers and sisters of Colossae. ↓

Paul considered all Christ-followers to be saints, not because he thought they were morally perfect, but in the sense that they were God's set-apart people. As such, he offered the believers in Colossae a heartfelt wish for "grace and peace" that comes from God.

In the Greek text, vv. 3-8 are constructed as one long and complicated sentence, but most translations break it into two or three sentences for greater clarity.

In his extended greetings to the churches, Paul typically offered thanks for particular attributes or qualities known to be present in the church fellowship, followed by a prayer for the people.

Although Paul had not visited Colossae, he had learned much about the church from his friend and colleague Epaphras, a native of the area who had also evangelized the neighboring towns of Laodicea and Hieropolis. ↓

Epaphras, probably working under Paul's supervision, had been the primary evangelist and church planter in Colossae: Paul said they had learned the truth of the gospel from Epaphras, "our beloved fellow servant" who "is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf" (v. 7). Epaphras appears to have been a fellow-prisoner with Paul, too (Col. 4:12, Philemon 23), so Paul would have been well aware of both victories and challenges facing the church.

Enquiring minds want to know: What did Paul find to be thankful for among the Colossians? Faith, for one thing. And love. And hope (vv. 3-5a). These three characteristics served as important touchstones for Paul, as true marks of true believers. ↓

The three virtues are interrelated:

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our faith in Christ inspires us to love one another, while both faith and hope are grounded in “the hope laid up for you in heaven.” One cannot claim to have true faith in Christ and not also have love for God’s people.

When Paul writes of hope, it is not just a subjective attitude he has in mind. It is also the very substance of our hope, the assurance of an eternity guaranteed by God. It is not only the act of hoping, but also the object that is hoped for.

The Colossians’ hope – and corresponding faith and love – had come to them through the preaching of “the word of truth, the gospel” that gave rise to the fruit of new believers and new behaviors (vv. 5b-6). In Paul’s mind, fruit and growth – both numerical and spiritual – demonstrated the authentic nature of the Colossians’ faith.

When used here, “the gospel” (literally, “the good news”) describes truthful teaching and preaching about Jesus Christ. The four “gospels” we know from the New Testament had not yet been written or distributed. Paul’s own letters were the first of the writings that would later become the New Testament. Thus, it was most important to have a trustworthy preacher who had an accurate understanding of the gospel. This was the kind of evangelist they had known in Epaphras, who had reported to Paul the depth of their Spirit-inspired love (vv. 7-8).

**Knowledge, wisdom and
understanding
(vv. 9-10)**

When you pray, do you include both thanksgiving and intercession? Paul did. After praising God for the fervent faith, love and hope found among the Colossians, Paul prayed that God would bless them with the knowledge of God’s will “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (v. 9).

Paul uses three different words that relate to comprehension, and one could parse slight differences in meaning, but they all support the same idea: Paul wanted his readers to be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will.” Paul’s

vocabulary may have been shaped in part by the false teachers who claimed to offer a fullness of truth that went beyond Jesus and came through secret knowledge.

Paul’s concern is not that the Colossians have encyclopedic knowledge or philosophical acumen or tactical brilliance. He wants for them the ability to discern God’s will; to understand what God is about and how we can fit into God’s plan of redemption for all people.


Paul leaves no doubt that the purpose of the wisdom and understanding he prays for is “so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God” (v. 10).

Understanding God’s will and doing God’s work are interrelated, each one reinforcing and deepening the other. The more we understand God’s desires, the more we want to live in ways that please God. The more we live out our calling, the more deeply we understand our call.

**Strength, patience
and redemption
(vv. 11-14)**


If knowing and doing God’s will came easily, Paul’s letters might never have been written. The truth is, following God’s way is hard. Culture works against it, as do peer pressure and economic pressure. Doing the right thing or the loving thing doesn’t always pay off with either financial success or societal acceptance. When Jesus called us to lives of self-sacrifice, he never promised it would be an easy road.

For this reason, Paul prays that the Colossian believers would “be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power” (v. 11a). The repetition sounds awkward, but shows the depth of Paul’s emphatic concern. He knew the believers would need strength to “endure everything with

patience” (v. 11b), yet encouraged his readers to give thanks and find joy even amid their struggles, remembering their hope of an eternal inheritance “in the light” (v. 12). 

Light and darkness are timeless contrasts, often used for artistic effect. Rembrandt was famous for his portraits, which typically featured dark backgrounds and the masterful use of light used to draw attention to faces. Some contemporary dramas, such as HBO’s *Game of Thrones*, illustrate dark themes through dark scenes in which it’s hard to make out what’s happening and viewers find themselves wishing for more light.

Paul drew on this metaphor in reminding his readers of the supremacy and full efficacy of Christ, who “has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (vv. 13-14).

For Paul, people had two options when confronted with the gospel: They could continue living in darkness or follow Christ into the light. Paul’s readers believed in demonic powers that were characterized by darkness and held sinful people in their sway. 

Notice Paul’s emphasis on the effective work of Christ, a primary theme in Colossians. The verbs behind “has rescued” and “transferred” are in the aorist tense, indicating completed action. The word for “have” is an active verb, suggesting a present state. Because of what Christ has already done, we now have redemption from sin and the hope of an eternal inheritance. Nothing else is needed.

So we return to the question with which we began this lesson: Is Jesus enough? Do we have confidence that the love and power of God in Christ is sufficient to release us from the captivity of sin, transfer us from worldly darkness to the kingdom of light, and give us the strength and wisdom we need to grow with patience and joy?

Paul did. He would certainly hope that we will, too. **BT**

Youth

July 7 - July 28, 2013

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

Just Dance

Psalm 30

Gangnam Style. Harlem Shake. Cat Daddy. Walk It Out. Rockaway. As you read over each of these, the song starts playing in your head and you start seeing the YouTube video of the dance in the back of your mind. Dancing is just something we do — some of us better than others, but we all dance. The psalmist knew this as well: "You have turned my mourning into dancing."

The dancing the psalmist is referring to isn't the type you do at the prom or some other school dance, though. The psalmist is referring to the type of dancing you do when something amazing happens and you just can't help but move — you know, those little dances that if someone caught them on video, you would be mortified. The psalmist has the

feeling that he has just overcome death; that his cries to God have been heard and he has been rescued.

Psalm 30 is a psalm of individual thanksgiving. The writer is thankful for the healing God has bestowed on him — the healing that yanked him from the doorstep of death. And because it was God who healed him, the writer is also saved from the taunts of his enemies. The psalmist is so overwhelmed, he can't keep his joy to himself and he encourages others to join in the celebration with him.

As we read Psalm 30, we are reminded of where to put our hope. We know that sickness or other troubles are not signs from God and that we don't have to deal with them alone. Our hope rests in God.

JULY 7

Think About It:

When we fail, we often put the blame somewhere other than ourselves. When we succeed, we like to take the credit. In both of these situations, how often do you turn to God?

Make a Choice:

Where do you put your hope when you feel utterly lost and there is nowhere else to turn? Do you continue to rely on yourself or those around you, or do you finally turn to God?

Pray:

God, we praise your name for being with us when things are going well and also when things are tough.

Enough

Colossians 1:1-14

"What three things would you want to have if you were going to be stranded on a deserted island for the rest of your life?"

In some fashion we've all played this mental game before. It is really getting at two things: 1) What is important, and 2) what is enough?

As Paul begins his letter to the Colossians, he is reminding them what is important and what is enough: Jesus Christ. In our society we are constantly bombarded with the newest and brightest and best. Perhaps we also need to be reminded of what is important and what is enough.

Paul's letter starts in his usual way: with a greeting and a prayer. Even though he mentions the people of Colossae as saints, he

doesn't refer to them as perfect, but as set apart for God. This is a reminder to the people that they are different than everyone else around them. Paul reminds them to continue to be faithful, to show love and have hope because, while these actions and qualities may be different than what the Colossians hear as important from others, they are the things that produce fruitful lives.

Where did the Colossians learn how to be faithful, to show love and have hope? It seems obvious to us, but the people of Colossae had information coming from all over the place. Paul reminds them that their knowledge comes from the good news of Jesus Christ. He wants them to be so full of the knowledge of God that there isn't room for anything else in their lives. Paul wants their lives to be a pouring out of the good news of Jesus.

JULY 14

Think About It:

Living for God is not always easy. We need constant reminders of who we follow. Who are some of the people that help you live for Christ?

Make a Choice:

We can fill our lives with all sorts of things. How do you choose what goes into your schedule and what stays out? How do you know when enough is enough?

Pray:

God, we pray that we would recognize that you are enough in our lives. You are all we need. You are our enough.

David Cassady and Jeremy Colliver



Describing Jesus

Colossians 1:15-29

Talladega Nights includes a funny scene where the characters discuss the ways people talk about Jesus. As Ricky starts to pray, he is interrupted by others around the table who share the way they like to visualize Jesus. Baby Jesus, Jesus in a tuxedo t-shirt, ninja Jesus and “Jesus as an eagle” are some of the images named. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul also describes Jesus with some fairly vivid images.

Paul begins by describing Jesus as being in creation as “the visible image of God.” God is somewhat mysterious in the Old Testament (remember that no one could look upon God), but in Jesus we not only look at God but also

can experience life with God. Paul writes that Jesus is also “in” (not apart from) creation. He claims that God does not merely put creation into order but sustains it through Jesus.

Paul then describes Jesus as “the head of the church.” If Jesus is the sustainer of the universe, he must also be the one to control the church, for the church is God’s agent on earth. Paul wants the Colossians to know that Jesus is enough for them. Jesus is to be their head, to provide them with guidance, to bring them back through forgiveness when the guidance is ignored. Jesus is all they need.

Paul is not only telling others about Jesus but also encouraging them to continue to grow in their relationship with Jesus.

JULY 21

Think About It:

“The more you know, the more you grow” became a popular slogan used by NBC. Paul would agree with this sentiment in that the more we know about Jesus, the more we grow into a life with him. How do you grow in your life with Christ?

Make a Choice:

We can choose to follow after Jesus or to make our own path. How do you follow Jesus in your life?

Pray:

God, may Jesus be enough for us. May we see Jesus as your face and follow him in all that we do.

Walking

Colossians 2:6-19

We don’t often take a journey by walking. We might jump in a car for a road trip or catch a flight for a vacation or even take the subway around town, but we don’t often walk for long distances. When we do have to walk, we often see it as a burden or a waste of time.

When Paul wrote to the Colossians, walking was the primary way people traveled and probably why he used the metaphor of walking to show how we should live out our faith.

Paul begins this section of his letter by encouraging the Colossians to walk in Christ. He reminds them that as they walk in their life with Christ, they have to be rooted

somewhere, and those roots are in Jesus. As they walk by faith, they are to remember to trust in Christ. There will be dangers along the path that tempt them into trouble.

Paul mentions some of the things that tempt the Colossians, and we might replace those with our own temptations as we read. When the temptations come, Paul reminds the readers that all they need is Jesus; he is enough. Through their walking they will continue to grow in faith. Others will tell them things they will have to do, but Paul reminds them their growth comes through a life in Christ — not because of what they do but by being connected with Jesus.

Paul reminds the Colossians that Jesus is enough and that walking with Jesus brings true and lasting growth.

JULY 28

Think About It:

We learn about things that will help us grow in our faith, but they will not be our salvation. They are merely things that help us return our focus to Christ. What helps you focus on Christ?

Make a Choice:

We can chase after a lot of things in our lives that give us meaning and purpose. How do you know which things lead you to Christ or away from Christ?

Pray:

God, may we walk with you wherever we go, and may we remember that you choose to walk alongside us.

Bible Study


Colossians 1:15-29

with Tony W. Cartledge

The Hope of Glory


July 21, 2013


What is your favorite image of Jesus? Do you like to think of him as a young carpenter with a hammer in his hand, as a popular teacher with a smile on his face, as the suffering savior with a cross on his back? Or, do you prefer to imagine the exalted Christ in a glorified body, sitting on a heavenly throne?

I suspect that most of us prefer to envision the itinerant Jesus in peasant garb, but Paul was more likely to speak of the heavenly Christ, the preeminent Lord who has existed from the beginning and will rule until the end. 

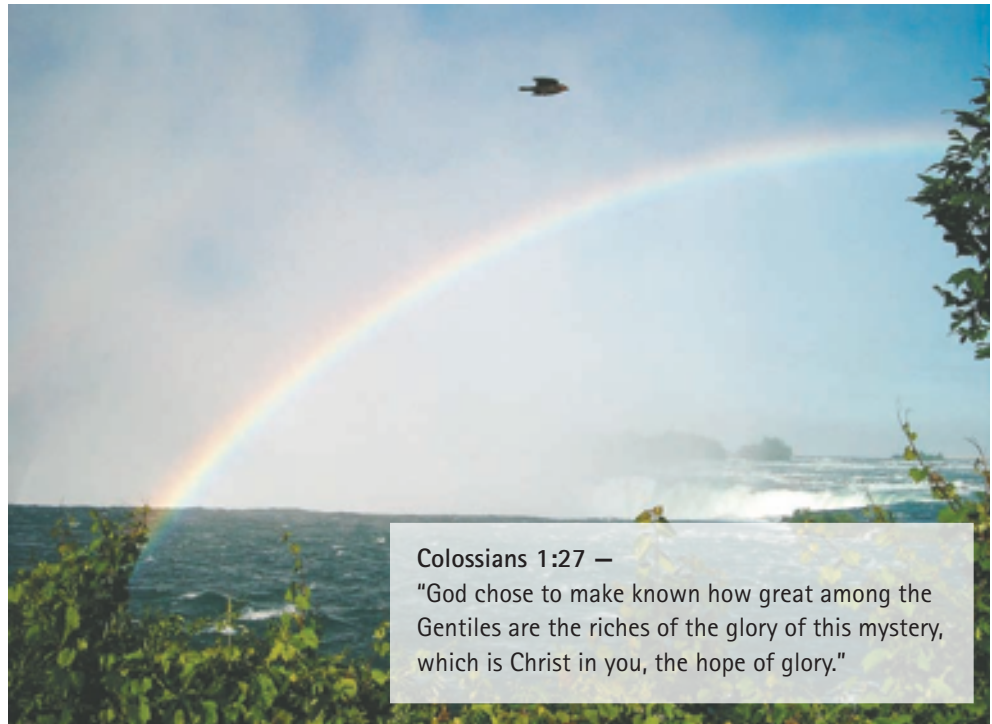
When writing to the Colossians, Paul was particularly emphatic about magnifying Jesus as the exalted Christ, because other teachers in the area held a lower view of Jesus, insisting that other heavenly powers should also be incorporated into worship.

Christ over creation (vv. 15-17)

In vv. 15-20, Paul launches into a wide-ranging description of Christ's divine activity from beginning to end, a lyrical passage that many scholars consider to be an early hymn or confession that Paul quoted as a reminder of what the Colossians had been taught. 

The section begins with the affirmation that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (v. 15). God is typically imagined as an unseen reality beyond human vision, but in the person of Christ, Paul says, we see God. 

The man named Jesus who was




Colossians 1:27 —

"God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

born of Mary and walked the hills of Galilee and who loved every person he met is — amazingly — a visible image of the invisible God. The great and mysterious God revealed in the Old Testament — the God whom no one could look upon and live — *that* God took on a human face in Jesus Christ and so became visible.

Other belief systems popular in the ancient world taught that a primary god created (or gave birth to) a second generation of gods, who were then responsible for actually creating the world and humankind. The hymn's reference to Christ as "the firstborn of all creation" might seem to suggest Christ was God's first creation, who then took responsibility for creating everything else.

Paul would not have seen things in this way, however. The term "firstborn" could mean either first in time or first in rank. With firstborn sons, the two went together, but in this text the word clearly indicates a rank of preeminence. Jesus had authority over all creation. 

That "firstborn" does not indicate

any subordination to God is clear from v. 16, which attests "for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created" (v. 16a). Though the confession does not use Trinitarian language, Paul would surely affirm there was never a time when God did not exist as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that all creation owes its existence to the full Godhead.

Paul wanted to emphasize that any other spiritual reality owed its existence to God in Christ. First century peoples commonly believed in a variety of unseen powers, thought of as varying ranks of angels or demons. Royal terms such as "principalities," "powers" or even "thrones" were used to designate the invisible beings thought to inhabit the atmosphere, engage in "spiritual warfare" and influence life on earth.

This is why Paul goes on to affirm that every aspect of creation comes through Christ, including "things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him" (v. 16b).

Additional background information
online where you see the "Digging
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Paul did not claim to have special knowledge of these presumed powers, nor does he expressly affirm their existence. But he does insist that anything created owes its existence to Christ, and is thus subordinate to him: “He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (v. 17).

In these words Paul declares that Christ is not only the original creator but also the continual sustainer of the universe. On those days when we may feel that our world is falling apart, it is helpful to recall Paul’s affirmation that Christ holds all things together. The same powerful Christ who constrains protons in the nucleus of an atom can hold broken hearts together and give us hope to face another day.

Christ over the church (vv. 18-20)

The second stanza of Paul’s poetic confession again uses the term “firstborn,” but clearly in support of the affirmation “He is the head of the body, the church” (v. 18a). Paul’s contemporaries did not understand the brain as we do, but they knew the head controls the body. If the church can be described as a body, then Christ is clearly its head: The same Christ who rules the universe gives special attention to believers as “the body of Christ.”

Christ is the head of the church because he is the founder of the church, “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything” (v. 18b).

With v. 19, the confession shifts from firstborn to fullness as Paul proclaims Christ as the one in whom “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (v. 19). False teachers might claim that Jesus was only a partial manifestation of God, but Paul was emphatic in his insistence that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully sufficient for us.

Believers have no need to concern themselves with other spiritual beings, whether real or imagined, for God in Christ has reconciled all things to himself through his death on the cross (v.

20). Whatever is fragmented or fractured in the universe, Christ has the power to make whole.

Christ as the redeemer (vv. 21-29)

The concept of Christ as reconciler carries over into vv. 21-22, but with a twist. Christ is fully able to present us forgiven and blameless before God – so long as we trust him alone to do so.

Baptists who affirm the “eternal security of the believer” may struggle with v. 23, which implies that one could turn back from faith and no longer qualify as blameless before God. Believers can only remain without reproach, Paul told the Colossians, “provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven” (v. 23a).

Paul’s warning concerns the false doctrine spreading through the area, teaching that Jesus was not sufficient, but that believers must also observe various ascetic practices and acknowledge other spiritual powers. Paul saw this as an abandonment of the faith.

If Christians expect Christ to advocate for them in the final judgment, they must put their whole trust in Christ and not be lured away from the gospel they have heard and believed.

Paul is confident, however, that this will be the case. Peter T. O’Brien paraphrases the Greek construction this way: “At any rate if you stand firm in the faith – and I am sure that you will ...” Paul’s words express both assurance and warning, and remaining faithful is the test. “If it is true that the saints *will* persevere to the end, then it is equally true that the saints *must* persevere to the end” (O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary,

Vol. 44 [Word Books, 1982], 69).

In other words, “Continuance ... is the test of the reality of their faith” (p. 72). Or, as Baptists have been wont to put it, “Once saved, always saved – if *really* saved.”

The remainder of today’s text builds on Paul’s description of Christ as supreme, as he describes himself as a servant of Christ who gladly suffered for Christ as a way of “completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (v. 24 – see “The Hardest Question” online for more on this).

Paul saw his unique contribution as being one who was commissioned by God to reveal a hidden mystery – that mystery being that God’s grace had been poured out on Gentiles as well as Jews (vv. 25-27). Most of the believers in Colossae were probably Gentiles, and because of this good news, they too could embrace Christ, and with his presence experience “the hope of glory” in full measure.

Paul’s goal was not only evangelism but also discipleship. He wanted all people to know Christ, but also to grow in wisdom and faithfulness so that he could “present everyone mature in Christ” (v. 28). In v. 22, Paul had spoken of Christ as presenting believers holy and blameless at the judgment. Now he speaks of himself and his companions as presenting the believers they had taught to Christ, and wanting to be proud of them.

If anyone has ever been driven, it was Paul. From the day he found Christ on the road to Damascus, he was driven to bring people into the kingdom and to teach them to become genuine, effective disciples. “For this I toil and struggle,” he said, “with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me” (v. 29).

For what do we toil and struggle? Not all of us are called to follow Paul’s single-minded devotion to evangelism and church planting, but every believer is called to live out our own unique calling – even if it requires toil and struggle. **BT**

Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Colossians 2:6-19

July 28, 2013

Stuck on Jesus

Have you ever noticed how many popular songs include the word “walk”? Fats Domino sang “I’m Walkin’,” and Johnny Cash pledged his love with “I Walk the Line.” We’re familiar with inspirational songs such as “Walk On” and “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” both covered by a number of artists. ↓

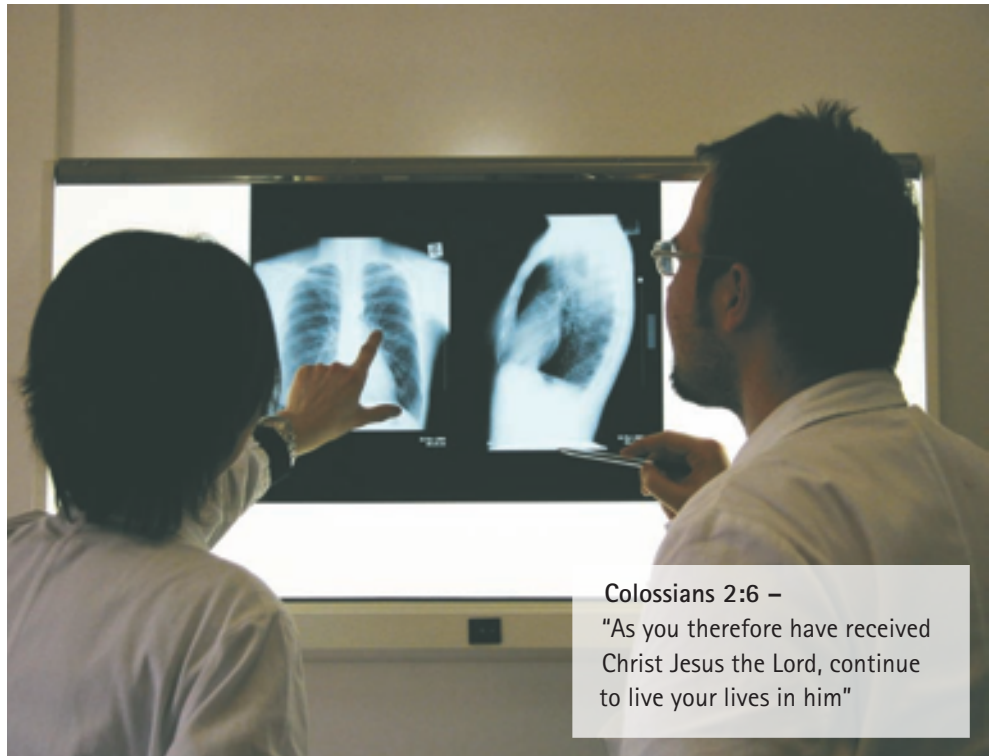
While songs such as Roger Miller’s “Walkin’ in the Sunshine” and James Taylor’s “Walkin’ Man” focus on actual ambulation, many songs use walking as a metaphor for living.

This concept isn’t new: Enoch was said to have “walked with God” so closely that he bypassed death and went straight to God (Gen. 5:24). Yahweh called Abraham to “walk before me” (Gen. 17:1). The prophet Micah challenged his readers to “walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). In today’s text, Paul also used the image of walking as a metaphor for the way we live before God.

Walking in Christ (vv. 6-7)

In the first chapter of Colossians, Paul urged believers to trust that Christ was fully God and fully sufficient to reconcile sinners with God. He warned them against false teachers who claimed Jesus was not enough, but he only hinted at what their teachings might be.

In today’s text we get a clearer idea of what the Colossian believers had to confront, but Paul first pleaded with believers to continue to “walk in him” (v. 6). The NRSV and NET both



Colossians 2:6 –
“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him”

translate “live your lives,” because that’s what Paul had in mind, but the root meaning of the word is “to walk” or “to walk about.”

Earlier, Paul had encouraged the same people to “walk worthy of the Lord” (1:10). To “walk in Christ” is to live in daily fellowship with Christ, seeking to follow God’s will. It is to strive to be the people we are called to be and to do the work we are called to do.

Paul used an interesting combination of metaphors, as the activity of walking suggested in v. 6 is juxtaposed with being “rooted and built up in him and established in the faith” in v. 7. ↓

Fortunately, the foundational faith that establishes us in Christ is portable – and we are to take it wherever we go. In this context, Paul had in mind the rooted anchor of faith that Christ alone is fully sufficient for our salvation and for our worship. ↓

Paul’s metaphors offered images for everyone. “Rooted” comes from the world of agriculture, “built up” from

architecture, and “established” from the arena of law. Christians whose faith is rooted in Christ are challenged to the continual task of building a strong and mature faith that will stand up in the judgment.

Trusting in Christ (vv. 8-15)

In the next several verses, Paul had more to say about the danger he saw confronting the church. Apparently there were some who claimed to have esoteric knowledge or wisdom that went beyond the gospel proclamation of salvation through Christ alone.

With a touch of irony, Paul – who was in prison – warned his readers not to be taken captive by those who peddled false “philosophy” and “vain deceit” (v. 8a). They claimed to possess deeper wisdom needed for believers to move forward, but Paul called it an empty fraud.

One aspect of the teaching seems to have involved the honoring or worship of angelic beings, referred to as

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“elemental spirits of the universe” (v. 8b).^U In v. 18, Paul spoke specifically of “the worship of angels,” which may be another way of describing the false teachers’ focus on “elemental spirits.”

Whatever these teachings or spirits were, Paul said, they were “not according to Christ.”

Before going on, Paul asserted again that Christ is all that believers need. “In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” Paul said (v. 9), a clear reference to the incarnation of God as Jesus. This verse, a foundation stone of our doctrine of the Trinity, reminds us that to know Christ is to know God. We don’t need to go through ethereal intermediaries to reach God.

As the fullness of God is in Christ, so believers who know Christ “have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority” (v. 10). The terms “ruler and authority,” translated as “principality and power” in the KJV, could refer to earthly rulers, or they could be used to describe the supposed ranks of heavenly powers to which the false teachers claimed Christians should also be subject.

Paul insisted that Christ is the head of every ruler and authority, just as he had earlier spoken of Christ as head of the church (1:18). Paul’s ambiguous language suggests that he has in mind every power in heaven or on earth. If Christ has supremacy over every “ruler and authority,” and believers can relate directly to Christ, then they have no business giving heed to any other spiritual powers, whether real or imagined.

It is likely that the false teachers practiced an esoteric form of Judaism that incorporated an emphasis on angels into the traditional practices of the Hebrew faith, as we will see in vv. 16-18. The Christians in Colossae would have been primarily Gentiles, however, so the males would not have been circumcised. It is likely that those Paul opposed would have insisted that Christian men go under the knife.

Paul, however, would have none of it. Those who trust themselves to Christ are spiritually circumcised, he wrote

(v. 11), buried with Jesus in baptism and raised again – through faith in the power of God – to join Christ in a resurrection life (v. 12).^U

Nothing else was (or is) needed. Though once dead in the “uncircumcision of your flesh,” Paul insisted, referring to their old way of life, “God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses” (v. 13).

When God forgives sins, they are forgiven. All legal matters are settled and charges are dropped. Using a powerful metaphor, Paul said the case against us because of our sin is no more, because Christ has nailed it to the cross (v. 14).^U The “record that stood against us” translates a technical term for a certificate of indebtedness. In Christ, our debts are paid. We are free.

By eliminating all debts against those who sought forgiveness, Christ had made any other spiritual entity that might want a piece of the action totally irrelevant, thus “triumphing over them” (v. 15). Paul’s language is probably drawn from a tradition in which military leaders, returning from conquest, would parade vanquished foes through the streets of their home city. Christ’s victory over death had demonstrated that any other supposed spiritual power had no further claim over humankind.

Growing in Christ (vv. 16-19)

A brief summary: Thus far Paul has shown that the primary problem with the false teachers is that they did not accept Christ as fully sufficient to reconcile humankind with God, and he has declared in turn that Jesus’ incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation proved him to be everything believers could need.

Having established this central point, Paul went on to address what appear to be specific teachings of those who claimed that Jesus was not enough. “Matters of food and drink or

of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths” (v. 16) are the sorts of things that teachers who expected the believers to be Jewish as well as Christian would teach.

We are familiar with the Jewish dietary laws of “keeping kosher.” Ancient Jews also observed several festivals each year, along with observances to mark each new moon and strict regulations regarding the Sabbath (these appear together in 1 Chr. 23:31). Today observant Jews continue to observe the Sabbath and some festivals, though new moons have become a very minor observance.

Outward rituals such as those mentioned above, as well as the ascetic practices implied in v. 18, may have once served a purpose but were no longer needed, Paul said. They are “only a shadow of what is to come” (v. 17). In vv. 21-23, Paul again referred to rules such as “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” as not only temporary but also “simply human commands and teachings” that give the appearance of wisdom or piety but “are of no value in checking self-indulgence.”

It is possible to be as indulgent or proud of one’s piety, rule keeping or humility as it is to be self-indulgent in other ways. We’ve heard of people who are “humble and proud of it.” Paul wanted his readers to be truly humble, recognizing that their peace with God had not come through their own efforts but through Christ alone.^U

Modern believers are rarely tempted to observe Jewish festivals or worship angels in order to be fully right with God. We may be taught the importance of spiritual disciplines such as tithing, prayer or even occasional fasting as habits that can promote spiritual formation, but we recognize that such disciplines are not required for salvation.

Rather, like the Colossians, we acknowledge that Christ, the head of the body, is the ultimate source of both peace with God and progress in our walk as the body “grows with a growth that is from God” (v. 19).^U

The Lighter Side

By Brett Younger

Insightful questions preachers neglect to ask

Every once in a while a first-semester seminary student not yet adroit in the dance of theological education will, with an embarrassing lack of sophistication, ask, “Dr. Preaching Professor, can you give us a list of simple steps to a sermon?”

My eyes drop, my spirit shrinks, and my soul shrivels a little as I explain: “No, my young green pupil, we don’t put together a sermon like a bookshelf from Ikea. Monet did not have a paint-by-number for *Water Lilies*. Rodin did not follow a set of directions to sculpt *The Thinker*. Jesus didn’t construct the Sermon on the Mount from a kit. You are here to become a homiletical artist and not an electrical engineer.”

By this point in my speech the budding scholar is considering transferring to a Hebrew class, so I compromise: “Future preaching luminary, instead of thinking of steps to a sermon, why don’t you try thinking of questions that might lead to a sermon? Here are inquiries that your listeners will be glad you thought to explore.”

- How many people in your text have handlebar moustaches?
- What’s the weather like in your story? (In the Gospels it snows at Christmas and is 90 degrees for the next 30 years.)
- What’s the most irritating sound in your story that’s not a sheep or a Pharisee?
- If you were drawing a picture of your passage, how big a box of Crayolas would you need?



- Who’s the best looking person in your story (pick someone other than Jesus because that’s cheating)?
- Would the contemporary version of your story be set in Cracker Barrel or Starbucks?
- Who in your story would just as soon not be mentioned in your sermon?
- What do you wish wasn’t in the Bible because its absence would make writing your sermon easier?
- What are you tempted to hear when you read the story that isn’t there but would be if the writer thought more like you do?
- What have you heard other preachers say about this text that would make the writer of scripture scream?
- What did the writer of this passage say that would embarrass your mother?
- Which character on *Modern Family* would feel most at home in your story?
- What do scholars say about this text that is too boring to mention?
- How would they tell this story on Fox News? On NPR?
- What disconcerting truths in your text will your sermon skillfully avoid?
- What in your sermon might awaken a ninth grader?
- What would Fred Craddock preach on this text?
- What did Barbara Brown Taylor already preach on this text (ask this question only in desperation and only on Saturday night)?
- If the listeners completely missed your point, what would they hear?
- Are you willing to skip the stuff you want to say that no one will care about?
- Will your sermon be evidence that preaching is a dying art?
- Will your sermon be closer to the gospel than the announcements made earlier in the service?
- Can people who go to church three times a week guess exactly what you are going to say?
- Do you have three points, or is it an interesting sermon?
- What part of the sermon will make your spouse regret coming?
- What will you say that your children will wish you had not?
- How would the sermon be different if you had to mime the whole thing?
- If you were going to wear a hat while preaching this sermon, what kind of hat would it be?
- Will visiting Episcopalians wish their sermons were longer?
- After Jesus’ first sermon in Nazareth, the congregation almost threw him off a cliff. Is this a possibility for you?
- Will the Tea Party or the Green Party be offended?
- Who should sing the solo before this sermon — Mumford and Sons, Lady Gaga or Kanye West?
- If this sermon were a hamburger place, would it be McDonald’s, Five Guys or Wendy’s?
- Which major league baseball team is most easily connected to your sermon — the Atlanta Braves, San Diego Padres, Los Angeles Angels or Los Angeles Dodgers?
- Who do you wish could hear this sermon — Jon Stewart, Antonin Scalia or your sister?
- What kind of eggs would go best with this sermon?
- Would this sermon make your preaching professor proud?
- Which part would Jesus like the most? Can you spend more time on that part?
- When you pray about this sermon, are you praying for guidance or forgiveness?
- Does God want to be associated with your sermon? **BT**

Available as a digital download (ebook) or in print at nurturingfaith.info

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

BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Hoping to gain a military advantage and foment unrest in the United States, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee leads his army from Virginia into the North for a second time. While Lee's forces invade Maryland and then Pennsylvania, the Union Army scrambles to respond.

At the same time, U.S. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant is deep in southern territory, besieging Vicksburg, Miss. Control of the western theatre of war rests upon taking the river city. As weeks pass and supplies in the city run low, many trapped Confederate soldiers and citizens alike fall victim to hunger, despair, disease and death.

Meanwhile, Baptists in annual gatherings South and North offer support for their respective nations and armies.

Virginia Baptists reaffirm the Confederacy as God's chosen nation and African slavery as God's will for blacks:

... we are daily more convinced of the righteousness of our cause, and have abiding faith, through His favor, of ultimate, and we trust not distant deliverance from our ruthless enemy. We are contending not only for political liberty, but for rights of conscience, assailed by fanaticism in the name of religion...

... those [Northern Christians] who claim to be the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus – ministers of the reconciliation – heralds of the gospel of peace, have sown the seeds of the whirlwind which is devastating the land. It is now many years since our Northern brethren, in their fierce hostility to the institution of domestic slavery, deaf alike to the voice of reason and the authority of Scripture, to the pleadings of patriotism and the claims of Christian charity, by their fiery and intolerant fanaticism furrowed deep and broad the line of separation – thrusting us from their communion as unworthy to labor with them in the fields of Christian benevolence and gospel enterprise...

In the North, Illinois Baptists condemn slavery:

We cordially support the [Lincoln] administration in their efforts to put

150 YEARS AGO

June 1863

down the rebellion, and hail with joy the proclamation of emancipation, believing that when we as a nation shall "keep the fast which God hath chosen" "that our light shall break forth as the morning, and our health shall spring forth speedily"

We recognize human slavery now, as we have heretofore done, to be the cause of the war and its kindred evils, and we reiterate our convictions that there can be no peace and prosperity in the nation until it is destroyed.

We feel that the hope of our country in the suppression of treason in the revolted States, and in our midst, lies not merely in military successes or in military orders, but in the incorruptible virtue and the profound devotion of the people to the principles of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Free Will Baptists in the North express their ardent desire for the "everlasting overthrow of the accursed institution of American slavery":

The system of slavery in this land has received its death-blow. The wound can never be healed. This is generally admitted on all sides. No compromise will ever be made between the North

and the South, to restore this God-abhorred system to its former position. It may be months, and even years, before it entirely expires. There may yet be severe struggles and mighty death-throes, but die it must and die it will; and may God hasten the happy day.

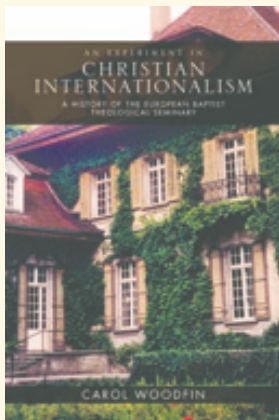
In the midst of the rhetoric and battles, the Confederacy and the Union struggle for the loyalties of citizens in the Border States. Mary Bristow, member of the Sardis Baptist Church in Union, Kentucky, and a Confederate sympathizer, writes in her journal:

O, what an awful situation our once happy country is in. War, dreadful, devastating war, with all its horrors is all around us... The invaders seem disposed to subjugate and destroy all who dare oppose their bigotry and fanaticism.

Meanwhile, former slave and abolitionist Harriet Tubman guides Union soldiers on raids in the upper reaches of South Carolina's coastal rivers. The campaign results in the freeing of some 750 slaves who are transported to the First Baptist Church of nearby Union-controlled Beaufort before being resettled as freepersons. More Union raids into the countryside follow, further loosening the grip of slave owners in the region.

The month of June thus closes with each nation's army standing on enemy ground. Apprehension is high North and South as the war over slavery hangs in the balance. **BT**

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Classifieds

Pastor: Crosscreek Baptist Church is now welcoming résumés for pastor. The church is a warm Christian community of believers who study the Bible and worship together in Shelby County, just south of Birmingham, Ala. The church family of about 150 active members is racially diverse and theologically moderate to progressive, supporting the mission efforts of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alabama CBF. Several church members and participants are engaged in mission service efforts in the community surrounding the church building as well as in areas such as Mexico, Haiti, Slovakia, and the Mississippi Delta. The church's search committee is seeking résumés from pastoral candidates who would lead the church in facilitating creative liturgical worship services, pastor the church body, encourage transformational ministry efforts, and recognize the value of self-care. The pastor's salary will be commensurate with his or her experience and education. Send information requests or résumés to Pastor Search Committee, 600 Crosscreek Trail, Pelham, AL 35124 or to pastorsearch@crosscreekbaptist.org.

Pastor: Zion Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C., (zionbaptistshelby.com) is seeking a pastor. We are a moderate congregation dually aligned with the SBC and CBF. We seek a candidate with a minimum of 5 years pastoral experience and who is a graduate of an accredited seminary or divinity school. We desire someone who is a servant leader and an inspiring preacher and has strong interpersonal skills. Send résumé by July 15 to jlail@yahoo.com or Pastor Search Committee, Zion Baptist Church, 525 W. Zion Church Rd., Shelby, NC 28150.

Pastor: First Baptist Church in Corbin, Ky., affiliated with CBF and Kentucky Baptist Fellowship, is seeking a full-time pastor. FBC is a traditional, progressive church with a community focus. The church has a proud 118-year history in Corbin and is ecumenical in its approach in reaching the communities of southeastern Kentucky. Located in historic downtown Corbin, the church is within minutes of I-75. The congregation of approximately 400 members welcomes diversity and inclusiveness while celebrating many gifts among its members for service and ministry. Candidates should submit résumés to the pastor search committee at fbcr_resumes@yahoo.com.

Pastor: Valdese First Baptist Church in western North Carolina is seeking a gifted teacher to become our new pastor and lead a full-time staff of 2 pastoral and 3 administrative members. Our mission activities extend from local to international. We average 150 attendance in Sunday school and 225 in our blended worship service. Our church is aligned with CBF and SBC. We provide space and support for a local Hispanic congregation and a 5-star child development center. For more information, see ValdeseFirst-Baptist.org. Submit résumés by July 31.

Part-time Director of Youth Ministry: Randolph Memorial Baptist Church, Madison Heights, Va., affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, seeks a creative and caring team player to plan, coordinate and develop our youth ministry. A 4-year degree from an accredited college/university is preferred. Experience working with youth is required. Submit résumés to Pastor, Randolph Memorial Baptist Church, P.O. Box 70, Madison Heights, VA 24572 or to dwhamby1@yahoo.com.

Pastor for Youth and Children: Vienna Baptist Church (VBC) of Vienna, Va., is seeking a full-time pastor for youth and children. The pastor will work in partnership with the youth and children's ministry team (YCMT) to build upon existing ministries and introduce innovative, meaningful, and engaging activities. Responsibilities include leading regular youth meetings, participating in Sunday Bible study with youth and children, attending our week-long children's summer camp and youth weekend at VBC's Lost River Retreat Center in West Virginia, and managing the administrative tasks of the youth and children's ministry. Candidates should be ready to build relationships with youth and children through home visits, attending school or sports events, and community activities. Required qualifications include a mature and active faith in Jesus Christ, experience with youth and children's ministry, and a bachelor's degree. Seminary degree or coursework is preferred. VBC provides a warm and welcoming environment that is inclusive and culturally diverse. We are affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, the Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist World Alliance. Find out more about our church at vbc-va.org. To apply or obtain a more detailed job description, contact our search team at VBCyouthmin2013@gmail.com.

Minister with Children and Families: Central Baptist Church of Bearden, Knoxville, Tenn., is seeking a minister with children and families. The position is full time, salaried with benefits. The ideal candidate will be called by God for this specific area of ministry, hold a bachelor's degree in education and a seminary degree (or equivalent) with a focus on Christian education with children, and have at least 3 years experience with children in a church setting. Central Baptist Bearden is a midtown, CBF/SBC congregation of 2,900 resident members. Average weekly Sunday school attendance is 1,100, which includes 100 children in grades 1-6. Position profile, personal and professional profile (application), and recommendation form are available under Employment at cbcbeardean.org. Submit questions to Dr. Chuck Chance, chair of the search committee at cchance@utk.edu.

Minister to Children: First Baptist Church, Conway, S.C., is seeking a full-time minister to children who will be the team leader for the children's ministry and have primary responsibility for developing and implementing a complete and balanced age-graded ministry to

and with children (birth-grade 5), their parents, and other adults in the church and community who work with children. Conway's First Baptist Church is located adjacent to Myrtle Beach, S.C., and shares enduring partnerships with other churches and ministries in sharing Christ's love along the Grand Strand and far beyond. Submit résumés and/or inquiries to bob@firstbaptist-conway.us or Search Team, First Baptist Church, 603 Elm St., Conway, SC, 29526.

Minister of Children: Greenwood Forest Baptist Church (CBF), an inclusive community of faith seeks a permanent half-time minister of children to lead our children's ministry programs and provide spiritual formation for our children. In addition, this person will serve alongside our talented staff as a part of a vibrant ministry team. To apply, submit cover letter and résumé with references to cmsearch@gfbcary.org or Children's Minister Search Committee, Greenwood Forest Baptist Church, 110 SE Maynard Rd., Cary, NC 27511.

Business Administrator: Providence Baptist Church, a 1,500-member CBF congregation in Charlotte, N.C., is seeking a business administrator. This person is responsible for managing human resources, finance/stewardship, facility/security, technology and food service, functioning as the chief operations and financial officer. A bachelor's degree is required, a master's and/or NACBA certification is preferred, and theological education is viewed as an asset. The job description and additional information about the church are posted at providencebc.org. Interested candidates should send a résumé by June 14 to searchcommittee@providencebc.org or Search Committee, Providence Baptist Church, 4921 Randolph Rd., Charlotte, NC 28211-4002.

Minister of Music

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Reader's Response

EDITOR: Thanks to Bruce Gourley for the "Thirty Moments" piece in the April issue (page 10) of *Baptists Today*, as well as for the ongoing "In their own words" series about Baptists during the Civil War.

One small factual correction to the former piece, re: the founding of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. The newsletter for which the new organization assumed responsibility was titled *PeaceWork*, a publication of the (American) Baptist Peace Fellowship, which began, as you noted, in 1940 under the name Baptist Pacifist Fellowship.

Baptist Peacemaker was a tabloid journal first dated December 1980 and produced by an all-volunteer group of Southern Seminary students, assisted by three professors (Glen Stassen, Glenn Hinson and Timothy George) and local Southern Baptist pastor Carman Sharp.

The journal continued to be produced in Louisville following the 1984 founding of the BPFNA, until 1989 when the BPFNA office took over responsibility for its production.

By the way, the BPFNA office was originally in an unused Sunday school room at Oakhurst Baptist [in Decatur, Ga.], just down the hall from where Walker Knight set up *Baptists Today* in another unused room. This was back in the day before desktop publishing.

Walker purchased an old Compugraphic photoelectronic typesetter, and he let me use

it at night to produce copy for *PeaceWork* and other BPFNA-related print products.

Also related to this history: Walker and Nell Knight were part of a regular group of volunteers who met weekly to support the work of *SEEDS* magazine (which also was housed for many years at Oakhurst), whose first full-sized magazine-style publication came out in early 1979.

I left the *SEEDS* staff in 1984 to become the first director of the BPFNA.

All told, it was quite an amazing publishing mini-empire birthed in the Oakhurst nest, whose Civil Rights era reformation is documented in Walker's book, *Struggle for Integrity*. Reading that book as a Baylor freshman is one of the things that prompted me to give up my football scholarship to pursue a calling whose future shape was at the time a complete mystery.

The mystery has yet to be exhausted. **BT**
Ken Sebested, Asheville, N.C.



Baptists Today has received gifts:

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In the Know

Bob Cole of Mars Hill, N.C., received the I. Ruth Martin Award for Christian Service from Mars Hill College.

Héctor M. González was honored for 40 years of service at the annual meeting of Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico in March. He was the first Hispanic president of American Baptist Churches USA (1994-95), and has held several positions in ABC life.

Lynn Green was elected general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, coming from the Southern Counties Baptist Association where she serves as regional minister.

John William Grisham will retire June 30 as associate minister for American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region, based in Springfield, Ill.

Brian Henderson is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Denver, Colo. He previously served Calvary Baptist Church in Denver.

Kendra Holt from Hurst, Texas, and Venantie Uwishyaka from Rwanda, students at Hardin-Simmons University, were named 2013 Young Maston Scholars during the T.B. Maston Lectures in Christian Ethics hosted by Logsdon Seminary.

Jeff Huett becomes associate coordinator of communications and advancement

for the Atlanta-based Cooperative Baptist Fellowship June 17. He comes from the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

Jerrod H. Huguenot is associate executive minister for the American Baptist Churches of New York State.

Richard "Little Richard" Wayne Penniman was honored with a Doctor of Humanities from Mercer University. The musical pioneer is a native of Macon, Ga.

Leo Smith died April 28 in Alvin, Texas, at age 75. He was the president and executive director of Texas Baptist Men before retiring in 2011 **BT**

Reblog

Selections from recent blogs
at baptiststoday.org

By John Pierce

Experienced ministers know how the scenario goes. A relatively new member who has jumped into congregational life wants to share some “concerns” he has about the church.

At the appointed time, the pastor discovers this is really a test — with an agenda. Questions that did not originate with the questioner start to flow.

Questions like: “Do you believe in a literal hell, yes or no?” “Is that a Brian McLaren book on your shelf?”

“Why did you quote Nouwen and Merton last Sunday without telling the church they are dangerous?” “Have you attended a conference at which Leonard Sweet or Richard Foster spoke?”

“The word ‘missional’ was in the church newsletter this week; don’t you check for things like that?” “Are you aware that in the young adults class last Sunday, the teacher talked about social justice instead of the gospel?”

“Why don’t you preach against evolution?” “Are you aware of Rick Warren’s universalist leanings?”

Recently a long-term, effective pastor told me that his North Carolina congregation experienced two years of turmoil resulting from this kind of encounter. And the whole disruptive action was carried out by a foot soldier (and other recruits) of Eric Barger of “Take a Stand! Ministries” who is on a mission to straighten out all churches he deems errant.

Barger, based in Rowlett, Texas, proudly claims that his “ministry” exists to “see the church changed.”

He instructs his followers to look for the signs of “emergent” influence or liberalism in churches and to “conduct spiritual warfare” — by asking these kinds of questions, confronting leadership, warning other members of the dangers, and if all else fails,

by fleeing!

The problem, of course, is that those who import such trouble don’t flee soon enough.

Barger fits the typical profile of such aggressive, religious know-it-alls. He lived a hellish life of drugs and self-absorption for which he has found divine forgiveness — but loves to post photos and detailed descriptions of such glorified experiences including his drug use and sexual exploits.

While faithful Christians were building congregations and carrying out their daily mission, and committed ministers were



toiling in theological education and doing real-life ministry, Barger was abusing his mind and body. But following his dramatic conversion — presto! — he became an expert on all things Christian.

To borrow a great line from Fred Craddock, he acts like he’s walked around God and taken pictures. Now he is eager to use whatever wild accusations he can find to push his bizarre ideas of biblical truth on everyone else. So be warned.

My pastor friend said once the troublemaker and his recruits finally left, the church found some benefits from the experience that distracted them from a full focus on ministry. Primarily, the congregation now has a clearer identity, he said, one forged in response to the accusations and threats they encountered.

When I serve interim pastorates, urging the church to clarify and communicate its identity is my foremost task after preaching and consulting with leadership. Congregations sometimes are hesitant to clarify values, identity and mission due to

the naïve idea that they can be the church for all people.

Such lack of a clearly stated identity and mission invites cocksure persons with little or no stock in the church to launch a personal agenda to be carried out at the congregation’s expense. And it is always done with an abundance of self-righteousness and in the name of correcting the errant ways of the church.

Congregations must find loving but clear ways of saying: “This is who we are. You are welcome here to worship and to share in this community of faith. You don’t even have to agree with us. We don’t all see everything in the same way either. But if you are uncomfortable with our church’s identity and mission, don’t come in here and try to change us to be like you. We can recommend churches in the area that suit you much better.”

Sadly, many congregations have had such disruptive experiences that can be traced to an outside preacher, teacher, author, agitator. Often the damage remains long after the “blessed subtraction” (a term I learned from the late Brantley Seymour of Roswell, Ga., in 1978) has fled.

So any preemptive measures — such as clarifying the church’s identity and enlisting leadership that appreciates the common good over personal agendas — should be taken.

Barger’s call to “spiritual warfare” is much more warfare than spiritual. It has all of the marks of strident fundamentalism that takes pride in leaving carnage in its path.

It has nothing to do with Jesus except a gross misuse of his name.

Being gullible to those who poorly mask their hostilities and political agendas in religious language can make suckers out of the church.

“Fundamentalism can rise up at anytime,” my friend said. And he thanked me that his congregational leaders have a better understanding of who they are and how to identify and counter such assaults through reading *Baptists Today*. **BT**

Getting involved

By Tony W. Cartledge

It is one thing to talk or write about ideas or projects, but quite another to do them. On a recent Saturday, instead of reporting on a mission project, I had a chance to participate with Woodhaven Baptist Church in Apex, N.C., as it observed a day of Operation Inasmuch. The popular missions effort that was pioneered more than a decade ago by David Crocker and Snyder Memorial Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C., is now nationwide.

My son Samuel and I joined 40-50 other volunteers in packing meal kits for distribution through schools in developing countries where hunger is a serious issue. Working through an organization called Stop Hunger Now, we packed 13,000 meal kits, each containing a cup of soy flour and a cup of rice, along with dehydrated vegetables, seasonings, and vitamins.

Adding water and then boiling makes for a nutritious meal that's actually tasty. Seriously. We sampled some for lunch afterward.

Volunteers working through the Raleigh-based organization have packaged more than 94 million meals, and the number rises daily.

Churches or other volunteer groups interested in hosting an event, or individuals wishing to donate to the charitable cause, can find information on the Stop Hunger Now website.

On the following Tuesday, I wasn't doing volunteer work, but had a chance to get my feet wet through a baptism practicum at Campbell University Divinity School. As part of the "Life and Work of the Minister" course, we talk about the significance of baptism and the Baptist emphasis on baptism by immersion — then go practice in the school's natatorium.

The first time I baptized someone — in an outdoor baptistry and with no previous experience — the candidate was a man considerably larger than me. I had no training at all, so we were lucky that both of us made it out without any untoward events.

Campbell Divinity students, however, get tips on technique and then hands-on experience.

A third opportunity for involvement

that week came when I saw that the Agora Scholarship fund, which supports emerging businesses in developing countries, had agreed to sponsor Xochitl Palacios and her young business called Deli Maya.

Starting from a room in her home, Xochitl (pronounced "so-cheel") is building a healthy snack business, drying and packaging local fruit and some vegetables native to El Salvador.

Xochitl is related to friends of mine from Washington, D.C., and a couple of years ago helped host a church group that had come to visit. She gave all of us samples of her fare, and most of us bought additional items to bring home.

To continue my involvement, I considered it an honor to contribute to the Agora Scholarship fund to help expand Xochitl's business and provide jobs for more people in El Salvador.

Opportunities for involvement abound. They are all around — and something about us feels a bit more alive when we get past talking and get involved. **BT**



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A face & a name

Immigration reform becomes personal for evangelicals

For Southern Baptist Pastor David Uth, immigration reform became a priority after a family in his Orlando, Fla., mega-church faced deportation.

Bishop Ricardo McClin says it was time to speak up when members of a Church of God congregation he oversaw stopped worshipping in Jacksonville, Fla., because they feared detention.

As Congress hammers out new immigration policy, religious leaders — and especially evangelicals — say personal encounters with the current system have prompted them to advocate for reform.

“We’ve sensed in our church this growing understanding that immigration has a face,” said Uth, pastor of First Baptist Orlando. “It has a name. It has a story.”

A recent poll shows white evangelicals are less supportive (at 56 percent) than other religious groups of allowing immigrants living in the U.S. illegally to become citizens. But leaders say there’s been a sea change in the last couple of years as they hear about church members being detained or deported and the effects of those measures on their families.

The Evangelical Immigration Table has mounted a six-figure campaign that includes Christian radio ads, distribution of more than 100,000 bookmarks urging congregants and members of Congress to read Bible passages about “welcoming the stranger.”

McClin, a former district supervisor for the Tennessee-based Church of God, said a predominantly immigrant church in Jacksonville shut down after going through ups and downs in attendance by fearful worshippers.

“One Sunday there’s a service, we had 80, 100 people,” he recalled. “And the following Sunday there would be nobody.”

“I can’t pretend that everything is going to be OK because of faith,” said McClin, now a pastor in Kissimmee, Fla. “Faith has to be put to work.”

Samuel Rodriguez, a longtime advocate for immigration reform, said personal experiences are what have driven many non-Hispanic clergy “off the fence.”

“This is now a Christian issue,” said Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. “It’s not a political issue. It became a Road to Damascus moment.”

In January a broad network of churches — including mainline Protestant, historically black, Orthodox, Catholic and evangelical and Pentecostal leaders — issued a statement calling on Congress and the president to improve the laws.

“Each day in our congregations and communities, we bear witness to the effects of a system that continues the separation of families and the exploitation, abuse, and deaths of migrants,” declared Christian Churches Together in the USA.

Jim Wallis, the evangelical founder of the anti-poverty group Sojourners, said some Christians have seen a passage from the Gospel of Matthew in a new light. It includes the verse that reads: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

He said a “biblical conversion” is occurring, along with a relational one.

“When you worship with people, you get

to know them and you get to know their lives and their families and their kids and so stereotypes go away,” said Wallis, author of the new book, *On God’s Side: What Religion Forgets and Politics Hasn’t Learned About Serving the Common Good*. “And you understand who they are and that changes you.”

Evangelical leaders are hoping to use newfound support to galvanize Congress. Scores of pastors are meeting with legislators in their home districts and in Washington, urging them to take the “I Was a Stranger” challenge and study related Bible verses for 40 days.

In April, Rep. Randy Hultgren, R-Ill., met with evangelical leaders at an Aurora, Ill., church. His spokesman, Josh Wessell, said Hultgren, who attends an evangelical church, committed to personally read the several weeks of Scripture and took extra bookmarks to share with members of his congressional Bible study group in Washington.

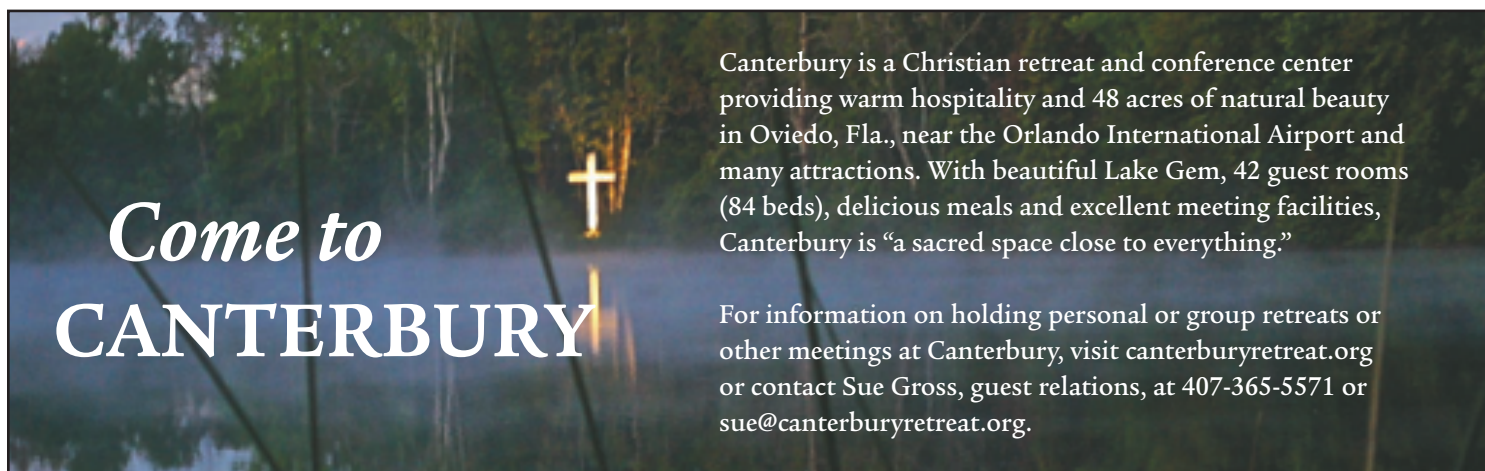
Wessell said the congressman’s primary focus has been border security but he is in an “information-gathering phase.”

“He’s seeking input from folks, particularly leaders in the faith community, on how to successfully balance federal immigration policy with his faith and biblical principles,” Wessell said.

Beyond the biblical focus, some evangelical leaders are addressing immigration reform for strategic reasons.

While some predominantly white evangelical congregations may not have any immigrants in their pews, denominational leaders are aware that immigrants are contributing to the growth of their churches, said Matthew Soerens, U.S. church training specialist for World Relief, a founding member of the Evangelical Immigration Table.

“If you’re in a denominational office, you know that,” he said, “and you don’t want to see the part of your church that is growing deported.” **BT**



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A Higher Purpose

Young foot soldiers reflect on civil rights experiences

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — In May 1963, thousands of Birmingham school children faced police dogs, fire hoses and possible arrest to demonstrate against segregation. Fifty years later, those who were part of what became known as the “Children’s March” say they don’t want their story to be forgotten.

“We were doing this not just for ourselves but for some higher purpose,” said one of the young marchers, Freeman Hrabowski III. “It focused on civil rights for all Americans.”

Hrabowski is now president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He was 12 when he marched in Birmingham and was arrested for parading without a permit. He and hundreds of other children were held in custody for five days before being released.

Experts say the children’s crusade helped galvanize the civil rights struggle at a time when efforts were flagging.

“That was really the tipping point in a tipping year,” Pulitzer Prize-winning author Taylor Branch, who has written a series of books about the civil rights movement, told *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*.

Martin Luther King Jr. arrived in Birmingham in January 1963 to support local efforts to end segregation through nonviolent protests. The campaign did not live up to his expectations.

“He prepared for three months and started the demonstrations in April,” said Branch. “They fizzled quickly; nothing went according to plan.”

As King struggled to convince adults to march and get arrested, civil rights leaders including James Bevel and Dorothy Cotton were holding special meetings for Birmingham elementary and high school students.

“We knew that they were curious about what was going on in their town,” Cotton said.

“They just started hanging around ... and it swelled.”

As King considered a retreat from Birmingham, Branch said, “the people running the children’s workshops said ... ‘(We’ve) got plenty of foot soldiers.’” But the idea of putting children on the front lines was controversial.

“Dr. King was severely criticized for allowing the children to be involved, but the children insisted themselves,” said Virgil Wood, a longtime King associate.

Carolyn McKinstry was 14 when she learned about plans for young people to march. She didn’t tell her parents because she knew they wouldn’t let her go.

“It was such an excitement in the air,” she said. “I knew I wanted to be part of it.”

McKinstry said before they could march, the young people were trained about the importance of nonviolence.

“We were told what to expect when we marched, if we did encounter the police. They might hit you, they might spit on you, they will have dogs and billy clubs but the only appropriate response ever is no response, or a prayerful response,” she said. “Faith was very much a part of what we were doing.”

On May 2, students left their classrooms midday and gathered in Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. They came out marching and singing, row after row, some as young as 6 years old. Nearly a thousand students had signed up to march, and more than 600 were taken into custody on that day.

As hundreds more children showed up to demonstrate and face possible arrest, Birmingham police commissioner Eugene

“Bull” Connor was anxious to restore order. He instructed his forces to bring out the fire hoses and the police dogs. Some of the most shocking confrontations happened in Kelly Ingram Park, where officials turned the water hoses against the marching children.

“The water came out with such tremendous pressure, and it’s a very painful experience,” McKinstry said. “I got knocked down, and then we found ourselves crouching together and trying to find something to hold onto.”

The police also used dogs to try to control the crowd gathering in the park. News reporters captured images of young people being attacked by the German shepherds. The marching, and the arrests, went on for several days. Energized by the children, adults soon joined in.

Hrabowski said he was held in crowded conditions with children even younger than he was. At one point, they were allowed a visit from their parents and King.

“He said, ‘What you do this day will have an impact on children who’ve not been born,’” Hrabowski said. “Our parents were crying, and we were crying, and we knew the statement was profound, but we didn’t fully understand.”

Americans were transfixed by the news reports and pictures coming out of Birmingham, and the movement turned a corner.

“When they saw those children suffering ... millions of people said, ‘I need to do something about this,’” said Hrabowski.

Concerned about the image of their city, white leaders negotiated a plan to start ending segregation. And on June 11, citing the events in Birmingham, President John F. Kennedy announced his intention to introduce new federal civil rights legislation.

“It led me to believe, especially after the laws were changed,” said McKinstry, “that there were many things that were worth fighting for.” **BT**

—*Editor’s note: This story is distributed by RNS. A version was first broadcast on the PBS program Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly.*



Hrabowski



McKinstry



A conversation *with* Suzii Paynter

GAINESVILLE, Ga. — In March, Susan (Suzii) Youngblood Paynter began her work as the third executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and hit the ground running. Included in her busy schedule was the 30-year celebration dinner for *Baptists Today*, that assisted the Fellowship at its founding and collaborates in a variety of ways including the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies within the news journal.

Suzii offered the closing prayer at the April 25 celebration. She was interviewed by Editor John Pierce the following morning during a meeting of the *Baptists Today* Board of Directors. This conversation is adapted from that interview.

BT: Suzii, please tell us about the family environment in which you grew up and what you learned to think, value and do.

SP: Besides my family's deep rootedness in the very beginning of Trinity Baptist Church in

San Antonio where we were anchored, I'd say my life was equal parts of ranch, art and education. Those things shaped me.

My mother graduated from Parsons School of Design in New York City. There were five kids in our family, and every third or fourth year you got to go with mom and dad to New York.

A very important part of our childhood was this travel and sitting with my mom in a museum or running around the museum while she sat there and drew. So art was an influence in my life for creativity, expansion and cultural change.

Then, of course, I'm a Texas girl. I grew up on a ranch. My mom still lives there. She raises exotic animals.

My dad, after he retired from his business, was there full time. But we always had a ranch life — which was place; it was land; it was nature.

Education was always important. It shaped me greatly.

My dad was a very active layman and deacon in Trinity Baptist. Every Sunday morning was him in the den preparing his Sunday school lesson. And about every Tuesday night



“Advocacy ... is an extension of mission.”

BT: A few years ago I did a story about your work in Texas. You graciously let me spend a whole day with you. We met in Dallas that morning and I followed you around and then rode with you to Austin to see your work with your fine staff and in the state capitol.

What I remember most is how industrious you are and how well you worked with a gifted staff. How do you describe your leadership style?

SP: I love those words: industrious and works with a gifted staff. I think that's still true — thinking about this new chapter with the Fellowship.

I developed my leadership style through education: through being a teacher, then an administrator, and then an advocate on the national scene on behalf of literacy programs around the United States. That was in my secular life.

Then in my church life, my volunteer life, was the creativity and the beginnings of CBF. I was on the original interim steering committee that formed CBF — and gave myself to this movement and to the Fellowship all through my life as a pastor's wife and as a leader in Texas Baptist life.

When I came to be a director of federal programs, a director of advocacy, I was always shaped by the idea that it is a learning environment. Change is essential, and we are always listening to and learning from what's next. And that's the place we live into for our energetic and analytical look at what's coming up.

Secondly, without creativity, without fun, without joy, without building a team that likes each other and looks forward to going to work each day, you're missing out on about half of the value of going to work.

I really learned this in the Baptist General Convention of Texas: When you go to work in a non-profit organization, especially within our community of faith, you know your work is being funded by people's sacrificial gifts. That should change what you do: the way you spend your money, your time; the way you treat your staff; to always remember that it is the gifts of other people that are the foundation of the work you are doing.

That's energizing and gives me a passion for the mission of what I am doing. I don't want to do work I'm not passionate about, and I don't want to do it with people I don't like. I want to be with people I love.

BT: You mentioned advocacy, which was a primary role for you with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. How would you like to see advocacy grow or happen in new ways within CBF life?

SP: Certainly advocacy, in my opinion, is an extension of mission. Let's say you are working in a food pantry in your church and you see the same families come back week after week and then month after month. Sooner or later that question comes into your mind: What could I be doing to help this family not have to be here?

That's where advocacy begins; it's where your compassion is. So we have a great opportunity for advocacy within CBF. We have eight communities of missions that deal with poverty and transformation — both here in the U.S. and around the world.

Disaster recovery, church starting, missions that have to do with refugees and immigrants, missions that have to do with education, medical and health needs, economic development and opportunity. In all of those areas there is an element of advocacy that is born out of compassion. And I'm very interested in developing those advocacy channels that complement these mission communities within CBF.

The great thing is that we already have people exhibiting those passions and doing advocacy work although they may not be as connected, supported or organized for a stronger impact. So I feel like that is one place where I can bring a lot of experience.

Another way in terms of bringing advocacy to CBF is from the contacts I've made over the years with local, state, national and international advocacy communities. Advocacy is one of the ways in which ecumenical and interfaith work is done. Ecumenical and interfaith efforts are often around areas of advocacy, thankfully, rather than around doctrine or worship styles. It allows us to cooperate.

was a theological discussion at our dinner table.

I remember when we were all teenagers, there were five kids within a very short distance of each other. He would throw out a question and say, “What do you think about that? Do you agree with that? Well, the Bible contradicts itself when it says this or that.”

He'd throw out the question, and then we'd all debate it.

My brother would say, “This is just too much.”

But my dad would come back and say, “Well, what do you believe? What's left in the Bible? What do you count on?”

Then he would say: “Live that one; whatever you believe.”

Our family was full of learning and places and friends — grounded in our church.

“Change is essential, and we are always listening to and learning from what’s next.”

BT: Diversity is something we struggle with organizationally in moderate Baptist life. It brings us two challenges. One is the danger of ignoring diversity and the need to have persons with different perspectives and gifts and from different demographics. The other danger in that diversity can be so heavily emphasized that it becomes an end rather than a means. We can then take a wonderful group photo and say we have diversity even if we are not accomplishing our mission. What is your perspective, and how do you envision CBF approaching its future in that regard?

SP: To live out diversity is to put power and diversity together. When you get just the photo op, that’s because you’ve got people representing different groups and they don’t have any power.

Real diversity is about people with different strengths and different gifts and different looks coming together and everybody has equal power. They’ve got power to do something creatively. They’ve got budget power and decision-making power.

One of the most important aspects of our diversity, and I say this to our churches and to myself at CBF: We have to hire diversity. So step one is to make your staff look like you want it to be. Until we hire diversity and allow people to be in leadership, and give them authority and power, it’s very hard to make a statement that you’re living out a true heart of diversity rather than just a picture of diversity.

Most of us start from a picture place. As we grow, we grow to a place that understands power and decision making. When people with diverse attributes are at the table, then their constituencies respond. Then diversity within the Fellowship and within the leadership of the Fellowship begins to have the impact we hoped representational diversity might have.

BT: There are many of us who have the Fellowship as our primary or sole denominational identity. That is not the case in Texas due to the state convention there. You have confessed to being a ranch-raised

Texan. Can you explain Texas Baptists to us and how, in CBF life, we bridge that big muddy river better?

SP: One thing I’d remind us of is that being a Baptist wherever you are a Baptist, east or west of the Mississippi or around the world, is kind of like being a cowboy. You just say you are one.

It’s up to someone else to prove you’re not. You can be all hat and no boots, or you can be the real thing. Our identity is formed by the communities within which our Baptist heritage has grown.

So a couple of things to know about Texas Baptists, first of all about who they are today: There are 5,600 congregations in [Baptist General Convention of Texas] life.

Twelve hundred of those congregations speak Spanish on Sunday morning, and 416 congregations speak a language other than Spanish or English on Sunday morning. So the Texas Baptist convention today is a picture of ethnic diversity. We have some lessons to learn from them.

The other thing to know about Texas Baptists is kind of interesting. Randel Everett did this study when he came to be the new executive director [of the BGCT].

In about the 1840s there was this complete infusion where the Baptist presence was being developed. He compared what happened in the northwestern United States — which had about the same number of Baptists moving to the Northwest as the Baptists who moved to Texas.

One of the things he said that was a significant difference in Texas, and I think this is replicated in other states as well, was that Baptists took education seriously and they took health care seriously and they began not only to invest in the institution of the church but in educational and health institutions.

These were followed by, and in some cases preceded by, compassion ministries like children’s homes and family support systems. That’s really the difference in what happened in Texas: the institutional support system that was built up around the church.

I think that has a lesson for us today. We feel the burden when the church has to carry everything on its own.

It’s really not meant to be that way. Just as Christians are to be a community within a congregation, so are congregations meant to be together to create structures that hold us up and lift us up.

So all of these partner organizations that we have in CBF, and *Baptists Today* is a fabulous example, without which our network would not be knitted together. We would not have an identity were it not for the other pieces that come together underneath churches.

That’s one thing to understand about Texas Baptist life. I think it is one of the things we aspire to in the greater Fellowship across the nation in our 14 states and four regions. How do we create the modern-day institutions and modern-day partnerships that are going to support our churches and our ministry toward this uplifted identity?

The last thing I’d say: A pastor said to me the other day, “Suzii, why don’t you consider a Fellowship home-away — where a pastor from one church in one state trades houses and pulpits with another pastor in another state for two Sundays in a row? You preach in somebody else’s church and you live in their house.”

He said we have so much to gain from each other. We are so much more alike as Fellowship Baptists.

In Texas Baptist life, it’s a big tent. But the Fellowship is a big tent. I believe we need to better understand the ways in which we are similar — a lot more than the ways we are different.

BT: As you mentioned, you did not come to this position from the outside. You have been a part of CBF since the beginning. But I imagine the intensity of the recent weeks has been something you’ve never experienced before. What have you learned from this incredibly fast start?

SP: We have so many terrific hidden assets. They are there and are ready. One of those is the terrific young clergy coming out of our

seminaries and divinity schools, and young laypeople.

Remember the early days when we worried about how we could possibly support one seminary? We have relationships with more than 13 seminaries and divinity schools. That puts young talent in our network.

Among the most interesting congratulations phone calls I got was from a Lutheran guy I had traveled with to Africa. He said something nobody else had said.

He said: "I'm jealous of you ... You all have all of these young clergy."

All of that talent is there. Our challenge is to be good stewards of it — to make room on our church staffs, to make room in our ministries, to make room in leadership.

I think God has given us that gift — by deciding to be a Fellowship and not a denomination.

BT: What are three things you would like to see happen in CBF life over the next few years?

SP: I'm going to take my cues straight from the [CBF] 2012 Task Force. First of all, identity. We have got to lift our identity in who we are.

We need to show the world who we are. Speak our voice, be our image and be ourselves.

It's not very far into conversations with pastors that they say, "I want a healthy church." Not the richest church or the biggest church.

What they mean by that is a place where people feel like they can live out their call — and those as leaders feel like they can live their call in tandem and in partnership.

Our nation needs this picture of the church — and the church at work.

We also need some soft elements of our identity. One of the things we were brainstorming the other day, and I'm very interested in your thoughts on ways we can exhibit our identity together. Of course, the 2012 Task Force asked for [identity] letters from churches and we're getting those.

But we were also talking about things like at every baby dedication, that there would be a satin ribbon with a little descending dove made by Delta Jewels, our ministry program in Helena, Ark., with Together for Hope.

Or at baptism, the same thing with an *ichthys* to put around the neck of the person who is baptized, knowing it had been made by the young women in Delta Jewels. Things that would connect our missions and our congregations that just say, "This is who we are. I'm in a CBF church."



Or maybe it's a key chain your kids get when they get their driver's license. But things that say I'm a part of that community. So identity is one thing.

I think one of our greatest challenges — and we are at such a fabulous time for it — is global missions. And by global missions I mean all of our greater mission enterprise: things that happen in this country and things that happen around the world.

We are in an evolving paradigm of mission, and we need to analyze that and understand it. I was surprised to learn we have more than seven ways to send people out in missions capacities around the world. And we have more than 11 ways of funding them.

Again, it's these assets that have already grown up. We've developed a diverse way of doing missions. Now we need to analyze, capture, expand it, resource it evenly and then empower that to be a good platform.

The third area is ministry, which in my opinion is the support of the local congregation. Is there any church that is not experiencing transition into a new era?

We have to think and structure ourselves and join together to support our congregational health and life toward the future. It means a paradigm of understanding how churches are alike even though they may be miles apart and how churches are similar even though they may be east coast and west coast.

How do we pull that together? Part of it is strengthening our state and regional networks. We have such talented people who are doing our state and regional work. They should not be under-resourced or left alone; this needs to be a team.

One of my most important early commitments or habits has been to institute a monthly conference call with all of our state and regional leaders. We talk to each other, and we hear each other. That's how we are going to begin to create the structure that supports congregations.

BT: How can we, as individuals and as an independent news journal that really values our collaboration with CBF, be of help?

SP: You already are, let me just say that. The strength of putting a face on our larger community — there's no words for that. This is an incarnational work. That is how God started it out, and that is how it is today.

So the way in which *Baptists Today* brings the face of faith and an active commitment and shares it throughout our whole community is a valuable, valuable gift to our greater Fellowship.

But also the digest aspect of what you do is so important, to be able to say, "Here's what's going on. Here's the greater picture beyond us."

I think insightful and thoughtful editorials, I'm always grateful for that myself. Then the publishing aspect of what you are doing now. It made me happy to see all of those authors last night [at the 30-year celebration of *Baptists Today*] and all of these books coming out.

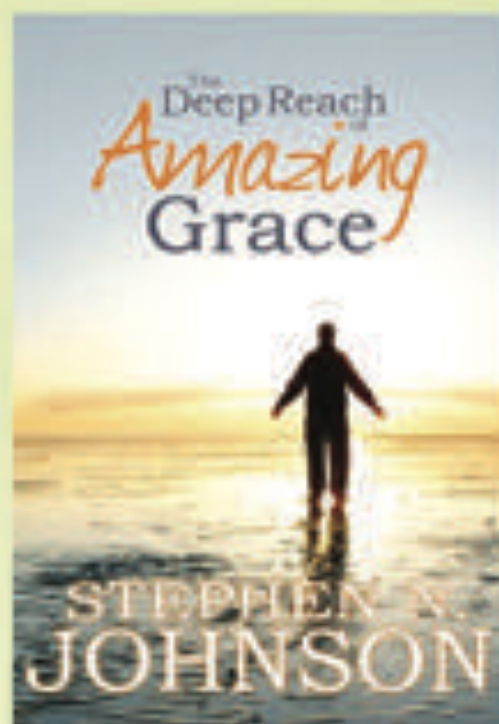
Thank you for the courage to take on that venture and to be that partner for so many folks. I said in my prayer last night that words matter — and they do. So keep doing what you're doing. **BT**

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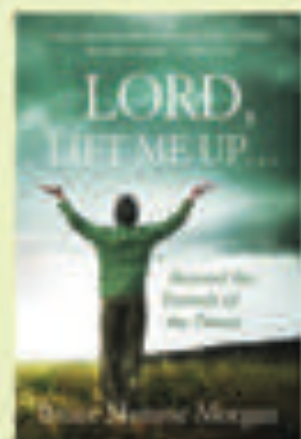


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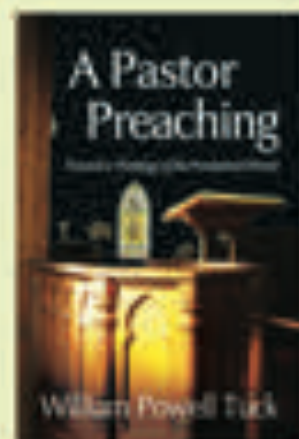
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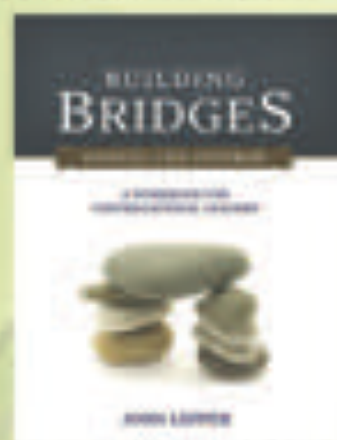
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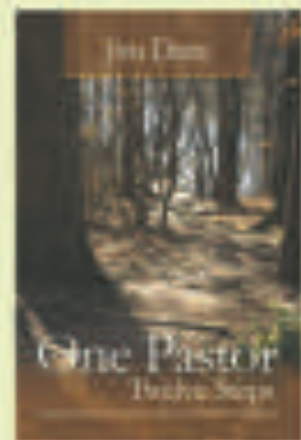
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Holocaust Museum turns 20 as survivors dwindle

WASHINGTON — The adult survivors of the Holocaust are mostly gone now, and those who survived as children — and were old enough at the time to remember their ordeals — are now in their 70s and 80s. It won't be long before no eyewitnesses remain.

When the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum marked its 20th anniversary on April 29, with more than 750 survivors, museum officials called it one of the last large gatherings of those who managed to escape Hitler's death machine.

For those who have dedicated themselves to teaching future generations about the Holocaust and its victims, the demise of the survivors means looking backward in a different way — a way that no longer includes people looking others straight in the face and recounting what they saw and what they lived.

You can read all the documentation of the Holocaust in the world, said Diane Saltzman, director of survivor affairs at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “but hearing somebody's voice, sitting across the table or across the room from a human being, there's no true substitute.”

Jonathan Sarna, professor of American Jewish history at Brandeis University, wants his classes to understand this.

“I tell my students annually that they have a special responsibility,” he said. “They are the last generation that will be able to say that they personally knew survivors of the Holocaust. It is a big change, just like it was when the last Civil War veteran passed from the scene.”

The Holocaust, now “perceived history,” will become “received” history, Sarna said. The challenge is that it doesn't recede from memory.

Holocaust educators take heart in the many institutions and younger people committed to ensuring that future generations will know about the 6 million Jews who died; of the concentration camps, gas chambers and crematoria set up to carry out Hitler's “Final Solution”; and of the 5 million Roma (Gypsies), gay people and others murdered



because the Nazis deemed them, like the Jews, unworthy of life.

That's the mission of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, said Saltzman, which has hosted some 35 million visitors since it opened just off the National Mall in 1993. The institution is full of audio and video testimony from survivors, artifacts from their lives before and after they were sent to concentration camps, and films and diaries that document the genocide.

“The museum stands as that eyewitness going forward,” Saltzman said. “We are the repository of all that evidence, and all of those memories.”

From the Washington museum to Jerusalem's Yad Vashem to smaller museums around the world, these institutions preserve history that will soon no longer be passed on firsthand. So, too, does Holocaust literature, from Anne Frank's famous diary to *Night*, by survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, who gave the keynote speech at the Washington museum's anniversary, alongside former President Bill Clinton.

The Shoah Foundation, based at the University of Southern California, has videotaped testimony from more than 51,000 survivors since film director Steven Spielberg started the project in 1994, when there were about 350,000 Holocaust survivors living worldwide.

Curriculum programs in schools introduce children in the U.S. and elsewhere to the Holocaust, and these programs will continue,

even when survivors aren't part of them anymore.

Norman Frajman, 83, thinks of that day. He was 10 years old when World War II began, and has sharp memories of life in the Warsaw Ghetto and of the Majdanek death camp in eastern Poland, where his mother and younger sister died. All told, he lost 126 members of his immediate and extended family.

“I probably wouldn't remember what I had for breakfast, but I remember all that happened to me during the carnage,” said Frajman,

who now lives in Boynton Beach, Fla., and has been sharing his testimony with schoolchildren for more than 30 years.

But not with young children. “The atrocities are indescribable. I can't address anyone at the elementary school level,” he said. “It's too graphic.”

For all the graphic details available from survivors, and primary and secondary texts and film, Holocaust denial still thrives on the Internet and in many parts of the world where anti-Semitism has strong roots.

Even in the presence of Holocaust survivors, there are people who insist the genocide never happened, Sarna said. The hope, when there are no more survivors, is that the museums and the video archives will make it “impossible for most people to accept the word of the deniers.”

In the meantime, as long as he is able, Frajman will tell his story and teach about the Holocaust in hopes of preventing another one. “Yesterday it was directed against the Jews. Tomorrow it could be against Christians, the next day against Muslims — unless people heed and listen,” he said.

But he is optimistic that his words and those of other survivors will resonate long after he is gone.

“Judging by today's young people that I encounter when I go to schools to speak, we are in for a better tomorrow,” Frajman said. “They listen. They are very perceptive. They take it to heart.” **BT**

REVIEW AND PHOTO BY JOHN PIERCE

More than a number

Jackie Robinson movie *42* creates needed discomfort, hope

Whether the sinking of the *Titanic* or Abraham Lincoln's political maneuverings to free slaves, great moments in history gain wider awareness and interest when made into feature films. Such is the case with *42*.

More than a baseball movie — though perhaps more intriguing to those familiar with names such as Pee Wee Reese, Dixie Walker and Eddie Stanky or the old ballparks in Macon, Birmingham and Chattanooga where the filming occurred — it is a story of faith and courage amid social change.

While news this spring included the planning of a racially integrated prom in the rural South, moviegoers could witness Dodgers' general manager Branch Rickey's daring move to integrate professional baseball 66 years ago.

Chadwick Boseman, as Robinson, and Harrison Ford, as Rickey, give convincing performances of two widely different but equally effective agents of social change. And the spiritual disciplines and commitments at play are as clear as the crack of the bat.

While some bemoaned that the movie didn't play up Robinson's meetings with ministers or offer more verbal affirmations of the Christian faith, the portrayal of a quiet and consistent faith seemed more fitting with the disciplined young player's approach to baseball and life.

Rickey, however, referenced the Bible frequently and spoke sermonically about God's expectations concerning justice and morality. Robinson, on the harder side of the experiment, passed the tough tests of living out the teachings of Jesus.

Although he talked of all money being green, Rickey's Christian faith played the lead role in his decision to challenge the well-entrenched codes of color. And Robinson's willingness to take undeserved abuse to bring about social change and to play baseball at the



highest level was rooted in something deeper than his own goodness.

Robinson is the chosen one, anointed for this mission because of his talent, temperament and conviction. When a young associate asks why Jackie Robinson is the right choice to break baseball's color barrier, Rickey barks: "He's a Methodist. I'm a Methodist. God is a Methodist. You can't go wrong."

Donning the Dodgers' uniform in 1947, in which he won the rookie of the year award despite constant taunts, threats and hostility, Robinson showed his Christian character again and again.

"Like our savior, you've got to have the guts to turn the other cheek," Rickey tells the young infielder called to break new, hard ground. He warns Robinson that his "enemies will be out in force," and urges him not to meet them "on their low level."

Rickey, who later helped birth the Fellowship of Christian Athletes organization, preaches in the film to coaches and players in the Dodgers organization, as well as those with other teams, who are resistant to the integration of baseball.

"Eight times in the Bible we are told to love our neighbors as ourselves," said Rickey, adding that it is one of the most repeated commandments in scripture.

When someone criticizes Robinson's boldness and intensity, Rickey replies: "If he were white, you'd call it spirit."

Rickey asks the Phillies' GM if he believes God likes baseball — and then warns him

that telling God that he didn't field his team against the Dodgers because of a black player "may not be sufficient enough of a reply" come Judgment Day.

The Christlikeness in Robinson's mission is clear: He is the one called down a lonely and trying road. Like Jesus, he questions the course ahead.

"So you want a player who doesn't have the guts to fight back?" he says to Rickey's first call to nonviolence. To which Rickey replies, "No. I want a player with the guts not to fight back."

Later Robinson, in a phone call to his wife Rachel, says, "We've been tested, you and me."

When Rachel encourages Jackie not to let the ugly words and cowardly threats get to him, he replies: "God built me to last." It is a phrase Rickey repeats later in the movie to affirm Robinson's perseverance of faith.

In one scene, Robinson pushes Rickey on why he made such an unpopular move. The influential GM tells of being a player-coach at Ohio Wesleyan University and not doing enough to help a black catcher who faced discrimination. Haunted by that experience, he was seeking to right a wrong.

"There was something unfair at the heart of the game I loved and I knew it," said Rickey. "You let me love baseball again."

Sounding like a reluctant savior, Robinson confesses: "Now I'm living a sermon out there." It is a much-needed sermon, Rickey reminds him — a mission only he can fulfill at this time and place.

"You're the one living the sermon," said Rickey, "in the wilderness, 40 days."

Dodger shortstop Pee Wee Reese, who embraced Robinson, literally, despite the opinions of family and friends in Kentucky, says to his teammate: "Maybe tomorrow we'll all wear 42. That way they can't tell us apart."

Some Christians ask too much of movie-makers. The living out of Jesus' calls to turn the other cheek and love your neighbor should be enough. It's how things change for the good of all of us. **BT**



Former ‘Jesus freak’ traces evolution of Christian rock

Bob Gersztyn owned a fine collection of 300 rock ‘n’ roll albums in 1971, the year he accepted Jesus. Among them were some choice 1960s vinyl from Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, Bob Dylan and the Mothers of Invention.

But all of a sudden, this was the devil’s music. “I destroyed some of them with a hammer and took the rest to a used record store,” he recalled with a laugh.

Gersztyn limited his listening to Christian rock, a genre that was just getting going in the era of the hippie-inspired “Jesus freaks” and the hit Broadway musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

He joined a Four Square Gospel Church in Los Angeles, enrolled in Bible college, and became a Pentecostal preacher. He also started emceeing and booking concerts for such Christian artists as Keith Green and 2nd Chapter of Acts.

Today, at age 65, Gersztyn’s religious fervor has mellowed. But he has put together

his love of music and photography to publish an illustrated, two-volume work titled *Jesus Rocks the World — The Definitive History of Contemporary Christian Music*.

The book traces the history of Jesus music from Negro spirituals, gospel, and blues to its modern roots in Southern California in the 1970s. It also tells the story of rock and folk stars who had “born-again” conversions, such as Bob Dylan, Noel Paul Stookey (of Peter, Paul, and Mary), and John Michael Talbot (of Mason Proffit).

Gersztyn, who grew up in a Catholic family in suburban Detroit, decided Jesus was the answer when he heard a radio account of how guitarist Jeremy Spencer had suddenly quit Fleetwood Mac during a performance at the Hollywood Bowl.

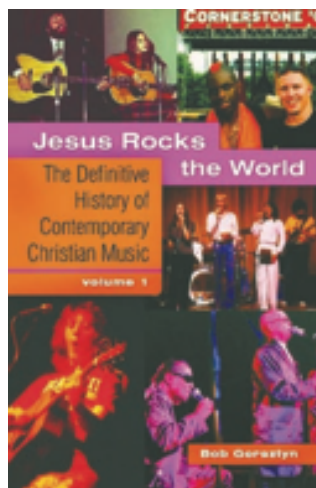
Gersztyn became part of an army of young people who went off seeking spiritual

bliss after drug-induced mystical experiences in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of them found a home among the counterculture “Jesus movement,” also known as “the Jesus people.”

Today, the music born out of that movement has grown into a huge industry. Estimates of its annual revenue range from \$500 million to \$2 billion — depending on who does the calculating and what bands are included as “contemporary Christian.”

Gersztyn considers Christian country/rock musician Larry Norman, who died in 2008 at age 60, to be the single most important figure in the history of contemporary Christian music. He is remembered for his 1969 Capitol

Records album *Upon this Rock*, and his song “Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music,” which features the verse, “Jesus is the rock and he rolled my blues away.” **BT**

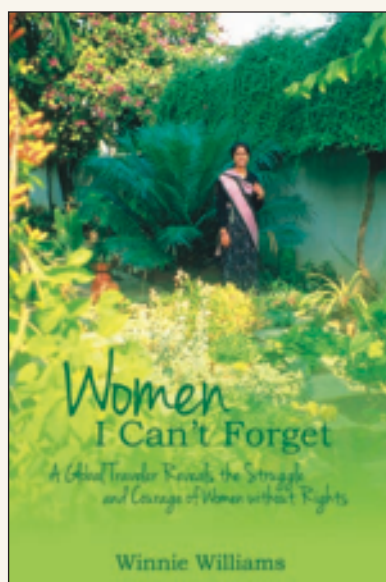


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