

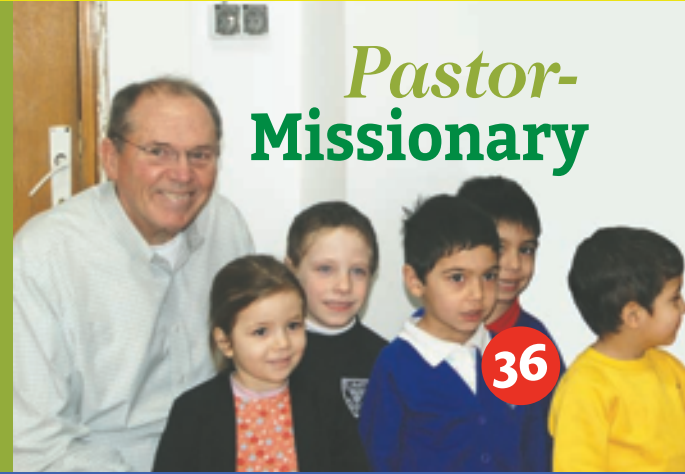
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Baptists ODAY

NEWS JOURNAL

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Global Embrace

*BWA keeps
working to
unite Baptists* | 4

Seven ways
Christians can
use social media | 14

*Nur*uring
FATH™

BIBLE STUDIES
for adults and youth

17

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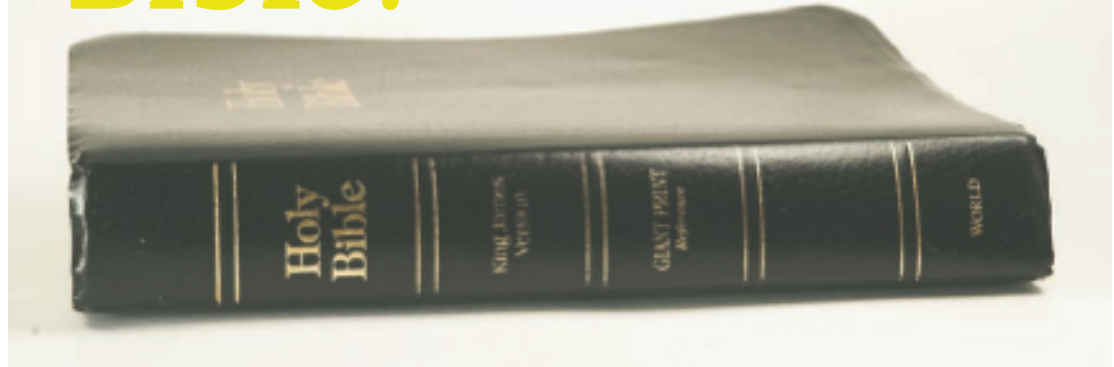
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WHY DO BAPTISTS
Argue
OVER THE
Bible? **16**



PERSPECTIVES

The gospel and the '60s not the same **7**
By John Pierce

Policy change for Baptists starts in congregations **9**
By Irceel Harrison

Seven ways Christians can use social media **14**
By Susan Codone

“A pastor who still puts up with me” **15**
By Harris Blackwood

Putting relationships above assignments **30**
By Jerry Chiles

Role of associate ministers during
pastoral transition **31**
By Melissa Fallen

IN THE NEWS

Moderates challenged to embrace
social justice **8**

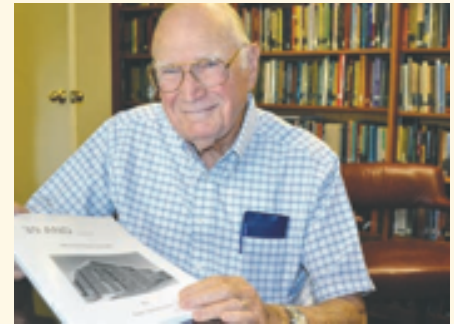
Are miracles really needed to
become a saint? **11**

The high cost of activism **12**

Is Eric Metaxas the next Chuck Colson? **13**

NC network planting good seeds
to serve others **39**

Cover photo Tony W. Cartledge. Young Jamaican dancers join in a colorful celebration at the annual meeting of the Baptist World Alliance this summer. **Story on page 4**



FEATURE

Faithful volunteer shares
missions experience
By Terri Byrd

43

FEATURES

Congregational ministry, missions calling
go hand-in-hand for Georgia pastor **36**

Whirlwind of help to Oklahoma
tornado victims **42**

Quotation Remarks	6
Editorial	7
Classifieds	28
In the Know	28
Lighter Side	29
Baptists and the Civil War	32
Reblog	33

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Global Embrace

BWA keeps working to unite Baptists

Well over a century after its founding in 1905, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) continues to facilitate communication, understanding and some measure of unity among Baptists around the globe, “networking the Baptist family to impact the world for Christ,” according to its mission statement.

Headquartered in Falls Church, Va., the BWA has a small but busy staff and an extensive array of volunteer participants who make up a decision-making General Council and a variety of departments, commissions and ministry groups.

The BWA’s work is organized around five “clusters of commitments”: worship and fellowship, mission and evangelism, religious liberty and human rights, relief and community development, and the promotion of relevant theological reflection.

Commissions appointed to support each area of commitment meet during the BWA’s annual gathering for business and dialogue. A larger “Baptist World Congress” is held every five years.

After several years of financial struggles exacerbated by the global economic meltdown in 2008, the BWA has regained a more solid financial footing. Officials recently celebrated a return to a full staff with adequate support personnel for division leaders who travel the globe to promote freedom and justice issues; facilitate conferences for youth, women and men; and provide consultation or promote healthy dialogue among the organization’s six regional bodies.

At the most recent annual gathering, held in Jamaica this past July, the General Council approved a 2014 budget of \$2.56 million, up 16 percent from actual expenditures for 2012. General Secretary Neville Callam noted that, while gifts from individual churches fell by two percent in 2012, giving by individual donors increased by two percent, and contributions from member bodies increased by 12 percent.

Member organizations from North America gave \$383,242 in 2012, while



Leaders of the Jamaica Baptist Union welcome representatives of the worldwide Baptist family to their island nation.

organizations from the other five regions contributed \$225,812. The balance of support came from individual churches and donors, most from North America.

Callam also touted the approval of a document of “Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relations,” approved by the BWA’s executive committee in March and by the General Council in July.

The document notes the increasing cultural diversity of the growing Baptist family and offers specific principles for promoting unity through respectful dialogue, mutual acceptance and a concern for the interests of others.

Callam devoted much of his annual report to the ongoing and sometimes thorny issue of how the BWA’s various regions relate to each other.

Following its inception in 1905, the BWA existed as a single body, but Baptists in Europe formed the European Baptist Federation in 1950. After considerable debate among participants, the North American Baptist Fellowship was created in 1965, followed by the formation

of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship in 1970, the Asian Baptist Federation (now the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation) in 1972, the Baptist Union of Latin America in 1976, and the All Africa Baptist Fellowship in 1982.

Various models for relationships have been tried and found wanting, with the latest effort being Callam’s initiative in calling a task force to develop a profile of the role of regional secretaries, with implications for the relationship between the regions and the BWA. That report was also approved.

The BWA continues to grow in membership. On July 5 the BWA’s General Council approved the admission of five new member bodies: the Baptist Mission of South Haiti (50,000 members in 488 churches), the Connection of Haitian Baptist Churches for Integral Mission (15,000 members in 58 churches), the Turks and Caicos Islands Baptist Union (500 members in 13 churches), the Baptist Church of Congo (2,850 members in 26 churches), and the Convention of Independent Baptist Churches in Brazil (67,908 members in 437 churches).

The BWA now includes 228 conventions and unions in 120 countries, representing about 177,000 churches and 46 million members.

During the annual gathering in July,



Glenn Stassen

the BWA honored Glenn Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, with the 2013 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award. Stassen was lauded for more than 50 years of work as a tireless theorist and activist in the cause of peace and justice issues around the world.

The General Council approved 17 resolutions, most of them expressing appreciation for various persons or causes, but also in opposition to the U.S. embargo on trade with Cuba and to call for a peaceful resolution of violence and unrest in the Middle East, North Africa, Myanmar, and the Korean peninsula. Other resolutions called for corrective action regarding child sex abuse in the church, gender inequality and basic human rights concerns around the world.

Some of the resolutions emerged from various commissions that met earlier in the week to discuss human rights, missions, theological education, ethics, the environment and other subjects.

Special sessions were held to pay tribute to George Liele, a former American slave who planted churches in Jamaica and helped to bring an end to slavery there; to early Jamaican Baptist deacon and preacher Sam Sharpe, who also worked to end slavery; to African-American theologian J. Deotis Roberts; and to Duke McCall, long-time president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a lifelong supporter of BWA, which he served as president from 1980-85.

A report on conversations between BWA representatives and Catholics was discussed, as well as ongoing dialogues with Muslims. Efforts for dialogue with the Orthodox have been rebuffed, and talks with Pentecostals have been delayed, but plans are in the works for renewed conversations with Methodists.

BWA's 2014 annual gathering will be held July 6-12 in Izmir, Turkey. The larger Baptist World Congress, held every five years, will meet July 22-25, 2015, in Durban, South Africa — the first time a Baptist World Congress has been held in Africa.

The global Baptist family is invited to join in this time of worship, fellowship and service. **BT**



BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, a Jamaican native, talks with local leaders.

BWA honors Duke McCall

Duke K. McCall, a former BWA president and a key figure in the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, was honored in a special session during the 2013 annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

McCall, who died April 2 at the age of 98, “was one of the towering figures of Baptist life,” said Bob Garrett of Dallas Baptist University, in a presentation on McCall’s legacy.

McCall served as pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, led the Baptist Bible Institute of New Orleans to become New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, spent five years as executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and was president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for three decades.



Duke McCall

During McCall’s tenure at Southern Seminary, he led the school to admit both African Americans and women to theological studies.

McCall was active in the Baptist World Alliance from the age of 16 and served in a variety of roles, including a stint as president from 1980-85.

As BWA president, McCall promoted the formation and inclusion of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and the Union of Baptists in Latin America as regional bodies. He advocated the formation of a fund to provide travel scholarships to BWA meetings, and helped facilitate the first Baptist International Conference on Theological Education.

As executive secretary of the SBC executive committee, McCall “led the denomination in an astonishing chain of achievements in rapid succession,”

Garrett said. These included the launching of Baptist Press as an independent news service, establishing the Southern Baptist Foundation to invest and administer donations, and leading the effort to raise \$3.5 million to get the convention out of debt.

When the fundamentalist movement captured control of the Southern Baptist Convention, McCall became a leading voice among moderates, once narrowly losing a race for president of the SBC. In 1990, McCall spearheaded the formation of an alternative cooperative giving system for moderate churches that was eventually incorporated into the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which formed in 1991.

McCall was such a prominent denominational statesman that historian Bill Leonard called him “the personification of the amazing organizational success and regional strength of Southern Baptists in much of the 20th century,” and saw his death as “the end of an era in Baptist life,” said Garrett.

But McCall’s influence extended beyond Baptist life, Garrett said. While at Southern Seminary, he sold the oversized president’s residence to the Presbyterians for a new seminary, and maintained close relations between the Baptist and Presbyterian schools. He also persuaded American Baptists to send area students to Southern, Garrett said, promising that his faculty would not try to convert them into Southern Baptists.

McCall’s influence was expanded through several books. Garrett cited *God’s Hurry*, which called for worldwide evangelistic outreach, and *Passport to the World*, written with W. A. Criswell after a globe-hopping trip at the behest of the BWA, appealing to various governments to allow American missionaries.

“While he was a capable administrator and visionary thinker,” Garrett said, “McCall’s chief contribution was rooted in his ability to form stable partnerships and trusted relationships with people with whom he disagreed in very important ways.”

“In that sense Duke McCall was a bearer of the Baptist spirit,” he said. **BT**

quotation remarks

“The far right is making a concerted effort to redefine religious freedom as a catch-all concept that gives ‘authentic’ Christians the right to do what they want, whenever they want, wherever they want . . . When challenged, they present themselves as victims or martyrs and claim the mantle of religious freedom as the ultimate defense.”

—C. Welton Gaddy, president of the Interfaith Alliance, and Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, in a Religion News Service commentary

“In 1966 he wrote (his most famous) essay that injected the phrase ‘civil religion’ into the public discussion of the place of religion in a pluralistic, and supposedly secular, society.”

—From a 1989 story in Christianity Today about sociologist of religion Robert Bellah, co-author of the best-selling 1985 book *Habits of the Heart*, who died July 30 at age 86

“People from all different colors and faiths were reaching out to me personally to tell me they were with us. There was an outpouring of love and support that the Sikh community had never experienced before.”

—Valarie Kaur, founding director of the interfaith group Groundswell, one year after a gunman opened fire in a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis., killing six worshippers (RNS)

“Rick spoke about the cruel things that had sometimes been written about him after the tragedy and how the opinions of others, if they ever could hurt him, could not touch him now. But of course it was not his or Kay’s imperviousness but their openness, their brokenness, that left us who attended a little more whole, a little more healed. No matter one’s faith, every worshipper walked away that day knowing they had seen God’s work being done.”

—Rabbi David Wolpe of Los Angeles, who attended Saddleback Church July 28 when Rick and Kay Warren spoke about their son’s suicide (HuffPo)

“There is so little substance to oppose reform. It’s good for the economy, for law enforcement, for families, communities, and congregations, and for the moral fabric of our nation — as a place of diversity, growth and welcoming.”

—Jim Wallis of Sojourners, saying politicians’ fear of constituencies is holding back widely-supported immigration reform (HuffPo)

“Some of us *want* to walk into a cathedral space that reminds us of the small place we inhabit in the great arc of salvation history. We want to meet the Unmoved Mover in an unmoved sanctuary.”

—Writer Andrea Palpant Dilley, 32, on her return to a traditional church (Faith and Leadership)

“We can’t earn it. We don’t deserve it. But we get it anyway. Abundantly. Audaciously. Without caveat or qualification. That doesn’t make much sense to our human understanding of justice. It doesn’t seem fair. It isn’t fair. And that’s precisely the point of grace.”

—Religion News Service columnist Cathleen Falsani

“I love the game, don’t get me wrong, but I love the Bible more. I want to help people save their lives, and have the responsibility of leading people into following Christ.”

—Darryl Strawberry, whose baseball career was marred by drug and alcohol addiction, on becoming a minister in St. Peters, Mo., and creating a Christian recovery program in Longview, Texas (USA Today)

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The gospel and the '60s not the same

Anyone else remember when the '60s were bad? Well, they are not anymore. Listen to the naysayers, who tend to speak with a holy tone, and you will hear of a glorious, ideal time to which we should all be seeking to return.

According to this fearful narrative, the last half-century has been one big rush toward hell.

Of course, that is much like what many elders in the 1960s were saying about the evil ways of that time. The only difference is the primary blame now is placed on different political activists, immigrant groups and so-called secularists rather than primarily the Beatles.

Hearing such calls to return to a yesteryear when life was ideal — and it was pretty darn good for many white males who had educational and vocational advantages — leaves me wondering what these people remember and what they have forgotten.

Despite great advances in medicine, communications technology, race relations, social services for those fleeing abusive relationships, greater legal protection of equal rights and other strides forward, modern culture still gets portrayed as one big downhill slide.

Such is clouded vision. The alarmists of today are much like the alarmists of that earlier era because — like this time in history and all other — things actually change.

However, what was considered a fearful time of social change in the '60s has become the ideal to which we are called to return.

How did that happen?

The answer is clear: That earlier time is now familiar rather than fearful. The changing present and the unknown future are what always call for alarm. And especially aging critics, who felt more productive and in control back then, want to preserve such security and influence.

Such perspectives are not based on reality.

Are there significant challenges in our modern era? Absolutely.

Should we be concerned about violence, abuse, economic issues, ethical challenges tied to new technologies and more? Yes, as in every generation.

Should we be guided by fear of change and an idealist view of a time that was once marked by much of the same criticism heard today? I find nothing honest or constructive about that approach.

Honest recollections of the late-'60s and the 1970s include hearing aging relatives and neighbors wondering and worrying aloud about the awful state of this country — along with all kind of assurances that the Lord Jesus would not put up with such and soon make a big final appearance to put it all to an end.

And now another aging generation is wringing its hands and pronouncing that our only social salvation is to return to the good ol' days that were then considered so bad.

Many Baptist sermons and writings today seem to confuse the gospel message with a fearful appeal to recover an era when institutional

church life functioned more smoothly and individual life is recalled as more stable.

However, those who teach, preach and share the gospel in other ways must be very careful. We are to call listeners to lives of sacrifice and service — and firm faith amid change and uncertainty — not to some nostalgic era stripped of its reality.

It is better not to romanticize the past or the present — nor to misrepresent either — but to live into a hopeful future in the midst of new challenges brought on by technology and social patterns that have great advantages as well as risks.

Besides, who wants to go back to smoke-filled restaurants, or having to put dimes in a roadside pay phone, or getting up to turn the TV dial to one of the three channel choices? And any Christian sensitivity to issues of equality and justice should allow for at least as much confession as warm nostalgia about times gone by.

We are better served and more able to live constructively today with a balance of both good memories of the past and a hopeful future that acknowledges both the needed and helpful strides along the way and the new challenges to be faced.

Also, it helps to know that, in about 50 years, many youth of today will bemoan whatever is taking place at that time and yearn for the slow, easy and idealistic days of 2013.

By faith we look to a time when pain and trouble are no more. But it will not be yesterday when all our troubles seemed so far away. **BT**



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New challenges

Moderates must embrace social justice to grow, observers say

New research predicting the rise of religious progressives and a conservative decline presents a challenge to those in the middle, including moderate Baptists, according to some leading Baptist and other Christian activists and thinkers.

The Public Religion Research Institute survey released in July examined the intersection of economics, politics and faith. Predicting the rise of religious progressives (currently at 19 percent) and the decline of conservatives (28 percent), it shows moderates firmly in the middle with the greatest numbers of all (38 percent).

The poll goes on to examine mostly the interplay between progressives and conservatives, attributing the latter's decline to younger Americans seeking more action-oriented, and less doctrinal, expressions of faith.

But it's that same factor, and the rise of the Millennial generation, that could spell trouble for moderate churches and denominations, according to experts who examined the study.

One of them is Brian McLaren, who said the survey suggests moderate groups may have to risk alienating traditional members if they are going to attract and keep the Millennial and other younger Christians who are driving these trends.

Specifically, that means actively embracing the social justice causes dearest to that generation, including same-sex marriage rights and issues around poverty and hunger, said McLaren, a Christian theologian, author and activist known by many for his work on the emergent church concept.

Also, moderates must avoid framing the issue in terms of the old denominational battles that once defined them, he added.

"This is not a choice between the religious right and the old religious left," McLaren said. "The ability to mobilize people for economic action will become more and more important."

PRRI Research Director Dan Cox said the findings suggest that conservative churches may have to dampen their public identification for politically conservative causes to reduce the exodus of young people from their congregations. Moderates, meanwhile, will suffer if they remain quietly in the middle of the big political and social issues of the day.

"Many churches, like political parties, will have to adapt their strategies to engage young people," Cox said.

Baptists who studied the survey drew similar conclusions, adding that even those perceived as moderate — like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and American Baptist Churches USA — may struggle if they fail to make existing progressive leanings better known.

But doing that could also jeopardize those organizations, said Bill Leonard, professor of Baptist studies and church history at Wake Forest University School of Divinity.

"CBF, ABC and sometimes SBC, they have such fragile connections to their constituent churches and individuals that public stands on these divisive social issues are very difficult for them," he said.

At the same time, it's unfair to characterize CBF and ABC exclusively as moderates. Leonard said they are progressive in varying degrees on women's ordination, and admittedly less so in some congregations on issues surrounding homosexuality.

CBF's evolving focus on missional church plants and ministries, neo-monastic communities and urban renewal efforts can also be described as progressive, he said.

Still, CBF has been quiet on same-sex marriage and gay clergy issues, allowing its churches and members to decide those issues for themselves.

"CBF folks have often ... raised questions about what it means to be moderate, and that often meant 'lukewarm' for some people," Leonard said. "So I think the term 'moderate' is in need of some revisiting for CBF types."

Others, including Baptist Brian Kaylor, see in the PRRI data an opening for moderates to capitalize on what neither the progressives

nor the conservatives usually have: balance between two extremes.

Moderates can brand themselves as places where extreme positions, right or left, are avoided and where dialogue between differing viewpoints is accepted, said Kaylor, a communications professor at James Madison University who speaks and writes on issues of faith and politics.

"There is an opportunity there, a pendulum swing away from the older generations, which could end up (on the left) with the same overbearing" attitudes often attributed to the Christian right.

However, they must not let a balanced approach be a passive approach on controversial social and political issues, he added. "If you remain silent, the only voices are on the extreme left and the extreme right."

But there are also multiple voices among progressives, which is one of the movement's draws, said Carol Blythe, president of the Alliance of Baptists.

Blythe said topics ranging from support of Palestine and gay marriage to gun violence and climate change regularly surface during meetings of the progressive organization — but not always with one voice.

"We are not afraid to talk about things," she said. "We don't avoid controversy."

That approach brings in a lot of new members. Blythe said many come to the Alliance from moderate groups, and others, just the way the PRRI survey suggests. The 139-church Alliance has grown for the past decade, adding one to two new partner congregations each year.

"I think Millennials respond well to that kind of thing," she said.

Originally, Baptists were neither moderate nor conservative, but always pushing social and political boundaries, said Blythe, a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. It's that spirit that can attract the restless, spiritually hungry Millennials and other young Christians to progressive Baptist causes, she said.

"Baptists were early progressives," Blythe said. **BT**

Policy change for Baptists starts in congregations

What do Christians, and particularly young-adult believers, want from a denomination in the 21st century?

In the 20th century, the way to influence policy very often was from the denomination. If a group with an agenda could gain the favor and support of the leadership of the organization, they would be assured that the organization — a Christian denomination, for example — would use its considerable resources and influence to further their cause.

We see this exhibited in the work of some denominations to support boycotts related to apartheid in South Africa and lobbying for civil rights legislation in the United States.

We no longer live in that world. For one thing, denominations do not carry the kind of influence and authority they once did. Most are extremely fractured over both internal and external issues.

Our friends in the Alliance of Baptists may be an exception when it comes to solidarity, but they were formed out of churches that had already made decisions on the local level to pursue a progressive agenda. Their strength is in the churches and not in the judicatory.

Second, denominational groups such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship don't have a lot of resources to toss around. Churches are more focused on maintaining control over their own mission dollars, and the global missions strategy of CBF seems to reflect this concern.

Third, churches — especially those with a congregational polity — will not defer to denominational entities on “hot button” issues, and individuals should not expect the churches to give up this responsibility.



Ircel Harrison

Those who are passionate about issues such as sexual equality, racial reconciliation and poverty will be more effective at creating change on the local level than by seeking a directive or policy from a denominational office in Atlanta or Valley Forge.

The African-American leaders in the civil rights era of the '50s and '60s came out of local African-American churches and not from their national conventions.

Perhaps a way to think about this is to contrast two military conflicts of the 20th century. World War II was a conflict of nations against nations. One might argue there were certain principles and values at stake on both sides. The way to prevail was for nation states to fight other nation states in great campaigns until one alliance surrendered and adopted a different system of principles and values.

The Vietnam conflict was very different. Despite the efforts of American forces to mount major campaigns, the decisive battles were fought from village to village and for the “hearts and minds” of the population. The emphasis was shifted from macro operations to micro operations.

If those affiliated with the CBF want to pursue a more progressive agenda, I suggest three courses of action:

1) Individuals who want change must find ways to network with one another and develop grassroots strategies. Such individuals, many of them Millennials, are already in places of leadership in denominations, churches and religious organizations. Their influence will continue to grow in this decade, and their compatriots need to encourage them.

2) Great sources of strength in Fellowship Baptist life are the CBF partners — seminaries, service providers, advocacy groups and resource providers — most birthed in the past two decades with marginal Fellowship support. As in the example of the sexuality conference held in Decatur, Ga., last year, an entity such as



McAfee School of Theology may have to take the lead to promote both dialogue and action on volatile issues.

3) The local church is “where the water hits the wheel.” In a recent ABP article, Bill Leonard commented on the “fragile connections” of local churches with judicatories such as CBF and ABC, and because these linkages can be easily disrupted, it is unrealistic to expect denominational policy statements either to be forthcoming or to facilitate change in local churches.

In the 21st century, progressive churches and individuals cannot abdicate decisions about justice and equality to denominational leaders. Churches and individuals must step up and take responsibility for the things that are important to them. **BT**

—Ircel Harrison led collegiate ministries for the Tennessee Baptist Convention and then served as coordinator of Tennessee Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (1998-2008). He is a coaching consultant for Pinnacle Leadership Associates. This column is distributed by Associated Baptist Press.

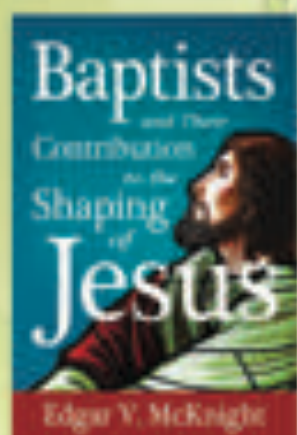
“The African-American leaders in the civil rights era of the '50s and '60s came out of local African-American churches and not from their national conventions.”

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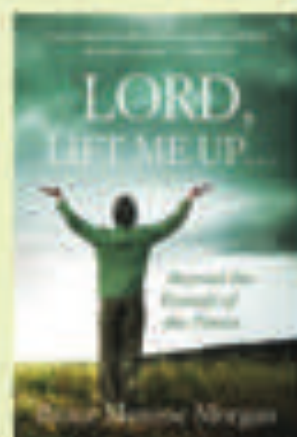
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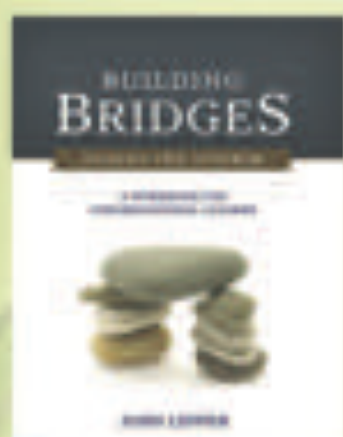
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Are miracles really needed to become a saint?

VATICAN CITY — When the Vatican announced that Pope Francis would formally elevate Popes John Paul II and John XXIII to sainthood, two things stood out.

For John Paul, it was the record speed that he reached sainthood, just eight years after his death. The only other saint to be canonized so quickly in modern times was Opus Dei founder Josemaria Escriva, whose sainthood bid took 27 years.

But for John XXIII, Francis decided to waive the church law that requires a second miracle in order to be named a saint. Asked how John XXIII could be named a saint without the required second miracle, the Vatican's chief spokesman said, "No one doubts his virtues."

With that rare, if not unprecedented, move, Francis rekindled a years-old debate in Catholic circles, with some asking whether miracles are really needed for sainthood anymore.

"I think it is time to drop the miracle requirement," says Thomas Reese, a Jesuit priest who is a senior analyst for the *National Catholic Reporter*.

"It is sufficient to look at a person's life and ask, did this person live the life of a Christian in a special or extraordinary way that can be held up for admiration and imitation by other Christians?"

According to the church, miracles are performed by God, not the saints. The saints' role is to bend God's ear, to intercede on behalf of those who pray to them and make sure that God hears their requests.

The rationale for the miracle requirement is that it proves "that the person is in heaven and listened to by God," Reese said.

It was Pope Benedict XIV, in the 18th century, who formalized the miracle requirement: Two miracles were needed to be declared "Blessed," through a rite called beatification, and two more were needed to become a saint.

(The difference between the two stages is that while a "Blessed" is venerated at the local

level, a saint is held up as an icon of faith for the global church.)

Professor Daniele Menozzi, a church historian at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, said the importance of miracles grew during the 19th century as the church was engaged in its struggle against the modern world.

"Miracles — events that science wasn't able to explain — were the church's answer to the scientific mindset," he said.

But this changed after the watershed Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, which John XXIII convened.

"As the church wasn't afraid of secularization anymore, sainthood stopped being a proof of the existence of the supernatural and became a way to promote exemplary lives," Menozzi said.

In 1983, John Paul lowered the requirement to one miracle for beatification and another one for sainthood, while martyrs — those who had been killed because of their faith — could be beatified without miracles at all.

John Paul went on to name around 500 saints and more than 1,300 blessed during his 26-year pontificate — more than in the past five centuries combined.

At the Vatican, potential miracles are vetted by a team of specialist doctors, who are called to determine whether a miraculous healing can be explained by modern medicine.

"But medicine becomes more complex and advanced by the day, so it's possible to make mistakes," cautions Peter Gumpel, a Jesuit expert who has worked on saints' causes for more than 60 years.

Today, unexplained healings make up about 95 percent of church-certified miracles. But it has happened in the past that what was considered

a miracle has been later explained by science.

For Gumpel, by looking only at physical miracles "the church ventures in a field that is not its own."

He says that the church could look for God's intervention "in the many spheres of human experience" beyond medicine.

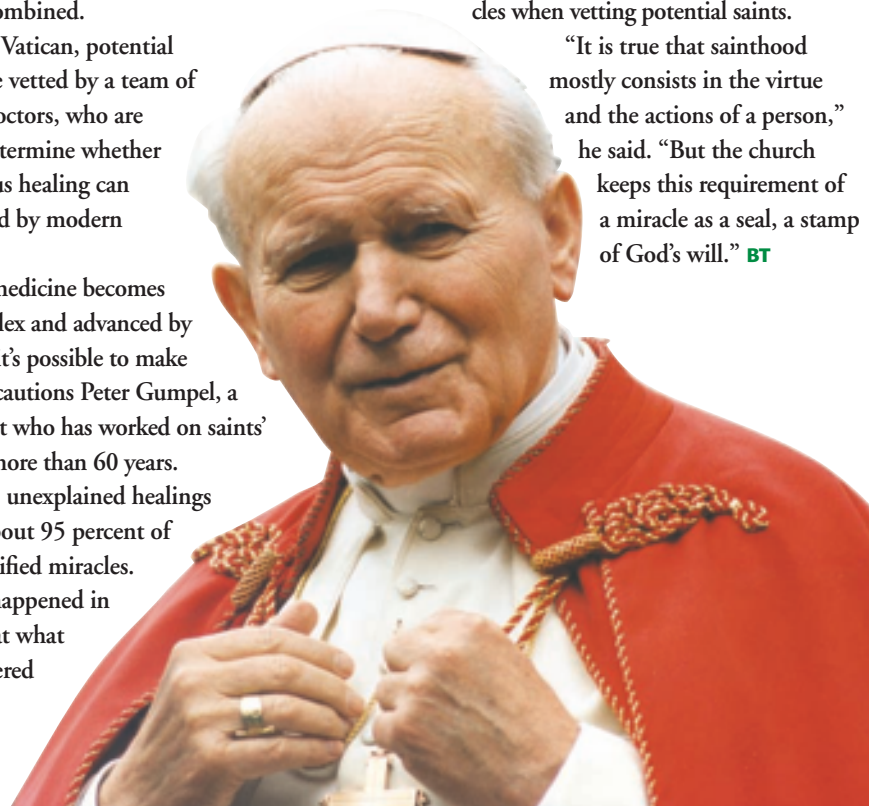
"When a couple gets reconciled, or economic help arrives against all human expectations — if there are hundreds of such cases, all after praying to the same person, then God wants to tell us something," Gumpel argues.

"According to my experience, a miracle is only the confirmation of what has been ascertained through a long study of a person's life, writings and actions," he said.

Nevertheless, a traditional miracle is still what's required in most cases, even though, as Gumpel recalls, "these are human laws, and the pope could change them if he wants."

A senior official at the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, who asked to remain anonymous because he is not authorized to speak publicly on this issue, is not convinced that the church can completely give up on miracles when vetting potential saints.

"It is true that sainthood mostly consists in the virtue and the actions of a person," he said. "But the church keeps this requirement of a miracle as a seal, a stamp of God's will." **BT**



The high cost of activism

Evangelical pastor **Joel Hunter** pays a price for political opinions

LONGWOOD, Fla. — There's a price to pay for becoming the voice of moderate conservatism and coalition politics. Even more so for refusing to march in partisan lockstep.

Ask Joel Hunter of Northland Church, Florida's largest evangelical congregation. Hunter, 65, says his suburban megachurch may have lost as many as 1,500 members, or 10 percent of its membership, as a result of his ecumenical and political activism.

But the compact, upbeat, Midwesterner is sanguine — likening membership departures to separating the wheat from the chaff.

“There is no such thing as safe leadership,” he said.

Hunter, who may be best known as President Obama's spiritual counselor, still has plenty of church members — around 13,500. And he is not the first evangelical to pay a price for taking a less traveled path.

Fellow evangelical Richard Cizik took a harder hit in 2008 when he spoke out on social issues such as gay civil unions and global climate change and lost his job as chief Washington lobbyist for the National Association of Evangelicals.

Cizik said Hunter's amiable demeanor will help him, but there's no escaping criticism when an evangelical pastor talks about political cooperation.

“Give Joel Hunter credit,” said Cizik, who now heads the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good. “He has guts, depth of conviction, and hasn't lost his integrity, nor his prophetic voice.”

A good example of that leadership was Hunter's two-day visit to Washington, D.C.

First, Hunter talked immigration reform with Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., alongside a group of Florida Jewish religious leaders. The next day, Hunter attended an annual

Jewish-evangelical leaders' dialogue, whose agenda includes issues such as human trafficking, prison reform and religious persecution around the world.

“When I advocate for these issues, I see that as part of the natural influence of the church,” he said. “Most of our members believe that it's a good thing that I'm involved in policy and political matters.”

Yet pointedly, Hunter did not stay in Washington for the kickoff of the annual Faith & Freedom Coalition Conference, a magnet for conservative national evangelical leaders, though he is a strong opponent of abortion and gay marriage.



Joel Hunter

Hunter's high-profile activism is not new. He delivered a benediction at the Democratic National Convention. Last year, Northland hosted a talk about exercise and nutrition by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Yet in the 2008 Florida Republican Presidential primary, Hunter supported — and contributed to — the campaign of former Arkansas governor and former Baptist minister Mike Huckabee.

After 40 years as a Republican, Hunter changed his registration to Independent three years ago, explaining in one statement that he did so in part because of the GOP's “growing uncivil/personal attack tone.”

“We expect the party out of power to be more negative, but the strident hyper-partisanship was something I could not support — in either party.”

In a veiled reference to the Tea Party, Hunter released another statement saying, “the outside voices hijacking legitimate political debate is not something of which I will be a part.”

In addition to his relationship with the Obamas, Hunter has been a national leader in

drawing evangelicals into “Creation Care,” a Christian form of environmentalism aimed at mitigating global climate change.

Over the past decade, he and a cohort of younger, evangelical leaders have called on others to lower their voices and shift the political center of gravity from the far right to the pragmatic center-right. They have also asked their congregations and organizations to make common cause with other faiths and denominations despite fundamental differences with mainline Protestant and non-Christian faiths over abortion and gay marriage.

To church member Richard Milam, Hunter's comments about “turning down the political rhetoric” sounded like a “left wing talking point,” and for him it was the last straw. He left Northland not long after.

Northland's leadership is trying to cope with the loss of membership, which has necessitated some staff cutbacks.

“I am somewhat concerned that people are leaving the church over Joel's involvement,” said Tom Starnes, a “shepherding elder” in the congregation. “But often they don't have an understanding of the role Joel has played and the actions he has taken.”

Starnes says that a majority of Northland members agree with him that there is value in Hunter's activism, and support his position on climate change and immigration reform.

And he gets support from others, such as Cizik, who believes change is impossible without a degree of risk taking.

“It's obvious that without leaders who have guts, and will pay the price of leadership, the evangelical movement will remain as stuck in the past today, as evangelicals were stuck in the racist past of the days of Bull Connor and Jim Crow generally.”

Cizik, who in the 1980s wrote a book called *The High Cost of Indifference*, said the price he paid for losing his job was high, but he added, “the real price is being paid by the evangelical establishment that has lost its authority due to indifference and fear.” **BT**

Northland's leadership is trying to cope with the loss of membership, which has necessitated some staff cutbacks.

Is Eric Metaxas the next **Chuck Colson**?

NEW YORK — Before evangelical leader Chuck Colson fell ill at a conference last year and later died at the hospital, it was Eric Metaxas who introduced him.

At the time, Metaxas seemed primed and ready to become the next Colson — a key evangelical leader credited with keeping Christians engaged in politics and culture through books, radio and other outlets.

Metaxas took over some of Colson's roles, including co-host of *BreakPoint*, a radio show Metaxas wrote for in the late '90s. And like Colson, Metaxas took to the Christian conference circuit, speaking on the issues that were near and dear to Colson's interests. But comparisons to Colson only go so far, Metaxas said.

"I'll always want to follow in Chuck's footsteps, but I'm a humorist, I write poetry and children's books," said Metaxas, whose most recent book, *Seven Men*, came out this spring. "Chuck was a lawyer."

But like Colson, the Nixon adviser who converted to Christianity after serving time for his involvement in the Watergate scandal, Metaxas rose to evangelical fame later in life.

For years, Metaxas struggled as a writer in Manhattan, contributing to *VeggieTales*, writing children's books, apologetics books and then biographies. But then Metaxas' 2011 600-page biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who was executed for his involvement in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, took off, selling more than 600,000 copies.

The book led to an hour-long meeting with former President George W. Bush, who gave him high praise for the book. A letter from Bush hangs in Metaxas' Upper East Side apartment. In another room, a framed letter from Woody Allen is propped up on a stack of books. Allen called Metaxas' humor pieces "quite funny."

The Bonhoeffer biography led to an invitation to speak at the 2012 National Prayer Breakfast. During his speech, he said former President George W. Bush had read *Bonhoeffer*. He then handed a copy to Obama and said, "No pressure." Obama nearly left the breakfast without the book but went back to his table to grab it.

Metaxas seemed surprised by the prayer breakfast's effect. "It somehow did something to how people saw me as a voice in the culture," he said.

At 5 feet 8 inches, with Harry Potter-like glasses, Metaxas does not fit stereotypes easily. He speaks quickly with energy and quick wit, but he suffers from chronic fatigue, something he manages by running regularly.

Born in Queens to a Greek father and a German mother, Metaxas grew up in Danbury, Conn., and graduated from Yale. He was raised in a Greek Orthodox home and still visits every Easter, singing the Divine Liturgy in the choir with his father.

An interdenominational evangelical, Metaxas has jumped around the church scene in New York. Since 2001, his family has attended Calvary-St. George's Episcopal Church. Metaxas says he attends because of the theologically conservative leadership in spite of national leadership, "which has like Wile E. Coyote sped off the cliff with single-mindedness and speed."

Before *Bonhoeffer*, Metaxas wrote a biography of William Wilberforce, an 18th-century English leader in the movement to abolish the slave trade. He said he had never thought about writing a biography.

"It's a genre I was looking forward to skipping," he said.

The summer after he became a Christian at 25 years old, someone gave him Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*. Because his mother is German, he decided to explore Bonhoeffer's story.

"Wilberforce, because of his faith, stood up for African slaves," Metaxas said. "Bonhoeffer, because of his faith, stood up for Jews. That's Christianity to me."

The Bonhoeffer biography almost died before publication. HarperOne wanted to publish a third of the book and delay publication, so Metaxas gave back the advance, a painful decision as he and his family struggled to continue to live in Manhattan. An editor from Thomas Nelson agreed to publish the book.

A *Christian Century* review suggested Metaxas hijacked Bonhoeffer for his own purposes. For instance, Metaxas will compare the Holocaust to abortions in the U.S. His wife, Susanne Metaxas, directs the Midtown Pregnancy Support Center in Manhattan.

"At times, he tends to overdo things," said John Wilson, editor of *Books and Culture*. "It would be misleading to say he has simply framed *Bonhoeffer* in a way that plays to current culture war conflict. That's not true, but that's part of it. That's one thing that he's going to have to wrestle with in the next stage of what he does."

Metaxas responds that his critics have "bitter animosity toward evangelicals and conservatives."

In 2000, Metaxas founded a series called "Socrates in the City" where he interviews leaders, mostly Christians, on the culture. Metaxas, 50, knows how to keep an audience's interest, weaving cultural and political references together, his friends say.

For now, Metaxas begins work on *Seven Women*, a book that will have short biographies of seven Christian women. In addition, he's developing a mainstream TV talk show but said negotiations are still underway.

"He's not this one-sided predictable figure," said Wilson. "The same is true of evangelicals as a whole." **BT**



Eric Metaxas took over some of Chuck Colson's roles after Colson's death, including part of *BreakPoint*, a radio show Metaxas wrote for in the mid-'90s. Photo courtesy Eric Metaxas.

7 WAYS Christians CAN USE



MOST OF US are involved with social media.

The most common platforms — Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn — help us to keep in touch with friends, family and others we may not see regularly, either personally or professionally.

Like me, though, you've probably interacted with someone in a social environment only to be scared away by that individual's singular emphasis on politics, religion or some other controversial issue.

Jon Acuff, a popular Christian speaker, has joked that there are three spiritually-approved times when we can unfriend someone on Facebook: when that person has (1) fallen in love, (2) had a new baby or (3) gotten a new puppy. He jokes that when your account suddenly becomes flooded with pictures and updates of any of these three things, it's okay to stop being friends.

As Christians, though, we are called to live in relationship with others, share one another's burdens and walk together on our spiritual journeys. Some Christian leaders have embraced social media, seeing it as a tool to carry out their calling. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in California, interacts with more than one million followers multiple times each day on Twitter and Facebook.

As a professor, I like understanding the research behind social phenomena. An article published by the Kelly School of Business at Indiana University identifies seven purposes of social media. The authors state that building a presence, sharing information, creating relationships, cultivating an authentic identity, creating conversations, being involved in groups and enhancing reputation are all key to

success for social media use.

While these authors didn't use the Bible as a scholarly reference, aren't we called to do these things? By stating our identity as Christians, God asks us to share with each other, build relationships and groups, engage in conversations, and maintain our reputation as Christ followers.

So, on the left are seven recommendations for using social media with your faith in mind.

For someone who never had the chance to use social media, Elvis probably said it best: We shouldn't go around with suspicious minds.

Social media has long surpassed being a trend and is now a force in society we need to embrace. As an online way to communicate, it offers a great opportunity to follow others who can help build our faith and in turn to share our faith with others who might be seeking God.

So, build your identity, share your faith, engage in conversations, create groups, maintain your presence, and guard your reputation. By being wise and discerning, we can use social media as a tool to nudge the Kingdom forward. **BT**

—Susan Codone is an associate professor of technical communication at Mercer University who researches church technology. Students earning the BS degree in Technical Communication in the School of Engineering can specialize in Ministry Media & Technology to pursue careers related to ministry and technology. For more information, contact Susan at codone_s@mercer.edu.

1 Put your Christian identity out there. Identify yourself and your beliefs on Facebook and other social media platforms. Be authentic about who you are.

2 Share information about what God is doing in your life and church, and how others can have such experiences. Social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter are great applications for sharing faith. More than 20 million people follow the Jesus Daily Facebook page, so sharing one's faith on social media has a solid precedent.

3 Build relationships with others. Using your favorite social media tools, whether common ones such as Facebook or niche tools like Goodreads (a site for book lovers), interact with others and create relationships in which you can share your common interests and your beliefs.

4 Maintain your presence. If you're going to use social media, stay engaged by maintaining a consistent presence. If one million people pay attention to Rick Warren every day, might a few pay attention to you? And if the time you spend nudges the Kingdom forward just a little, isn't it worth it?

5 Engage in conversations. Many of us are lurkers on social media. We read what's going on in others' lives but never contribute to the conversation. Jesus asked us to go and tell. We have an open microphone in the social media world. Others are certainly using it, and we can, too.

6 Join or create groups. Many social media applications are built around interest communities. Pinterest allows you to share pictures of your hobbies and link to others with shared interests. Many social exercise tools offer you the chance to link with others for accountability and motivation. We meet in small groups at church. Why not through social media? Go ahead, create a Google+ circle and invite some friends and see what God will do.

7 Build your reputation by making thoughtful, wise and consistent posts. People follow and connect with social media users who use social platforms with wisdom and discernment. Rather than posting about how bad an experience was for you, write instead about how you learned through it. Millions of others are seeking the kind of reputation you have to offer.

“A pastor who still *puts up with me*”



Harris Blackwood (right) chats with his pastor, Bill Coates

During my half-century and a little change on this planet, I have been a member of 12 churches. I was a member of one of them twice. I moved away and then came back.

Each one of the churches had a pastor, and I have fond memories of all of them. Church has been a part of my life since I was born. As soon as I was a few weeks old, my Mama signed me up in what was called the Cradle Roll. Nobody uses that term today, but it worked for me.

I have had successes and failures in this life, but the constant place of refuge and strength has been God's church.

For the past 14 years, Bill Coates has been my pastor. He is celebrating 15 years in the pulpit of First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga.

He has been my pastor longer than any of the others. I don't know whether that requires prayer, sympathy or forgiveness. The best I can offer is heartfelt thanks.

Not only is Bill a great pastor, but he also is a great preacher. He has a head full of snow-white hair, earning him senior citizen

discounts before he turned 50. It gives him an air of distinction.

But when he speaks, it is an aw-shucks voice honed in a simple, frame house at RFD Route 2 in Kershaw County, S.C. It is a voice that speaks from the heart of a boy raised by God-fearing mill workers who took their baby to the Cradle Roll department at Thorn Hill Baptist Church.

It is also a voice speaking from the experience of successes and failures in life. His life has taken him to the mountaintop and into the valley, and he talks freely about both.

But it is a voice that on any given Sunday may quote Shakespeare, Gandhi, Faulkner, Graham or his grandmother. Both seminary training and a doctorate in English literature from the University of South Carolina temper his well-chosen words.

In the summer of 1998, Bill Coates answered the call of First Baptist to become its

pastor. Seeing South Carolina in his rear-view mirror did not come easy, but Gainesville has become home to Bill and Claire, his wife of 37 years.

They met 39 years ago at Coker College in Hartsville, S.C. She would follow him to Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest, N.C., where they both earned their masters degrees. He makes no bones about his wife's role in his ministry.

“She's everything,” he said. “She does not seek attention, but I know she is there.”

Claire Webber was everything Bill was looking for, aside from the fact that she was a Methodist. “I didn't think my grandmother, Nan, was going to get over that,” he said.

Not only did Claire become a Baptist, but she also became a Baptist preacher's wife, which generally means life can take some unpredictable turns.

As a pastor, Bill has been there for me when I grieved, but also when I celebrated. A decade ago he officiated at the Sunday morning wedding of my wife, Allison, and me. So far, so good.

He has a wonderful sense of humor and puts up with my periodic abuse. When we have traveled, I have introduced him to strangers as my heart surgeon, the governor of South Carolina (not the one who “hiked” the Appalachian Trail), a TV weatherman and any number of noted theologians.

His favorite story involving me was when we went to see an ailing church member who was recuperating at a Catholic hospital. I showed up wearing a clerical collar, which will get you a better parking space at a Catholic hospital.

Unlike the other 11 pastors in my life, Bill Coates has become one of my dearest friends. I am not alone in that distinction. He and Claire are beloved by so many in this community from First Baptist and many other churches.

I showed up at First Baptist on a Sunday morning in 1999 and couldn't imagine being anywhere else. I was at home.

The first 15 years have been wonderful. I hope the next 15 are just the beginning. **BT**

—Harris Blackwood, a member of the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga., is director of the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety. He is also a columnist for the Gainesville Times where this column first appeared.

Answers to Baptist Questions

FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



>> QUESTION: Why do Baptists argue over the Bible?

The story of Christian history thus far is that of division rather than unity. New Testament believers disagreed on who was eligible to be a Christian.

The early Church Fathers battled over which manuscripts to include in the Bible. Creeds were crafted to establish theological correctness and punish dissenters. The Roman Catholic Church enforced proper faith by the threat of death. Protestant reformers continued the pattern of violence and death as a means of eradicating heresy.

Against this backdrop Baptists emerged in the early 17th century, quickly embracing that which was long undesirable in Christendom: diversity. Rather than dividing over theological issues or punishing dissenters, Baptists created a large enough tent of faith to include almost anyone and everyone who expressed faith in Christ and requested baptism as a believer.

Calvinists and Armininians alike found a home in the Baptist family. Closed communion was more common, but open-communion Baptists also existed. Pro-worship music and anti-worship music factions bore the Baptist name. Trinitarians and non-Trinitarians coexisted, albeit in tension, within the Baptist family. In addition, the Baptist insistence upon freedom of conscience, voluntary faith and the priesthood of all believers — rather than the old model of hierarchical, forced faith — welcomed all manner of biblical interpretation.

The Bible was the faith guidebook of early Baptists. So central, important and holy

were the words of scripture that no human interpretation was authoritative. Nonetheless, each believer was responsible for personally engaging the interpretive process under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Underneath their ever-expanding tent, Baptists allowed a wide array of interpretations and doctrines, with like-minded Baptists voluntarily gathering into local, autonomous communities of faith. From within their local ecclesiasticity and doctrinal elasticity, Baptists birthed a new vision of Christian unity, displacing creedal and theological conformity with intentional, welcomed diversity.

Disagreeing among themselves over scriptural interpretation yet remaining within the same faith family, early Baptists debated internally as much as they did with non-Baptists. As did Baptists of old, modern Baptists often fragment over biblical disagreements while yet remaining in the Baptist fold. So important is the Bible to Baptists that scripture remains the focal point of contention within the modern Baptist family.

Aside from formal exegesis and hermeneutics, Baptist arguments over the Bible, historically and currently, must be understood within broad context.

Firstly, external circumstances frequently serve as a prism for biblical interpretation. For example, only after African slavery became critical to the economy of the American South in the early 19th century did most white Baptists of the American South determine that the Bible proscribed African slavery. Historians sometimes refer to this as cultural captivity, terminology that describes the tendency of religion to sanctify prevailing social and cultural norms.

Other examples of biblical interpretation as culturally captive abound. Modern efforts to exorcise alcohol consumption from scripture derive from the popular temperance movement

in America of the late 19th century. The concepts of rapture and premillennial dispensationalism, birthed in the early 19th century and long considered heresies, became accepted by many as scriptural orthodoxy following global pessimism brought about by World War I. Creation science, birthed in the 1960s, seeks to conform the ancient, pre-science biblical text to modern scientific methodology. Each of these contemporary interpretive schematics has many Baptist followers, ensuring ongoing biblical debates with traditional Baptists.

Secondly, Baptists' belief of the priesthood of all believers ensures that the personal biases of all persons reading scripture — rather than the personal biases of a select few, as remains the case in much of Christendom — are woven into the interpretive process. Accordingly, Baptists' arguments over the biblical text openly take place from within a democratic context, a model opposite from that of a top-down mandated belief system. Hence, biblical debates and discussions among Baptists are personal, often emotional, and informed by personal experiences, environment, education, knowledge, agendas and prejudices. Disagreements among individuals are thus inherent within the Baptist family, a faith group in which diversity is fundamental.

In the end, Baptists argue over the Bible because the Baptist faith recognizes that all humans are fallible creatures and equal in the eyes of God through the cross of Christ. Within the environment of a fallen world and blemished humanity each believer bears the privilege and responsibility of reading and interpreting scripture. While there is no perfect interpretation of scripture, a responsible stewardship of the biblical text — with context and personal biases taken into account — is necessary to produce healthy, rather than destructive, arguments over the Bible. **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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Oct. 6, 2013

Feeling Small

Have you ever met a person who cited Luke 17:7-10 as his or her favorite Bible text? Have you ever heard a sermon on it? Pastors are tempted to avoid it: the image of God as a slave-driver (from the Bible, no less) is jarring to our sensibilities and seems disconnected from our preferred picture of God as loving and compassionate.

The unpopularity of this text may be one reason why Luke is the only gospel author to cite it – and we may wonder why he didn't leave it out as he was choosing what materials to include in his account of Jesus' life.

Warning words (vv. 1-6)

A brief look at the larger context may provide some help. If you were reading through Luke's gospel, you would note that with chapter 17, Jesus turns his attention from the Pharisees (16:14-15) to the disciples. Luke 17:1-10 consists of several sayings of Jesus whose relationship is not obvious, but discernible.

There are things disciples need to know and challenges they need to hear. Chapter 17 begins with a warning against the danger of causing others to stumble (17:1-2). Impeding the faith of a "little one" (*micros*, either a child or a new believer) is serious business – so serious that Jesus said it would be better to be thrown into the sea with a heavy millstone tied around one's neck than to be found guilty of sidetracking another's faith (compare Mark 9:42 and Matt. 18:6).

Disciples must be good stewards of their influence, recognizing that many



Luke 17:1-10 –
"So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

others are paying attention to their example. To lead someone away from Christ rather than toward him is a serious failure.

Have you ever contributed to someone's falling away from the church and from Christ? The knowledge of that can be a heavy load – enough to make you wish you'd been fitted with concrete shoes and left at the bottom of a lake.

Some years ago a survey asked representative "unchurched" people why they were not Christians. One of the most popular answers was "because I know some Christians." That's the last thing Jesus would want to hear.

But you probably know some "Christians" who could have that effect. Could you imagine anyone putting you in that category?

The second and third sayings challenge the disciples to be willing to rebuke other disciples when they sin (17:3) and to forgive them when they repent, even against them directly (17:4). Furthermore, Jesus said, forgiveness should continue even if the repentance becomes so repetitive it seems rote or insincere.

The call to be accountable to

each other grows from the terrible consequences Jesus has predicted for those who cause others to stumble. Fellow believers should care enough about each other to call them to account when they are in danger of leading others astray.

The call to forgive, even seven times in a day (Matt. 18:21-22 extends it to 77 times), is more concerned with the offended person's willingness to forgive than the sinner's willingness to repent. Jesus' command, as R. Alan Culpepper has pointed out, is emphatic, a future tense used as an imperative: "You will forgive him" ("Luke," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IX [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 322).

Jesus' strong words led disciples to realize how far they were from living out Jesus' teaching, and concluded that their own faith was not yet strong enough. Thus, they responded "Increase our faith!" (17:5).

As if the Twelve weren't challenged enough, imagine their surprise at Jesus' response. On the one hand, it appears Jesus was implying that the disciples had no faith to increase, or that they had failed to understand faith at all. If they had faith

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the size of a tiny mustard seed, Jesus said, they could command a big mulberry tree to be uprooted and cast into the sea – suggesting that their current faith was practically non-existent. 📖

On the other hand, Jesus' intent may have been that the disciples didn't need to increase their faith so much as to exercise the faith they already had. Who could imagine transplanting a tree from the earth to the sea? But even the tiniest amount of faith, when acted on, could do great things.

Why anyone would want to throw a tree into the sea is unstated and unimportant. The point is that the kind of faith Jesus called for is strong stuff, and apparently not easy to grasp. 📖

Under the sea: Note that both of these hard teachings involve something being thrown into the sea. Disciples who cause others to stumble would be better off if they were weighted down and thrown into the sea, but disciples with mustard seed faith would have sufficient power to uproot large trees and plant them in the sea. Was the connection intentional? What do you think?



Thankless work (17:7-9)

It was in this context that Jesus told the troublesome parable found in 17:7-10. We are called to forgive without keeping score and to have genuine faith, however small. But even if we are successful, “the parable that follows now affirms that regardless of how much we do, we cannot do more than is expected of us” (Culpepper, p. 323).

The story Jesus told presupposes a society in which slavery was an accepted and commonly understood aspect of everyday life. Jesus' use of an illustration drawn from a servant's life does not mean for a moment that Jesus endorsed slavery; he simply used the well-known institution to make a point his hearers would understand.

The parable presumes the case of a farmer who has but one servant. As such, the slave is expected to do double duty, working as a field hand during the day and as a domestic servant by night. The slave tends the master's farm and then tends to the master's dinner before looking after his own needs. The slave does not expect to be congratulated, thanked or rewarded for such tireless efforts. He or she has done only what is expected of a servant.

Slavery metaphors don't communicate as well in contemporary America, where we abhor the very notion so much that it's hard to get past our negative perception to see the point. But, we all know a single mother who slaves day after day to care for her children – not for reward, but because it is what she has to do. 📖

Or, perhaps we know a soldier who has been deployed and lives in constant danger, not by choice, but because it is his duty.

Jesus wanted the disciples to know that this was the way he was working. He wandered Palestine without a home, taxed himself through constant ministry, and poured his life into the disciples. Beyond what they had yet seen, he would soon take on the role of a suffering servant who would die for the sins of the world – not to receive a reward or the praise of those he saved, but because it had to be done, and he was the only one who could do it.

Thankful work (17:10)

Jesus' disciples were to follow his example. They were to put others above self, live an upright life, challenge one another, forgive one another, and exercise a faith they did not yet understand.

Notice how Jesus subtly switched the story around as he told it. He began by leading the disciples to think of themselves as the slave owner who expected to be served, with no need of showing gratitude. Having led them to see

themselves in that position, Jesus reversed the roles and transferred the disciples to the servant's place: “So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done.’”

The word “worthless” would be better translated as “unworthy.” Jesus did not suggest that anyone is worthless. The point is not that God's servants have no innate value, but that they will always be unworthy of the grace that has been given to them. Their works can never earn a favored place in God's heart. 📖

Thus, the disciples were to see themselves as servants. No matter what God told them to do or how far God called them to go, their obedience would be only what was expected. 📖

The situation has not changed, of course. The would-be disciples who populate our churches are subject to the same teaching. No matter what Jesus asks of us and how noble or self-sacrificial it might seem, it is only what we are expected to do.

More than 10 years ago, in the poor industrial town of Mabopane, South Africa, I met a woman named Mary Lwate. Fueled by an unending compassion for children – mostly AIDS orphans or older children trying to survive in garbage dumps – “Mama Mary” and a crew of volunteers were caring for 200 girls and younger boys in a 1,400-square-foot house with an attached shed.

Mama Mary's work so impressed visitors that overseas supporters established the Mabopane Foundation to purchase land and begin construction of Ya Bana Village, where even more children can be cared for, and in better conditions. 📖

Lwate and other selfless caregivers I know may sometimes be praised, but they do not expect to be congratulated for what they do. They realize that the work must be done, and they can't imagine not doing it, with or without any salary.

They would be comfortable quoting the words of Jesus: “We have done only what we ought to have done.”

Can we say that? **BT**

Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Luke 17:11-19

Oct. 13, 2013

One Came Back

Health and wholeness – not to mention happiness – are often closely correlated with an attitude of gratitude. A person who recognizes the amazing wonder of his or her living human body as a gift is more likely to take care of it. Those who rejoice in life’s daily blessings as ongoing grace are less likely to be stressed or angry – factors that contribute to cardiovascular disease, obesity and other health problems. 📌

Have you ever connected gratitude with faith? Last week’s lesson raised important questions about the meaning of faith and God’s demands on the faithful. It was a heavy text from beginning to end.

Today’s text strikes a lighter tone, but no less serious. We see faith at work – surprisingly, perhaps – in the form of humble gratitude for the healing and wholeness God brings. While we often think of faith as something required prior to healing, in this story the order is reversed: a leprous Samaritan man is healed. Afterward, his thankful heart and recognition of God’s work are seen as expressions of faith.

On the road again ... (v. 11)

Luke is the only gospel writer to include this story, and he uses it to balance the demand-filled first half of the chapter with a return to the theme of grace and salvation. If the disciples who were called to live and forgive in ways beyond their human abilities should be considered unworthy servants who had done only as they were told (17:1-10), how much less worthy would be a band of leprous men



Luke 17:17 –
"Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?'"

who have only heard of Jesus?

With this story, Luke also returns to the overriding motif of Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem, begun with 9:51 and mentioned again at 13:31-35 and 14:25. Luke has Jesus encounter the 10 outcast men on the road as a reminder that, despite the periodic stops for dinner and debate with the Pharisees, for interaction with the crowds who followed, and for private teaching of his disciples, Jesus has been slowly making his way toward a date with death. This story takes place “on the way to Jerusalem,” in a border region where both Jews and Samaritans might be found. 📌

As the story progresses, we note that the disciples have dropped out of the picture. Although they were presumably present and witnesses of what took place, all of the action and dialogue takes place between Jesus and a group of unnamed and unwanted men.

Ten leprous men (vv. 12-14)

Careful readers note that Luke had a special concern for the poor, for the sick and for women, all of whom were easy targets of oppression. Luke not only tells more stories about such people, but also

humanizes them in subtle ways. He does not call the 10 men Jesus met in v. 12 lepers, but “men who had leprosy.” 📌

The biblical term for “leprosy” does not refer to Hansen’s Disease, the condition known as leprosy in the modern world, but to a variety of painful or disfiguring skin conditions. 📌 Jewish law included strict rules requiring that persons suffering from skin diseases – which were considered unclean – had to remain outside the camp lest they contaminate other people.

Leviticus 13-14 contain very specific instructions, including the demand that leprous persons should make themselves conspicuous by wearing torn clothes and keeping their hair unkempt. They were to dwell outside the camp and warn all who approached by covering their mouths and shouting “Unclean, unclean!” (Lev. 13:45-46; see also Num. 5:2-3).

The men Jesus met were thus following the rules, having established a small community of their own outside of town. The outcasts kept their distance from Jesus as required by law, but instead of shouting “Unclean,” they called out “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (v. 13). 📌

When Luke tells us that Jesus “saw” them (v. 14a), he is introducing

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Have mercy!: The word for "master" in v. 13 is not the typical word that could be translated as "Lord," but a generic term for a person in authority. "Have mercy on us" was a common prayer and found often in the Psalms, but is non-specific. One would suspect that the men had heard of Jesus' healing powers and "have mercy" may have been intended as a request for healing, but the same phrase could have been used – and is still used – by persons seeking alms.



an important motif of seeing and what happens when we truly see. When Jesus saw the men, even from a distance, he understood what they needed and immediately acted to help them.

How do we understand Jesus' simple command to them: "Go and show yourselves to the priests"? Some interpreters see it as a test of faith or at least of a willingness to obey Jesus' command, while others think of it only as the first step required by the law before a person cured of his disease could re-enter society, and many other steps would follow.

This is not the first time Jesus instructed someone to act with the anticipation of healing, but before it actually took place. Earlier, Jesus had told a paralyzed man to stand up (5:25) and a man with a withered hand to stretch it out (6:10). He told a dead man and a dead girl to rise (7:14, 8:54). Jesus' act of healing and the person's acting as healed were closely intertwined.

"The lepers were required to act as though doing what Jesus asked would make a difference, even though there was yet no tangible evidence that it would" (John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary [Word Books, 1993], 846).

As Nolland suggests, "they had at least to believe it was worth a try." And, "As they went," the text says, the men were "made clean" (v. 14b).

The healing of any advanced skin disease would have become immediately apparent. No more itching or pain, no more suppurating sores, no more crusty white patches or fiery red rashes, no more awful stench of diseased flesh – they were clean!

One thankful Samaritan (vv. 15-19)

Try, if you can, to imagine yourself among that group of men who had suffered so long but were suddenly healed. What would you do? Really?

Nine of the men continued on their way to find the priest. The text doesn't say they were ungrateful: perhaps they felt an obligation to complete the assignment Jesus had given them, and show their cleansed flesh to the priest.

But one man felt an even greater obligation: the compulsion to turn back and offer thanks to the one who had effected his healing. When "he saw that he was healed" (note the second instance of "seeing"), he turned back to Jesus rather than continuing to find a priest.

Luke's careful use of language is instructive: the man came back "praising God with a loud voice" (v. 15) as he "prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him" (v. 16a). Luke wants us to see that the man recognized God as the source of his healing even as he fell on his face with thanksgiving before Jesus, an implicit recognition of the close relationship between Jesus and God and the in-breaking of the Kingdom through Jesus.

The man could have gone on to the priest and praised God there, or later at the temple, but he felt compelled to include Jesus in his initial prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Luke makes a point of saying "And he was a Samaritan" (v. 16b).

Why does this make a difference? Did this man feel more free to abandon the order to show himself to a priest, since he was a Samaritan and not welcome in Jewish towns? Probably not, because the

Samaritans also worshipped Yahweh and had their own version of the Pentateuch, though they worshiped on Mount Gerizim instead of in Jerusalem (see John 4).

Samaritan priests would have been available, but the now-healed leper sensed that his first obligation was to Jesus.

Jesus appeared to be surprised – both that nine men did not return, and that the one who did was a Samaritan. "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (vv. 17-18).

Jesus' sharp questions imply disappointment that the nine did not return and wonder that the one who did was a Samaritan. As he had previously lamented the lack of faith in Israel (7:9, 8:25, 9:41), Jesus seemed chagrined that only one responded to healing with faith and gratitude, and embarrassed that the one thankful man was not even a Jew.

But in that one who returned, Jesus saw something greater than physical healing. Ten men had met Jesus, but only one had encountered God; ten had been healed, but only one had become whole. "Get up and go on your way," Jesus told him. "Your faith has made you well."

The Greek word behind "made you well" is the same word that means "saved." The sentence could have been translated "Your faith has saved you." The grateful Samaritan found a depth of healing that went beyond that of the other nine.

This text challenges readers on several levels. When we see others' needs, do we respond as Jesus did or look the other way? The thankful man's identity as a Samaritan leads us to think also of the "Good Samaritan," who saw a man in need and had compassion while a string of pious Jews crossed to the other side of the road (Luke 10:29-37).

Secondly, when we see what Jesus has done for us – through healing or forgiveness or the blessings of everyday life – how do we respond? Do we take the time to express gratitude and faith, or do we go on about our business like the nine others who were healed?

What we see – and what we do – can say a lot about the health of our souls. **BT**

YOUTH

October 6 — October 27, 2013

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

Thank You

Luke 17:1-10

"Thank you" are two words often said by someone with manners. There are hundreds of cards at Hallmark with the words "Thank you" on them. Words, when meaningfully said, are worth more than the payment received. We all want to be thanked for what we have done for someone else, but Luke 17 shares with us that we are to serve in the name of Jesus without expecting a "Thank you" in return.

Jesus has turned his attention away from the Pharisees and is now speaking directly to the disciples. In case they are wondering if what he is about to tell them is important, he reminds them it would be better for them to drown than to cause a new believer to stumble. (That would also

lead me to pay a little more attention to what Jesus had to say!) But knowing they will all fall short, Jesus reminds them they are to forgive and forgive and forgive again when a wrong has been done to them.

Jesus addresses those who cause others to sin, talks about what to do when someone sins against you, and now speaks to those disciples who think their faith is mature and finished. Jesus says if they have real faith, they will be able to cause a mulberry tree to be uprooted and planted into the sea. You can almost see the letdown on the faces of the disciples as they realize they have a long way to go.

Jesus reminds them they are to do all of this without expecting any thanks. They are to serve, because that is what they have been called to do.

OCTOBER 6

Think About It:

The disciples gave up everything to go and follow Jesus, and then Jesus told them they were to do all of this without any reward — without even a thank you. How far are you willing to go without a reward to serve Jesus?

Make a Choice:

We make choices throughout the day. How often do we take time to think about how those choices affect others? Think about the things you did yesterday. How did those actions affect others?

Pray:

Ask God to give you strength and wisdom so your choices will honor God.

Thank You

Luke 17:11-19

Christmas has come and gone. Or maybe it is your birthday. Or maybe you have just finished opening up all your graduation gifts. Whatever the occasion may be, after you have opened your gifts, your parents remind you that you need to write each gift-giver a thank-you note. It seems like a dreadful task at the time, but have you ever been on the receiving end of the thank-you note? Receiving the note is even better than giving the gift, because you know the gift was appreciated. In Luke 17 we read of a leper who returns to Jesus to offer a sincere "thank you."

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus

encounters 10 men with leprosy. They ask if they can be healed, and Jesus grants them their wish. The 10 men then leave to go show themselves to the priest. But one of them returns to Jesus to thank him. The other nine are under no obligation to come back and thank Jesus. They are in fact doing what the law requires of them: showing themselves to the priest so they may enter into the community again.

But Jesus bestows a special blessing to the one who returns to offer thanks, and he does so before going to seek out the priest. Jesus reminds him that it is through his faith that he has been made whole. The other nine may have been healed, but it is only this one who has been made fully whole.

OCTOBER 13

Think About It:

How quick are you to offer thanks and show gratitude? Are you more like the healed man who returned to give thanks or those who did not? Who do you need to thank today?

Make a Choice:

Offering thanks is a choice that requires us to notice the ways God and others care for us. Will you choose to notice and be among the first to offer thanks?

Pray:

Offer a prayer thanking God for at least three specific ways God has cared for you this week.



Youth Lessons by **David Cassady** and online youth teaching resources (at nurturingfaith.net) by **Jeremy Colliver** build off of the Bible lessons by Tony Cartledge.

Just Keep Swimming

Luke 18:1-8

Luke 18 has nothing to do with fish or looking for someone or a *Finding Nemo* type of search for someone. What Luke 18 does have in common with Dori's slogan — "Just keep swimming" — is that the widow in the text shows the same perseverance as she comes before the judge day after day.

Jesus gives away the ending of the parable in his introductory line: pray always and do not lose heart. If you are paying attention at all, you will expect the main character in the parable to show this sort of persistence. And lo and behold, Jesus doesn't let us down. The widow in the story continues daily to come to the

judge to ask for justice. The judge, who does not know God, continually refuses her until, at last, her persistence pays off and he grants her request.

Before you get too excited thinking you can become a millionaire by continually praying, notice what the woman has been praying for — justice. If we pray always and do not lose heart, we can expect God to give us justice. We will be vindicated not through blessings of wealth and health, but through the justice of God.

The question then is not whether there will be justice but if Jesus will find people who pray in this way. Will Jesus find a people of faith? When Christ returns, justice will also arrive, but will Jesus find a people of faith to whom it can be granted?

OCTOBER 20

Think About It:

The widow in our story had absolutely no power in front of the judge. When we look at the unfairness of the world, it is easy to feel powerless. Does this parable give us hope that we can change things for the better?

Make a Choice:

We pray for a lot of different things. Many of these things are self-serving. In your time of prayer today, will you choose to pray for those things that will serve you or for those things that will bring justice for others and our world?

Pray:

Pray that God will bring justice and fairness to those who are hungry, hurting, scared or oppressed.

Look at Me

Luke 18:9-14

We all know someone who enjoys being the center of attention. It might be the celebrity who does an act of charity because the cameras are on him. It might be the athlete who takes all the credit for the team victory. It could be someone in your youth group who wants to share all the drama going on in her life and what she has done to fix it. We all know of people like this. It comes as no surprise that Jesus tells us a parable about a person like this in Luke 18.

This parable is about a self-righteous man — told to a group of people who think highly of themselves. The Pharisees are a group of men who firmly and excessively

uphold the law. Some of them take greater pride in what they are doing instead of why they are doing it. The first character in the parable is this sort of Pharisee. The second character is a tax collector who is getting rich by taking more than the fair share he is supposed to collect. Everyone knows he is doing wrong, but there is no way to stop him.

Jesus' parable describes the two men as they offer their prayers to God. The Pharisee offers a praise of himself to God, while the tax collector offers a prayer of mercy. Jesus explains that the tax collector will be exalted because he humbled himself, while the Pharisee will be brought down low because he exalted himself instead of God.

OCTOBER 27

Think About It:

We are constantly tweeting what we are doing or posting pictures to Instagram of where we are. We get retweets and likes that boost our egos to post again. How often do we do the right thing and want it to go unseen?

Make a Choice:

Will you consider the ways you are already good or focus on the ways you can improve and grow?

Pray:

Ask for forgiveness for those times when you think of yourself as better than others, and ask God to help you humbly grow and improve.

Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Luke 18:1-8

Oct. 20, 2013

Persistent Prayer

Have you ever found yourself so tired or worn down that you wanted to quit, but knew that you had to keep going, to “hang in there” even when it was hard?

Think of a runner “hitting the wall” in the middle of a lengthy race. Think of a young mother with two jobs and a colicky baby who wonders how she will make it through another day. Think of an aging man or woman who serves as caretaker for a spouse who suffers from dementia and requires constant attention.

How does one keep going under such circumstances? Perseverance requires at least two things: a personal commitment to stick with it, and a firm hope that the crisis will pass and better days will come.

This theme is at the heart of the parable that involves an unjust judge and a persistent widow. ⬇

The setting (v. 1)

The early editors who divided biblical scrolls into chapters and verses begin a new chapter with this parable, perhaps because it addresses the issue of prayer, as does the story of the Pharisee and tax collector that follows it (17:9-14).

The account we find in 18:1-8, however, is not a beginning but an ending. It concludes the preceding section in which faith has been addressed from several angles (see the previous lessons from 17:1-10 and 11-19), leading into an apocalyptic address about the Son of Man’s coming to bring justice to the world and full fruition to the Kingdom of God that has become manifest in Jesus



Luke 18:8 –

“I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

(17:20-37; compare Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21). ⬇

In these verses that lead up to chapter 18, Jesus insists that the anticipated coming of the “Son of Man,” a typical messianic expectation among the Jews, would take place suddenly and unexpectedly, as people were going about their daily business.

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the early church re-envisioned the Jewish expectation of a messianic age as the return of Christ. So, although Jesus had yet to reach Jerusalem in Luke’s narrative, Luke’s readers would have had Jesus’ post-resurrection identity as the “Son of Man” in mind.

This is the setting for the story of the unjust judge and the persistent widow in 18:1-8. It begins with a call for a prayerful life that does not lose heart (v. 1) despite the injustice of the present world, remaining faithful in the hope of Christ’s return to vindicate the righteous and make all things right. The text closes on the same theme – though not optimistically – wondering if the Son of Man will find any faith when he returns (v. 8).

The parable (vv. 2-5)

Now that we understand the context, we realize that the parable, found only in Luke, is *not* about getting one’s prayer-shaped requests granted through much wheedling of God.

It’s easy to see how one might reach this interpretation: Luke begins with the interpretive statement “Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray and not lose heart” (v. 1). The following story involves a widow who wanted something and a poor excuse of a judge who finally gave it to her. ⬇

If a no-account, uncaring judge will finally grant the petitioner’s wish, one might think, how much more can we expect God to answer our prayers for health, wealth and happy children?

Take note, however, that what the widow wanted was *justice*. An opponent – perhaps one of her late husband’s family members who was failing to provide for her as called for in the marriage contract – was doing her wrong. While her request probably involved some sort of material

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good that was being denied her, the central plea was for vindication in the face of the one who was making her life miserable. 📖

This is a far cry from the sort of prayer that asks God for healing or an unexpected check in the mail. The widow's plea is for justice, even as the prayer of early Christians was often for vindication in the face of those who opposed their faith and made their lives hard.

In days of trial or persecution, believers would need to pray for Christ's return – thus expressing continued faith – and not lose heart.

The parable has two main characters, both of whom are essential to the story. One is not more important than the other. We first meet a judge – whether Jewish or a Herodian functionary is unstated – who is completely unfit for his office (v. 2). 📖

The second character is a particularly persistent widow who has been wronged. Through the stories he tells, Luke shows a particular interest in widows and their plight. 📖 The law provided clear protections for widows, but the law was often ignored.

Despite the depressing circumstances of the story, Jesus likely told it with a smile on his face because it includes a bit of a joke, a turning of the tables on the self-serving judge. It is yet another example of Jesus' surprising ability to use unsavory characters as examples for teaching. Earlier, he had held up a dishonest business manager as one who could teach the importance of acting decisively in a time of crisis (Luke 16:1-13, see the Sept. 22 lesson). Now, he uses an unjust human judge to provide an insight into the character of the eternal judge.

The text assumes that the widow's cause was just, but her righteous cause had no effect on the self-focused and hard-hearted judge. He persisted in refusing to give her justice, though she was equally persistent in coming to court day after day after day (the tense of the verb indicates repeated action).

This woman must have been quite a character. Perhaps you have known indomitable women who were

determined, aggressive, willing to do whatever it took to accomplish what needed to be done -- people such as Rosa Parks or Mother Theresa or countless others who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of justice for all, compassion for the least, or the needs of their families.

The widow would not take "No" for an answer, and though the judge kept refusing to listen, she kept demanding justice until she wore him down. Finally, in a brief conversation with himself, the judge decided that he would grant her justice before she exhausted him completely.

The funny part, which rarely makes its way into translation, is that the term translated as "wear me out" literally means "punch me in the face," or "give me a black eye." 📖

We've been told twice that the judge didn't care what people thought of him, so he probably wasn't expressing a metaphorical concern that her persistent complaints would give a black eye to his reputation. He seems to have been afraid she would actually slap or punch him – or at least browbeat him with her perpetual pleas for justice.

The irony is rich: a powerful judge overwhelmed by a powerless widow's persistence.

The point (vv. 6-8)

With v. 6, Jesus offers an interpretive word. If a mulish magistrate on earth can be persuaded to grant justice, how much more can we count on the judge of heaven and earth to vindicate those who have put their trust in God?

Remember the eschatological context of these verses: Believers may face arduous opposition and difficult days, but they should persist in faith and prayer, confident that God will ultimately vindicate them when Christ returns.

The translation of v. 7, especially the second half, is very difficult, with scholars

debating whether it means that God will be patient (the more natural meaning), or that God will not delay in coming to the aid of those who suffer injustice.

This becomes potentially problematic for those who read this promise 2,000 years later, knowing that millions of believers have suffered and died in the meantime, and the Son of Man has not returned to set things right. (For more, see "The Hardest Question" online).

Jesus' teaching about the coming of the Son of Man that preceded this text (17:20-37) did not give a timetable, but emphasized that the end would come suddenly, at a time no one expected. In v. 8, Jesus insists that vindication will come "soon." Even though two millennia have passed, we must remember that in the light of eternity, "soon" can take on a much broader meaning than we usually assign it.

The question is not when God will come or whether God is willing to vindicate the righteous. The question is whether, when the Son of Man comes, he will find faith (v. 8).

Will believers follow Jesus' challenge from v. 1, persisting in prayer and not losing heart? Or when he returns at the end of the age, will faith have disappeared from the earth?

The question is an open one. As with many of his parables, Jesus leaves the story unresolved, so that those who hear it (or read it many years later) can decide for themselves how they will respond.

How will you? **BT**

Wear me out: It's interesting that we have the same idiom in English, but in reverse. While the Greek term "strike me below the eye" could mean "wear me out," in contemporary English (at least of the southern variety), one may describe a firm spanking or physical beating with the phrase "he/she wore him out." 📖

Bible Study

Luke 18:9-14

with Tony W. Cartledge

Oct. 27, 2013

What Happens in Between

Have you ever known someone who could, as the old saying goes, “strut while sitting down”? We meet one of those characters in today’s text. He’ll be easy to make fun of – until we realize that we might be more like him than we realize.

Have you ever known a truly humble spirit? Someone who often makes mistakes, but recognizes his or her shortcomings and readily seeks forgiveness?

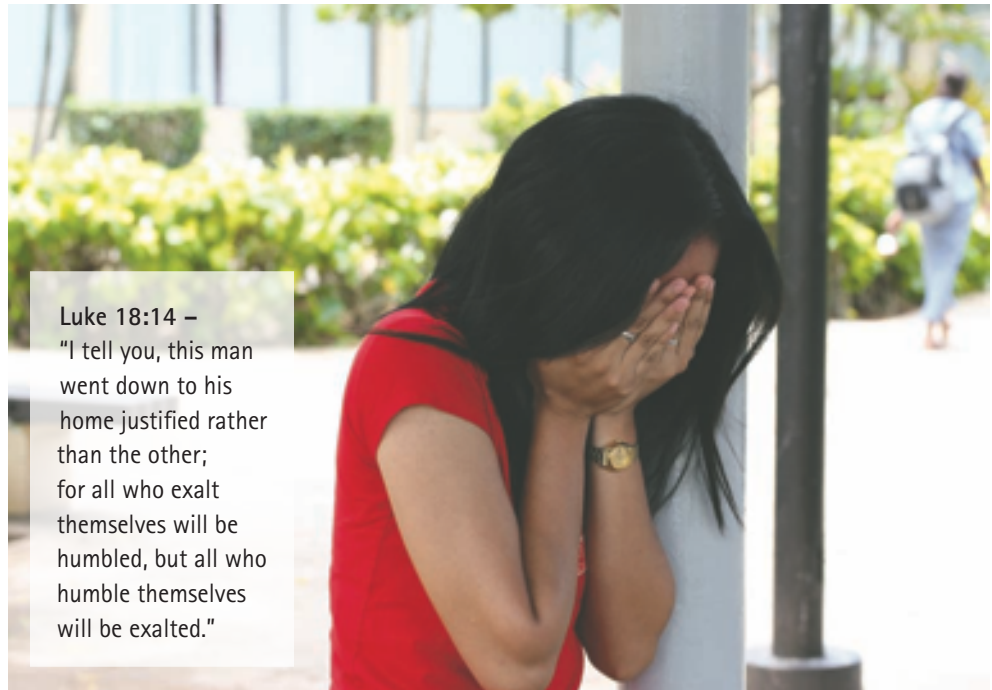
We’ll meet one of those people, too, and see if he holds a mirror to our own attitudes about what it means to be righteous – or even religious.

The set-up (v. 9)

This story relates to the preceding parable in that the subject of prayer is involved, but it also begins a new section of stories about entering the kingdom of God from a position of inferiority or deficiency: through humility (18:9-14), through the simple but limited faith of children (18:15-17) and through leaving all to follow Jesus (18:18-30).

Luke has a penchant for tipping his hand with an introductory note indicating his view of the parable’s purpose (see, for example, 18:1), and this one is no exception: “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt” (v. 9).

Some of those people might have been in Jesus’ daily entourage of followers. Some of them might have been among the disciples – remember other stories of how they sought to impede the work of others who were doing miracles in Jesus’ name



Luke 18:14 –
“I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

but were not of their party (Mark 9:38), and how they argued among themselves about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24-27).

Some of those people might be reading this text today. Do we look sideways at other people in church, quietly judging whether we are more righteous than they? Would we be offended if a notorious womanizer or an old man stinking of beer and the street slid into the pew beside us, head bowed?

We must be careful not to let the obvious point of the parable disguise its hidden subtleties.

The parable can be read in two ways, both with a twist. In Jesus’ day, Pharisees would have had a generally positive reputation and tax collectors would have been seen in a wholly negative light. The unexpected twist is that the righteous Pharisee comes up short and the penitent tax collector goes home justified.

Luke, however, has told so many stories involving both Pharisees and tax collectors that the readers’ view is reversed: we expect by now to think of Pharisees as self-righteous hypocrites, and of tax collectors as crooks who are willing to reform when confronted by Jesus. From

this perspective, the twist comes in the realization that we may be more like the judgmental Pharisee than the penitent cheat.

The story (vv. 10-13)

This story, like the one before it, has two main characters, with God lurking in the background. The first person is a Pharisee, a member of a religious party that promoted perfect obedience to the law.

↓ The Pharisees were so zealous that they went beyond the requirements found in the Pentateuch and sought to obey many additional rules developed by the rabbis in an attempt to prevent anyone from violating the most basic precepts. ↓

Because we are so attuned to the routinely negative portrayal of Pharisees in the Gospels, we usually fail to appreciate their laudable efforts to please God by scrupulously following every jot and tittle of the law. And, we should avoid seeing this story as a broadside against all Pharisees: it was and is entirely possible to follow the law while also treating others with grace and compassion.

In every group, however, there are bound to be those who take such pride in

Additional background information online where you see the “Digging Deeper” icon



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their personal achievements that they can't help but stand in judgment on those who don't measure up to their standards. The man in Jesus' story would have been one of those: one whose outward pride masked an inner insecurity that required him to look down on others in order to feel good about himself.

The other major player is a tax collector, also known as a "publican." Tax collectors such as this man were Jews who worked for the Romans in extracting tax money from fellow Jews, earning an unsavory reputation as turncoats and swindlers. 📖

How could such a man dare to show his turncoat face in the temple? In truth, the tax collector made every effort *not* to show his face, refusing to look up as he snuck into the temple courtyards to pray in deep contrition.

So we have these two men, both standing in the temple, probably at one of the two appointed daily prayer times (9 a.m. and 3 p.m.). It is likely that we are to think of the popular afternoon gathering, when a lamb would be sacrificed on the altar, incense burned, and priestly prayers offered in behalf of the people.

The Pharisee stood with his head and hands raised to heaven in the typical posture of prayer. His words, however, were not typical for one who seeks God's grace. 📖

Indeed, his prayer of thanksgiving seemed designed to indicate that he needed no grace. He looked up but prayed

Tithing: The Pharisees were so persnickety about tithing that they would tithe from something as small as their kitchen herbs, and even take a tithe from items or food they had purchased, in case the merchant had not already tithed from his wares. Jesus criticized those who tithed from herbs like mint and rue, but did not practice justice or the love of God (Luke 11:42). 📖

sideways, reminding God of how righteous he was by expressing thanks that he was not like other men, who might be robbers or rogues, adulterers or even someone so reprehensible as the tax collector he could see from the corner of his eye (v. 11).

Likewise, he thanked God that he could pat himself on the back for his resolute piety, even to the point of fasting twice a week and tithing from everything that passed through his hands. 📖 📖

The publican, in contrast, stood "afar off," perhaps in a back corner of the courtyard. He knew that he would not be welcome, and wished to remain as inconspicuous as possible.

The tax collector prayed with his eyes downward, not daring to "look God in the eye" by facing heavenward. Though he faced down, his prayers were directed up, offering a simple but abject plea for mercy on a sinner such as himself.

The wretched man's attempt to avoid attention soon fell victim to the depth of his contrition, as he began to beat his chest and perhaps to repeat his brief mantra for mercy. 📖

The take-home (v. 14)

With v. 14 we find the second of two bookends that frame the parable. Jesus began the parable by saying "two men went up to the temple to pray" (v. 10). 📖 Then, when prayers were ended, each "went down" to his home (v. 14). It's what happened between the going up and the coming down that mattered.

"I tell you," Jesus said – a polite way of saying "*Listen up!*" – "this man (the tax collector) went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Here is the switch: the Pharisee thought of himself as so righteous that he needed no help from God because he had attained righteousness the old-fashioned way, as the Smyth Barney commercials

used to say, by *earning* it.

But he was wrong. He was blinded by his pride. He didn't realize that his super-righteousness had driven a wedge not only between him and others, but also between him and God. As we learned from the rich man and Lazarus, you can't dig a moat between yourself and others without separating yourself from God, too.

The Pharisee's hall-of-fame piety had not moved him to love the people God loves, but had driven him away from them. As John Nolland puts it, "If grace does not lead to grace, it turns out not to have been grace at all" (*Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary [Word Books, 1993], 877).

Do you remember those stories from Luke 15, the ones about being lost and found? They had been directed against the overly righteous, too, against people who kept themselves apart from people who were both physically and spiritually needy, lest their piety be contaminated. 📖

But Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) – including tax collectors. And he spoke with divine authority when he pronounced the penitent publican as the one who was "justified" – made right with God.

The story is about two men who show us two different pictures of God. For the Pharisee, God was limited to a theological box constructed by the law: God had to love the righteous (him!) and reject the sinner. The penitent publican, on the other hand, recognized that God is free, and capable of forgiving even a sinner like himself.

The parable is a warning, as Peter Rhea Jones argues, that when we approach God, we need to lay down not only our sins but also our virtues (*Studying the Parables of Jesus* [Smyth & Helwys, 1999], 256). Focusing on our spiritual accomplishments and comparing ourselves to others is a sure-fire way of missing God altogether.

This points to a danger inherent in religion, even to faithful living: We are tempted to become proud of our piety. Sometimes the most religious people can be the farthest from God.

Jesus has framed a compelling picture: two men, two prayers, two outcomes. Where are you in the picture? 📖

Classifieds

Associate Pastor in Family Ministries: The Baptist Church of Beaufort is seeking candidates for the position of associate pastor in family ministries who is responsible for providing leadership and oversight in Christian education, spiritual formation and all other ministries (with the exception of music) to families. Primary emphasis is on families with school-age children (both two-parent and single-parent households) and married couples of the same life stage. This staff member shall serve in a supervisory role for other staff members related to family ministry (such as ministers/directors of preschool, children and youth ministries). Minimal requirements include a master's degree from an accredited seminary or related institution, at least 7-10 years experience in a related ministry (youth, children, etc.), and a proven capacity to supervise others in ministry. The Baptist Church of Beaufort relates on the state and national levels with both the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as internationally with the Baptist World Alliance. Interested candidates should send their résumé to Search Committee, P.O. Box 879, Beaufort, SC 29901.

Minister of Music: Trinity Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., is prayerfully seeking a full-time minister of music with full compensation and benefits. Trinity is dually aligned with SBC and CBF. Worship is traditional/blended with 400-475 in worship attendance. Experience and a master's degree are preferred. Please email résumé to tsimons@trinitybaptistchurch.org. No phone calls please.

Minister to Students: First Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga., (carrolltonfirstbaptist.com) is seeking a minister to students for junior high through college age. This is a full-time position, salaried with benefits. This person should have a call by God to this work and some previous work experience in student ministry, and be able to work with the church staff in providing pastoral care to the entire congregation. A seminary education is preferable. First Baptist is a 168-year-old congregation in downtown Carrollton. We support both CBF and SBC. We encourage qualified candidates, male and female, to submit résumés to steve@carrolltonfirstbaptist.com.

Christian Byrd is the new coordinator of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Mississippi.

M. Dwaine Greene will become the 24th president of Georgetown College in Kentucky on Oct. 21. He comes from Campbell University in North Carolina where he is provost and academic dean.

Ryan Forbes is minister of music and worship at First Baptist Church of Clemson, S.C. Earlier he served North Broad Baptist Church in Rome, Ga., and First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga.

Ronnie Kiehm is pastor of Farmville (Va.) Baptist Church, coming from Evergreen Baptist Church in Milledgeville, Ga.

Aileen Mitchell Lawrimore is minister to youth and children at First Baptist Church of Weaverville, N.C. She was ordained to ministry by First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C.

Alan Sherouse is pastor of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, N.C., coming from Metro Baptist Church in New York City.

In the Know

Otto M. Spangler Sr. died Aug. 3 in Gainesville, Fla., at age 77. He served as Baptist campus minister at the University of Florida from 1972 until his retirement in 1999. An active member of Gainesville's First Baptist Church, he was longtime chaplain for both UF Gators athletics and the Gainesville Quarterback Club.

Warren Woolf died July 15 in Atlanta at age 91. He directed the Baptist Student Union at Georgia Tech, his alma mater, from 1950-1966. He then served the former SBC Home Mission Board where he retired in 1984 as director of personnel. He was a member of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., for nearly 45 years.

Emerson and Ivy Wu were commissioned by American Baptist International Ministries to serve as development workers in Macau.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia announces the appointment of part-time campus ministers to lead Cooperative Student Fellowships: **Scott Lee** at University of Georgia, **Daniel Elliott** at Mercer University, and **Dan Stockum** at Georgia Tech. **BT**

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Lucky strikes

At 2 o'clock the girl at the counter said: "It's \$12 per person per hour or you can all bowl for \$5 until 6:00, but you don't have to bowl the whole time."

Our \$5 was not being used to pay for the most up-to-date equipment. The roundest ball I could find had been attacked by an angry bowler with an ice pick. I believe the bowling balls were a ploy by the owners to encourage new bowling ball purchases in their curiously named "Pro Shop." I admit the glow-in-the-dark skull ball was tempting.

The computerized scorekeeper dealt in estimates rather than exact numbers. The ball return never returned Graham's first ball — perhaps "Thunder Ball" chose to team up with some other bowler. The shoes were, however, as are all bowling shoes, fantastic. Only the most stylish footwear has both men's and women's sizes printed on the heel.

The atmosphere was inspiring — multiple NASCAR schedules on the wall, "Snakes on a Lane" T-shirts, and 7-year-olds bowling with the bumpers that eliminate gutter balls.

To our left was a family who also bowls once a year, but to our right were serious bowlers ("Alley Gators") in serious bowling shirts who brought their own bowling balls in special zippered bags, polished shoes, polishing cloth, talcum powder and beer.

The members of my family are at about the same skill level. Carol does a cute little hop on her left foot as she knocks down one pin at a time. Caleb started with a slight case of ebowla — you couldn't hear a pin drop. When he finally nailed one, I wanted to shout, "I can't believe it's not gutter!" Whenever Graham did well, he enjoyed saying, "That's how I roll."

Bowling is a great sport for talking to yourself: "Keep your mind out of the gutter." "I am Don Carter" (the only bowler I can name). "You don't have another frame to spare."



"Let the pins fall where they may." "Call me butter 'cause I'm on a roll."

For a while we took it seriously, but by the end we were rolling the ball between our legs. I won, but do not want anyone to make a big deal of it. What happens at the bowling alley stays at the bowling alley.

We ended up having a strikingly good time with the pin pushers. Bowling is right up our alley. What's not to love about a sport in which you are expected to eat nachos and pickle sickles during the game?

Artifacts for a game similar to bowling were found in the tomb of an Egyptian youth who died approximately 5200 BCE. Ancient Polynesians rolled stones at objects from a distance of 60 feet — the same distance as from foul line to headpin. During the third and fourth centuries, bowling was a religious ceremony. German parishioners had to roll an object at a pin or kegel (from which we get the word *kegler* for bowler) to avoid performing an act of penance.

The sport of kings (which most people think is horse racing, but it ought to be bowling) has a bad reputation. "Gutter" sounds low-brow and "strike" seems

violent, but I am growing in my appreciation for this sport that does not penalize the overweight.

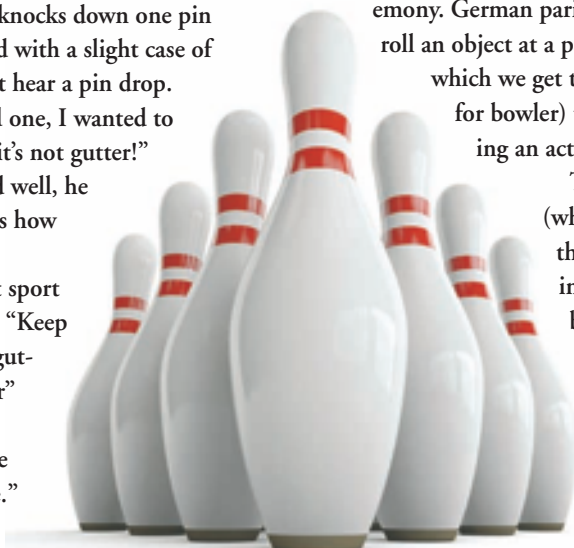
Bowling has a simple elegance. The pins are up. Then the pins are down. You know exactly how you did. Bowling is honest.

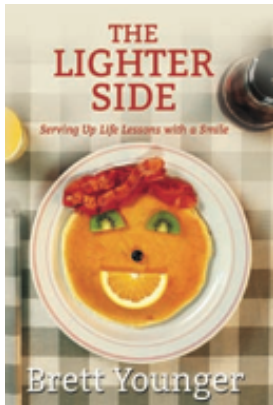
Could it be a coincidence that most of us have never heard of a church golf league, a church hockey club or a church gymnastics association, but there are lots of church bowling leagues? Church bowling teams have great names: "Holy Rollers," "Lord of the Pins," "Pin Pals," "Tenpin Commandments," and "Let There Be Strikes."

A life-size diorama at The International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame portrays Martin Luther bowling on the single lane at the side of his home. Luther, an avid bowler according to the curator, "once preached a sermon which, if put into bowling vernacular, proclaimed we all strive for perfection in life. But if we roll a gutterball, all is not lost."

Bowling is not going to replace prayer or fasting as a spiritual discipline, but every now and then we should join the gutter fingers, pin heads and rolling pins. We try so hard to get so much done that we forget to have fun. We should bowl — maybe even more than once a year. **BT**

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





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Putting relationships ABOVE ASSIGNMENTS

Ask a real estate professional, “What are the top three reasons a property will sell?” and the answer almost always will be “location, location, location.”

The church, however, is entirely different. Location is not the main reason a church will thrive — nor is it economic wealth, worship style or highly educated people.

The secret to a thriving church is relationships, relationships, relationships.

Webster defines relationship as “connecting or binding participants.” This is the description found in Acts 2:42-47 that affirms, “They devoted themselves to the fellowship.”

Relationship is not a new idea for the church. In creation, God sought fellowship with humanity. Genesis 3:8 tells us, “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he walked in the garden in the cool of the day.”

God comes to us to engage us in relationship. To have a relationship with God, we must believe that God wants the best for us.

To be a member of the body of Christ, we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. This allows the Spirit to work in the garden of the heart to produce the fruit described in Galatians 5:22-23.

As the Spirit changes us, we reflect these changes back to God and in relationship with other people.

In an interview by Mark Galli in the March 2013 issue of *Christianity Today*, William Paul Young said: “Relationship is about learning to trust. Trust is connecting in a huge way to the character and nature of God, because you cannot fundamentally trust someone you don’t know loves you or is for you.”

For some people in the church, their relationship with God is interpreted through their relationship with pastoral staff. Can pastoral staff, as William Paul Young says, be trusted to love laypersons and be for them?

Can laypersons know that even if they disagree with pastoral staff, they will be loved and cared for? Are there times when we can agree to disagree because we care for each

other? Is pastoral staff investing time building relationships?

One of the ways pastoral staff and lay leaders can be proficient in relationship building is through Emotional Intelligence (EI) — introduced in 1995 by Daniel Goleman.

Goleman wrote the internationally best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995, Bantam Books) that spent almost two years on *The New York Times* best-seller list. He developed the argument that non-cognitive skills can matter as much as IQ for workplace success according to Wikipedia.

Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, using Goleman’s model, wrote *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and established TalentSmart, Inc. to further explain the model. Emotional Intelligence is divided into two major categories: “personal competence” and “social competence.”

“Personal competence is your ability to stay aware of your emotions and manage your behavior and tendencies,” they wrote. “Social competence is made up of your social awareness and relationship management skills; social competence is your ability to understand other people’s moods, behaviors and motives in order to improve the quality of your relationships.”

In their 2011 training material titled “Discovering Emotional Intelligence,” Bradberry, Greaves and DeLazaro say that our brains are hardwired to make us emotional creatures. In the early days of human existence, knee-jerk emotional reactions protected people from danger. But we are no longer stepping



outside our caves reacting to danger.

Although emotions are still vital, the meaning we give them and how we think about them determines our success. It is important to combine emotions with thinking, thus avoiding an automatic reaction. Automatic reactions are intensified by our personal history. Goleman describes these reactions as “emotional hijackings.”

Studies show IQ accounts for 10-25 percent of our performance. IQ is not what we know, but our innate ability to learn.

Personality can predict 4-9 percent of our performance in certain roles. Personality is a set of behavioral tendencies that become relatively stable in our 20s.

Sixty percent of our success is determined by emotional intelligence. More importantly, emotional intelligence can change because it is a set of skills that can grow.

Bradberry, Greaves and DeLazaro say that an effective relationship must meet three criteria: (1) my needs, (2) your needs and (3) the requirements of the relationship.

If the ministers of a church are meeting the relational needs of each other, their work will thrive. As laypersons observe the healthy relationships, they will seek similar relationships and meet challenges in a new way.

When we think about pastoral-staff relationships and pastoral-lay relationships, how well do we meet the criteria stated by Bradberry, Greaves and DeLazaro? Do we put the relationship first, or are we more interested in accomplishing a task?

Do we truly want to meet the needs of others as we accomplish a task? If we are meeting each other’s needs first, we will be able to accomplish much more together than just completing an immediate assignment. **BT**

—Jerry Chiles of Raleigh, N.C., is a retired Christian educator and a certified Emotional Intelligence trainer with TalentSmart, Inc.



Role of associate ministers during pastoral transition needs clarity

By Melissa Fallen

"I will retire effective June 30." Those simple words from our pastor raised a lot of questions for me about what the future might hold, not only for the congregation but also for me as an associate pastor.

I discovered many resources about the steps a congregation can take to facilitate a healthy transition to its next pastor. However, I found very little guidance on how staffs negotiate this process.

As part of my Doctor of Ministry project at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, I interviewed other ministerial staffs to learn about the interim period in congregational life. The question at the forefront was: What can congregations, staffs and interim pastors do to make this period the best possible growth experience for everyone?

The interim period is a naturally anxious time in the life of a congregation. Leadership is negotiated in different ways when the pastor's seat is vacant.

Nothing is more critical than having clear lines of communication between the interim pastor, staff and congregation. So I developed a list of conversation starters that might help congregations clarify and guide the role of the associate pastor during a pastoral transition.

Role of the interim

If a church chooses to employ an interim pastor, that person will have a different relationship with staff than the pastor did. It is important to clarify what the expectations are of the interim serving in the pastoral role.

How many days each week will he/she be on site? Will he/she supervise the staff? If so, what will that look like?

What about funerals, baptisms, weddings,

etc.? Will the interim take the lead role in conducting those? Will that role be shared with the associate staff? Will the associate(s) be asked to carry out those duties?

There is no "one size fits all" answer to these questions. Instead, a congregation can discuss these questions with the interim pastor and associates to determine what the best working relationship might be for them. Most importantly, roles regarding leadership in these areas must be clearly defined before issues arise.

The search process

As the interim process moves along, the congregation will begin to form a search team for a new pastor. As résumés pour in, associate staff members need clarification about their role in the discernment process.

The first question to ask is whether or not associate staff members will be considered for the pastorate position. Conventional wisdom leans against this, but the congregation must decide what it believes is best for its situation and stick to the decision.

The second issue regards involvement of associate staff members in the search process. Questions stirring in their minds include: "Will I like this person? Will he/she like me? What if he/she doesn't value my ministry? What if the new pastor has a different style of leadership? What if I have to find a new job?"

This kind of anxiety can cause distraction for associate pastors. They need reassurance of their place in the congregation and a definition of their role in the search process.

Every congregation will determine the level of involvement differently, but at the very

least, associate staff members need access to a pastoral candidate prior to issuing a call. It will lower anxiety levels and make for a much smoother transition if the associates know their opinions are valued.

Love one another

This sounds really simple, but it is vitally important to love one another during transition periods. Everyone is grieving in some way following the loss of a pastor.

Things are changing, and the future is uncertain. Approach it together.

If you are a church member, find ways to support your associate staff. There is nothing more defeating to an associate pastor than feeling like "second best" or that the congregation is "settling" because the pastor is absent. Associate ministers are gifted and trained to handle many ministerial duties. Affirm them, and give them an extra pat on the back for the gifts they offer to the church.

Associate ministers also have an even greater responsibility to care for the flock during transition. Even if the church hires an interim minister, the associates usually have the longer tenure, and people appreciate the stability and calm that tenure can bring.

To associates, don't hide out in your office until the new pastor arrives, but be available and sensitive to the broader needs of the congregation during this period.

The transition to a new pastor can be an exciting time in the life of a church. With clear communication among the congregation, associate ministers and the interim pastor, the transition time can build a strong foundation for an entering pastor and years of effective shared ministry. **BT**

—Melissa Fallen is the associate pastor for older adults and administration at Huguenot Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.



BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

This month in Tennessee, Union forces occupy Knoxville, seize the Cumberland Gap and take Chattanooga in rapid succession and with few casualties. Yet the advance comes to a sudden and bloody standstill when Confederates win the Battle of Chickamauga in the greatest Union defeat in the western theater of the war, totaling some 34,000 casualties, second only to Gettysburg. Despite the victory, Confederate losses are greater. Retreating to Chattanooga, the federals retrench for more battles that are sure to come.

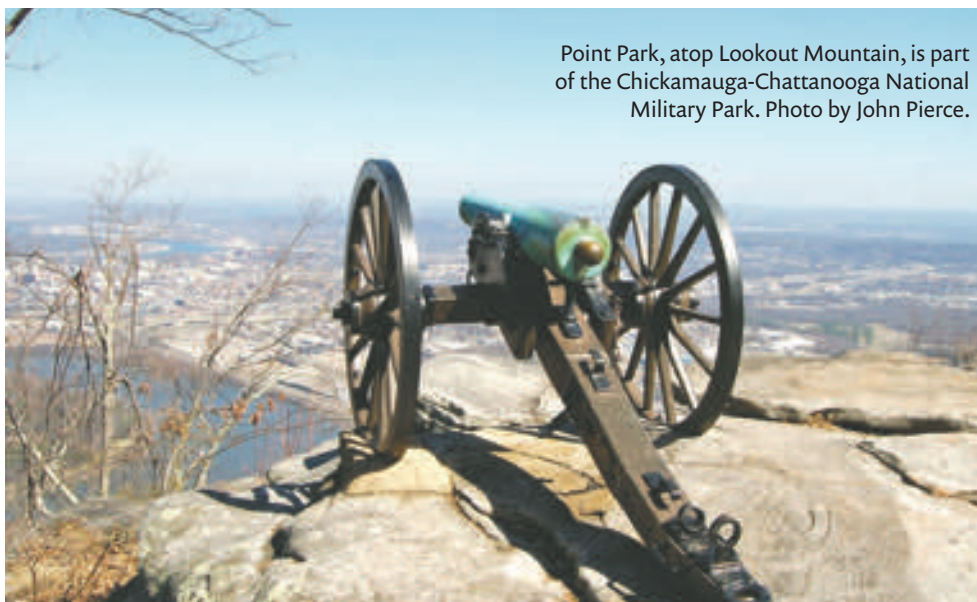
Meanwhile, earlier Confederate losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg have led to unprecedented revivals among soldiers and on the home front. Southern Baptist newspapers routinely report mass conversions, yet largely ignore growing army desertions. In associational gatherings throughout the South, army mission work is highlighted and defiant support of the Confederacy voiced.

An editorial in the North Carolina Baptist *Biblical Recorder* echoes sentiments publicly voiced among white Baptists:

Our reverses are not ruinous. They are what must be looked for in a war of such magnitude. And if rightly received, they will be among the most powerful agencies for good to the nation. ... What we shall gain by this war will be blood-bought; and so sacred will be these treasures, that the people of the confederacy must ever cherish and defend them next to their religion. Every man, not now fit to be a slave, must place a proper estimate on these rights and blessings for which we contend; and must ask, in all the fervor of his patriotism give me a place where I can aid in achieving the independence of this land. And, having found his place, he must stay there and labor, and suffer, and be hopeful, and wait for deliverance that a just God will bring to a Christian people struggling to be free...

A Confederate Baptist mother in Kentucky, however, writing in her diary, is not fully persuaded by such lofty rhetoric:

The South has had many reverses and to me, a short sighted worm of the dust,



Point Park, atop Lookout Mountain, is part of the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park. Photo by John Pierce.

150 YEARS AGO

September 1863

those late reverses look almost irreparable. Yet I know in the hands of an Omnipotent God those very things that make my heart sink and flesh cringe may ultimately prove the best things that could have happened for the cause I deeply & devotedly cling to. I have also been anxious, O, so very anxious, to hear from our darling boy far away in the Confederate army... Now I feel so anxious to know how that sickness terminated, where he is, & what he is doing. O, would it please God to guard & guide our loved one, shield him from disease & death in battle, and bring him safely home to us at the right time, if it be His sovereign will. And if it be decreed that we should see that manly form and dear face no more on earth, may it be Thy will we should meet in that bright, glorious world, where wars cannot come, where sickness and sorrow, pain nor death are felt nor heard no more. ...

Within the United States, the Erie Baptist Association of New York convenes and, offering sentiments similar to other northern associations, passes resolutions of loyalty to the

Union and support of freedom for slaves. The latter states:

Resolved, That we have special occasion for thankfulness to God, in the emancipation last January, of nearly three millions of our fellow men from bondage, and still another such occasion in our recent National victories.

Hundreds of thousands of Africans yet enslaved grow more hopeful, while freed persons exercise their newfound autonomy. The African-American Baptist congregation in Union-occupied Port Royal, S.C., holds a special event to raise funds for the creation of a monument to Col. Robert Shaw, commander of the 54th Massachusetts African Regiment killed in action in July. In Washington, D.C., 21 African Baptists, now free but exiled from their home in Fredericksburg, Va., establish the Shiloh Baptist Church.

Late summer and early fall thus witness the now-weary tale of battlefields strewn with bodies. Yet the war is increasingly transformed apart from the battlefield by defiant white southern men and despondent white southern women, Confederate army revivals and desertions, ebullient Northern civilians and growing political will, and hopeful slaves and autonomous free blacks.

Appeals to God and providence aside, final triumph, dark and distant, demands human determination. **BT**

When greed trumps history

By Tony W. Cartledge

Political crises and massive uprisings in Syria and Egypt are not only taking a toll on human life, public resources, and economic wellbeing. They're also contributing to an unconscionable desecration of history.

Syria, a cradle of ancient civilization, may have more important archaeological sites than any other country in the world. But formerly pristine sites that were identified but not yet excavated are starting to look like moonscapes as prospectors armed with bulldozers and automatic weapons search for valuable artifacts to sell on the black market, destroying every hint of historical context along the way.

The Roman city of Apamea is a current target, and invaluable sites such as Aleppo, Mari and Ebla are also endangered. Most of the looted goods are fenced through black marketers in Turkey and Lebanon.

In neighboring Jordan, the threat is not civil war but an unsteady economy and the hope of quick riches.

Local legend has it that the Ottoman Turks, who ruled the area from 1516 to 1918, owned mounds of gold, much of which they buried



Syrian rebels walk through rubble and damaged buildings near the Aleppo's Umayyad Mosque on Feb. 11, 2013. Reuters/Aref Heretani

before fleeing British forces. It's also believed that supernatural powers such as genies guard some of the gold, leading looters to cite exorcism verses from the Quran while prospecting.

In Egypt, looters have taken advantage of the current chaos not only to dig in poorly protected sites, but also to attack and clean out state-owned warehouses of artifacts, or to brazenly rob museums of precious treasures. While they make a few dollars from the robberies, operators at the top of the chain can

make many thousands of dollars on a single prize sold to wealthy collectors.

Meanwhile the world's cultural heritage is impoverished.

For most of us, there is little we can do other than shake our heads in dismay and (hopefully) pledge that we will never purchase looted artifacts. But we might also want to stop for a moment and think about how we look at our own past, and to be careful about what we trash and what we treasure. **BT**

Giving and receiving

By John Pierce

True generosity is not based on what one gets in return. Yet while we don't (or shouldn't) give in order to receive, it often works that way.

It did for veteran Atlanta Braves pitcher Tim Hudson who suffered a major ankle injury in a July 24 game against the New York Mets.

Hudson and his wife Kim are widely appreciated for the charitable work they do in person and through their foundation. Particularly, they are known for brightening the dark experiences of children who are seriously ill.

Suddenly, the tables turned.

Steve Hummer of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that the staff and patients at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta made it their mission to let Huddy know he was loved.

Early messages of support to the Hudsons included snapshots of young patients holding baseballs inscribed with get-well messages. The staff dressed in Braves attire in tribute to a faithful friend, and the hospital even served baseball fare in his honor.

The world of professional sports is so



Tim Hudson

often marked by big egos and big money, scandals and win-at-any-cost abuse to one's self and others.

But this tragic incident at the first-base bag revealed the best of humanity in the sports spotlight. Eric Young Jr., the Mets player who accidentally inflicted the injury, was most remorseful. He rushed to Hudson's side immediately, expressed his sorrow when the pitcher was placed on a stretcher, and then wiped tears from his eyes as he walked back to the dugout.

His expression of kindness was just the first. Kids with much bigger concerns than a crushed ankle quickly reached out to one of their heroes.

Oh, what lessons to be learned — including the reality that sowing seeds of kindness often results in a bumper crop of goodness in return. **BT**

Nurturing Faith: *Texts and Themes for 2014*

BY TONY W. CARTLEDGE

*Order the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies within *Baptists Today* at 1-877-752-5658 or nurturingfaith.net.

Jan. 5 – John 1:10-18

“The Word That Walks”

In Jesus we learn what God is like – and how to live as God’s children.

Season of Epiphany

Jan. 12 – Acts 10:34-43

“Who Converted Whom?”

Cornelius and company became Christians, but Peter may have had the most significant conversion of all.

January 19-February 23

Things That Matter

Jan. 19 – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

“Certain Strength”

Paul thanks God for the Corinthians’ progress in the faith and affirms his confidence in them.

Jan. 26 – 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

“Perilous Polarities”

Divisions and polarization can threaten even strong people, and strong opinions can lead to strong divisions.

Feb. 2 – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

“Foolhardy Wisdom”

Paul’s thoughts on wisdom and foolishness may be surprising.

Feb. 9 – 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

“Spiritual Secrets”

Some things are beyond purely mental comprehension.

Feb. 16 – 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

“Baby Talk”

The Corinthians’ immaturity frustrated Paul, who called them babies and pleaded with them to grow up.

Feb. 23 – 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

“Quality Construction”

All believers begin with the foundation Christ laid; what we build on it is up to us. How do our temples look?

Mar. 2 – Psalm 2

“More Than Meets the Eye”

Believers, like kings in Israel, are “adopted” by God and brought into a special relationship that calls for transformation.

Season of Lent

March 9-April 13

Songs for Serious Seekers

Mar. 9 – Psalm 32

“Forgiveness”

Observing Lent begins with repentance and forgiveness.

Mar. 16 – Psalm 121

“Preservation”

The confidence needed for bold living comes from God.

Mar. 23 – Psalm 95

“Worship”

The closer we come to God, the more we are drawn to worship.

Mar. 30 – Psalm 23

“Trust”

Sheep thrive when they trust the shepherd.

Apr. 6 – Psalm 130

“Hope”

Even the strongest believers face trials that force them to rely on hope.

Apr. 13 – Psalm 118

“Multi-tasking”

The psalmist blessed God, prayed for deliverance and celebrated God’s answer – all at once.

Season of Easter

Apr. 20 – Matthew 28:1-10

“Who’s Afraid?”

The post-resurrection Jesus told the women not to be afraid, but others needed to hear the message more.

April 27-June 1

The Challenges of a Changed Life

Apr. 27 – 1 Peter 1:3-9

“Hopeful Faith”

Faith and hope are closely related; we can’t have one without the other.

May 4 – 1 Peter 1:17-23

“Deep Love”

Deep love isn’t a surface phenomenon; it comes from the heart.

May 11 – 1 Peter 2:13-25

“Paradoxical Living”

How can people be slaves and free at the same time?

May 18 – 1 Peter 2:1-10

“Living Stones”

The temple of God is built of the living stones of God’s people.

May 25 – 1 Peter 3:13-22

“Good Suffering?”

Can anything good come out of suffering?

June 1 – 1 Peter 5:6-11

“Lion Taming”

Temptation never goes away, but it can be tamed.

June 8 – 1 Corinthians 12:4-13

“One and Many”

The gift of the Spirit connects many persons into one body – a marvelous, miraculous feat.

Season after Pentecost

June 15-July 27

Words about Words — from God

June 15 – Genesis 1:1-2:4a

“And God Said ...”

The Bible begins with a lesson on the creative power of divine speech.

June 22 – Jeremiah 20:7-13

“Fire in the Bones”

Jeremiah learned that a personal message from God isn’t easy to ignore.

June 29 – Jeremiah 28:1-17

“Not Just Yoking Around ...”

The words Jeremiah heard led to some peculiar behavior and intense confrontations. Are we ready for that?

July 6 – Zechariah 9:9-13

“Prisoners of Hope”

Those who have been captured by hope are free to hear God’s promise of freedom.

July 13 – Isaiah 55:6-13

“The Fertile Word”

Where God’s words are planted, amazing things grow.

July 20 – Isaiah 44:6-20

“The Real Thing”

God’s word to Isaiah reveals the glory of God and the folly of idolatry.

July 27 – 1 Kings 3:3-15

“A Listening Heart”

Deep wisdom comes from listening – to God.

Aug. 3 – Matthew 14:13-21

“A Picnic to Remember”

Jesus fed the multitudes with far more than physical food.

August 10-August 31

Talking Tough

Aug. 10 – Romans 10:5-15

“No Distinction”

We may draw social lines consciously or unconsciously, but Paul reminds us that God does no such thing: that salvation is for all.

Aug. 17 – Romans 11:1-32

“What about Israel?”

Paul struggled to understand and explain the ongoing place of Israel in God’s plan. It’s not an easy issue.

Aug. 24 – Romans 12:1-8

“Everyone Is Gifted”

God’s grace, like God’s salvation, is available to all. Every believer is gifted for service and responsible to be a good steward of those gifts.

On the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies

by Tony Cartledge in *Baptists Today*:

“This curriculum ... is a huge time-saver over what I had been doing. All the gathering, culling and creating have been done, and I feel like the online resources are quite helpful. THANK YOU!”

—ELAINE ANDERSON SARRATT, SPARTANBURG, S.C.

“Thank You!”

“This has been a **wonderful study for our class**. None of us had ever ventured into a study of Revelation because we were worried about not understanding the symbolism that seemed so difficult to understand. We feel this book has become in our American culture a symbol about ‘doom and gloom’ rather than the book of encouragement it was written to be. All of the class members have **really enjoyed this six-week study**. Tony’s videos have been extremely helpful. Thanks again for helping us stretch our comfort zone and realize that this is a book to encourage and not threaten us in our walk with Jesus.”

—ANN BOLINGER, WEAVERVILLE, N.C.

Aug. 31 – Romans 12:9-21

“A Labor of Love”

Paul unleashes a string of imperatives – all of which can be fulfilled through genuine love.

September 7-September 28
Hard Lessons

Sept. 7 – Matthew 18:15-20

“Confrontation and Community”

What should we do with sinners in the church?

Sept. 14 – Matthew 18:21-35

“The Power of Forgiveness”

Forgiveness is not a one-time thing; it is a life-long attitude.

Sept. 21 – Matthew 20:1-16

“A Question of Fairness”

When the first are last and the last first, what’s fair about that?

Sept. 28 – Matthew 21:23-32

“Who’s in Charge?”

Honoring human authority while remaining faithful to God can be tricky.

October 5-November 23
Growing Pains

Oct. 5 – Psalm 19

“Silent Speech”

God speaks in many ways; not all of them are audible.

Oct. 12 – Exodus 32:1-14

“Rebels Without a Cause”

The golden calf episode was a tragedy; Moses’ intercession was instructive.

Oct. 19 – Exodus 33:12-23

“Holy Boldness”

Moses’ determination to seek God *and* intercede for the people earned a reward.

Oct. 26 – Deuteronomy 34:1-12

“A Good End to a Good Life”

Moses’ death was a reminder of both possibilities and limitations.

Nov. 2 – Joshua 3:7-17

“Crossing the Jordan”

Crossing rivers with no bridges calls for creativity and faith.

Nov. 9 – Joshua 24:1-25

“Making Choices”

Joshua’s call to “choose this day” is really a call to make good choices every day.

Nov. 16 – Judges 4:1-17

“What Women Can Do”

Women can do whatever needs doing – as illustrated by Deborah and Jael.

Nov. 23 – Ezekiel 34:1-31

“The Good Shepherd”

Sometimes it’s good to be a sheep.

Season of Advent

November 30-December 21

An Adventurous Advent

Nov. 30 – Isaiah 64:1-9

“The Cry of the Clay”

The Advent season begins with a cry of hope.

Dec. 7 – 2 Peter 3:8-15a

“While We Are Waiting”

Israel and Christians alike look toward a coming day of consummation. While waiting, our behavior matters.

Dec. 14 – 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24

“Imperatives Abounding”

Paul could get very specific about what God expects from those who anticipate the Messiah’s arrival.

Dec. 21 – Luke 1:26-38

“When Heaven Comes to Earth”

Gabriel’s visit to Mary set world-changing events in motion.

Season of Christmas

Dec. 28 – Galatians 4:4-7

“Children of God”

As we celebrate a baby in a manger, we remember that we are all children of God.



Jimmy Lewis (left) talks with Drs. Fola and Tosin Fasuyi at the annual Tomato Sandwich Party that builds support for a free medical clinic behind First Baptist Church of Morrow, Ga. The most recent party raised more than \$50,000.

Hand-*in*-hand

Georgia pastor blended congregational ministry, missions calling

Jimmy Lewis didn't choose between the pastorate and missions service. The two became seamless and complementary throughout his ministry career.

Lewis retired in June from the First Baptist Church of Jasper, Ga. He served four congregations over 40 years with a brief stint as missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia.

SOUND OF SILENCE

Out of seminary Jimmy became pastor of Cave Spring Baptist Church in northwest Georgia. The small town near Rome, Ga., is home to the Georgia School for the Deaf.

Hearing-impaired persons attended church services and were involved in congregational life.

When exploring doctoral work back at his seminary alma mater in Louisville, Ky., professor Clyde Francisco urged Lewis to create a unique ministry model for working within this community.

In an initial survey, Lewis was surprised by some results — especially those indicating a preference for having sermons interpreted by a translator rather than coming directly from the preacher.

Upon further exploration, however, he discovered those responses were more a reflection of familiarity than preference. And

another message was much more direct.

He asked someone to interpret his pastoral prayer and received the terse response: “You do it.”

So he did. Jimmy learned sign language in order to preach directly to the entire congregation and to better engage hearing-impaired persons socially and pastorally.

“I got pushed into this concept of missions and ministry by my deaf people,” he said appreciatively. “And I could visit in their homes and pray with them.”

The relationship between the school and the church grew. And so did the young pastor's understanding that missions and pastoral ministry are not exclusive.



The Good Shepherd Clinic in Morrow, Ga., is the first of several medical clinics for the uninsured that Jimmy Lewis has helped start in Georgia, each an ecumenical and community-supported effort.

His Doctor of Ministry project focused on the impact of language on the mission of the church. That language as well as the opportunities for ministry, he said, vary in every context.

“That kind of shaped my idea of how we do ministry,” he said. “We don’t do it on our terms, but on the terms of the people.”

BEYOND THE WALLS

Lewis went to his second pastorate, Locust Grove Baptist Church in Smyrna, Ga., knowing it would be different from his first, but ripe with mission opportunities.

“We have to discover the mission of the church,” he noted. “It is not the same in every place.”

In this traditional congregation enveloped by Atlanta’s continuous expanse, Jimmy expanded his own pastor-missionary approach.

He became a founding board member and early chairman of the Cobb County Habitat for Humanity in the 1980s. Working in ecumenical community missions fueled his enthusiasm for congregational ministry that goes beyond familiar church walls.

Within his congregation were those with exceptional building skills that could be used for homes locally and churches widely. Lewis led volunteers to erect church buildings in Tennessee, Kentucky, New York, Illinois, Missouri and Georgia.

They were good at it. They even had a well-equipped truck ready to go on short notice.

“We could dry in a church in a week,” he said. “It was hard work.”

Lewis said the construction of homes and church buildings shaped the volunteers as well.

They were “blended together in a common cause.”

Knowing that hammers and saws don’t fit every hand and that many needs require something other than shelter, Jimmy invited other church members to go with him into downtown Atlanta and volunteer in a large-scale feeding ministry at Thanksgiving.

It became an annual project. But driving back from Atlanta after serving food, Jimmy asked his faithful coworkers: “What’s wrong with this picture?”

One church member responded: “We came at Thanksgiving; we ought to do it all the time.”

Participation in feeding those in need grew in numbers and frequency, and with just encouragement from the pastor.

Missions moved from being an annual summer trip, he said, to an ongoing way of congregational life. Lewis said he discovered the importance of “finding lots of different things for people to do.”

“When people are committing themselves to something greater than themselves,” he said, “they rise to the cause.”

Jimmy and others began working with alcoholics and drug addicts through a Saturday night worship service at a non-threatening place called “The Hole in the Wall.”

“Church members would go with me and they’d come back overwhelmed at what they had seen and heard,” he recalled.

When Thanksgiving rolled around, they planned a dinner at “The Hole in the Wall” for whoever might come. They asked fellow church members to prepare an extra turkey or ham or batch of potato salad for this occasion.

“They’d bring the food over on Thanksgiving morning,” said Lewis. “That

thing grew until people started volunteering to do it each time.”

The multiplication and diversity of mission opportunities and volunteers is what pleased Lewis the most.

“I think the key to missions is your people buying into it and seeing that it is not just one thing.”

FREE HEALTH CARE

When Jimmy became pastor of First Baptist Church of Morrow, Ga., he discovered a congregation that accepted the realities of its changing community.

“The church knew I was committed to doing missions,” he said.

One of the opportunities for ministry on Atlanta’s south side was a need for medical care for the uninsured.

There were no physicians in the congregation, Lewis said, but the church called Judy Conway to serve as parish nurse.

A Presbyterian layman and physician Tom Kelly told her he had long wanted to start a free medical clinic using health care volunteers. So the good doctor and the pastor met for lunch.

“The first thing we needed to do was create a 501(c)3 apart from the church, said Lewis. Now an experienced Baptist pastor, he explained why: “Because churches have too much trouble making decisions.”

Jimmy asked a recently retired accountant in the church to help form the non-profit organization. Instead he wrote a generous check and said, “Go get it done.”

Presbyterian and Baptist volunteers renovated a home behind First Baptist Church to house the clinic. Physicians, nurses and other volunteers were enlisted. Sample medicines were acquired. And the word of a free clinic for the uninsured was spread.

“We began to tell the story everywhere people would listen to us,” said Lewis of churches, civic clubs and other places.

The clinic, which opened for the first time on a well-publicized Monday (from 4pm-8pm) in 1998, was staffed with volunteers and ready.

“That first night, we had one person come in,” said Lewis. “I was devastated. I had told the deacons we’d be overwhelmed.”

So Jimmy changed the church sign to read “FREE CLINIC” with a phone number. People would call and ask: “What do you mean by free?”

“It just took off,” said Lewis. Clinic hours were expanded and more volunteers enlisted. Years later, it is still going strong.

Churches in other areas sought advice on following the Morrow model. Eventually Lewis and Kelly formed an organization now called the Georgia Charitable Care Network to assist those starting new clinics and for active free clinics to cooperate.

"In the clinic I learned the power of collaboration," said Lewis. "It's all right, and downright liberating, to work with other people in a common cause."

PASS IT ON

Lewis has good, practical advice for those who launch such ministry efforts as a free medical clinic. The first is to be well prepared to answer the "three big questions" coming from church leadership:

1. "Where are you going to get the money?"
2. "Do you have insurance?"
3. "Where are you going to get the people to do this?"

Addressing the liability concern was eased by Georgia's Good Samaritan law. Dr. Kelly's practice covered his insurance just to be sure.

As with most nonprofits, fundraising was a challenge. Oddly, an annual event called the Tomato Sandwich Party raises the most money for the clinic.

Gifts the first year totaled \$7,000. The

tenth and most recent one netted more than \$50,000.

"Kroger donated everything but the tomatoes, which came from a farmer," said Lewis. "So there are no expenses for the fundraising event."

While leading missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, Lewis helped launch the Open Arms Clinic in Toccoa, Ga. At his request, the local Lions Club sponsored the organizational meeting, and Lewis chaired the new board.

When he accepted the pastorate in Jasper, Ga., the mountain community had already opened a clinic. Lewis was chairman of that board when he retired.

He assisted a group in Dahlonega, Ga., that started a free clinic and consults with those in other communities who express interest.

Lewis sees his role as offering guidance but also encouragement.

"I just happened to be the person who said, 'You can do this and I'll help you. Here are the steps.'"

The most effective community missions, said Lewis, involve a wide and large base of support and a willingness to explore new possibilities.

In other words, he said, "It's got to be bigger and freer than the church."

BLESSINGS BOTH WAYS

"I was blessed in all of those places to have a church willing for me to spend time on those projects," said Lewis. "I talked about it and never tried to hide it. I wanted the people to be involved."

The starting point is discovering the needs within the community, he said, and then considering the gifts the congregation can bring.

"Then you ask them to do it."

He urges: "Don't limit God, and don't limit your people. Find ways for them to be involved in the Kingdom. It's bigger than the church."

In most cases, said Lewis, the church serves best as the initiator of a wider community mission effort. That was the case in Jasper, just before his retirement, when a group home for persons with developmental disabilities opened.

"But it's not always about building something," he said. "It's about touching the lives of people."

The use of existing church buildings for community missions can result in pushback from within congregations, he said. It requires helping people discover the joy and purpose that comes from finding their places in effective ministry.

"The challenge of a pastor is to invite people in the church to engage in missions that fit their personalities and gifts." **BT**

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Life on the Farm

NC network
**planting good
seeds** to
serve others *

Cooperative Baptists in North Carolina are forging a network of church and other faith-based garden and farming ministries in hopes of inspiring more congregations to grow food for those in need.

The effort's center of gravity is Healing Springs Acres, a community farm in Denton founded by former CBF Foundation President Don Durham.

The farm has been producing thousands of pounds of produce for area feeding ministries since 2011, catching the eye of CBF North Carolina leaders who view the operation as a potential incubator for nurturing and creating similar ministries across the state.

The resulting partnership provides non-profit status administrative aids for Durham and his ministry. In return, CBFNC has gained a community-farming expert with proven networking skills to harness a growing, but largely unorganized, garden and farming ministry movement in the Tar Heel state.

"Don, with his expertise ... is able to consult with those churches and expand those ministries," said Larry Hovis, executive coordinator of CBFNC.

That also enables the organization to live more fully into its purpose, Hovis said. "It helps us to follow the call of Jesus to feed hungry people,"

Serving the 'hard-living'

For Durham, it all started in 2008 when he experienced a powerful insight that his mission in life is to minister to "the blue-collar culture, the hard-living and survivor kinds of people" in the region of North Carolina where he grew up.

He thought about starting a church, but dismissed that idea. He realized that church for that population "is just one more place to be told you're not good enough," Durham said.

"I wanted to be part of creating a community where survivors and hard-living people could feel welcome."

He struck upon the idea of a farm that could both feed that population and provide them with a means of serving their fellows.

"Helping a neighbor goes over well with them because for them it's really a survival mechanism. It's how the fabric of life works," Durham said.

Healing Springs Acres is on a 70-acre farm, of which 20 acres are cleared and two are being used for growing food. It produced 8,000 pounds of food in 2011, 2,000 pounds the second year and this year is on track to match the first-year totals, Durham said.

About 90 percent of it is given to a biker ministry that operates a daily feeding program nearby. Food is also donated to other ministries as available.

Durham said he hopes his ministry inspires others.

"The solution for Healing Springs Acres is not to get bigger and bigger, but for more and more churches to participate in this kind of ministry," he said.

A wider impact

Durham's work at Healing Springs Acres has also been like a calling for the family who owns the land, said Gary Skeen, president of CBF's Church Benefits Board and a son of the farm's owner.

The property sat empty the past 35-40 years. Prior to that it had been his grandparents' home, Skeen said.



Don Durham grows okra and other crops for local feeding ministries. Photo by John Pierce.

Skeen, who shared an office with Durham when the latter had his vision about a farm ministry, consulted the whole family about the idea.

"None of us had the heart to sell the homestead since it's the family heritage, but we didn't have any use for it and none of us lives near it," Skeen said. **BT**

—*Editor's note: A cover story featuring Don Durham and Healing Springs Acres can be found online in the October 2011 issue of Baptists Today.*



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Calvary Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky.
Calvary Baptist Church, Mt. Airy, N.C.
Calvary Baptist Church, Reidsville, N.C.
Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.
Centerville Baptist Church, Chesapeake, Va.
Central Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, Fla.
Central Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.
Church for the Highlands, Shreveport, La.
Church in the Meadows, Lakeland, Fla.
Covenant Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.
Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.
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First Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga.
First Baptist Church, Sylva, N.C.
First Baptist Church, Tryon, N.C.
First Baptist Church, Waynesboro, Va.
First Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C.
First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.
Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.
Grace Crossing, Charlotte, N.C.
Grace Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss.
Haddock Baptist Church, Haddock, Ga.
Hampton Baptist Church, Hampton, Va.
Hayes Barton Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.
Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.
HillSong Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.
Holmeswood Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo.
HomeStar Fellowship, Apex, N.C.
Huegenot Road Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.
Jersey Baptist Church, Linwood, N.C.
Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Ga.
Kirkwood Baptist Church, St. Louis, Mo.

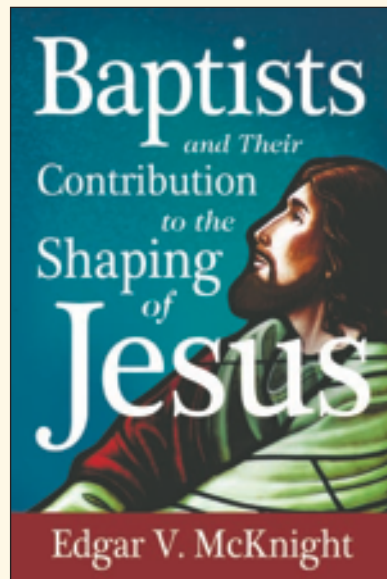
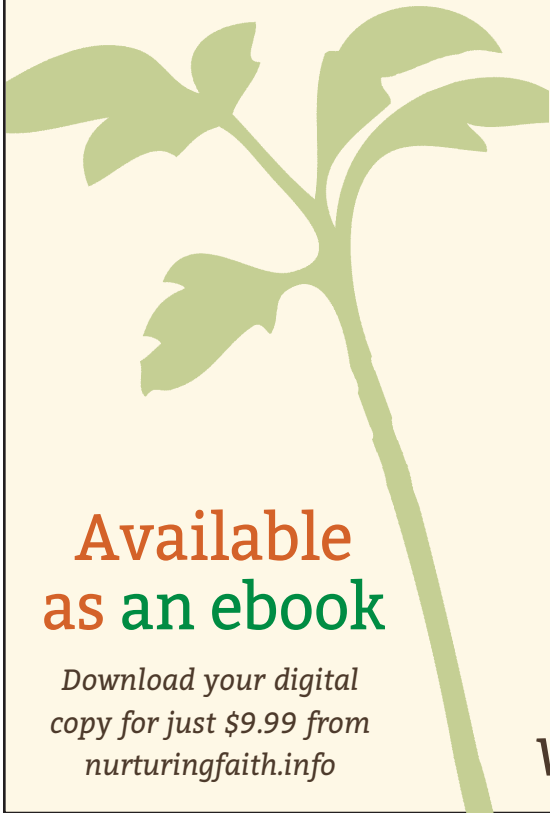
Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.
Lakeside Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, N.C.
Littleton Baptist Church, Littleton, N.C.
Living Faith Baptist Fellowship, Elizabethtown, Ky.
Lystra Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.
McGill Baptist Church, Concord, N.C.
Millbrook Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.
Milledge Avenue Baptist Church, Athens, Ga.
Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.
National Heights Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ga.
North Stuart Baptist Church, Stuart, Fla.
Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.
Oak Grove Baptist Church, Vilas, N.C.
Oakmont Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C.
Pintlala Baptist Church, Hope Hull, Ala.
Providence Baptist Church, Cookeville, Tenn.
Providence Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.
River Road Church, Baptist, Richmond, Va.
Rock Falls Baptist Church, Excelsior Springs, Mo.
Rolesville Baptist Church, Rolesville, N.C.
Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo.
Second Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark.
Second Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.
Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist, Atlanta, Ga.
Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Ga.
Snyder Memorial Baptist Church, Fayetteville, N.C.
St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.
Tabernacle Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga.
Temple Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.
Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, La.
Temple Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.
The Summit Baptist Church, Cairo, Ga.
Tomahawk Baptist Church, Midlothian, Va.
Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn.
Trinity Baptist Church, Seneca, S.C.
United Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.
University Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.
Viewmont Baptist Church, Hickory, N.C.
Vineville Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.
Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.
Weatherly Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala.
Westwood Baptist Church, Cary, N.C.
White Oak Baptist Church, Clayton, N.C.
Wingate Baptist Church, Wingate, N.C.
Winter Park Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C.
Woodhaven Baptist Church, Apex, N.C.
Woodland Baptist Church, Woodland, N.C.
Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.
Yates Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.
Youngsville Baptist Church, Youngsville, N.C.
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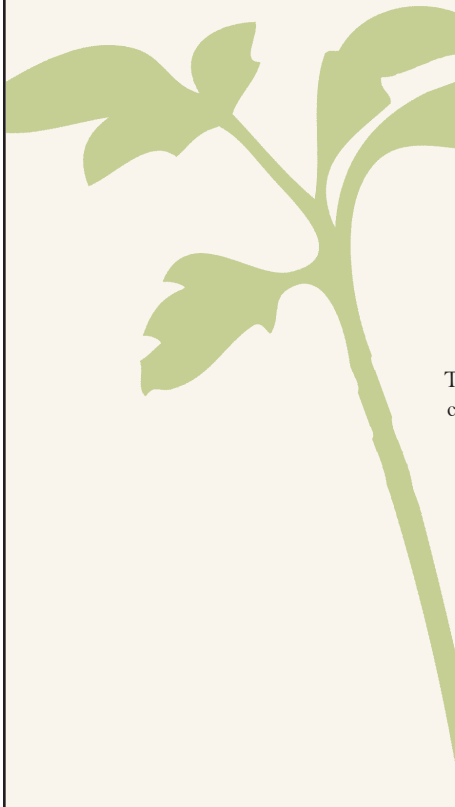
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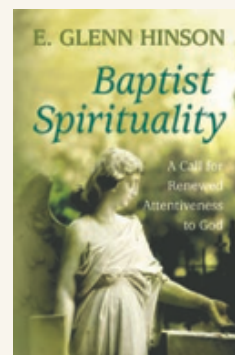
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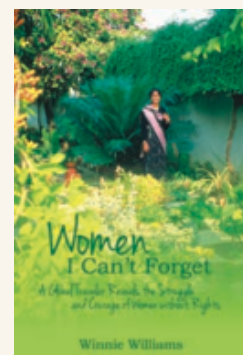
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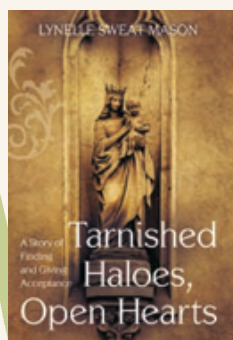
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Whirlwind of Help



NC furniture manufacturer, volunteers aid Okla. tornado victims

PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY felt deep sympathy for the people of Oklahoma after the spate of powerful tornados last May. Hundreds of homes were wrecked, hospitals damaged, and public service centers reduced to rubble. Children lost their schools.

Many wanted to help, but how? One Oklahoma City congregation knew right away.

Several years ago, Tom Ogburn, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, had learned about a furniture ministry implemented by Kim and Marc Wyatt, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel serving in Canada. The ministry serves 60-75 families a year and targets the working poor, single parents, and recent immigrants who need basic furnishings for their homes.

Ogburn proposed the ministry idea to his congregational leaders and, by 2011, the Oklahoma City area furniture bank was up and running with help from regional partners, including several area churches.

The ministry was serving about 50 families a year despite a meager \$6,000 budget and church volunteers supporting the operation. But everything changed May 20 when a deadly EF-5 tornado came rolling through the city of Moore, on the south side of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

"We were in over our heads fast," Ogburn said. "We knew there was a great need in our community for this furniture, but we knew we needed more and more quickly."

Tom Connell, a community leader employed by the Armstrong Transportation Company called. Thomasville, a large furniture manufacturer in North Carolina, had offered to donate 40 truckloads of new products to relief efforts, Connell said — provided that transportation could be arranged.

It was an answer to the congregation's prayers, but the cost and logistics of transporting that much furniture posed quite an obstacle.

That's when Ogburn made a phone call to Kevin Hagan, president of Feed The Children (FTC), one of the world's largest international and domestic relief organizations, which happens to be headquartered in Oklahoma City. Ogburn knew that FTC owned a fleet of tractor-trailers.

Hagan and Gary Sloan, senior vice president for domestic operations, seized the opportunity. Feed the Children was already providing food boxes and household essentials such as cleaning products to shoppers at the furniture bank.



"We were so happy to partner together with the furniture bank ministry sponsored by First Baptist Church," Hagan said, "because it helped both of us further our mission — to bring hope to a group of people in a time of great need."

Within a matter of hours the inventory grew to more than \$3 million in products, but the furniture bank needed adequate facilities. With assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the furniture bank moved from a small space at the church to a storefront

near the hardest hit areas in Moore.

However, the ministry soon outgrew the new space.

First Baptist representatives called on Feed The Children again, and the organization provided \$30,000 to secure a 60,000 square-foot warehouse near the interstate in Moore. Early in July, a mission team from Calvary Baptist Church in Humboldt, Tenn., assisted with the move to the new location.

First Baptist leaders anticipated serving more than 500 families by the end of the summer. Families receiving assistance were grateful.

"We don't know what we'd be sitting on or sleeping on if it weren't for these kindhearted folks," said one recipient.

In recounting the whirlwind of recent months, Ogburn said: "God used this moment to grow ministry [in Oklahoma City] beyond our wildest imagination. I'm just so grateful to be a part of it."

Such a moment would not have been possible without the witness of the Wyatts' ministry in Canada, the support from Feed The Children locally, the generous furniture donation from North Carolina's Thomasville Company and countless church volunteers from all over the country.

Even in the midst of utter devastation, the kingdom of God is coming in Oklahoma. **BT**

—Elizabeth Evans Hagan is a freelance writer and minister dividing her time between Arlington, Va., and Oklahoma City.

Top: Moore, Okla., was hit by a deadly tornado on May 20, leading to compassionate responses nationwide. Left: Truckloads of furniture from Thomasville, N.C., were sorted and distributed to those whose homes in Moore, Okla., had been destroyed.

The Best Trip

MISSION EXPERIENCES ADD UP FOR FAITHFUL VOLUNTEER

Bob Stevenson sits in the library of First Baptist Church of Auburn, Ala., and flips through a book he's written titled *39 and ...*:

My Volunteer Stories.

In 1987, Stevenson took his first mission trip to Anderson, Alaska. As of this summer, he has been on 40 trips and number 41 is scheduled for Recife on the Atlantic coast of Brazil.

Recife is the largest metropolitan area in the northeast region. At least 25 of his 40 trips have been to Brazil where his heart has found a special calling.

"About 25 years ago, Wallace Baldwin, a member of Auburn First Baptist, began leading mission trips to Brazil," said Stevenson. "After Wallace led for a while, Dr. Paul Smith led for a couple of years and, now, I've led them for the past 15 years."

The church began working with missionaries in Brazil through the Baptist convention office in Pernambuco, a state in the northeast region of Brazil.

"They wanted our help to build a church for a small congregation there," said Stevenson. "So we went and built the church and taught Vacation Bible School as well as some English as a Second Language classes."

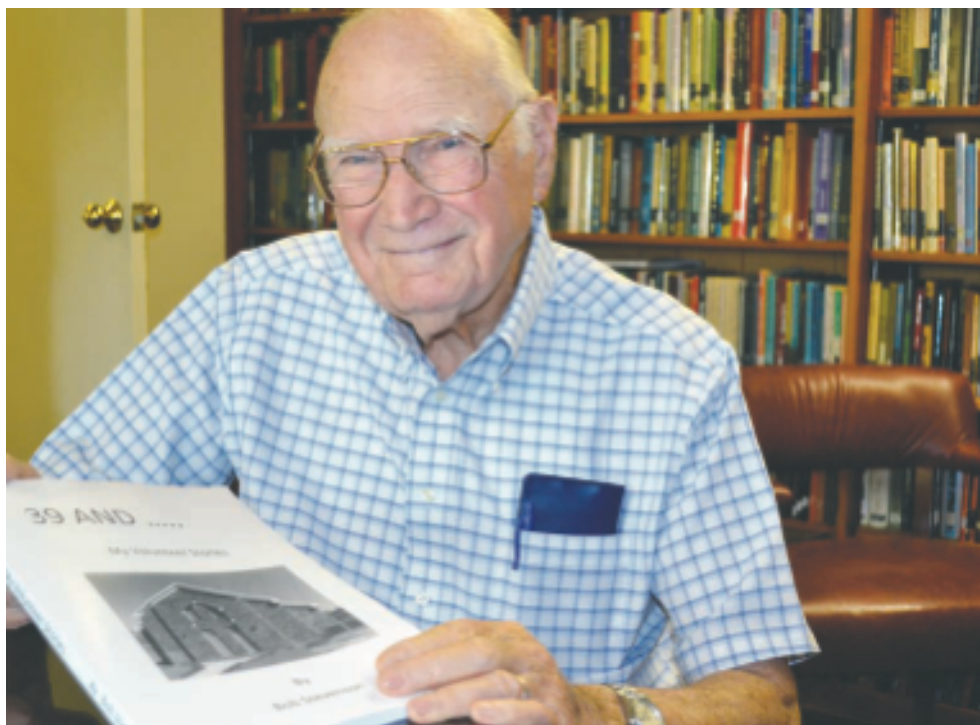
But over the years, Bob has learned to stay flexible about what volunteers will do or experience when they go on mission.

"Most of the time we've helped with construction," said Stevenson. "But we've also taught classes or held eye clinics where we've distributed glasses from Lions Clubs."

"One of our most important philosophies," said Stevenson, "is that we don't go there to do something for them. We go to help them with something *they* want to do. We're just blessed to work alongside them."

Over the years many of his family members have become involved in these mission endeavors as well. "It's been a blessing," he said.

In addition to family, more than 120 people from different places have become a part of the mission experiences he has led.



Many volunteers have come from within his congregation — along with Auburn University students hailing from California to Romania.

In Brazil the volunteers have often worked with Southern Baptist missionary Louise Donaldson.

"One time she called us and said that a little church in Recife, pastored by the son-in-law of the president of a local girls college, really needed help with their building," said Stevenson. "Their property was hemmed in on all sides, but the congregation was really growing."

So Bob took a team to build a second story onto the church but then realized more space was needed.

"We came home after building the second story in February but really felt like we needed to return and build another story," he said. "So we prayed for God to make it possible."

Finances and volunteers had been

arranged for only one trip a year.

"Somehow, God allowed us to come up with the people and then the money to go back in July of that year and we built that third story," Bob said. "Today, that church is flourishing."

A couple of years ago, Bob, now 87, sensed that he needed to capture the stories of these mission experiences in Brazil and many other places.

"People often asked me to share the stories from these trips," he said.

So, he decided to write them down — leading to a book filled with the adventures of his travels and how God placed within him a heart for people and for missions.

These mission trips mean the world to Bob, and his eyes get a little misty when recalling such life-changing experiences.

"Every time we go," he said, "we come back and say, 'That was the best trip.'" **BT**

“We came home after building the second story in February but really felt like we needed to return and build another story. So we prayed for God to make it possible.”



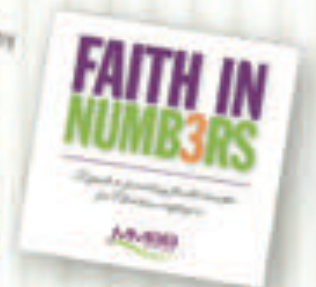
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