

content for learning. context for living

Baptists ODAY

NEWS JOURNAL

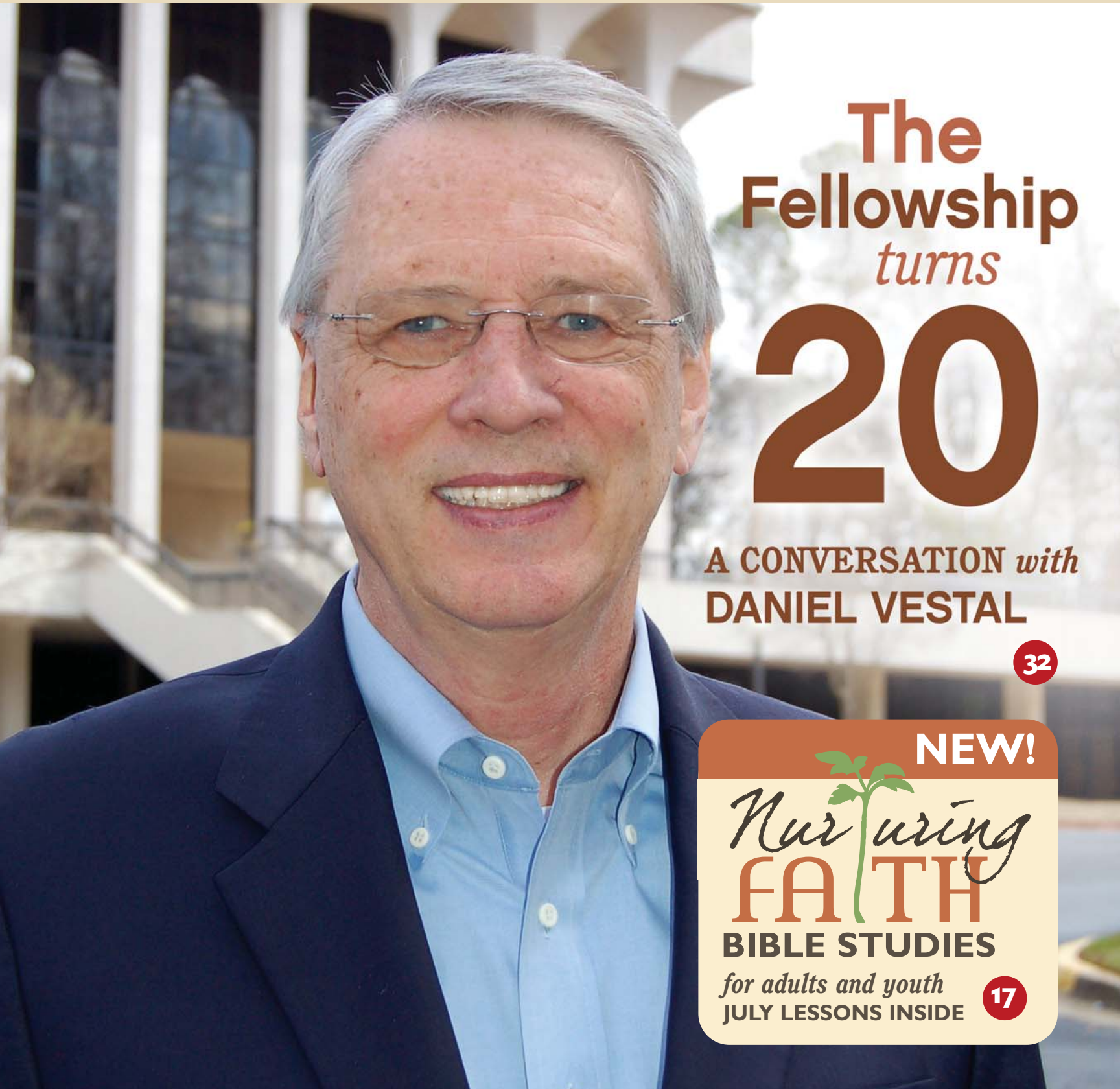


A growing
gift

4

JUNE 2011

baptiststoday.org



The Fellowship *turns*

20

A CONVERSATION *with*
DANIEL VESTAL

32

NEW!

*Nur*uring
FATH

BIBLE STUDIES

for adults and youth

JULY LESSONS INSIDE

17

STAFF

John D. Pierce
Executive Editor
editor@baptiststoday.org

Julie Steele
Chief Operations Officer
jsteele@baptiststoday.org

Jackie B. Riley
Managing Editor
jackie@baptiststoday.org

Tony W. Cartledge
Contributing Editor
cartledge@baptiststoday.org

Bruce T. Gourley
Online Editor
gourley@baptiststoday.org

David Cassidy
Church Resources Editor
david@thefaithlab.com

Steve DeVane
Contributing Writer
steve@baptiststoday.org

Vickie Frayne
Art Director

Jannie Lister
Office Assistant
jannie@baptiststoday.org

Kimberly L. Hovis
Marketing Associate
kim@baptiststoday.org

Walker Knight, Publisher Emeritus

Jack U. Harwell, Editor Emeritus

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gary F. Eubanks, Marietta, Ga. (chairman)
Kelly L. Belcher, Spartanburg, S.C., (vice chair)
Z. Allen Abbott, Peachtree City, Ga.
Jimmy R. Allen, Big Canoe, Ga.
Nannette Avery, Signal Mountain, Tenn.
Thomas E. Boland, Alpharetta, Ga.
Huey Bridgman, The Villages, Fla.
Mary Jane Cardwell, Waycross, Ga.
Robert Cates, Rome, Ga.
Jack Causey, Statesville, N.C.
Anthony D. Clevenger, Pensacola, Fla.
Kenny Crump, Ruston, La.
David Currie, San Angelo, Texas
James M. Dunn, Winston-Salem, N.C.
R. Kirby Godsey, Macon, Ga.
Ben Gross, Chattanooga, Tenn.
Leslie D. Hill, Lexington, Ky.
Michael M. Massar, Sugar Land, Texas
J. Thomas McAfee, Macon, Ga.
Michael G. Queen, Wilmington, N.C.
Lee Royal, Greensboro, N.C.
Mary Etta Sanders, Dalton, Ga.
Charles Schaible, Macon, Ga.
Macon Sheppard, Folly Beach, S.C.
Walter B. Shurden, Macon, Ga.
Charlotte Cook Smith, Winston-Salem, N.C.
David M. Smith, Houston, Texas
Leo Thorne, Valley Forge, Pa.
Sarah Timmerman, Cairo, Ga.
David Turner, Richmond, Va.
Clement H. White, St. Petersburg, Fla.
Winnie V. Williams, Seneca, S.C.



PERSPECTIVES

Seeking a simpler, not simple-minded, faith **7**
By John Pierce

Welcome to a 'new thing' in Bible study **7**
By Bo Prosser

How to bring clarity to mission and vision **9**
By Chris Gambill and Beth Kennett

Preparing for New Baptist Covenant II — in Denver **15**
By Brian Henderson

My new hero **35**
By Larry Hovis

A new *Baptists Today* for today **40**
By John Pierce

IN THE NEWS

Panel cites Egypt for religious freedom violations **10**

Yiddish newspaper removes women from
White House photo **10**

Baptists Today to launch Alabama edition in August **11**

Acceptance grows for autistic kids in church **11**

Central Seminary dedicates Baugh-Marshall Chapel **14**

Scholars codifying Bible's textual changes,
one verse at a time **38**

Baylor researchers study impact of
short-term missions **39**

Randall Lolley honored with Judson-Rice Award **42**

FEATURE

Christy McMillin-Goodwin answers six questions
about CBF **36**



Quotation Remarks	6
Editorial	7
Lighter Side	12
Media Shelf	13
In the Know	14
Classifieds	30
Reblog	31
Baptists and the Civil War	37

cover photo by John Pierce.

Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal talks about the 20-year-old Cooperative Baptist Fellowship **Story on page 32**

An autonomous national news journal since 1983

WHAT'S NEW?

Baptists Today is now providing a complete Bible study curriculum for adults and youth within the news journal. Sunday school classes and other groups can dig into biblical truths while gaining a better understanding of the context in which faith is lived out.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

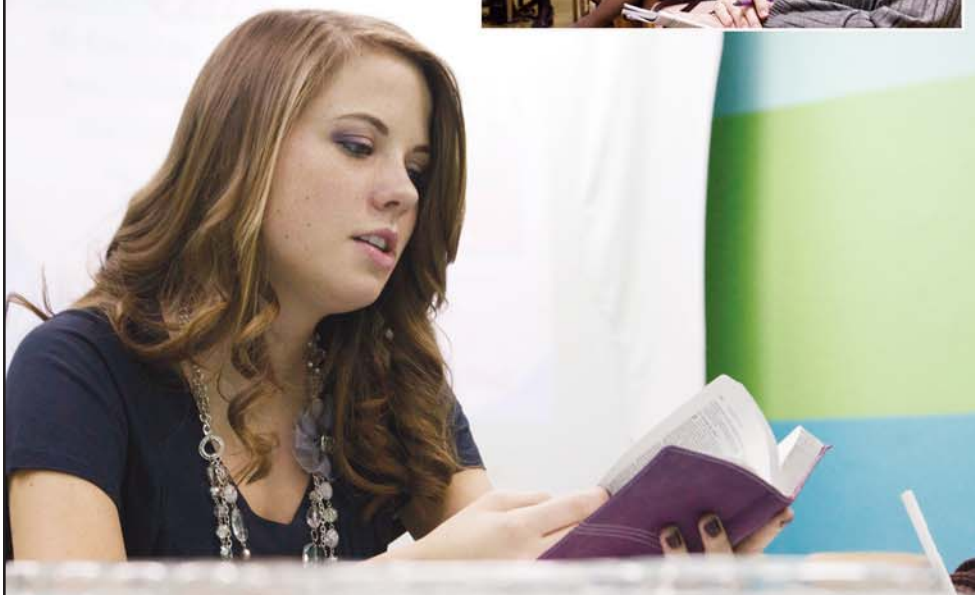
The Bible lessons — are printed right here in the center of *Baptists Today*.

The teaching resources — lesson plans, Tony's video introduction of each lesson, and more — are online at baptiststoday.org. These easily accessible and printable teaching resources are provided at no additional charge! All you need is an issue of *Baptists Today* for each class participant.

It's a unique and flexible approach to teaching and learning.

See page 16 for more details.

The new Nurturing Faith Bible Studies section begins on page 17.



READERS SERVICES

Mission Statement

Baptists Today serves churches by providing a reliable source of unrestricted news coverage, thoughtful analysis, helpful resources and inspiring features focusing on issues of importance to Baptist Christians.

Advertising

- Print and online ads for purchase separately or in combination
- Frequency discounts available
- Rate card: baptiststoday.org/storage/ratecard.pdf
- Inquiries: advertising@baptiststoday.org

Individual and Gift Subscriptions

- \$20 (1 yr.) / \$35 (2 yrs.)
- Credit card: baptiststoday.org / 478-301-5655 / 1-877-752-5658
- Check: *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318

Group and Bulk Subscriptions

- \$18 (1 yr.) / min. 25 orders / pd. by single check and credit card
- Group sent to individual addresses / Bulk sent to single address

Single Issues

- \$4 (includes postage)
- Credit card: baptiststoday.org / 478-301-5655 / 1-877-752-5658
- Check: *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318

Tax-deductible Gifts

- Online: baptiststoday.org
- Phone: 478-301-5655 / 1-877-752-5658
- Mail: *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318
- Information on designated gifts or estate planning: editor@baptiststoday.org
- *Baptists Today, Inc.*, is a 501(c)3 not-for profit charitable organization.

Letters to the Editor

- Limit to 200 words
- Email: editor@baptiststoday.org
- Include name, city, state, phone

Writing Submissions

- Unsolicited manuscripts welcomed for consideration
- Email: editor@baptiststoday.org

Contact Information

- 478-301-5655 / 1-877-752-5658
- info@baptiststoday.org
- *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318

A growing gift

Gratitude and generosity
meet church's ministry dreams

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Pastor Sonny Gallman came to Central Baptist Church in Daytona Beach at a time when the congregation was struggling. Some feared the future for a church with a long history of community ministry but recent division.

“They were ready for a visioning process when I got here,” said Gallman, who enlisted the Columbia Partnership to guide the process.

Congregational leaders crafted a vision statement and, with some reluctance, began developing a future story.

Three groups were asked to imagine — to varying degrees — what the church's future might look like. One group's assignment was to “go crazy imagining what God could do,” he said.

The three stories were compiled into one and presented to the church in January 2009. Though approved, Gallman said there was some pushback for not being realistic about the church's future possibilities.

“However, we started incrementally living into our vision,” said Gallman. A second and different worship service was added that brought in some new faces — and fear of the church's demise began to recede.

ENTER JIM FIELDS

A phone call to the church about some estate planning came a few days after Christmas 2010. Gallman agreed to meet with the man early in 2011 and asked David Smith, chairman of trustees, to join him.

“We were trying to figure out the scam,” said Gallman with a smile when recalling his low expectations on that day to *Baptists Today*.

Instead they heard a passionate and compelling story from Jim Fields, a highly successful businessman who grew up Daytona Beach but now lives in Lynchburg, Va.

His family had been active in the First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, but Fields had attended Central's church camp and was aware of the congregation's compassionate ministries led earlier by longtime pastor Hal Marchman who was himself a recovering alcoholic.

And, more recently, one of Fields' sisters, Debbie, a drug and alcohol addict who had become a destructive force to herself and her family, had walked over to Central on the first Sunday of Gallman's pastorate. Her recommitment to Christ that began on that morning had been life-changing for her and life-giving to the family.

Jim wanted to say thanks. “You gave me my sister back.”

BIG QUESTION, BIGGER RESPONSE

After expressing his gratitude, Fields asked what the church might be able to do with more resources. He didn't expect the visionary response he was about to hear.

“If they'd said they needed to pave the parking lot, that's what they would have gotten,” said Fields, looking to show his appreciation to the church in some tangible way.

Instead, Gallman unfolded the church's future story that was filled with the wildest dreams of what could be done in that setting.

Fields could not believe what he heard.

“When I came in to meet with Sonny, I just told him I was doing some estate planning and wanted to talk about that,” said Fields. Now he was faced with a large and compelling dream.

The part of the story that drew Jim's attention first related to more intentional ministry to persons with drug and alcohol addictions. If his sister could walk across the street from her small apartment and have a life-changing experience, he wondered: What else could be done?

So rather than pave a parking lot or offer some other gesture of gratitude, Fields offered to fund a part of the church's dream that would provide such services to others.

“If it changes one additional life, like my sister's, it will be worth it,” said Fields, “but I know it will be significantly more than that.”

THE GIFT GROWS

Jim was so impressed by the congregation's future story that he worked with Sonny to identify some other priorities and committed \$500,000 to see them come to life. But he was not finished.

New possibilities arose by connecting the church with other community organizations — such as one providing medical services to uninsured working families. Then, during a January worship service, Jim surprised the congregation by announcing that he would make a \$1.5 million gift to support several community ministry initiatives.

“Debbie's problems didn't happen overnight,” said Fields. “They were complex. The addiction certainly being one of them — and add to that homelessness and the lack of hope.”

He saw great potential for restoring hope in the congregation's future story. The church's mammoth and underused educational space was the perfect place to bring to life community





“As we talked, it was like we were talking about the same thing happening,” said businessman Jim Fields (right) upon hearing pastor Sonny Gallman (left) share the church’s ‘future story.’

ministries such as children’s programs, medical and dental services, a salon, vocational training, counseling and more.

“You’ve got to break that cycle of poverty,” said Fields. “Their plan does that.”

FAMILY MATTERS

The ninth of 10 children, Jim grew up in a working-class family that has faced more than its share of challenges — especially addictions and cancer diagnoses.

His alcoholic father, a disabled World War II veteran, had “some less than admirable experiences with church,” said Jim. However, his mother was a steady force.

When she was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2005, Jim moved her to Virginia to escape the demands of Debbie and a brother who were struggling with addictions.

“They were on top of her all the time, borrowing money,” he said. “...We had to cut any ties, any connections, so (Debbie) wouldn’t have a place to fall back to — because every time she did, she never got the help she needed.”

His sister “went through a very bad spell,” Jim recalled, and relapsed after going through several treatment programs.

She finally settled into a one-room apartment across from the church. Walking across the parking lot on that memorable Sunday, she met church leader David Smith who extended a warm welcome.

“She said, ‘I just need to come to church.’ David put his arm around her and said, ‘Come on in.’”

His sister has not experienced a relapse

since that day and has recruited other sisters into the church. He expects them to be active volunteers in the emerging ministries he is supporting.

A LARGER VISION

“By coming here and finding Christ, and finding such a warm, open church, to me that was really the difference in why she is alive today,” Jim said of his sister.

Because of her experience — and the church’s history of community service — Jim was eager to provide the resources needed to maximize the congregation’s ministry potential.

In fact, more and more of the craziest dreams the church could ever imagine are now moving toward reality.

Recently, Jim bought a two-story home across from the church and his son, 10, and daughter, 17, used Internet maps to design a volleyball court and other features for what will become the church’s new youth house.

In partnership with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, an expanded ministry to the area’s college students is in the works.

Reflecting back on his first conversation with the two church leaders, he recalled: “As we talked, it was like we were talking about the same sort of thing happening. When Sonny brought out the future story, my initial thought was for them to tell me what you’d like to do in the ideal. So they did.”

This wildly imaginative, shared dream met a faithful steward.

“My wife and I have been blessed by

tremendous resources...” Jim said. “We’ve always felt a responsibility to give back.”

For him, Central was just the right place — and at the right time.

A LEGACY OF HOPE

Fields has had a highly successful career in software development and now has other business interests including a restaurant and construction-related companies.

At age 46, however, he is facing the realities of a shocking diagnosis made in 2007 that will cut his life short. His careful attention is now being given to the impact his life will have beyond his own earthly experiences.

“You never know how you’ll handle it,” he said of his terminal illness for which he is now forgoing treatment. Rather than spend the rest of his life in medical facilities, he has chosen to get and give as much life out of what time remains.

His influence — in partnership with Central Baptist Church and others — will certainly be long lasting.

“This whole big plan made such a difference,” said Jim of the church having its multifaceted dream of community ministries already conceived.

He described the church’s dream and his desire to leave a lasting gift as “nearly a perfect match.” He expressed confidence that the congregation will provide the hope and help so many in his hometown need.

“I can only believe that God has led me here,” he told the congregation during a January worship service in which he announced his intentions to fund their dream.

Jim told the church that his financial support is “the easy part” — with the congregation and other community volunteers carrying out the expansive, daily ministries year after year.

In March, Jim told *Baptists Today* that giving attention to this final gift in partnership with the church helps divert attention from his own challenges and provides a way for giving hope for a better life to many others.

“It’s given me something to focus on other than my own wallowing,” he said. “That’s been a good thing.”

Jim said that despite his failing health at a young age, his faith in God’s love is strong because he believes so deeply in the biblical call to walk by faith rather than by sight.

“My hope begins and ends with God,” he said.

And because his hopeful generosity aligns with a church’s expansive vision, that hope will be extended to so many others, for so many years to come. **BT**

quotation remarks

“We deal with these guys all the time, especially the clergy. It’s amazing how many of the clergy are involved in those lies to build that flock up.”

—Retired Navy SEAL Don Shipley on the false claim by Pastor Jim Moats of Christian Bible Fellowship Church in Newville, Pa., who bought a gold Trident medal at a military surplus store and bragged that he was a former SEAL to his congregation for five years and to a newspaper after Osama bin Laden was killed (RNS)

“In England last year, Mohammed (and variations of the name) was listed as the most popular name for boys.”

—Writer Sarah Pulliam Bailey for USA Today, also noting that the biblical name Jacob ranked highest for newborn males in the U.S.

“The building is destroyed, not the church.”

—Dennis Kizzire, director of communications for the Mississippi Association of Free Will Baptists, on the church building in Smithville, where he previously served as pastor, that was demolished by a tornado in April (Clarion Ledger)

“Oh yes.”

—Don Dowless, Shorter University’s new president, responding to Georgia Baptist Convention newspaper editor Gerald Harris’ question about whether he believes “God literally created the world in six days” (Christian Index)

“...How much better can we show the love of God and his power than by building them a house?”

—Mario Garcia, Laredo area coordinator for Texas Baptists’ River Ministry, who discovered a family living in a water tank and found willing volunteers, including many from Wainwright Baptist Church in Muscogee, Okla., to build a house (ABP)

“We got the piano, pulpit and Lord’s Supper table out, but not everything. The rest of it is gone.”

—Pastor LeRoy Davenport of Dorena Baptist Church in Missouri, whose church building was washed away by Mississippi River flooding (BP)

“Through counseling for 35 years, you begin to find out that ultimately the only glue that really holds a family together is their ability to be able to forgive each other.”

—Bishop T.D. Jakes, Dallas megachurch pastor and producer of the romantic comedy film, *Jumping the Broom* (RNS)

“In some ways we’re ‘stuck’ because we don’t understand ... Race issues may be more cultural bias than anything else.”

—Pastor Carroll Baltimore, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (NABF)

“Now that we have to deal with this calamity, you put aside racial barriers, religious and political. We’re one people. We’re Alabamians.”

—Pastor Kelvin Croom of College Hill Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa on rebuilding the congregation’s storm-torn building built by his father with the help of legendary football coach Paul “Bear” Bryant (CNN)

“[David Barton] and his ‘Wall Builders’ institute cherry-pick lines from the documents and banner them or engrave them in public expressions ... and get to pick the history texts for Texas etc., and thus push out of contention authors and publishers who, for all their flaws, are vocationally committed to fairness and, yes, truth-telling.”

—Martin Marty (Sightings)

“Older people want to find a more personal experience of God and young people don’t want the congregational structure or process. People don’t want to just read the responsive reading when they are told to.”

—George Barna, researcher and author of *Maximum Faith*, giving his take on the growing popularity of house churches (USA Today)

“The First Amendment does not have an asterisk assigned to it that permits assistance to a church because it is rendered as historic.”

—Rudy A. Pulido, a retired Baptist minister in St. Louis, on government grants for the preservation of church buildings — such as the National Cathedral — that are home to active congregations (Church & State)

“Baylor expects students not to participate in advocacy groups promoting an understanding of sexuality that is contrary to biblical teaching.”

—Lori Fogleman, a Baylor University spokeswoman, on the administration rejecting student efforts to form a recognized group sensitive to gay and lesbian issues (New York Times)

Seeking a simpler, not simple-minded, faith

Sometimes faith gets frenzied. Inquiring, engaged or enraged Christians get carried away with debating the fine points of theology, assessing ongoing ecclesiastical shifts and trying to stay ahead of the competition (without admitting that religious groups — including other churches — compete).

Daily demands of time and energy look and feel nothing like lying down in green pastures. For all of its good, doing church can be one of the greatest challenges to spiritual well-being.

We can become so concerned about finding and following the latest program, reading the best book or being on the right side of a debate that we lose touch with the essence of faithful living that Jesus described in terms of loving God and neighbor. Sometimes our more trivial pursuits lead us to ways of living that contradict the love we claim to hold and share.

That is why Christian disciplines are so essential. Through prayer, Bible study, reflection and rest, we rediscover the simpler faith — one that grounds us in kindness,

forgiveness and grace.

However, simple faith should never be confused with simple-minded faith — which brings its own share of distractions and destruction. Sadly, simple-mindedness abounds. It allows for authentic faith to merge into civil religion or to be confused with legalism. It replaces the simple and central attributes of love, joy, peace and hope with fear of change, a denial of mystery, and pride.

Simplicity, however, is rooted in the ethic of love as seen and experienced in the



life and teachings of Jesus. A simpler faith seeks to forgive more easily and forget more quickly.

A simple faith acknowledges the daily challenge of truly seeing as children of God those persons who look different from the one seen in the mirror. It is a faith that sustains with hope of a love greater than our own — and with promises stronger than we make to each other.

The great irony of a simpler faith, however, is that it accepts and embraces the complexities of life — and learns to live with them. On the other hand, a simple-minded approach seeks to resolve the complex, confusing and contradictory aspects of faith — no matter how pat the answer or how unloving the response.

Investing ourselves in efforts to stay relevant and engaged in being a Christian presence in a fast-changing culture is worthy and commendable. Yet care must be given continually to the central and simple — yet challenging — call to follow Jesus. **BT**

Welcome to a 'new thing' in Bible study

By Bo Prosser

Recently, a friend asked: "Don't you think we are too sophisticated now for Sunday school classes?"

I replied: "We are much more sophisticated than when Sunday school began, but we still need to journey with an intimate community of believers."

Today, we still seek Bible information but are much more about spiritual formation that leads to transformation. So we need to teach today in ways that inform us about the Bible and about how to live faithfully.



In today's technologically savvy world, boring is unacceptable, especially in spiritual formation and faith development. Sunday school need not be just the same old thing.

Welcome to a new "thing!" The pages in the center of this issue are designed to challenge, inform and inspire Bible teachers — and learners.

Our hope in providing this new "thing" is that Bible study will be *information* that encourages *formation* that leads to *transformation*.

I still believe in exciting Bible study. I still believe that God is in the redeeming work, leading us to deeper truth, for the coming of God's kingdom, on earth as it is in heaven.

Join us on this new journey; it is going to be anything but boring!

The image shows the cover of a Bible study resource titled "Nurturing FAITH" by Baptists Today Bible Studies. The theme for July lessons is "Stories of birth and blessing." The cover includes a "How to Use These Bible Studies" section with instructions for teachers and learners, and a "How to Order" section with contact information. It also features a photo of three people and a testimonial from a teacher.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is pleased to partner with Baptists Today to bring you this exciting new approach to Bible study.

—Bo Prosser is Coordinator for Congregational Life for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.



Serving the Church...

Doctor of Ministry

ANNOUNCING THE NEW PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING CONCENTRATION



For more information, please go to
www.gardner-webb.edu/divinity or call 704.406.3205

*Stretching the Mind,
Stirring the Heart,
Serving the Church*

Faith ♦ Service ♦ Leadership

**Gardner♦Webb
University**

From fuzzy to focused:

How to bring clarity to mission and vision

By Chris Gambill and Beth Kennett

During a transition it is essential for a faith community to clarify its mission and vision. Why? Because when individuals enter or leave a community, the group’s sense of identity is affected and it has to be reformed.

This is especially true during a pastoral transition. Clergy typically play a key role in forming a congregation’s self-understanding. When they leave, the congregation has to wrestle with who they are and will be apart from their former pastor.

Moreover, clarifying mission and vision during a pastoral transition is a matter of practical necessity. Potential pastoral candidates want to know who a congregation is and in what direction it is moving.

Why clarity matters

Clarifying a congregation’s self-understanding has other benefits as well. A national survey of congregations by *Faith Communities Today* (2008) showed a significant positive relationship between sense of self and other measures of congregational vitality such as financial health, worship attendance, growth and lack of conflict. A congregation gains a clearer sense of self when it clarifies its mission and vision.

Furthermore, confusion or ambiguity about identity can have negative consequences. In a 2004 *Christianity Today* survey, 64 percent of pastors cited vision/direction as a source of conflict. A congregation that does not have widespread agreement and understanding of its vision is more prone to conflict.

A congregation’s mission — its reason for being — is usually easier to articulate than its vision or picture of its future. Both are important, but vision has a particularly large impact on congregational life. A clear and compelling vision is attractive and energizing both for members and potential members. It also provides a touchstone for decision-making. With a clear sense of mission and vision, leaders have a tool to use in discerning whether to say

To hear more of these stories and to share your own, go to www.healthychurch.org/threshold.

“Yes” or “No” to mission and ministry opportunities.

Getting there

Some congregations want their pastor to articulate a vision for the congregation. But articulating mission and vision should never be left to a pastor alone. Pastors are temporary, and particularly when new, do not fully understand a congregation’s giftedness, assets and passions.

Similarly, mission and vision discernment should not be left to a small group of congregational leaders. While this method may be efficient in terms of time and energy, it is highly ineffective in creating ownership and energy for mission and ministry within the larger congregation.

Clarifying mission and vision is best understood as the work of the congregation. God equips and calls a congregation for mission and ministry, and the congregation needs to work collaboratively in this vital work of discernment. At the Center for Congregational Health, we believe that the wisest decisions are those the congregation makes. Any process seeking to bring clarity to mission and vision should engage as many members of the congregation as possible.

Before a congregation can articulate its mission, it must understand who it is. Many congregations have dated ideas about themselves that must be traded for a current, more accurate view of the congregation. A breakdown by gender, age and life stage is important, because it changes over time.

A congregation can then take positive, appreciative approaches to identifying its strengths and assets by asking questions such as, “What are the human resources we have? What are our physical resources? What do we value most as a congregation?”

In order for a congregation to understand who it is and what it aspires to become, it is important to name its values. One way to approach this is for individuals to reflect upon those times and places when the congregation has been at its best. Then identify the values exhibited in those circumstances.

Exploring a congregation’s history and traditions is also a helpful way to gain important insights about its core values.

Once a congregation has identified its resources and values, it is easier to say, “This is our mission — this is who we are.” The next step is to clarify vision — to answer the question, “What is God calling us to do and be?”

Clarifying a congregation’s vision — how it wants to impact the world — is both challenging and energizing.

Every congregation needs an empowering and compelling vision to guide its mission and ministry. Creating a compelling vision requires careful listening to the Spirit along with creativity and courage. Otherwise, a congregation risks just repeating what has been successful in times past — but probably won’t be in the future.

Instead of simply asking, “What shall we do?” we suggest that congregations use a visioning exercise. For example, small groups can be utilized to create the front page of a newspaper with headlines describing the church’s accomplishments five years in the future.

Though it is challenging work, clarifying mission and vision is vital if a congregation wants to remain faithful, healthy, and thriving. God’s call is dynamic — so should be our response. **BT**

—Chris Gambill is senior consultant/manager of congregational health services, and Beth Kennett is spiritual formation coordinator for the Center for Congregational Health.



After seminary, ‘Lost Boy’ headed back to Sudan

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (RNS) — It has been more than two decades since Deng Alier fled war in his homeland. Now, armed with a master’s degree in educational ministry, the former “Lost Boy” is ready to find his way back to Sudan.

Alier, Deborah Makuei and Rebecca Deng were among 63 students graduating May 6 from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. They began their studies three years ago free of charge when the seminary launched a program to inject young, educated Christian leaders into the country torn by civil war.

The students spent a semester in Sudan through the seminary and will have their undergraduate loans repaid as they return to work there with their master’s degrees. In July, the southern part of Sudan where the students lived will become independent from the northern, Muslim part of the country.

Living in the U.S., Alier said he has learned that different people can live in the same place and get along. Seminary education has given him a deeper understanding of biblical principles that can help Sudanese Christians live in harmony with “our Muslim brothers,” he said. **BT**

Panel cites Egypt for religious freedom violations

WASHINGTON (RNS) — A religious freedom watchdog panel has added Egypt to its list of the worst violators of religious liberty, citing attacks on Coptic Christians that occurred surrounding the downfall of former President Hosni Mubarak.

“The Egyptian government engaged in and tolerated religious freedom violations both before and after President Hosni Mubarak stepped down on Feb. 11,” said Leonard Leo, chairman of the bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which released its report April 28.

“In his waning months, religious freedom conditions were rapidly deteriorating and since his departure, we’ve seen nothing to indicate that these conditions have improved.”

Members of the independent commission also continued their criticism of the Obama administration for not making religious freedom a higher priority. However,



Hosni Mubarak

Leo acknowledged the recent confirmation of Baptist minister Suzan Johnson Cook as the new ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom and said he hopes it will lead to “meaningful actions” in the near future.

Commissioners listed 14 countries that they recommend the State Department designate as “countries of particular concern,” including Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan. **BT**

Study: 2 in 10 atheist scientists say they are ‘spiritual’

(RNS) — More than 20 percent of atheist scientists consider themselves to be “spiritual,” according to a Rice University study. The findings, published in the June issue of the journal *Sociology of Religion*, are based on in-depth interviews with 275 natural and social scientists from 21 of the nation’s top research universities.

Elaine Howard Ecklund, lead author of the study and an assistant professor of sociology at the Houston university, and other

researchers found that these “spiritual atheists” viewed not believing in God “as an act of strength, which for them makes spirituality more congruent with science than religion.”

These scientists view both spirituality and science as “meaning-making without faith,” the study authors said. They viewed spirituality as congruent with science but not with religion because a religious commitment requires acceptance of an absolute “absence of empirical evidence.” **BT**

Where’s Hillary? Jewish newspaper removes women from iconic White House photo

(RNS) — An ultra-Orthodox Jewish newspaper in Brooklyn deleted Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton from a White House photograph of top officials monitoring the raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

The Yiddish-language *Der Zeitung* removed Clinton and Audrey Tomason, a top counter-terrorism adviser, from the photo, which quickly became an iconic image. The photo shows the White House’s Situation Room during the raid on bin Laden’s Pakistani compound.

The doctored photo was first noted on Failed Messiah, a Jewish blog. *Hamodia*, another Brooklyn paper serving ultra-Orthodox Jews, also deleted the women from the photo, said Surie Ackerman, a former editor at the paper.

“*Hamodia* cropped out Clinton while *Der Zeitung* airbrushed,” Ackerman said. “It’s well-known that haredi (ultra-Orthodox) papers believe women should not appear for reasons of modesty, both for men and women.”

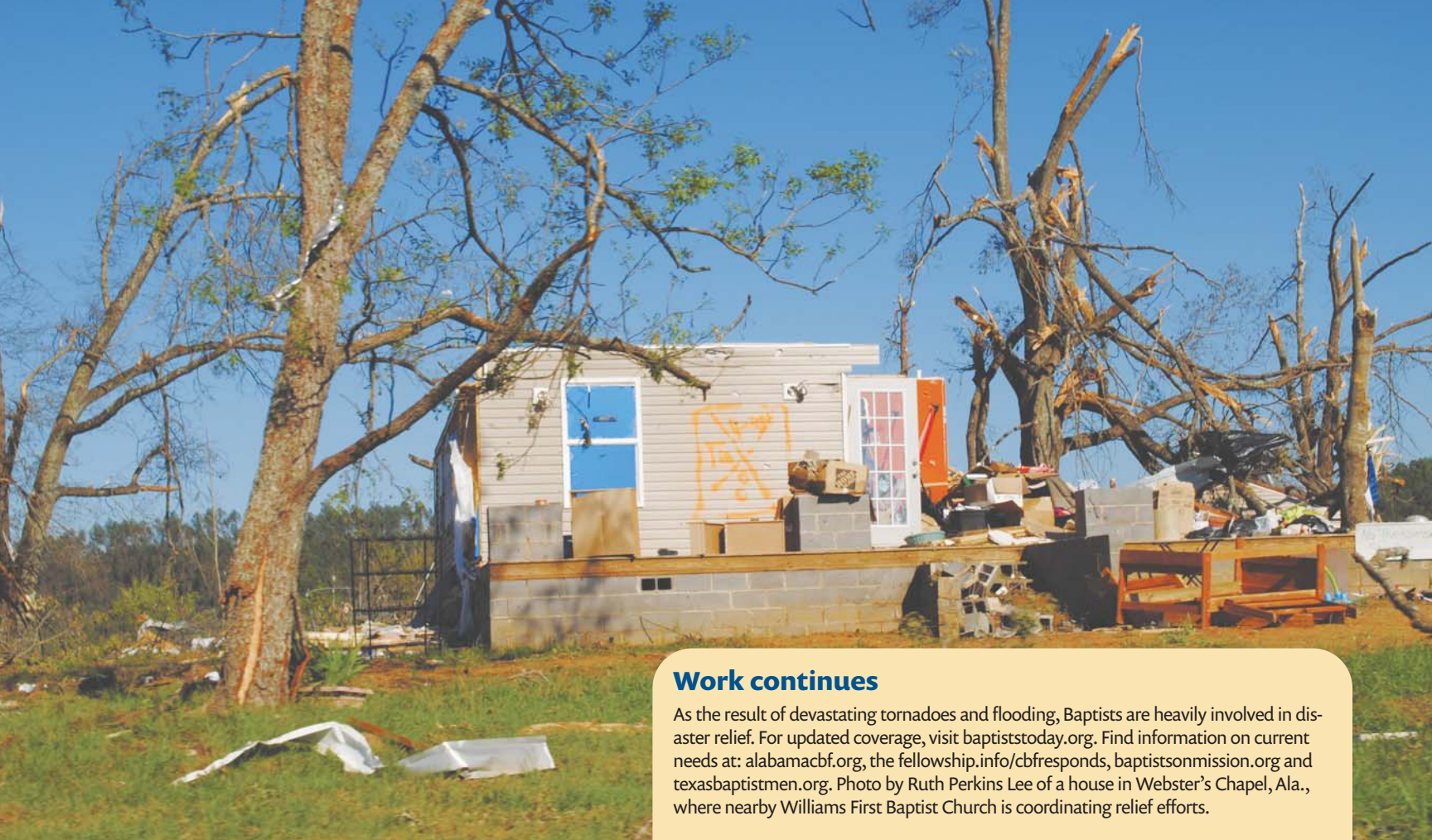
Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not own TVs, read only their communities’ newspapers, and rarely surf the Internet. “They’re very insular,” Ackerman said. “They probably had no idea this was such an iconic photo.”

Later *Der Zeitung* apologized to the White House and State Department for altering the photo, saying the newspaper has “a long-standing editorial policy” not to include images of women in its pages, but rejects the idea that Orthodox Jews “denigrate women or do not respect women in public office.” **BT**



Above: Official White House photo by Pete Souza. Below: Manipulated photo in *Der Zeitung*, courtesy of failedmessiah.com.





Work continues

As the result of devastating tornadoes and flooding, Baptists are heavily involved in disaster relief. For updated coverage, visit baptiststoday.org. Find information on current needs at: alabamacbf.org, thefellowship.info/cbfresponds, baptistsonmission.org and texasbaptistmen.org. Photo by Ruth Perkins Lee of a house in Webster's Chapel, Ala., where nearby Williams First Baptist Church is coordinating relief efforts.

Alabama edition of *BT* to launch in August

The national news journal *Baptists Today* will begin producing its second state edition through a partnership with Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The new Alabama edition will appear in August.

"Words like partnership and collaboration get tossed around a lot in moderate Baptist life," said John Pierce, executive editor of *Baptists Today*. "But it is always nice when groups within our movement embrace trusting, mutually beneficial relationships."

The state-specific edition will carry some unique copy from the content in the national edition along with advertising space for AL-CBF to promote its activities.

"This opportunity to partner with *Baptists Today* is a win-win situation," said AL-CBF Coordinator Ronnie Brewer. "Most importantly, it will provide needed information — along with the new Bible studies — to our churches."

Brewer and other AL-CBF staff — Terri Byrd and Natalie Aho — will work with *Baptists Today* editors to identify and help produce stories from Alabama as well as promote the news journal across the state.

"The Alabama edition will give us the chance to better tell our story as well," said Brewer. "So Terri, Natalie and I — along with many others who are part of CBF life in Alabama — are very excited to be a part of this."

The first state edition was launched in North Carolina in January 2008 through a partnership with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of N.C. That relationship has grown through the years including recent collaboration in producing new church resources in *Baptists Today*.

"We're delighted whenever talent and resources can be shared in ways that help churches," said Pierce. "That's what is at work here — and it's a pleasure to be a part of this growing venture." **BT**

Church easier for autistic kids

CALDWELL, N.J. (RNS) — Halfway through a Mass in Caldwell College's campus chapel, Chase Keith rose to his feet for one of the most challenging parts of a challenging day. It required the boy from Basking Ridge, N.J., to offer his hand to strangers in the traditional sign of peace.

With his mother whispering in his ear and guiding his arm, the 7-year-old stuck out his small hand toward a fellow parishioner. "How you? Peace," Chase said.

Afterward, his mother slipped him a Goldfish cracker as a reward for his correct behavior. Chase had gone through months of intensive training to get to this point — where he could sit through a Catholic Mass with his family.

Chase, who has autism, is among a growing number of children with developmental disabilities who are being welcomed at religious services.

The symptoms of the disorder differ from person to person, but most children with autism have social, behavioral and communication problems. They may shout or laugh at inappropriate times, have trouble keeping still or have an aversion to loud noises. That makes attending services — with big crowds, loud music and periods of silence — daunting for many families dealing with autism.

"The church has a wonderful theology and heart. ... [but] We don't always live it out well," said Anne Masters, the director of pastoral ministry with persons with disabilities for the Archdiocese of Newark.

Mary Beth Walsh, a Caldwell College adjunct professor and parent of an autistic teenager, said: "Autism can be a very isolating diagnosis. Sometimes the only place you can go as a family is church." **BT**

By Brett Younger

Why Baptists should do Pentecost

When I was growing up Baptist the biggest church days were Mother's Day, Easter and G.A. Coronation (imagine a royal wedding where Jesus is mentioned constantly).

Pentecost was not on the list. We may have skipped Pentecost because my kind of Baptists were a little uncomfortable with the spookiest member of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit was a theologically suspect Casper the Friendly Ghost. When we saw a sign that said "Holy Ghost Revival," we were nervous about what was going on inside.

Some Baptists are still uneasy with snakes, dancing and the banjo music occasionally associated with the Spirit. If *TV Guide* lists "The Holy Spirit Hour" on the Trinity Broadcast Network, channel 345, at 1:00 a.m., we do not expect Bill Moyers to be the host. The hour is more likely to feature a singing, shouting evangelist with gravity-defying hair slapping people on the forehead while asking for money to pay for his mansion in the Bahamas.

Pentecost's color scheme may be a problem. Christians in liturgical churches often wear bright red on Pentecost. Some Baptists do not look good in red. Johnny Cash was never the man in scarlet. Most find it hard to picture Billy Graham in a cherry suit. (Carrie Underwood is an exception — a Baptist who looks good in red.)

The word "Pentecost" may sound too much like "Pentecostal" for some Baptists. The Baptists who moved into town looked down on the Pentecostals like the Methodists



This is not a Baptist preacher.

looked down on the Baptists. The Presbyterians looked down on the Methodists. The Episcopalians looked down on the Presbyterians. The Pentecostals thought the Episcopalians were in dire need of some Pentecost.

The Pentecost story itself includes another complication. Peter's sermon begins with a line for which my Baptist mother does not care. Imagine your pastor opening with, "I know what you are thinking, but in spite of the way they look and the sounds that you have been hearing, the choir is not drunk. I can assure you that the choir is not drunk, because it is only 11 o'clock in the morning."

We should ignore that part and listen to the story again. At the end of the first chapter of Acts, the disciples are getting organized. They choose a new person to fill

the vacancy Judas left on the board. They select Matthias by throwing dice — which would usually be a fine way for a church to choose deacons, but in this instance leads to a forgettable choice.

The disciples talk about how best to go about the business of incorporating as a 501(c)3 organization. Peter begins his PowerPoint presentation: "Listen carefully. Here are three keys to an effective organization: #1. competent programs, #2. solid financial resource, #3. adequate facilities and parking."

Peter is fiddling with the remote when pandemonium breaks out. Nothing about the preparations they have been making prepares them for what happens. Whatever they thought was coming next turns out to be wrong. Everything comes loose. The Spirit blows their agenda away.

Women hang on to their shawls. Men pull on their coats. The wind sounds like a freight train. Something like fire dances on each person's face. The storm and the flames push them out of the fellowship hall and into the street. People who have never been to a church business meeting are suddenly in the middle of a doozy.

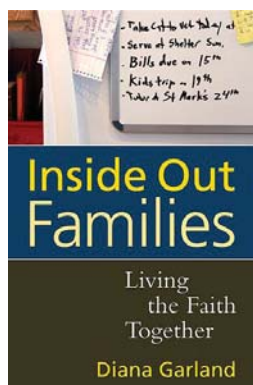
No one is sure what is happening with the wind, fire and foreign languages. Some jump to the aforementioned peculiar conclusion, though in the midst of chaos it is not surprising that they thought they smelled another kind of spirit.

God breathes life into the church with a mighty rush of wind because nothing less would do. When they sing "Just As I Am" 3,000 walk the aisle. That sounds Baptist.

Pentecost is June 12. Wear red. Light candles. Turn on the fans. Sing. Shout. Dance. Celebrate the Spirit. **BT**

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

Pentecost's color scheme may be a problem. Christians in liturgical churches often wear bright red on Pentecost. Some Baptists do not look good in red.



Inside Out Families: Living the Faith Together

by Diana R. Garland
(2010, Baylor University Press)

Garland gives new meaning to ‘family ministry’

What if your family chose a ministry to do together? What if you planned and carried out a project that you believed would make life better for another family?

What if you gave some time and thought and money *together* to a ministry you cared about?

This book is about such families, living the faith together. It is about families who moved from the inside of the church to the outside world to make a difference. And because they were doing the ministry together, it also made a difference in their life together as a family.

We are all familiar with ministries sponsored by churches in which the youth go on a mission trip, or retirees tutor elementary school children, or a men’s Sunday school class helps older families who need assistance with small repairs. But families doing ministry together is different.

Diana Garland, dean of the School of Social Work at Baylor University, developed a project with just that aim: to find and report on families who select and carry out a ministry together. The idea grew out of her own family situation.

One of her teenage children was tired of the same old routine of church activities and began making noises about not wanting to continue going to church with the family. Diana and her husband David found a way to keep their daughter involved and challenged.

Their family volunteered at a shelter for homeless families once a week. While Diana and David talked to the parents and suggested some helpful resources, the Garland children got to know the children in the shelter and helped them with homework or played ball together.

Their whole family became energized and involved in the ministry. Doing something about their faith rather than just study-

ing it or talking about it brought a new dimension to their Christian journey as a family.

Diana Garland later developed a research project (The Families and Faith Project) to see if families doing ministry together had similar experiences to her family’s experience.

As a professional social worker, she knew that trying to change a negative situation (such as homelessness) one family at a time was small potatoes. But making the effort to get to know the people her family was ministering to and understanding the stresses they were undergoing gave the Garlands a glimpse into the real-life situation that homeless families endure.

The Garland family, as well as other families reported in this research project, moved from knowing about a problem to becoming involved in its dimensions and its effects on real families like their own.

Garland interviewed 110 families from 32 diverse congregations, large and small,



Kay Shurden

It inspires families to think of themselves as a ministering unit, a way of putting their faith into action.

from all over the country. She asked them about the way they practiced their faith. Each family interviewed had to have been at its ministry for at least a year.

The book is filled with their stories, which reflect a wide range of ministries that were tried. Although the book contains some statistics about how involvement in these ministries affected attendance and institutional participation, most of the book is about the inspiring and life-changing experiences of the families themselves.

In many cases the ministry was the central way the family found time to be together. In some cases parents reported that the ministry they began with their children moved into the next generation as children grew up

and continued similar ministries.

Throughout the stories the same theme emerged: that each family found a way to carry out Jesus’ teaching of loving and serving neighbor. They discovered that faith is something people do, not simply what they believe.

Here are some of the ministries that families reported doing together:

- Providing trips to the doctor for disabled persons
- Gathering furniture for burnt-out families
- Making home repairs for the elderly
- Visiting homebound persons and those in skilled-care facilities
- Teaching people in a homeless shelter how to budget limited funds
- Tutoring children in a homeless shelter

In some cases the families found that the needs of individuals led them to see larger systems that needed changing. For example, tutoring a deaf child in a poor family led one family to advocate for better health care for the poor.

In the neighborhood where the child

lived, trash piled up and was rarely picked up by the city. The family leaned on the city to pick up trash more frequently, greatly improving the environment in the neighborhood.

This book gives new meaning to the term “family ministry.” It inspires families to think of themselves as a ministering unit, a way of putting their faith into action.

Garland tells a convincing story about families who went from inside the church to the outside world, but in the process they were turned inside out as well. They had become “inside out families.” **BT**

—Kay Shurden is a retired marriage and family therapist who taught at Mercer University Medical School in Macon, Ga.

Central celebrates

Celebratory events were held April 7-8 on Central Baptist Theological Seminary's campus in Shawnee, Kan., including the dedication of the new Baugh-Marshall Chapel. The chapel, made possible through a \$2 million gift from the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation, was part of an overall \$4 million capital campaign called "Cultivating Excellence."

Other projects include renovation of the library and the installation of two stained glass windows to Hatcher Heritage Hall that were given by artists Carol Ann Holcomb and Lois Redman.

Cutting the ribbon outside the new chapel are (left to right) Trustee Chair Phil Love, President Molly Marshall, Babs Baugh of the Baugh Foundation and City Manager Carol Gonzalez. (CBTS photos)



In the Know

PEOPLE

Leah Grundset is associate pastor for congregational life at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. A graduate of Truett Seminary, she served as an intern at Calvary and later as associate pastor through the CBF-Lilly Foundation residency program.

R.G. Puckett received the Greg Warner Lifetime Achievement Award in Religious Journalism from Associated Baptist Press May 1. He is editor emeritus of the North Carolina Baptist newspaper, *Biblical Recorder*.

Phillip Reynolds is pastor of First Baptist Church of Hickory, N.C. He previously was pastor of University Baptist church in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Melissa Rogers received the Religious Freedom Award from Associated Baptist Press May 1. She directs the Wake Forest University

School of Divinity Center for Religion and Public Affairs.

David Stratton is pastor of Woodhaven Baptist Church in Apex, N.C., coming from Brunswick Islands Baptist Church in Supply, N.C.

PLACES

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond received pledges from five anonymous donors to match up to \$500,000 in contributions over the next year to assist the school in its proposed transition. The plan calls for selling the four campus buildings that have created significant debt and relocating to a new setting.

Baylor University's Truett Seminary will have a scholarship named for graduate Clint Dobson, the pastor of NorthPointe Church in Arlington, Texas, who was murdered in his church office on March 3. The fund was established by family and friends.

Baptist race-relations advocate Dick Brogan dies

CLINTON, Miss. (ABP) — Dick Brogan died April 25 in Jackson, Miss., at age 73.

After serving as a pastor, he worked with African Americans in the Mississippi Delta through the Southern Baptist Convention.



Brogan was president of Mississippi Baptist Seminary, established in 1944 to educate black ministers and laity, until the Mississippi Baptist Convention turned control over to National Baptist trustees in 1988.

Brogan worked for the Mississippi Baptist Convention as a consultant. He was director of the Mississippi Baptist Biracial Commission, a hospice chaplain and interim coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Mississippi. **BT**

Lay leader Ed Vick of Raleigh dies

RALEIGH, N.C. (ABP) — Ed Vick, a prominent Baptist layman and supporter of moderate causes, died May 13 at the age of 76.

Vick served as a director of Associated Baptist Press since 1994 and was a past chairman. He also formerly chaired the CBF board of directors, was a founding member of the CBF of North Carolina Endowment Management board of directors and was a former member of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Coordinating Council.

ABP directors honored Ed and Laura Ann Vick with the organization's Founders Award for individuals who have contributed to ABP through significant volunteer service, financial contributions or



professional services.

Vick, a longtime member of First Baptist Church of Raleigh, joined his former graduate school professor, transportation engineer Bill Horn, and Bob Kimley from the Carolina State Highway Commission to incorporate the design-consulting firm Kimley-Horn and Associates in 1967. The company now describes itself as the leading engineering firm for multi-family residential and retail properties. It currently ranks 40th out of the top 500 design firms recognized by the *Engineering News-Record*. Vick retired in 2001. **BT**

Preparing for New Baptist Covenant II — in Denver



Representatives of various Baptist groups in and around Denver, Colo., met in April to form a local steering committee. Denver's Calvary Baptist Church will be one of several New Baptist Covenant II sites to host the event in mid-November. For more information, visit newbaptistcovenant.org. Front: Kay Farley (left) and Jan McCormack. Back (left to right): Brian Henderson, John Tellis, Steve VanOstran, Rudy Antle, Jim Peters and Mike Sayler.

Editor's note: A second New Baptist Covenant event will be held Nov. 17-19 with main programming beamed from Atlanta to various locations around the nation. Calvary Baptist Church in Denver is one host site. Pastor Brian Henderson reflected on the preparation.

Bringing our Baptist family together isn't as easy as it sounds. At least, that is what the steering committee in Denver discovered at its first organizational meeting in preparation for the New Baptist Covenant II event in November.

From the outset our conversation explored the possibilities of what it would look like to bring as many parts of our Baptist family together including our Southern Baptist cousins. In the early moments of our discussion it seemed that creating the opportunity for as many Baptists as possible to experience the New Baptist Covenant II might not come to fruition.

But in good spirit, our steering committee stayed committed to the conversation. We acknowledged that there are historical, political, theological, racial and social realities that make it difficult for us as Baptists to hold a common mission together.

We debated whether it was worth the time

and energy even to pursue a new Baptist covenant with each other.

We asked ourselves: "If we come together, will this create change?" "What outcomes will evolve?" "Will we be better connected to each other and a shared mission?" "How will we address the issues that divide us?" "In light of the holiday season and presidential election to be underway, is November 2011 the right time for such an event?"

While our steering committee represented a number of Baptist traditions and experiences, it represented, as one might expect, even more perspectives and convictions about what should and shouldn't be. Thanks be to God, our committee also displayed what can happen when Baptist folk come together.

Our questions led to a dialogue that included personal anecdotes as well as reflections upon scripture and faith. In the course of this sharing, a sense of trust seemed to bring our varied experiences and perspectives to a place of genuine curiosity.

It seemed that maybe, just possibly, there is potential for pursuing a new covenant together.

We acknowledged that the chance is real for the New Baptist Covenant II to be yet another event that will come and go, but that it

is also possible for something truly new to happen. Perhaps this is a time and season that will bring about change and bring us as Baptists together in a transforming way.

While there will be differences among us forever and realities that separate us, our conversation brought us to admitting, albeit with some level of doubt, that there will be something to gain as we participate in the New Baptist Covenant II.

As we move toward Pentecost, I'm eager to see if our Denver New Baptist Covenant Steering Committee might be a catalyst for a new work of God's spirit within the larger Baptist community in our region. Maybe our flame will turn into a spirit-filled fire.

Will we resolve all of our differences? Probably not. However, could we create a moment that will give birth to future moments of mission and collaborative ministry? Quite possibly.

My prayer is that this initial conversation by our steering committee will be the first of many by Baptists in our state and region that will give inspiration to all for Jesus' command to bring "good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight for the blind, and liberty to the oppressed." **BT**

Introducing

A NEW WAY TO DO BIBLE STUDY



FIND THIS



INSIDE THIS

Across the page begins the new Nurturing Faith Bible Studies from *Baptists Today*. Here's what you will find:

- > The consistency of a trusted Bible scholar and writer
- > Abundant teaching resources that allow for different approaches
- > Lectionary-based studies from a Baptist perspective
- > Relevant and creative youth lessons
- > A colorful center spread for children — along with other resources

Only *Baptists Today* provides excellent Bible studies within an autonomous, national news journal.

A GREAT VALUE!

Annual subscriptions to *Baptists Today* are all you need. There are **no additional costs** for shipping, teacher's materials or other resources. Plus each person gets all of the news, analysis and features found in the news journal.

SPECIAL NOTE: Because July has five Sundays, the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies section this month varies slightly from the usual format.



Rick Jordan provides teaching plans for each weekly adult lesson. These easily printable plans are provided in collaboration with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina.

Join us in Tampa

Baptists Today editors will lead a workshop at 3:30 p.m., Friday, June 24, Convention Center Room 31, during the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly. Come learn all about the new Bible study curriculum.

THANKS, SPONSORS!

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

Nurturing FAITH

BAPTISTS TODAY
BIBLE STUDIES

Theme for July lessons
in this issue:

Stories of birth and blessing

Bible study curriculum for **adults** and **youth**

Teaching resources at baptiststoday.org

HOW TO USE THESE BIBLE STUDIES

1. Order a copy of *Baptists Today* news journal for each member of the class. The student lessons are found only here.
2. Teachers can go to baptiststoday.org/bible to access all the free resources needed for presentation.

Teaching the Lessons

After reading Tony Cartledge's weekly Bible study lessons starting on page 18, Sunday school teachers and other Bible leaders can access helpful teaching resources (at no charge) at baptiststoday.org/bible. These include:

- * Tony's video overviews
- * Adult teaching plans by Rick Jordan
- * Youth teaching plans by David Cassady
- * Tony's "Digging Deeper" notes and "The Hardest Question"
- * Links to commentaries, multimedia resources and more

How to Order

Bible Studies in *Baptists Today* are copyrighted and not to be photocopied.

- * Orders may be placed at baptiststoday.org or 1-877-752-5658.
- * The price is just \$18 each for groups of 25 or more — for a full year — with no additional costs.
- * All online teaching resources are available at no charge and may be printed, copied and used by teachers of the Baptists Today Bible Studies.



Popular Bible teacher and writer **Tony W. Cartledge** writes each of the weekly Bible studies in *Baptists Today* (beginning on page 18). Themes are based on selected texts from the Revised Common Lectionary.

These lessons — found exclusively in this Nurturing Faith section of *Baptists Today* — form the foundation for the teaching resources for all age groups. Each class participant should have a copy of *Baptists Today* with these lessons in hand.

Youth lessons build off of Tony's Bible studies and direct these biblical truths to the daily lives of students. Christian educator and curriculum developer **David Cassady** of the FaithLab provides the youth-focused lessons that follow each of Tony's Bible studies.

Youth teachers will find creative resources (video, music, links, etc.) online at baptiststoday.org/bible to enhance the lessons for today's youth.

Children get to enjoy and learn from a colorful center spread (pages 22-23) developed by **Kelly Belcher**, a creative and experienced minister in Spartanburg, S.C. These materials — written for children — may be used at home, during children's sermons or at other times. 🌱

Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

July 3, 2011

The Back-Story

Have you ever read a novel or watched a movie that began in the middle and left you confused? Skillful writers will find ways, as the story moves along, to fill in the back-story — aspects of the story that readers or viewers need in order to understand the actions, motives or personalities of the characters.

For example, the movie version of *Forrest Gump* opens with a feather gently riding the soft currents of a warm Savannah breeze, then landing on the foot of a young man who sits at attention while waiting on a bench at a bus stop. We don't know who he is, why he is on the bench, or why he speaks so oddly — but we learn through a series of flashbacks that tell the story of Forrest's life to that point.


Biblical stories also have back-stories that are important if we are to understand the characters involved. Today's text provides the background to a series of lessons on the memorable life of the patriarch Jacob, one of the Bible's most colorful characters.

A servant's mission (vv. 34-38)


Today's lectionary text plops us down right in the middle of an elongated narrative, so that the back-story needs a back-story of its own. A servant of Abraham is making a speech before dinner in the home of one of Abraham's relatives, in the far-off city of Haran. What brought him there?


The story began with Abraham, whom God had called to become the father of a great nation (Gen. 12:1-9) at a time when Abraham and his wife Sarah were childless, old, and unlikely to

become parents. After many years and several misadventures, however, they had a son, and they named him Isaac (Gen. 21:1-7).

In today's story, Isaac is 40 years old, and his mother Sarah has died. Abraham decides it is time for Isaac to marry, so he sends a trusted servant to find a wife for him while Isaac remains at home, grieving for his mother. 

Determined that Isaac should not marry one of the local girls of Canaanite ancestry, Abraham sent his servant on a long journey north to Haran, where his extended family had settled (Gen. 11:31). The servant is not named, but was probably his steward Eliezer, who would have been Abraham's heir if no children had been born (Gen. 15:2).

We enter the story after Abraham has assigned his servant the task, swearing him to fidelity through an oath that involved touching his genitals (24:1-9). With 10 loaded camels, the servant completed the long journey to Haran and stopped by a well to pray for God to identify the right maiden (24:10-14), who quickly revealed herself by drawing water for the servant and all of his camels (24:15-21) — no easy task. 

The servant rewarded the young woman with a gold nose ring and two heavy gold bracelets before learning that she was Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor, and thus a perfect match for Isaac (12:22-24). When Rebekah invited the servant to lodge at the family compound, he offered a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving (24:25-28). Once there, he met the woman's brother, Laban, who took notice of Rebekah's new jewelry before taking charge of the camels and inviting the servant to dinner (24:29-33). 

Today's text picks up here, just as dinner is served, but the servant refuses to be seated or to eat before announcing his mission. In short order, he describes how Abraham had amassed great wealth, how Isaac had been born, and how he had been sent to procure a wife for Abraham's heir. The servant notes that

Abraham insisted a wife be chosen from his extended family, but tactfully omits the patriarch's instruction that Isaac should under no circumstance travel to Haran (24:6).

An answered prayer (vv. 42-49)

With the back-story in place, the servant related his earlier encounter with Rebekah.

The servant explained to Rebekah's family how he had prayed for God to reveal the chosen woman by means of her willingness to water the camels, how Rebekah had met every requirement, and how he had thanked God for answered prayer.

The servant then put the wedding ball in his hosts' court: would the family agree to a marriage between Rebekah and Isaac?

While Rebekah remains silent, her father Bethuel and brother Laban politely protest that there is little for them to say, since Yahweh's will had been made known (vv. 50-51). Pleasantries aside, Rebekah's family could still expect the payment of a generous dowry and other gifts of hospitality. The servant did not disappoint them, distributing rich gifts to Rebekah as well as to other family members (v. 53).

A marriage made in Haran (vv. 58-67)

Rebekah's family sought to delay her departure for 10 days of farewells, but when the steward insisted on leaving immediately, Rebekah was finally given a voice in the matter. Her willing attitude (v. 58) reminds us of Abraham's readiness to heed God's call and leave his family behind as he followed God's leadership to the land of promise.

Fittingly, Rebekah's family blessed her as she left — a literary pointer to the father's blessing that Rebekah would later help her son Jacob steal from his brother Esau. The blessing itself — a wish for many offspring who would prosper and

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



RESOURCES TO TEACH

Adult and youth lessons
available at
baptiststoday.org/bible

“gain possession of the gates of their foes” — foreshadows Israel’s efforts to take possession of the “Promised Land” many years later, after the exodus from Egypt.

The long journey south to the Negeb (a near-desert area in southern Israel) is passed over quickly, but the initial meeting between the two lovers-to-be plays out in almost cinematic style. From atop her camel, Rebekah saw Isaac at a distance, then slid to the ground and covered her face with a veil, as was the custom before a wedding.

The narrator passes over any mention of a ceremony, however, cutting to a scene in which Isaac “brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent” where “he took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her” (24:67).

There is much to unpack in these few frames of action. The significance of Isaac taking Rebekah to his mother Sarah’s tent is that she becomes the new matriarch of the family. Abraham remarried after Sarah’s death (25:1), but his new wife Keturah did not get Sarah’s tent: that

belonged to Rebekah, through whom the promised line would continue.

Although the new union was an arranged marriage, we are told that “Isaac loved her” and was comforted after his mother’s death. The text says nothing about whether Rebekah loved Isaac, but her earlier eagerness to get on with the journey suggests she was a willing partner in the marriage.

Nurturing faith

The story of Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage seems far removed from courtship as known in Western culture, though arranged marriage is still the custom in some Eastern cultures.

What might Christians in a modern Western context learn from this account of a strange practice in a strange land?

We first consider how the story fits into the larger context. Genesis 12-50,

often called the “Patriarchal History,” focuses on themes of divine guidance and human obedience in the lives of the patriarchs, as well as God’s covenant promise to Abraham that he would become “a great nation” (Gen. 12:2). Each generation of patriarchs faced tests of faith and had to overcome obstacles before seeing the birth of children. Isaac himself is most famous for having been born, after all hope had failed, to a 100-year-old father and a 90-year-old mother.

For the line to continue and the “nation” to grow, Isaac would also have to marry and have children. The servant’s experience of answered prayer is replete with the theme of divine guidance, reminders that God desires to be at work in the lives of those who seek to follow God’s way.

By the end of the story, there is no doubt in the reader’s mind that Isaac has found the right woman, but a question yet remains: will she have children? This will be the subject of next week’s lesson. 🌱

When God Opens Doors

When you were a child, your parents made most decisions for you. But as you grow, you get to make more and more choices about your life. Some are small choices, such as what kind of music and clothing you prefer. Other decisions are more important, like choosing friends, deciding how to handle temptations, where to spend your time, how hard to try in school, and eventually, selecting your path after high school — which college, what job?

The freedom to make choices for ourselves can be exciting. But it can also be stressful, since the best path is not always clear. That’s why we usually talk with friends, mentors and

family when we face important decisions about our lives.

In the scripture story for today, we watch as an arranged marriage brings Isaac and Rebekah together. Abraham, Isaac’s father, was concerned that Isaac had not yet taken a wife, much less had children. After all, Isaac was 40 years old. In order for Abraham’s family to continue (as God had promised), it was important for Isaac to have children. So, Abraham sent a servant to go and find a wife for Isaac.

In spite of having never met him, Rebekah eagerly accepted the call for her to wed Isaac, and Isaac quickly grew to love her. While an

arranged marriage is unusual in our culture, it was common in their time. Finding each other brought joy into their lives, and helped fulfill God’s promise to Abraham that he would father a great nation.

God often works in our lives to “open doors.” We never know when we may meet someone who will become a close friend. We never know when we will have the chance to take part in a group or project or discover a talent we did not expect. God opens doors, and we get to choose how to respond to these opportunities. Which opportunities are from God? How do we know? 🌱

Youth • July 3, 2011

Think About It:

List your closest friends. Leave a blank space. Ask yourself if you are open to adding a new name to your list if God brings someone unexpected into your life.



Make a Choice:

Pay attention to the choices you make during this week. Watch for the opportunity to give something a try, or to do something new. How can you tell if God is leading you to say “yes” to these things?



Pray:

Ask God to help you make good choices. Thank God for bringing new friends and new possibilities into your life.



Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge


July 10, 2011

Birth Rights and Wrongs

Have you ever seen a rough-looking biker or other person wearing a T-shirt with the slogan “Born to Lose,” or heard one of several songs by the same name? Apparently the fatalistic notion that one might come into the world with the fates stacked against him or her is a fairly common one.

The Book of Genesis contains the story of a man who seemed born to lose. His name was Esau. Esau’s brother Jacob, however, could have sewn a patch on his shepherd’s robe declaring that he was “Born to Win.”

Do either of those life scripts resonate with you? How we think of ourselves in relation to the world — as winners or losers, as competent or hopeless — can have a great impact on whether we find success in life or surrender to our own script of failure. A look at Jacob and Esau might offer helpful insights as we imagine what yet lies ahead for us.

Esau was technically the older brother, but his twin brother Jacob was given the name “Israel” and became not only the father of the famous 12 tribes of Israel, but also a mirror or memory in which Israel could see itself facing difficult obstacles (some self-inflicted) but yet surviving. 

Although we know Jacob is the most significant character, we will at least offer Isaac the respect of focusing today on the part he plays in the life and shaping of his sons.

Scholars note that “the barrenness of the patriarchal wives” is a common motif in Gen. 12-50. God had promised countless progeny to Abraham, but his wife Sarah remained barren for many years. So, we are not surprised to learn that Isaac’s beloved wife Rebekah was also barren (v. 21). This had apparently been

the case for 20 years: Isaac is said to have been 40 years old when he married Rebekah (v. 20), but he is 60 years old when Jacob and Esau are born (v. 26). Many things have happened in the intervening years — probably including most of what takes place in chapter 26, where children are not mentioned. Ancient Hebrew writers cared far less about putting things in chronological order than modern writers do. Since the most important thing for us to know about Isaac is that he was Jacob’s father, this story is told first.

Two prayers and an oracle (vv. 21-23)

We never read that Abraham prayed for Sarah to conceive, though we presume that he did. Stories about Isaac are limited, but the text does tell us that he prayed for an end to Rebekah’s barrenness, “and the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah conceived” (v. 21). And not only did Rebekah conceive; she conceived twins.

The story tells us that Rebekah also prayed, not in order to get pregnant, but because her pregnancy proved to be exceedingly difficult. The twins reportedly “struggled together” in her womb (literally, “they crushed each other,” a sign of things to come), making Rebekah so miserable that she prayed and wondered why it had to be that way (v. 22).

The text tells us that “Rebekah went to inquire of the LORD,” using the same sort of language typically employed to describe a visit to a sanctuary or a conversation with a priest, in which one would seek a divine oracle.

In Rebekah’s day, however, there was no sanctuary or priesthood in service of the God of Abraham, unless we are to presume something established by Melchizedek, who is called “priest of the God Most High” in Gen. 14:18, and to whom Abraham paid tithes (Gen. 14:20). Melchizedek is not mentioned after that in the patriarchal narratives, however, so we have no way of knowing where Rebekah went, how she went about

“inquiring of the LORD,” or how she received the oracle we find in v. 23. Perhaps we are simply to assume that Rebekah found a quiet place to pray, and God spoke directly to her.

Through the oracle, Rebekah learns the reason for her difficult pregnancy (twins), and receives a prophecy of how the brothers’ lives will play out. The oracle is couched in poetry, as shown below in this rather literal translation, with suggested clarifications in parentheses:

*Two nations are in your womb,
And two peoples will be separated
from your belly,
And (one) people will be stronger
than the (other) people,
And (the) great (older?) will serve
the small (younger?).*

The firstborn son, it seems, was born to lose.

Two births and a struggle (vv. 24-26)

In describing the twins’ birth, the narrator takes delight in wordplay. Esau is described as “red” (*’admônî*) using the same word translated as “Edomite.” The land inhabited by the Edomites is characterized by reddish sandstone mountains, scrub and deserts. Esau is also depicted as “hairy,” using a word that sounds like “Seir,” an alternate name for the Edomites’ homeland. The name “Esau” also draws on some of the same sounds.

Jacob is said to have been born holding on to Esau’s heel (*’aqav*), and thus he is called “*Ya’aqov*” which could mean something like “heel-grabber,” “supplanter,” “grasper,” or “overreacher.”

Take note that the narrator describes Esau entirely in physical terms — we are told what he looked like (red and hairy), but not what he does. In contrast, the narrator describes Jacob only in terms of action — we don’t know what he looked like, but are told he was grabbing at Esau’s heel, as if he were trying to pull his twin brother back and beat him out of the womb. Jacob’s competitive nature is clear from the beginning; he was born to win.

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



Two boys and a bad deal (vv. 27-34)

The story of the boys' disparate proclivities and their parents' dysfunctional partiality is familiar to us. Isaac is partial to Esau because he loves to eat wild game, and Esau's nature is the ancient equivalent of a man who wears camouflage and drives a pickup with a gun rack in the back. Jacob, on the other hand, is a homeboy who likes to cook, which pleases his mother.


As Isaac and Rebekah's years of childlessness are telescoped into a single verse, so is the adolescence and growth to manhood of Esau and Jacob. In vv. 25-26, they are born. In v. 27, they "grew up" and became men — men who lived out the prediction of the oracle that preceded their birth.

Wordplay is also important in the story of how Jacob persuaded Esau to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew. The story does not identify what Jacob was cooking when Esau came in from the field, only that he "was seething something seethed." Later we learn that it was

RESOURCES TO TEACH

Adult and youth lessons
available at
baptiststoday.org/bible

a stew made with lentils.

The words for "cook," "hunter," and "game" in Hebrew have similar sounds, suggesting perhaps that the hunter may fall victim to the cook. 


A second instance of wordplay is Esau's request for the "red stuff" (a literal translation) Jacob is cooking. The word for "red stuff" is the same as the word for Edom. Later in the narrative, Esau will be called as the ancestor of the Edomites.

Note again how differently the characters are portrayed. Jacob is conniving, clever, and looking toward the future, while Esau appears to be so short-sighted and impulsive that he thinks less of his birthright than a bowl of thick lentil soup, thinking he will die if he doesn't eat and the birthright will be no use to him. Thus, the text says, "he despised his birthright."

The text leaves us wondering what things we may have "despised" in service

to self over God. Are there ways in which we, like Esau, have "despised" our birthrights as children of God, called to live and love in ways that honor God and better the world? Have we let physical desires or appetites eclipse our inclinations to obey God and serve others?

Although Esau is the one who seemed to care little for his birthright, the narrator shows no empathy for the conniving way in which Jacob obtained it. Are we ever inclined to use shady means to get ahead or take advantage of other people? If our success comes at the cost of cheating another, is it worth it?

The reader may wonder whether either Jacob or Esau knew about the oracle Rebekah had reportedly received. Since the prophecy predicted that the older son would serve the younger, would Rebekah have kept that news from her favorite son? Given these thoughts, we likewise wonder if Jacob's actions were necessarily an indication of his personality, or if they were shaped by what his mother believed to be his destiny. 

Two Brothers

Esau and Jacob were brothers, and like most siblings they probably had their share of squabbles. In today's passage, we watch as they both make unwise choices.


First, we need to understand the idea of a birthright. In their time, a birthright always went to the first-born male of a family, and it provided a double share of the inheritance, along with other privileges. The father was required to give the birthright to the oldest son, although the son could give the birthright away.

Esau is the oldest of the sons, and holds the birthright in his family. However, he does not

seem to think it is very important, since he is quick to trade it to his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup. It seems like a foolish thing to do, since the inheritance would be worth so much more than a bowl of soup (even if it was amazing soup).

The younger brother, Jacob, was known for his cooking skill. So when Esau comes in from a long workday and is very hungry, Jacob takes advantage of Esau's hunger in order to obtain the birthright. Taking advantage of someone else's need does not seem to be a fair or wise way to relate to another person, much less a brother. Yet this is what Jacob does.

It is easy to judge Esau for giving up something of great value for a bowl of soup. Yet, how often do we treat as worthless things that seem far off in the future? The chance to have a wonderful career seems so far away to many teens — so far in the future that they do not connect excellence in school now with achieving that future. We can be more like Esau than we expect.

We may also find ourselves similar to Jacob, eager to use tricks or to take advantage of another person's need in order to help ourselves. 

Youth • July 10, 2011

Think About It:

What dreams and hopes do you have for your future? What can you do now that will help you reach your goals? How are you sometimes tempted to "give away" your future?



Make a Choice:

We are taught to be competitive in so many areas of life. What is the difference in being competitive and doing "whatever it takes" to get ahead? How will you choose to treat others?



Pray:

Offer your dreams and hopes to God, and ask for God's wisdom in how you treat others as you seek your dreams.



Thumbtacks

I will give you **REST** —Jesus

Matthew 11:25-30 — The Secret Word is rest. 7-3-11

In the United States we will celebrate Independence Day this week, remembering when Continental Congress members signed the Declaration on July 4, 1776. We get the day off as a holiday.

Holidays are important because we need rest. Where do you rest best? In your own bed or your bed at Grandma's? In a hotel or in a bunk bed at camp? In a tent or in your sleeping bag at a sleepover? Think of times you have been unable to rest. Maybe you've wanted a nap, but it was the middle of your school day. Maybe you had to stay up late to finish homework. Maybe you were worried, or you did something wrong and a guilty feeling kept you awake.

Jesus is comforting us like a blanket when he says to come to him and he will give us rest. He's asking us to be his **disciple**, a word that means "a student and follower." He also says that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. A yoke is a device strapped to farm animals so they can pull a plow or wagon to do farm work.

What is the hardest work you have done that made your body tired? By being Jesus' disciples we are doing his work. He's saying it is easy work, with a light burden. This does not mean the work won't make us tired. But the good tiredness we feel will be eased by good rest.

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 — The Secret Word is ears. 7-10-11

Have you ever helped plant a garden? You put seeds into the soil, and water it every day, and let the sun warm it up, and then after many days you see the seedling put out its first green shoot. That is an exciting thing to see! But what if some of your seeds accidentally spilled on the porch, or the sidewalk, or in your dog's supper dish? Would they grow? No way! This is what Jesus was talking about in his story.

Jesus was telling stories to crowds of people and thought of a great way to explain what he wanted to say: a **parable**. A parable is a story that teaches something in two ways you can compare to each other. Jesus was a good parable storyteller. Most people planted gardens or were farmers, and they understood this parable.

Ideas about God are like seeds. Can you remember the first time someone told you about God or Jesus? You might not remember because it happened so long ago, probably when you were about two. You remember who God is because people keep telling you every time you come to church. But how much would you know about God right now if that first person who told you when you were two was the **ONLY** person who ever told you who God is?

Jesus' story has two meanings. Meaning number one: The seeds that spill on the porch or sidewalk won't grow. Only the ones that go into good dirt and get sun and water daily will grow. Meaning number two: Hearing ideas about God and worshipping God one time won't make a person into a good Jesus-follower. A person has to worship every day. A person has to have ears that hear those God-ideas every day. What kind of ears do you have?





7-17-11

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 — The Secret Word is harvest.

Have you ever worked hard on something, such as cleaning your room, doing a project for school or building something, only to have it get ruined or messed up? If you have a little brother or sister, you know how angry you can feel when they mess with your stuff. Have you ever messed up somebody else's stuff?

This parable makes you wonder why anyone would mess up somebody else's stuff on purpose. It is hard enough to do good work or keep your things in order when accidents, bad weather, mistakes or bad luck can ruin something. For example, you may be praying now for people in Japan as they struggle to clean up and rebuild their houses and towns since the earthquake and tsunami there in March. It's hard to imagine how angry and frustrated they feel, a lot like the owner of the field in this story.

In this parable, Jesus' disciples (this means you!) are the good seeds that grow into delicious wheat. The weeds are the things all around us that make it harder to be a good disciple. What are the weeds that make things hard for you? Jesus says that just as the field owner can still harvest the good wheat even though there are weeds in it, we can still be good disciples during hard times. In fact, we especially need to be good disciples when things are hardest. What can you do as Jesus' disciple to help his other disciples in Japan this month as they work to rebuild?

7-24-11

Matthew 13:31-33 — The Secret Word is seed.

Some children were visiting their grandparents. Every morning during their visit, the grandmother would put a plate of hot biscuits on the table, and every child would grab and fuss for the biggest one.

One morning the grandfather said, "There is a cricket baked inside the biggest biscuit." Then the children were careful to take a biscuit that was small! The grandfather ate the biggest one happily as the children watched wide-eyed, because he knew the cricket was not really in the biggest biscuit.

A small cricket had taught a big lesson about manners: it's better to treat other people with love and kindness than to get the biggest biscuit.

A mustard seed is very little. Most seeds are bigger. When Jesus told this parable he was teaching that this tiny seed becomes a giant tree if it is allowed to grow, and that the number of Jesus-followers, called disciples, will start small but will end up being huge. Was he right?

Just because something is small doesn't mean it's not important. Some small things like seeds have potential inside them. **Potential** is the ability to change into something new and wonderful, sort of like Transformers. Each of us has potential, even when we are very small as babies.



7-31-11

Matthew 13:44-46 — The Secret Word is treasure.

Maybe you have been to the beach and seen people there who have devices called metal detectors. They walk along the beach and move the detector along the top of the sand. The magnet in it can find metal things under the sand that other people have lost — rings, watches, jewels. It's a treasure hunt for them!

When Luler the dog gets a juicy bone, she doesn't chew it up right away. She chews it some and then she does something gross: she buries it. It's a treasure to her, something she wants to save to dig up and chew later.

The pearl in the parable is the kind of treasure a person would keep safe, like a necklace in your mom's jewelry box. You probably have a treasure, and maybe more than one. Do you keep it safe and hidden? How would it feel to lose it? What if your little brother got hold of it?

Jesus tells us that there is treasure inside us too. Part of the Holy Spirit of God is inside each person, because we are God's children made to live as Jesus' disciples. People are way more valuable than things, even treasured things! A person is more important to God than the most precious possession we could own. As you think of things you treasure, remember this: what is inside people makes them valuable. Our worth comes from what we are, not what we have. If you can decide what you treasure most, you can understand how God feels about you. Do you treat people as if you think they are valuable to God?



Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

July 17, 2011

Blessings in the House of God

Have you ever wished you could meet God personally — while still on this side of the border between life and death? Have you ever imagined what it would be like to hear God speak a blessing directly to you?

If such a thing should happen, how do you think you would respond? With shock and awe? With humble gratitude? Is there any chance you would pull out a contract and ask God to sign on the dotted line to confirm that the promised blessings would be fulfilled?


That is very close to what Jacob did when God unexpectedly appeared to him in a dream at Bethel. Although the lectionary text stops at Gen. 28:19a, the story is woefully incomplete if we do not continue through verse 22, so we will.

Two stories (vv. 10-15)

This familiar story follows the even more memorable account of how Jacob disguised himself as Esau and swindled his brother out of the blessing his blind and aged father Isaac had intended to bestow on the oldest son (27:1-40). Esau was rightfully angry, and plotted to kill his conniving sibling, but Rebekah sent Jacob away before his brother could act. En route to Haran, where he would seek refuge with his uncle Laban, Jacob had an unexpected encounter with the divine.

There appear to be two stories in one here, a well-edited composite of the two oldest source documents behind the Pentateuch, usually called “J” and “E.” The J source is so named because the narrator typically refers to God as “Yahweh,” the special name by which God was called. It is called “J” rather

than “Y” because the Germans who first identified the source spelled Yahweh as “Jahveh.” The E source is denoted in part by its characteristic use of “Elohim,” a plural form of the generic Semitic term for “god,” as the preferred divine name.

While the older J source tends to speak of Yahweh as appearing physically in the form of a man, the E source imagines God as being more distant, appearing in dreams or through the medium of an angel. In this story, the larger frame of the story appears to be E, which speaks of a dream sequence in which Jacob glimpses a stairway to heaven. Though we commonly think of “Jacob’s ladder,” the word is more suggestive of a broad staircase: angels are both ascending and descending upon it — an unlikely image for a ladder. 


In the middle of E’s dream sequence, however, we find a theophany from the J source, in which Yahweh speaks directly to Jacob (the word “theophany” describes an appearance of God).

The editor/narrator manages this transition seamlessly by inserting it at v. 13 and by using a double-duty combination of a preposition that can mean “upon,” “by,” or “beside,” with an attached pronoun that can mean either “he” or “it.” Thus, the resulting word can be translated to indicate either that God stood “upon it” (that is, upon the stairway, from the perspective of E’s dream sequence) or “by him” (beside Jacob, from the perspective of J’s theophany).


Yahweh speaks audibly to Jacob, self-identifying as the God of his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. Yahweh repeats to Jacob the basic promise of land and offspring that was previously made to Abraham and Isaac, but then expands it with a promise to be with him everywhere he goes, to watch over him, and to return him safely back to his homeland. Yahweh concludes with the ringing affirmation “I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Two responses (vv. 16-22)

When Jacob awakes from the dream, he is convinced that he has stumbled upon

the very gateway to heaven. At first, he is overcome with awe and immediately marks the spot by taking the stone he had used to bolster his head and standing it on end, then anointing it with oil to sanctify the place as a holy site. Appropriately, he calls the place “Bethel,” a Hebrew term meaning “house (*beth*) of God (*el*.)” 

In v. 20, however, Jacob appears less worshipful and more distrustful. Although Yahweh had made a solemn and unconditional promise to bless Jacob, he responded with a very conditional vow designed to withhold his worship until God has fulfilled all the promises.

We recall that when Esau agreed to trade his birthright for a bowl of stew (25:29-34), Jacob had sealed the deal by requiring him to swear an oath. Now, before he fully accepts God’s offer, Jacob initiates a conditional vow designed to bind God to the previous promises: he wants to see the promises fulfilled before he agrees to join his forbears in acknowledging and worshipping God. 

Notice, however, that Jacob’s vow (vv. 20a-22) does not mention the central pledge of land or progeny. Instead, Jacob focuses on God’s promises of personal patronage and divine protection. This seems to underscore Jacob’s self-centered nature. Not only does he focus on personal aspects of the promises, but he also intensifies them. Not satisfied with God’s general promise to “watch over” him, Jacob asks specifically for food and clothing. Not satisfied to know that God will bring him back to the land, Jacob asks that he be brought back *in peace*.

Though raised in a family of Yahweh worshipers, Jacob holds out even his acceptance of Yahweh as God until he sees the promises fulfilled. In this way, the vow also serves as a framing device for much of the narrative that follows. The vow will be mentioned again in 31:13, when God reminds Jacob of it and tells him to return home. It is not completed until 35:1-7, when Jacob finally returns to Bethel, builds an altar and offers sacrifices after a peaceful reception by his brother Esau.

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



Two questions

Chances are that none of us has had an experience like Jacob's. We haven't slept in the wilderness with our head on a rock, or awakened to a vision of God standing beside our bedroll, promising to make us the father of a nation.

So, why do we bother to study this text? What can we learn from it?

When I read the story, I'm reminded that one never knows where he or she might meet God, or at least, feel an overpowering sense of the divine. There is nothing we can do to reach God, but the Bible insists that God can reach us, that heaven may come down to meet us in the midst of our need and our fear and our running away.

Jacob learned that he could run from his brother, but he could not run from God. God came to Jacob in the middle of nowhere, bringing surprising words of grace and promise and a future. Even when Jacob responded with a guarded vow that showed his own lack of trust, God did not give up on him, and neither does God give up on us.

RESOURCES TO TEACH

Adult and youth lessons
available at
baptiststoday.org/bible

As we walk our common journeys, as we run from our fears, as we pursue our dreams, God comes to us. Sometimes, when we *least* expect it, God comes to us in the form of a person or a dream or a sudden conviction or even a sermon that touches the heart. When God comes, we may not respond with great maturity or faith — we may try to work the same kind of distrustful deal with God that Jacob did — but God accepts what trust we have, and continues to work with us and lead us to other times when we may meet God again and grow in our devotion.

A second thing to observe is that the text virtually shouts of blessing. Jacob had done nothing to deserve God's beneficence. Indeed, one would think that his conniving ways would have earned some sort of divine retribution. But, the story suggests it was in God's mind to bless Jacob as the chosen one to become the

head of a new nation. Although Jacob had to leave home and would gain wealth through his wits rather than an inheritance from Isaac, he was blessed in many ways.

We should note that Esau was also blessed. Although he did not receive his father's official blessing to the firstborn, with Jacob's departure he inherited everything. This gave Esau even more property than he would have if the estate had been divided the normal way, with the older son getting twice the share of the younger.

Esau's behavior was no more commendable than Jacob's: he is roundly criticized for marrying two Hittite women who made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah (26:34-35). Yet, he is also blessed.

Can you think of ways in which God has blessed you, even though you can also think of ways in which you have fallen short of God's purposes for you? ↓

Surprising Blessings

"Great job!"

"You are a wonderful person!"

"I love you so much."

Words like these feel good to us, and they are actually a form of blessing. Someone is blessing who we are and what we do, reminding us that we are valuable. We love to receive such blessings.

In today's scripture passage, we see God surprise Jacob with a blessing. Jacob, you may recall, often behaved selfishly, to the point of tricking his brother and father into giving him

the birthright that rightfully belonged to his older brother. In spite of this, God comes to him in a vision and blesses him, promising to be with him and to make him the father of a nation.

Sometimes we forget that the persons we read about in the Bible were real, imperfect, and had their own personality flaws — just like us. In fact, God seems to have a habit of selecting and blessing normal people. Jacob and Esau both end up receiving God's blessing even though they each behaved badly.

Being accepted by God, no matter who we are or what we have done, is at the heart of what

we mean when we talk about "God's grace." It is grace when we receive something wonderful even though we do not deserve it. If we are honest, we all realize that we deserve less than God's blessing and yet God seems eager to bless us anyway.

In this passage, God appears to Jacob in a vision. Jacob does not expect God to give him special attention, and yet God appears to him with a blessing. While God may not appear to us in visions, there are many ways God can show up and surprise us. 📖

Youth • July 17, 2011

Think About It:

What are the ways you are blessed? Remember a time when someone said things to you that felt like a blessing. How did that feel?



Make a Choice:

Just as God blesses us even when we do not deserve it, there is great power in blessing others. Who can you bless this week?



Pray:

Thank God for blessing you, even when it is undeserved. Ask God to help you find ways to share blessings with others.



Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

July 24, 2011

Jacob Meets His Match

Have you ever unwrapped a gift, hoping it was something you wanted? Perhaps the size and weight were right for that blue sweater you'd been hinting about, or a new cordless screwdriver. With keen anticipation, you worked through the wrapping paper, only to discover that the blue sweater was a pink housecoat, or that the cordless screwdriver was a book.

It can be hard to hide our disappointment when reality turns out to be quite different from our expectations, and life surprises us. Try to imagine, though, the astonishment on Jacob's face when he awoke on the morning after his wedding night to discover that his new bride — veiled the night before — was not the woman he expected.

The text in context

The back-story of today's text, which the lectionary unfortunately breaks at v. 28 (we'll go through v. 30), is Jacob's arrival in Haran, where he quickly proves himself a force to be reckoned with.

Sometime after the midnight meeting with God that we studied last week, Jacob completed his journey to Haran. There, he came upon a well, possibly the same community water source at which his mother Rebekah had impressed Abraham's servant years before (Gen. 24). As in that story, Jacob's appearance at the well fits into the familiar betrothal type scene, but with several twists befitting Jacob's unique personality.

First, he alone moves the stone cover from the well, something ordinarily done by several men and only after all had gathered, ensuring that all shared equally in the use of the water. Jacob's action suggests not only that he is strikingly strong, but that he has no qualms about

violating custom in service to his own interests.

Secondly, while Abraham's servant had stood by as Rebekah drew water for his caravan of camels, Jacob eagerly draws water for the flock of animals Rachel had brought to the well. Was Jacob simply being gallant, or trying to impress the beautiful Rachel? Knowing Jacob, we are inclined to believe the latter.

After his long and lonely sojourn in the wilderness, Jacob is overcome with emotion to learn that the captivating Rachel is his cousin. Following her home, he receives a warm and happy welcome from Rachel's father Laban — but the initial warmth is in sharp contrast to the cold duplicity that will follow.

Two women, one love (vv. 15-20)

Hospitality can only last for so long without some sort of official arrangement. So, after Jacob had stayed for a month with Laban's family, a time in which he apparently pitched in and did chores with the rest of them, Laban sought to engage the industrious young man in a binding contract. His query, "Why do you serve me for nothing?" was an opening bid in negotiating the wages he would have to pay for Jacob's continued labor.

Perhaps the narrator intentionally built irony into Laban's question about why Jacob would "serve" him for nothing. The reader knows by now that Jacob serves no one, including God, for any purpose that does not serve himself — but he is willing to do what he has to do to get what he wants.


What Jacob wanted was Rachel, Laban's daughter — but he knew that Laban would demand a steep price for her hand.

Fleeing Esau, Jacob had apparently left home with little in the way of money or other resources. His family's wealth was in livestock, which he could not conveniently transport while on the run.

With no money to pay as a bride price, Jacob offered to indenture himself

to Laban for seven years as payment for the woman he loved. This suggests something about the depth of Jacob's desire for Rachel. How many of us would pay seven years' wages for the privilege of marrying our spouse?

As he negotiated, Jacob was well aware that Laban had an older daughter, so he carefully specified that his labor would be in exchange "for your younger daughter, Rachel" (v. 18).

We learned in the previous verse that Rachel's older sister was named Leah, and that she seems to have been less attractive than Rachel. The text mentions only her eyes, which are ambiguously described as "tender." 

Whether Leah's eyes are to be thought of as appealing or not, she was clearly no match for Rachel, who is portrayed as both shapely in form and beautiful in appearance. The NRSV muddles the translation, describing her as "graceful and beautiful," though the text clearly comments on both her figure (literally, "beautiful of form/outline") and her overall comeliness ("beautiful of appearance").

While Rachel's physical appeal is the only characteristic given by the text, we have no way of knowing what other intangibles may have attracted Jacob to her. The narrator leaves no doubt, however, that Jacob was deeply smitten with Rachel. The seven years of labor seemed like a few days, we are told, "because of his love for her."

A honeymoon surprise (vv. 21-25)

What happened next is a familiar story. The seven years passed, and Jacob insisted that Laban give him Rachel, whom he identifies as his wife: since betrothals were binding, the term was not inappropriate.

The manner of Jacob's request seems rather crude. "Give me my wife," he said, "my time is up and I want to go in to her" (v. 21). The Hebrew expression translated "go in" (or "go into") was a common way of saying "have sex with her."

The crassness of Jacob's request may

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



RESOURCES TO TEACH

Adult and youth lessons
available at
baptiststoday.org/bible

One bride, or two? (vv. 26-30)

When Jacob complained, Laban insisted that local custom dictated that the older sister must marry first. Laban was not averse to having his hard-working son-in-law marry Rachel as well — something custom did allow — but it would cost Jacob an additional seven years of labor. †

Notice that neither woman is given a voice in the story. Today, we would judge that both women were mistreated by having the course of their lives determined for them. For Leah it appears worse, because she is clearly less favored: the narrator emphatically tells us that Jacob loves Rachel. On the other hand, if Leah's "weak eyes" might have prevented other men from wanting to marry her, the arrangement might ultimately have served her well.

be the narrator's way of emphasizing Jacob's eagerness to consummate the marriage. After a day of wedding festivities in which men and women were largely separate, and after an evening banquet that probably involved some heavy drinking, Laban brought a veiled Leah into Jacob's dark tent instead of Rachel.

The narrator says nothing about Rachel's whereabouts, only that Jacob slept that night with Leah, not realizing until morning's light that his bedmate was the older, unwanted sister.

The narrator has skillfully indicated that Jacob finally got his comeuppance. Although he was younger, he had tricked his way into receiving the birthright and blessing that rightfully belonged to the older brother. Now, though he had bargained for the younger sister, he was tricked into wedding the older one. As Jacob deceived his blind father who depended on touch, he in turn was flummoxed by darkness and an over-reliance on feel. Perhaps Leah had spoken as if she were Rachel, even as Jacob had claimed to be Esau.

Still, we are left to wonder what the women thought about the arrangement. Was Rachel as in love with Jacob as he was with her? Did she cooperate willingly?

And how did Leah feel about this arrangement? Did she want to marry Jacob? Did she feel justified in participating in marriage by deceit?

These questions lead us to examine our own motives in our relationships with others. In our marriages and other relationships, do we seek others' good, or focus on our own needs? Do we relate to others with honesty, or harbor hidden agendas?

The story of Jacob and Laban, Leah and Rachel is not a pretty one. It is hard for us to find redeeming qualities in the multiple layers of deceit and the ways in which people were manipulated like pawns. Yet, before all was said and done, something good emerged: Jacob and his wives would produce children who would become known as the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. 📖

The Bigger Picture

Sometimes movies and books will offer a scene from later in time, and then jump to an earlier point in the story. We get to watch as the plot unfolds toward the future scene. Somehow, knowing a bit about where the story is heading helps us make sense of the earlier scenes.

Today's Bible passage gives us another part of the story of Jacob. To understand it, we need first to see where the story is heading. Here it is: Jacob and his wives are a very important part of the history of Israel. They have children who become known as the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel, and thus fulfill God's promise to Abraham and Jacob.

Now, we can rewind back to earlier in the story,

which could easily be a plot for a soap opera on television. Jacob meets Rachel, finds her beautiful and falls in love with her. He wants to marry her, but her father Laban requires that Jacob work seven years to earn her. Jacob works these years, and then asks for Rachel. The wedding is held, but when he awakens, he realizes he has married her older sister, Leah. When he confronts the father about this trickery, he is told that he must work another seven years for Rachel, which he does.

The story shows us unfairness (to the women, who really had no say in how, to whom or when they married), and to Jacob (who worked to fulfill the seven year agreement only to be tricked). Can you imagine how they felt during those 14 years? The events of their lives were certainly

frustrating, and probably made no sense to them at the time.

Our lives can often feel the same way. We face unfairness, find our hard work or patience punished rather than rewarded, and we wonder why life is being so difficult.

But look at the end of the story. Jacob and his wives give birth to and raise the people who become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. They literally give birth to a nation.

God may be working in our lives in similar ways; working toward something good, maybe even something surprising. We may not realize the ways that our lives are putting together a puzzle that, in the end, will be beautiful and significant. 📖

Youth • July 24, 2011

Think About It:

What are the parts of your life that seem unfair or hard? How might knowing that God is working toward a bigger picture help you cope with tough times?



Make a Choice:

As hard as we try, we cannot see the future God is working with us to create. Can you choose to trust God and work with God, even when times are confusing?



Pray:

Ask for the strength to trust God's work in your life.




Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

July 31, 2011

Wrestling for a Blessing

Have you ever felt that you were wrestling with God over some issue, perhaps hoping for some particular blessing or struggling to understand why some tragedy has happened? We may plead, argue or bargain with God, but few can claim to have engaged the divine in hand-to-hand combat.

Jacob could, and he lived to tell about it. 

On the road again


We've been studying glimpses into the life of Jacob, the trickiest of the patriarchs. In last week's lesson we saw how Jacob finally met his match in Laban, an avaricious uncle who duped Jacob into marrying both of his daughters, though Jacob wanted only one.

We now fast forward through a number of years during which Jacob and Laban continued their battle of wits, with Jacob acquiring considerable holdings in livestock. Jacob found himself in the uncomfortable position, however, of being bartered back and forth between his two wives (Rachel and Leah) and their handmaids (Bilhah and Zilpah). In the process, he fathered 11 sons and at least one daughter.

As Jacob's wealth grew, Laban's attitude toward him soured. Bolstered by a word from God, Jacob decided to gather his wives, flocks and other possessions for a return trip to his homeland (31:1-13). After a contentious parting from Laban (31:14-55), Jacob and his party traveled south along the eastern side of the Jordan River, stopping to camp near the fords of the Jabbok, a tributary of the Jordan about 20 miles north of the Dead Sea.

After an encounter with angels (32:1-2), Jacob sent messengers to his


brother Esau (32:3-8), who had apparently relocated to Edom, a rocky desert land southeast of the Dead Sea. Still afraid of Esau and showing surprising humility, Jacob referred to Esau as "my lord Esau" and to himself as "your servant Jacob."

When Jacob's envoys reported that Esau had set out to meet Jacob with a militia-sized retinue of 400 men, Jacob's initial response was to take defensive measures. He divided his family and property into two camps in hopes that one could escape if the other was attacked. His second response was to pray for deliverance (32:9-12).  Then, in an effort to placate his brother, Jacob sent a large gift of valuable livestock ahead of him (32:13-21), spaced out in several groups for maximum effect.

Wrestling ... (vv. 22-25)

At this point Jacob does a surprising thing. During the night, he took his wives, children, and all his possessions, and led them across the ford to the south side of the Jabbok. Then, apparently, he returned to the northern bank to remain alone through the night.


Why? Was Jacob being a coward, hanging back and leaving his family to face Esau without him? Did Jacob feel the need of some time in seclusion, perhaps to pray again for deliverance? We can't answer the question — nor can we fully explain what happened next.

A man appeared, we are told, who engaged Jacob in a wrestling match. The Hebrew word for "wrestle" is a verbal form of the same root that means "dust." Literally, it means "to get dusty." That's what happens when one wrestles in the dirt. 

Because we have read the whole story, we know that the "man" (*ish*) is actually God, appearing in human form, but apparently with some self-imposed human limitations. God had "stood by" Jacob at Bethel as he prepared to leave Canaan, and now meets Jacob again as he prepares to re-enter the land. In their first encounter, God had spoken only

words of blessing. This time, God attacks.

We are not told at what point Jacob recognized that he was wrestling with a divine adversary. Initially, he may have thought his assailant was Esau. The account of the wrestling is very brief, though we are led to believe that the opponents were evenly matched and the struggle lasted through the night.

That Jacob should prove to be a strong opponent is not surprising. We previously learned that he could move a heavy stone well cover by himself (Gen. 29:1-10), and his tenacity was persistent. As daybreak ("the rising of the dawn") drew near, Jacob's opponent saw that he "did not prevail" against Jacob through pure wrestling, so he struck him a blow in the hollow of the thigh and dislocated his hip. 

... for a blessing (vv. 25-31)

Though the dislocation would have been extremely painful, Jacob maintained his hold and refused to let go, even though God reminded him that dawn was breaking. It was widely believed that anyone who saw God's face would die, so God's request to be released is for Jacob's benefit.

Jacob, however, was determined to receive a blessing from his divine opponent, and was willing to risk his life in the effort.

Jacob's determination to receive a blessing is punctuated by two questions about names. God first asked Jacob's name, which he readily supplied, and God then gave him a new name. "Israel" can mean "God fights," but it could also be read to mean something like "he struggled (with) God." Given the context, the latter seems more likely: it commemorates that Jacob had struggled with God as well as with men, and prevailed.

Unlike the stories of Jacob's grandfather, which consistently call him Abraham after his name was changed from Abram, both Jacob and Israel are used in later narratives.

Jacob was not satisfied to receive a

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



RESOURCES TO TEACH

Adult and youth lessons
available at
baptiststoday.org/bible

new name of his own: he wanted to know the name of his adversary. Does this mean he was still uncertain with whom he was wrestling, or that he wanted God to reveal a more personal name that might grant Jacob some advantage? We cannot be sure: God deflected the question.

Jacob did not prevail enough to learn the name of his attacker, but he did win a blessing. God refused to reveal a name, but bestowed a blessing on Jacob, and that's all we know about how the match ended.

Perhaps we are to presume that there had been enough light for Jacob to catch a shadowy glimpse of his opponent's face, for Jacob named the place "Peniel" (more commonly spelled "Penuel"), which means "face of God." Proud of having survived the encounter, Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life has been preserved."

One of the most vivid images in all of scripture is the next one, told with bare-bones simplicity: "And the sun broke out on him as he crossed over Penuel, limping on his hip" (v. 31). Jacob may have

seen God and survived, but he did not emerge unmarked. 📖

Wrestling for a lesson

Jacob's struggle with God has the potential for speaking to believers on several levels. We recall that Jacob's encounter with God was preceded by a prayer for deliverance, followed by the employment of a defensive strategy designed to protect his family. Jacob believed in praying for divine aid, but also in doing what he could for himself.

The nocturnal wrestling match with God, in some ways, combines both prayer and action: Jacob physically struggled with God, while also engaging in a conversation designed to elicit a blessing from God.

Few of us could claim to have grappled with God in a physical sense, but Jacob's encounter at the Jabbok reminds

us that God comes to meet us on our own level, in our own imperfections, where we are — and that God's desire is to bless us.

Jacob's exchange with God on the subject of names reminds us that God knows our names. God knew Jacob's name without asking, but wanted the cunning patriarch to confess his nature as one who overreaches. The new name God gave honored Jacob's continued willingness to reach beyond what was expected: as he had struggled with men, so he had struggled with God.

Finally, it could be worth considering the notion that God can break into our lives at any time and lead us in new directions. Jacob apparently had few thoughts beyond protecting himself and his family when he encountered the unexpected, mysterious presence of God. He was still walking when he emerged from the encounter, but his limp was a clear reminder that his life had been forever changed. 📖

Do You Wrestle?

Sometimes we keep childhood notions of faith even as we grow and mature as persons. That is unfortunate, since our ideas about God and faith also need to grow and mature.

As children we are told stories from the Bible and of God's work, and we accept what we hear. But as we grow and mature, we begin to realize that life can be hard and complicated. The easy answers about God's love may not always feel helpful when we are facing difficult choices, feeling under attack or are scared or uncertain.

What if God wants us to not only wrestle with

life, but to wrestle with God? Would you feel guilty or frightened to wrestle with God? Are you able to speak your mind to God? Can you yell and scream at God about how you feel? What do you think would happen if you did?

Good friends already know how this works. We know that a real friend listens to everything we say and feel. A real friend lets us speak our mind. We can even fight with real friends and know that they will still love us and care about us. Why do we assume God is any different?

In today's Bible passage, we continue to watch Jacob's life unfold. As Jacob makes some bold moves for his family, he finds himself literally

wrestling with God — even to the point that he injures his hip and ends up limping across the river. But he does wrestle. In the process, he learns about himself, and he grows closer to this God who has been with him all along. God doesn't control Jacob, but interacts with him and challenges him.

Are you willing to wrestle with God? 📖

Youth • July 31, 2011

Think About It:

How honest and open are you with God?



Make a Choice:

Will you really open up to God and share your thoughts, feelings, even anger?



Pray:

Thank God for being willing to accept you for who you are and for allowing you to be fully honest.



Do You Wrestle?

Classifieds

Pastor: University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss., affiliated with CBF and SBC, seeks a pastor responsible for traditional and liturgical worship leadership, preaching, and pastoral care. The church has one other full-time minister and three part-time ministers. The pastor, preferably aged 35-55, should have at least five years of full-time pastoral experience and should hold a doctoral degree. Email résumés to crockett@wmcarey.edu, or send mail to Bennie R. Crockett Jr., Pastor Search Committee, University Baptist Church, 3200 W. Arlington Loop, Hattiesburg, MS 39401-7201.

Pastor: West Highland Baptist Church in Macon, Ga., a small traditional congregation, seeks a pastor willing to work to develop a new vision for the future. Send résumés to Pastor Selection Committee, 1857 Christopher's Trace, Macon, GA 31220 or whbcsearchteam@gmail.com.

Pastor: Knightdale Baptist Church (KBC) is accepting résumés for the position of lead pastor. KBC is a church of 500 members affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Raleigh Baptist Association. Knightdale is a small town adjoining Raleigh and has undergone major residential and commercial development in the

last 10 years. Résumés will be accepted until July 1 at p.t.jones@knightdalebaptist.org or P.O. Box 21, Knightdale, NC 27545.

Pastor: Beaver Dam Baptist Church is a historic church at the heart of a small, rural community in western Kentucky. BDBC is widely known for both its music ministry and youth ministry, led by two full-time ministers, and a growing Christian education ministry, including a preschool and K-6 elementary school. In 2010, BDBC contributed more than \$100,000 to local, state and international missions, with \$660,000 in undesignated receipts. BDBC affirms the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message*. For more information, or to submit a résumé, please contact BDBC Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 242, Beaver Dam, KY 42320 or bdbcpssc@gmail.com.

Minister of Music and Worship: First Baptist Church of Dalton, Ga., a CBF-affiliated church, is seeking the person God is leading to our ministry of music and worship. The candidate should be a deeply committed minister to the entire congregation. He/she should have advanced musical and theological education and be capable of directing a well-established, comprehensive program of excellent music for children through senior adults.

Skill in worship planning is also required. While the candidate must be able to work within the traditional parameters of organ, piano and robed choir, he/she should be willing to utilize a variety of musical styles. He/she should work cooperatively with other ministers, staff and the congregation in fulfilling the church's vision of "Together in Christ ... Sharing His Love." To apply, please contact Bill Ireland at bireland@firstbaptistdalton.com or Curtis Kleem at curtiskleem@gmail.com.

Part-time Worship Leader: First Baptist Church of Hickory, N.C., affiliated with CBF and SBC, is seeking an interim contemporary worship leader for the 8:30 a.m. contemporary worship service of the church. Candidates must have previously demonstrated leadership abilities in a contemporary worship setting, must strive for musical excellence in directing band and vocal rehearsals, and must be committed to theological depth in designing worship. A bachelor's degree in music education or church music or the equivalent is required. Keyboard, guitar and/or other instrumental skills and also theological training are preferred. Visit www.fbc.cc for a job description and our identity statement. Submit qualified résumés and cover letters to Worship Interim Search, First Baptist Church, 339 2nd Ave NW, Hickory, NC 28601.

Minister of Children and Families: The minister should preferably be a graduate of a seminary or divinity school and have at least two years experience as a minister to children on a full-time basis. Send résumés to Jeff@StatesvilleFBC.org, or Children and Families Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 815 Davie Ave., Statesville, NC 28677.

Director of Weekday Education Center: A degree in early childhood education and a minimum of two years teaching experience are required. Send résumé to HWEC Chairman, Heritage Baptist Church, 700 Milnwood Rd., Farmville, VA 23901 or lorraine@kinex.net.



Children At Heart Ministries

Children At Heart Ministries (CAHM), headquartered in Round Rock, Texas, invites applications and nominations for the position of **PRESIDENT/CEO**. Review of applications will begin immediately. Anticipated employment date is Fall, 2011.

CAHM is a family of Christian ministries that serve children and families in Texas:

Gracewood (Houston)	Miracle Farm (Brenham)
STARRY (Round Rock)	Texas Baptist Children's Home (Round Rock)

The CEO serves as the President of the corporation and is charged by the Board of Trustees to be responsible for all operations, which include a \$10 million budget and services to over 11,000 people annually.

A more detailed job announcement, job description and CEO profile are available at <http://www.ChildrenAtHeartMinistries.org/ceosearch>

serving children
strengthening families
since 1950

GIFTS TO
Baptists Today
HAVE BEEN RECEIVED
IN MEMORY OF ...

Lloyd Leneal Fortner
From Tamlin B. Fortner

*

William B. Greenhaw
From Suzy McCullough

Forget regrets

By Tony W. Cartledge

OK, I got to meet Bernadette Peters and was thrilled. I've been a big fan of hers for nearly 30 years, have all of her records, have seen several of her Broadway musicals, and own soundtracks of them all.

At the Kennedy Center, I attended opening night of a major revival of the musical *Follies*, which won seven Tony awards when it debuted in 1971. Then, I was lucky enough to go backstage and shake hands with the star.

That was the highlight of the evening. The play itself was profoundly depressing, and I found myself wanting to console Bernadette for having to play such a heart-rending role.

The plot line is that, just before an old theater is torn down in 1971, the producer of *Weismann's Follies* gathers former showgirls from the 1920s and '30s for a reunion. The play centers on two of the former dancers, Sally (played by Peters) and Phyllis (played by Jan Maxwell).

Both are miserable in their marriages. Sally still wishes she was married to Phyllis' husband, Ben, and her own husband, Buddy, has a mistress. Phyllis has grown weary of



Ben's emotional distance; both have dabbled in affairs.

Although there are a few light moments, the show is filled with regrets, recriminations, the ghosts of youth, and songs that are both sad and angry. At one point, both focal marriages appear to be over and with good reason, but at show's end all have surrendered themselves to living in misery because it seems the best they can do. Hope, in the play,

Selections from recent blogs at
baptiststoday.org

is a rare commodity.

I believe many people invest way too much time and energy on regrets. We have all made decisions for good or bad that influenced who and where we are today. It's easy to play "what if?" and wonder how life would be different had different choices been made.

Truth is, we can't know. Life might be better; it might not. Most of us make the best decisions we know how to make, given the information we have and the level of maturity we possess when it comes time to choose a course. None of us sees the future, and no one can look back and say with certainty how life would be different if we had made different choices.

We have done what we have done; we are who we are; we remain responsible for making choices about who and what we will become. As I see it, there's little room in that equation for regrets: we need to find a way to be thankful for what lies behind and hopeful for what lies ahead.

Getting stuck in the past or resigning oneself to present misery — now those are follies. **BT**

Preaching to the point

By John Pierce

Ed Pettibone took me to the historic First Church in Albany, N.Y. The building was erected between 1797 and 1799.

The Dutch Reformed congregation, founded in 1642, claims the oldest pulpit in America — brought from the Netherlands in 1656 for an older place of worship known as the Blockhouse church.

The most noticeable feature is the hourglass attached to the antique pulpit — surely not the preacher's idea. Was it a "gift" from a weary pew sitter or part of the architect's design — having sat through a few rambling sermons himself?

Holding a congregation's interest while seeking to speak a heavenly word through human lips remains one of the greatest challenges of church ministry. Perhaps that's why preaching takes so many forms — and lengths.

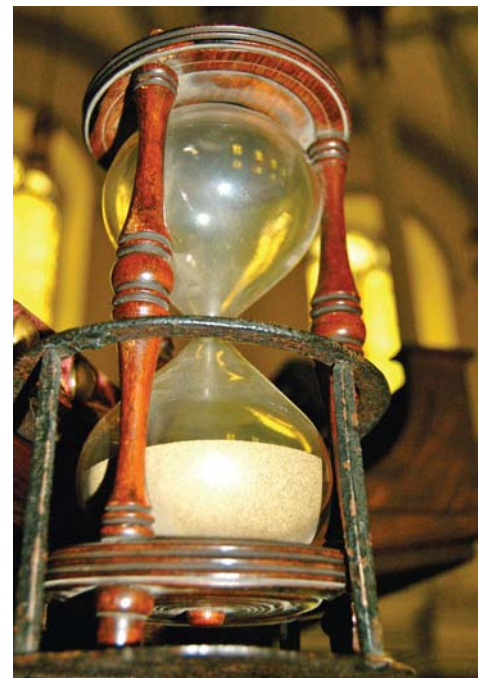
Squirring in pews was a form of child-

hood penitence in the days before "children's church" or "extended session." For many of us, sitting through long, loud and repetitive sermonizing provided an early understanding of the concept of eternity as "going on and on forever."

Beloved professor John Carlton told my seminary class: "If you can't say it in 20 minutes, say it next Sunday." Many of us took his words to heart — and our preaching is much shorter than that on which we were raised.

However, Dr. Tom Long, who teaches preaching at Emory's Candler School of Theology, said recently that sermons are gaining in length now for the first time in generations. We may need to flip the hourglass again.

Sermons can be meaningful without requiring exceptional endurance from the listeners. But, of course, there are greater questions to be asked about preaching than just length. Is it relevant, hopeful, applicable, and faithful to the biblical text?



These are (or should be) ongoing questions for those who dare to preach. There are places in life where the divine and humanity get mixed in inseparable ways. Certainly the pulpit is chief among them. **BT**

The Fellowship at 20



A conversation with Daniel Vestal

ATLANTA — When the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) was formed two decades ago, Daniel Vestal was a pastor and Southern Baptist leader who — among many — had watched his familiar and beloved denominational home transition into rigid fundamentalism.

The son of a Southern Baptist evangelist, this Texas-bred preacher helped launch the Fellowship as a home for those who desired to cooperate voluntarily in mission and ministry ventures while continuing to embrace historic Baptist values of freedom.

Twenty years later, Vestal is the second and seasoned executive coordinator of the

Fellowship. *Baptists Today* editor John Pierce asked him 10 questions at this juncture in CBF life. He graciously responded.

BT: When reflecting on the formation of CBF, what are the first thoughts that come to your mind?

DV: Hope and renewal. In reflecting back after 20 years, it is easier to see the discontinuity and difference between CBF and the denominational context out of which we came. It's huge. From the beginning of our formation there was a genuine hope for something new, not just a re-creation or reorganization of what had been.

BT: Obviously, you felt an urging of the Spirit when called to serve as the Fellowship's second executive coordinator. But can you say more about why you took this job?

DV: It's no secret that I struggled with a sense of call to this position. All I had known in ministry was the role of pastor, and I grieved over the possibility of leaving that role. I also was on a personal journey of discovery in regards to spirituality and contemplative prayer, and was afraid that in becoming an administrator I would have to abandon that journey.

But during the '96 Assembly in Richmond I came to a peace that perhaps this position had my name on it. I must also say that a number of colleagues and cherished friends encouraged me in ways that were affirming

and helpful, especially Carolyn Crumpler, Cecil Sherman and Buddy Shurden.

BT: Has this leadership position evolved in ways you could not have expected at the beginning? If so, how?

DV: I have said on occasions that my role has changed every three or four years. At the beginning we were under constant attack by the Southern Baptist Convention. They spent a lot of money, time and energy undermining us in the eyes of the Baptist public.

Whitsitt Society to honor Vestal

The Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society (whitsittbaptist.org) will present its annual William H. Whitsitt Courage Award to Daniel Vestal during the 20th anniversary Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in Tampa later this month.

Although we wanted to ignore them, we couldn't, because their attacks not only impacted us but also impacted local churches.

Also in my earlier years we needed some sense of cohesiveness. Contrary to what some may think, CBF has always been a very diverse group of Baptists. And in the earlier years, that diversity threatened to pull us apart. People were more passionate about their own agenda or issue or region than they were about the Fellowship.

Then for awhile there was this constant query, "Is CBF going to make it?" We were always being compared to the Alliance of Baptists or Southern Baptists or American Baptists or state Baptist conventions in disparaging ways. Our viability was always being questioned, and the challenge was to create confidence that we had a place in the Baptist family.

Then we have faced the collective responsibility of strategic planning, visioning and prioritizing which required my involvement. In recent years it seems I have had to spend more time focusing on funding and resources. One of the "constants" in all of this has been the opportunity to be in churches on a weekly basis.

BT: What does CBF do best?

DV: That's a hard question, because I believe we do a lot of things very well at a functional and organizational level. When I see ministries

from disaster response to chaplaincy endorsement, from global missions to congregational resourcing, from reference/referral to leadership development, I feel a great deal of satisfaction.

I honestly believe that our General Assembly is the finest annual gathering of any Baptist body in America.

I also think one of the things CBF does well is to function in collaboration. I work with an outstanding staff that is highly qualified and deeply committed. I work with state and regional leaders for whom I have great respect, and I have worked with wonderful moderators and councils. We're not perfect, but we really make an effort to work together.

BT: What are the Fellowship's greatest challenges?

DV: I would mention two, and they both have to do with growth. First, we must discover a way to fund mission for the 21st century.

We all know the ways of funding mission in the past fit the past better than the present, and we all know about the changing denominational and cultural landscape. But we have yet to define a funding vision and implement a funding mechanism that will effectively provide the needed resources for mission. I have hope that we will be able to do this, but I must be honest in naming this challenge.

A second challenge is to become a church-planting movement. CBF needs to be helping churches begin new churches, not just for the growth of CBF but for the future of the Gospel. The reality is that many existing churches will die, and new churches need to be born.

BT: CBF is focused on serving churches. Have the needs of churches changed over the past 20 years? If so, what are those changes and how has CBF responded?

DV: I have written and spoken on this a great deal, because it is at the core of our mission. In 1998 the book, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, was published. It was a watershed book, because it fostered a theological re-imagination about the Gospel, the church and culture. This conversation has now gone viral and global.

CBF has been a vital part of this conversation and has been shaped by it in significant ways. We are learning that God is on a mission to reconcile and recreate all things. We are learning how the triune God is a missional

God inviting us to be a part of the mission.

And what is encouraging to me is that congregations are learning to discern God's mission. And they are discovering their participation in it. They are learning how not to be pastor centered, or denomination centered, or program centered, or building centered, but to be mission centered.

This is resulting in profound changes in the life of congregations. One of the changes has to do with "measurement and metrics," i.e., how do we evaluate success? Another one has to do with "immersion and incarnation," i.e., how much are we involved in the human needs of the neighborhood?

Another one has to do with "ministry and motives," i.e., are we simply maintaining the institution or do we have a passion for God's Kingdom?

These changes are sometimes incremental and often painful, but they are real. And CBF is working hard to be sensitive to churches, especially to leaders, as they transition to missional.

We are seeking to serve them in two primary ways. First, we want to help them in missional formation, and then we want to help them in missional engagement.

BT: You've resisted efforts to formally designate CBF as a denomination, although you've explained that the Fellowship is "denomination-like" in the services it provides. But this question seems to never go away. Should it be, or is it, a valid question to consider once again?

DV: I'm not afraid of the "D" word. I just don't like it. All the baggage of the past seems to ride on the word and the concept.

For me, the word applies most accurately to the faith tradition we call Baptist. My denomination is Baptist. My faith tradition is Baptist, and it is a living faith tradition. Within the Baptist denomination there are a number of "denominational" organizations. CBF is one of them.

I realize this may sound like "ecclesiological hairsplitting." But I do realize that an increasing number of congregations want CBF to be a part of their identity and not just a mission partner. They see CBF as a "denominational home."

They want to belong to a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches with whom they share some core values and common mission. This is good, and I think this feeling will grow in the future.

BT: One mark of the Fellowship during your tenure has been working cooperatively with other Baptist and non-Baptist Christian groups on common concerns. What benefits have come from these relationships?

DV: I would like to think one benefit is that we have a fuller and broader understanding of the nature of the church. And that understanding is more than abstract or intellectual. It is visceral, emotive, intuitive.

In our Baptist focus on the local church as the Body of Christ we are in danger of

“I didn’t know ‘cooperative’ and ‘Baptist’ could be used in the same sentence.”

BT: With the 20th anniversary General Assembly ahead, CBF is celebrating at a time of diminished resources and cutbacks. How do you balance these two realities? And what are your hopes for the gathering in Tampa?

DV: I am reminded of the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:9, “For a wide open door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” A celebration of God’s

tive, and one of my hopes for Tampa would be for a genuine celebration of those relationships.

I love this Fellowship, and a lot of other people love it as well. I owe a great deal to CBF, and I want to express that sense of indebtedness by my presence in Tampa. My own Christian discipleship and Baptist identity have been shaped by CBF in the past 20 years. I want to say thanks to God and thanks to others.

BT: Try to look around the corner a little bit. What issues and trends will the Fellowship need to address in the near future — and what attributes of CBF life contribute to a meaningful response?

DV: Trying to predict the future is dangerous. My experience is that we have been surprised by emerging trends more often than we have anticipated them. But I will offer a few thoughts.

First, the technological changes around information and communication are simply mind-boggling. How the Fellowship — as well as local churches — adjusts and adapts to these changes will be crucial.

Another issue facing all of us has to do with human sexuality. What is a Christian sexual ethic for the 21st century? What sources should inform a Christian sexual ethic? How important is Scripture, tradition, reason, community, conscience? The Fellowship is not of one mind on these questions any more than the broader culture.

I personally believe that the issue of global poverty remains one of the great challenges facing the human family. As Christ followers we simply cannot accept the inequity between rich and poor, and if I understand Scripture correctly, we will be judged by how we respond to the suffering among us. There is in this Fellowship a genuine commitment to economic justice, and I hope that it will increase.

And then of course the issue of interfaith dialogue and cooperation is one that may determine the survival of our planet. I agree with the Catholic theologian Hans Küng, who has argued that we can’t have world peace without religious peace.

Nearly every major conflict in the world has a religious component to it, which means we must learn to respect and value those with whom we have differences. CBF itself must respond to this challenge and help churches do the same. **BT**



Daniel Vestal, here pointing to his 1967 ordination certificate from Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, struggled with the initial call to lead CBF because pastoral ministry was all he had known.

thinking that the Body of Christ is only the local church. And in our focus on Baptist identity we are in danger of separating ourselves from the historical, global community called the church. Relationships with other Baptist and non-Baptist groups check these dangers.

Another benefit — and this may sound self-serving — is that relationships with other Baptist and non-Baptist groups have given CBF a certain credibility and respectability in the eyes of others. I’m often in an ecumenical, or even interfaith, group, and will hear someone say, “I’m surprised that Baptists are here.”

I’ve even had folks remark, half joking,

providence and provision is often in the context of difficulty and disappointment.

We want to separate the two, but so very often they are all mixed together. And for me, faith is learning to embrace them both and believe that God is at work in both.

This gathering in Tampa is a time to look back over 20 years and give thanks. We dare not take credit for what has happened or engage in some kind of self-congratulatory ritual.

But it is good to pause in a collective way to praise God. It’s also a time to look around and give thanks. For many of us the relationships in this Fellowship have been transforma-

My new hero

I believe in heroes. We need heroes to inspire us with their courage and vision. Fellowship Baptists have our share of heroes, people like Cecil Sherman and Randall Lolley.

But I have a new hero. He's a young pastor of a very small First Baptist Church in a declining town. He graduated from one of our Cooperative Baptist Fellowship partner divinity schools and accepted a call to this church.

The congregation agreed to pay him a modest salary and pinned high hopes that their attractive, smart, hard-working pastor would restore their church to the glory days when the Sunday school rooms, sanctuary pews, and committee rosters were mostly full and their church functioned smoothly and efficiently.

Well, this pastor came, he worked hard, he preached well, and guess what? A few new folks came, but about the same number died. There just weren't that many lawyers, doctors, teachers and business owners (the typical First Baptist membership profile) moving into the community — just the opposite, in fact.

Those folks were moving away. Then the recession hit and the church's finances took a nosedive. They found it hard to pay the salary they promised the pastor, whose family had added a new baby.

At first, when they evaluated their situation, the pastor and the congregation became depressed and discouraged. It just didn't seem fair. They weren't sure what else to do.

Then they, as a church, read and studied Daniel Vestal's little book, *It's Time*. They became captivated by the vision of the missional church. They decided they wanted to shift their focus and begin the missional journey.

The pastor said to me: "We don't know if this will fill the pews of our church again, or not. That's not our concern. As we look around this little community, we see all kinds of problems and people who need our ministry, people who in the past probably didn't fit the profile of typical First Baptist members.



"But we're going to try to be the presence of Christ to them. We'll invite them to come to First Baptist. But more important, we're not going to wait for them to come to us. We're going to go to them, to love them, and serve them, and be Christ to them.

"We're going to do it, not so they'll

give us money to pay my salary, not so we'll have more Sunday school teachers or committee members or nursery workers, but because it's the right thing to do, because it's what we believe Jesus is calling us to do."

That young pastor is my new hero. I have tremendous admiration for that little church. They're learning that God is at work in the world, beginning in their community.

I'm grateful that Fellowship Baptists can be their partner as they pursue God's mission. We can't go back to yesterday, but we can go forward to a brighter tomorrow — because God is at work in the world, and calling us to join in. **BT**

—Larry Hovis is executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina.

Are Baptist Beliefs Still Important?

Maybe you think they are. Maybe you're not sure. Maybe you're sure they're not. Maybe you're not sure what Baptist beliefs are. Whatever your response, *Beliefs Important to Baptists*, a 13-session Bible study, is designed for you. A Teaching Guide is available free.

Log on to
www.baptistwaypress.org

and see all the study materials from BaptistWay Press®— more than 40 studies for adults plus FREE materials for all ages and in 7 languages.

Call 1.866.249.1799 to order.
 Or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org

BAPTISTWAYPRESS®
BaptistGeneralConventionOfTexas

SIX QUESTIONS

about the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Editor's note: In this series, various participants respond to the same six questions from Baptists. Today editor John Pierce about their involvement in and understanding of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship that is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

BT: What was your first experience with CBF?

Christy: While a student at Furman University and a member of the college Sunday school class at First Baptist Greenville, S.C., the teachers of our class along with the youth minister took us to the first official meeting of CBF.

I remember the feelings of hope and excitement among the crowd that gathered in Atlanta over those few days. As a young person who was sensing her call to ministry, I was elated to be a part of the birth of an organization that celebrated my calling to be a minister.

BT: What is it about the CBF that caused you to get and remain engaged?

Christy: I first became involved in CBF because folks who joined together to form CBF were my kind of Baptists. I feel that it is in our nature as Baptist churches to want to partner with other Baptist churches.

CBF gives churches like the one I serve (Oakland Baptist Church, Rock Hill, S.C.), the chance to connect with others. It gives our churches an opportunity to engage in missions, support our field personnel, help fund seminary and divinity schools for future ministers, and find resources that help us in our missional journey.

BT: What was a significant "CBF moment" for you?

Christy: I cannot name just one — so I will name three:

- Graduating from Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in the second graduating class. I loved being part of a school that was part of a new work that God was doing through CBF.
- Attending CBF General Assemblies. I love seeing old friends and reconnecting with them. CBF provides a home for us.



Christy McMillin-Goodwin is moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. She has served Oakland Baptist Church in Rock Hill, S.C., for 16 years, first as the minister of students and now as the associate minister for education and missions. She and her husband Shane Goodwin, an elementary school principal, have two children.

- I have been able to travel with my church and with CBF field personnel Nell Green to a number of places where our field personnel serve. I am incredibly humbled, and at the same time full of gratitude, for their undying commitment to share Christ's love with people who are living in desperate situations. We are truly blessed to have the quality of people we have serving in our stead around the world. If you have not gotten to know at least one of our field personnel, put it on your "to do" list!

BT: How do you explain CBF to others?

Christy: CBF helps churches and individuals to be the presence of Christ to the world. CBF is made up of churches that allow women to serve as ministers.

BT: What are the biggest challenges facing CBF at age 20?

Christy: Once again, I have three challenges!

- Having served on the CBF Coordinating Council and now as moderator, I think we need to examine the structure and function of the Coordinating Council. Our model was great when we were birthed 20 years ago, but does this model allow us to function most effectively today?
- MONEY! In January, CBF had to downsize staff. Cuts are already being recommended

for our next budget year. Interestingly, our biggest shortfall is with the Offering for Global Missions, not the monies churches send from their budgets. Yet, when asked, almost everyone does not want missions to be cut. It seems there is a disconnect.

- CBF exists to support churches. And I mention what comes next with great fear and trembling because I know that we are not of one mind. One issue that churches have had difficulty addressing is in regards to homosexuality. I was pleased that we had a beginning conversation around this topic at the General Assembly in Charlotte [last year]. But we need to continue to provide opportunities for prayer, conversation and study to help support the local church.

BT: What hopes do you have for the Fellowship's future?

Christy: I hope that the CBF will be at least as successful and fruitful as it has been for its first 20 years. I hope that CBF will continue to seek to be the presence of Christ in the world. I hope that CBF will continue to work to be a diverse and inclusive organization and a home for those who are marginalized.

I hope that CBF will boldly follow Jesus' leading. I hope that CBF will keep in the forefront of its purpose the support of local church (and individual) ministries. I hope that CBF will be a place for my daughter and son to call home when they are grown. **BT**



Baptists AND THE CIVIL WAR

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Two months after war is declared between South and North, and in the absence of any meaningful battlefield engagements thus far, the Confederate and American public harbors a somewhat romanticized version of a war based on feelings of regional righteousness and pride.

Julia A. Sanford, a young Baptist woman in Forsyth, Ga., captures the positive mood characteristic in much of the South. In her “beautiful diary” that her fiancé sent her from his army post in Virginia, she writes:

Wednesday, June 26 — What a good and refreshing Shower ... We may look for health and harvest. How good and great is our God!!! Everyone is looking forward to a speedy peace. So may it be.

Closer to the front lines, however, Mary Beckley Bristow, a member of Sardis Baptist Church in Union, Ky., laments news of a few minor preliminary skirmishes in nearby Virginia:

O, what an awful situation our once happy country is in. War, dreadful, devastating war, with all its horrors is all around us. Old Virginia, the Mother of Kentucky, has had several battles fought on her soil. The invaders seem disposed to subjugate



150 YEARS AGO

June 1861

and destroy all who dare oppose their bigotry and fanaticism.

Bristow’s words are a bit premature, as the first major battle of the war does not take place until late July. Yet few anticipate the full scope of the enormous carnage that lies ahead.

Soldiers, having volunteered to serve their countries, prepare for a war most believe will end quickly. The young army volunteers bring with them hopes and dreams. Some will survive the war, their futures defined by the great conflict.

Harrison Woodsmall, future Baptist minister and educator, leaves Indiana State University to join the Union’s 14th Indiana Regiment. During the war he serves with distinction, attaining the rank of major in the 115th Indiana Regiment.

After the war, Woodsmall enrolls in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and works among freedmen in the South, first as an employee of the Georgia Baptist Convention, and later on behalf of American (Northern) Baptists.

In 1878, Woodsmall becomes the first president of the Alabama Baptist Normal and Theological School at Selma for African Americans.

In the pre-war South, whites and blacks typically worshipped in the same congregation, albeit in segregated seating. Sometimes, blacks were allowed to have their own congregation, under close supervision of a white mother church. Yet the war quickly frays the racial dynamics of church life.

The white First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tenn., in January 1861, had established a “Colored Baptist Mission” in Edgefield (East Nashville). Served by a free black preacher, George Dardis, the black Baptist congregation ministered to area slaves and freemen under the ever-watchful eye of a white committee. Yet upon Tennessee’s secession from the Union on June 8, the First Baptist Church immediately discontinues the Colored Mission.

As the white South’s ironclad grip on black slavery slowly loosens in the coming years of war, white Baptists’ attempted control over black spirituality will follow suit. **BT**

For a daily journal along with references to source material, visit civilwarbaptists.com.

Support **Baptists Today** by ...

- Making a gift of \$ _____ (enclosed).
- Making a pledge of \$ _____ to the Keystone Fund to be given over three years (initial gift enclosed).
- Making a gift of \$ _____ in memory or honor (circle one) of _____.

To explore ways to support *Baptists Today* through estate planning, call 1-877-752-5658 or email editor@baptiststoday.org

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

MAIL completed form with check to: *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318 — or, to use a CREDIT CARD, call 1-877-752-5658 or 478-301-5655.

BAPTISTS TODAY IS A 501(C)(3) CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION. GIFTS OF SUPPORT ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

Additions and subtractions

Scholars codifying Bible's textual changes, one verse at a time

NEW ORLEANS — Working in a cluster of offices above a LifeWay Christian Bookstore, Bible scholars are buried in a 20-year project to codify the thousands of changes, verse by verse, word by word — even letter by letter — that crept into the early New Testament during hundreds of years of laborious hand-copying.

Their goal: to log them into the world's first searchable online database for serious Bible students and professional scholars who want to see how the document changed over time.

Their research is of particular interest to evangelical Christians who, because they regard the Bible as the sole authority on matters of faith, want to distinguish the earliest possible texts and carefully evaluate subsequent changes.

The first phase of the researchers' work is done. They have documented thousands of creeping changes, down to an extraneous Greek letter, across hundreds of early manuscripts from the second through 15th centuries, said Bill Warren, the New Testament scholar who leads the project at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

After 10 years of work and the interruption of Hurricane Katrina, the seminary's Center for New Testament Textual Studies has logged those changes, amounting to 17,000 pages of highly technical notes, all in Greek, into a searchable database.

Many of the early changes are well known, and have been for hundreds of years. Study Bibles mark scores of changes in italicized footnotes at the bottom of what often seems like every page.

But nowhere have so many changes been collated in a single place and made searchable for scholars and serious students, Warren said.

Nor is there an Internet tool like the one being constructed now in the second

phase of the project: the history of substantive textual changes.

This fall, the New Testament center will publish an online catalogue of substantive textual changes in Philippians and 1 Peter. Warren estimates there's 10 more years of work to do on the rest of the New Testament.

Those with more than a passing familiarity with the New Testament know its 27 books and letters, or epistles, were not first published exactly as they appear today.

The earliest works date to about the middle of the first century. They were written by hand, and successors were copied by hand.

Mistakes occasionally crept in.

Moreover, with Christianity in its infancy and the earliest Christians still trying to clarify the full meaning of Jesus, his mission and his stories, the texts themselves sometimes changed from generation to generation, said Warren.

As archaeologists and historians uncovered more manuscripts, each one hand-copied from some predecessor, they could see occasional additions or subtractions from a phrase, a verse or a story.

Most changes are inconsequential, the result of mere copying errors, or the replace-

ment of a less common word for a more common word. But others are more important.

For example, the famous tale in John's Gospel in which Jesus challenges a mob about to stone a woman accused of adultery: "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her," is a variant that copyists began inserting at least 300 years after that Gospel first appeared.

In the conclusion to the Gospel of Mark, the description of Jesus appearing to various disciples after his resurrection does not appear in the earliest manuscripts.

And in the Gospel of Luke, the crucified Jesus' plea that his executioners be forgiven "for they know not what they are doing" also does not appear in the earliest versions of his Gospel.

Warren said that even after the fourth-century church definitively settled on the books it accepted as divinely inspired accounts, some of the texts within those books were still subject to slight changes.

Warren said the story of the adulterous woman in John's Gospel, for example, seems to be an account of an actual event preserved and treasured by the Christian community.

"People know it, and they like it," he said. "It's about a forgiveness that many times is needed in the church. Can you be forgiven on major sins?"

John had not included it, but early Christians wanted to shoehorn it in somewhere, Warren said. Warren said the story wanders across several early John manuscripts, appearing in a variety of places.

It even shows up in two early copies of Luke.

"But probably it was never part of John's Gospel, in the original form," he said.

In effect, early copiers were taking what modern readers would recognize as study notes and slipping them into the texts, a process that began to tail off around the ninth century, Warren said. **BT**



Bill Warren, head of the New Testament Textual Studies Center at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, holds a piece of papyrus that contains part of the Gospel of John. RNS photo by John McCusker/The Times-Picayune.

— Bruce Nolan writes for The Times-Picayune in New Orleans.

Less materialistic, greater appreciation

Baylor researchers study return on short-term missions

BY TERRY GOODRICH

Photos by Jimmy B. Lewis. At right, Abbey Callahan lends a hand in Perry County, Ala., as part of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's ongoing Rural Poverty Initiative. Below, Joe Wright participates in a Habitat for Humanity project.



WACO, Texas (ABP) — Research has revealed students who participate in short-term mission trips tend to have lower levels of materialism, greater appreciation for other cultures and a better understanding of missions as a lifestyle, says a Baylor University professor studying whether short-term mission trips are good stewardship.

The number of U.S. Christians taking part in trips lasting a year or less has grown from 540 in 1965 to more than 1.5 million annually, with an estimated \$2 billion per



year spent on the effort. That investment of time and money has sparked debate whether the money might better be spent given directly to a country's Christian partners for spreading the gospel and offering medical aid, construction assistance or other help.

Some long-term missionaries complain that culturally insensitive short-term mission

participants do more harm than good by damaging relationships that had taken years to build. But Dennis Horton, associate professor of religion at Baylor, says the answer to whether volunteer missions "is worth it" is a qualified "yes."

Two-thirds of short-term trips last two weeks or less, with a host of purposes ranging from evangelism to digging wells or teaching English-as-a-Second-Language classes. On the surface, Horton said, the trips seem a win-win-win situation for those who send participants, team members who make the trips and for host countries.

"It is very much worthwhile. But I'm qualifying that by saying I think a lot of churches and groups need more follow-up to help mission team members incorporate what they've learned on their trips into their daily lives," Horton said. "Long-term involvement, whether global or local, is where you see transformation taking place."

About 600 students and 48 short-term mission trip leaders participated in the study conducted by Horton and four Baylor University research assistants.

For long-term effects on those who go on short-term mission trips, some studies show little difference between those who have participated in short-term trips and Christians who have not, Horton said. Patterns are similar in terms of giving, materialism and believing one's culture is superior to others.

What makes the most difference, according to virtually all studies, he said, are pre-trip training, on-site mentoring and follow-up after the trip.

"We appreciate the zeal" of students, he said. "They want to be on the streets evangelizing. They say, 'We need to get out there and share the gospel.' But the missionaries are saying 'Wait a minute.' In many countries, the most effective way to reach others is through friendships built over time rather than quick presentations of the gospel that can endanger the work — and lives — of long-term missionaries and local Christians.

"The study shows that many short-term mission trip leaders are doing a much better job training their team members about cultural issues and connecting with host countries. They're doing a lot of things right and learning from past mistakes."

Recent guidebooks are aimed at helping trip leaders and team members move from mission trips to a lifestyle of missions, Horton said.

"The desire is to ensure that short-term mission experiences become more than spiritual tourism in which participants travel to an exotic place, take a myriad of photos and return to their relatively isolated home environments, as well as their pre-trip behavior and routines," he said. **BT**

— Terry Goodrich writes for Baylor University.



MERCER PREACHING CONSULTATION 2011

September 25-27
St. Simon's Island, GA

“PREACHING TO
CHRIST'S CHURCH”

Brett Younger
McAfee School of Theology

Milburn Price
*Retired Dean of Samford's
School of the Arts*

Carlton Allen
Colleen Burroughs
Jimmy Elder
Dock Hollingsworth
Barry Howard
Tripp Martin
Rodger Murchison
Tom Slater

theology.mercer.edu • 678.547.6474

BY JOHN PIERCE

A NEW BAPTISTS TODAY FOR today



People will often ask kindly: “How’s *Baptists Today* doing?” Well, in a recent letter to supporters, I referred to being in “the most energetic and creative time” in my 11-year editorship. There are good reasons for such optimism and energy.

B*aptists Today* is doing well and expanding its mission in several good ways. While many print publications are losing circulation drastically, *Baptists Today* has retained its circulation growth of recent years and is now poised to increase its press run by providing new Bible studies and other resources for churches — and by integrating the best of print publication with a high-quality, updated web presence.

What you hold in your hand now is but one reason for feeling energetic and creative. We will soon launch a second state edition of *Baptists Today* in partnership with Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and we have other publishing initiatives in the works as well.

A second question may be: How can *Baptists Today* be expanding and creating new ventures at this time? The short answer is that we have the right people doing the right things.

Each team member is making a significant contribution to our shared task of producing this news journal and the related web site. Whether employees, contract workers or partners, these combined talents merge exceedingly well.

The *Baptists Today* Board of Directors provides the solid foundation on which this publication lives and grows. These dedicated volunteers protect the autonomy and editorial freedom of the news journal, give generously of their time, resources and guidance, and provide the healthy context in which staff and partnering groups can work creatively and constructively together.

Individual supporters and supporting organizations form the lifeline that allows *Baptists Today* to continue its mission. These

ongoing, faithful gifts assure us that our uniquely independent, cutting-edge approach to a free press is needed and valued. Thank you.

The financial security that allows for our creativity and effectiveness is tied to your annual giving, sponsorships of specific projects, and including *Baptists Today* in your estate planning. Please let me know if you are interested in discussing ways in which a gift now or in the future can play a key role in the mission of this news journal.

Since assuming the editor’s chair in 2000, much of my attention has been given to seeking out mutually beneficial partnerships with those in Baptist life who share our values and can be trusted. As a result, growing collaboration has emerged through partnerships with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, CBF of North Carolina, Alabama CBF, The FaithLab and others.

The adage that “a rising sea lifts all ships” is true. Voluntary cooperation and trust allow for healthy relationships that reap broad benefits for the larger movement.

Instead of yearning for the old ways of denominational structures and news delivery, we are eagerly harnessing the best of new media technology (that integrates the advantages of print and web) and creating new ways of serving churches (with resources that combine Bible study with reliable information about the world in which faith is to be lived out).

With supportive directors, trusted friends, cooperative partners, a creative staff and an engaged audience, *Baptists Today* is pleased to place in your hands this new, innovative news journal that retains the familiar news, analysis and features that have long marked this publication — along with new Bible studies for adults and youth as well as resources for children.

If you enjoy engaging in positive, creative efforts that honor the faithfulness of the past while seeking fresh, new opportunities at hand, welcome to *Baptists Today*. We are glad to have you with us. **BT**



Through group subscriptions to *Baptists Today*, these churches keep up with the latest issues facing Baptists — and study the Bible.

Ardmore Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C. • Bayshore Baptist Church, Tampa, Fla. • Boulevard Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C. • Broadmoor Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La. • Brunswick Islands Baptist Church, Supply, N.C. • Central Baptist Church, Richmond, Va. • Chadbourn Baptist Church, Chadbourn, N.C. • Church in the Meadows, Lakeland, Fla. • College Park Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. • Covenant Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C. • Crozet Baptist Church, Crozet, Va. • Cullowhee Baptist Church, Cullowhee, N.C. • Druid Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga. • Emerywood Baptist Church, High Point, N.C. • Fellowship Baptist Church, Fitzgerald, Ga. • Fernwood Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Abilene, Texas • First Baptist Church, Ahsokie, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Augusta, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Bladenboro, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Cape Girardeau, Mo. • First Baptist Church, Carolina Beach, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn. • First Baptist Church, Clemson, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Columbus, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Commerce, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Conway, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Dalton, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Forest City, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Fort Myers, Fla. • First Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky. • First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Fla. • First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Greenwood, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Griffin, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Hawkinsville, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala. • First Baptist Church, Jasper, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Lexington, N.C. • First Baptist Church, London, Ky. • First Baptist Church, Lumberton, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Macon, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Madison, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Marion, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Mocksville, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Morganton, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Morrow, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Mount Olive, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn. • First Baptist Church, Orangeburg, S.C. • First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla. • First Baptist Church, Rome, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Sanford, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, Texas • First Baptist Church, Tifton, Ga. • First Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C. • First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C. • Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C. • Franklin Baptist Church, Franklin, Va. • Grace Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss. • Haddock Baptist Church, Haddock, Ga. • Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla. • Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, Ga. • Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas • Holmeswood Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo. • HomeStar Fellowship, Raleigh, N.C. • Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Ga. • Kathwood Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C. • Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C. • Lakeside Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, N.C. • Lakeview Baptist Church, Camden, S.C. • Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, Danville, Ky. • Lystra Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C. • Maranatha Baptist Church, Plains, Ga. • Millbrook Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C. • Mount Zion Baptist Church, Macon, Ga. • National Heights Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ga. • Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss. • North Stuart Baptist Church, Stuart, Fla. • Oakmont Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C. • Providence Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C. • Providence Baptist Church, Hendersonville, N.C. • Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C. • Reynoldson Baptist Church, Gates, N.C. • Rock Falls Baptist Church, Orrick, Mo. • Rolling Hills Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark. • Rolesville Baptist Church, Rolesville, N.C. • Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo. • Second Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn. • Second Baptist Church, Richmond, Va. • Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga. • Shades Crest Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala. • Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Ga. • South Main Baptist Church, Houston, Texas • St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky. • Tabernacle Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga. • Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn. • Trinity Baptist Church, Moultrie, Ga. • University Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La. • Vineville Baptist Church, Macon, Ga. • Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, N.C. • Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga. • Wingate Baptist Church, Wingate, N.C. • Winter Park Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C. • Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn. • Yates Baptist Church, Durham, N.C. • Youngsville Baptist Church, Youngsville, N.C. • Zebulon Baptist Church, Zebulon, N.C.

For as little as \$450 a year, your church can have a group subscription.

Minimum 25 subscriptions at \$18 each.

Just send a list of names and addresses, along with a check, to:
Baptists Today
P.O. Box 6318
Macon, GA 31208-6318.

For more information, call toll-free 1-877-752-5658.

Former Southeastern Seminary President W. Randall Lolley was honored at an April 14 dinner event at First Baptist Church of Raleigh, N.C., for his many contributions to Baptist life. Photo by David Cassidy.

Baptists ODAY NEWS JOURNAL

Randall Lolley honored with Judson-Rice Award



RALEIGH, N.C. — Randall Lolley accepted the Judson-Rice Award from the independent news journal *Baptists Today* with a quick-witted quip and then turned his attention toward a broader Baptist cause.

Lolley is the 11th recipient of the award, presented by the *Baptists Today* Board of Directors and its supportive Judson-Rice Society comprised of persons making annual gifts of \$1,000 or more to the news journal. The award was presented during a well-attended April 14 dinner at First Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C.

Lolley, a statesman among moderate Baptists, was president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1974 to 1988. When fundamentalist trustees gained a majority on the seminary board during the heart of the Southern Baptist Convention controversy, Lolley resigned rather than moving the school decidedly to the right.

Baptists Today Executive Editor John Pierce and Director Mike Queen, now retired pastor of First Baptist Church in Wilmington, N.C., presented the award to Lolley.

“That looks a lot like a tombstone,” Lolley responded when handed the large plaque. He said he doubts he’ll ever live up to the award.

“Thank you for an honor undeserved, but very much appreciated,” he said.

Lolley said free and faithful Baptists stand on tall shoulders like those of Adoniram Judson, one of those for whom the award is named.

“This is not about me,” he said. “This is about us, our family, our Baptist family.”

Lolley praised *Baptists Today* and those who helped launch the publication 28 years ago. Those who started the paper took chances, ran risks and did the job that needed to be done, he said.

Lolley asked those present to remember *Baptists Today*, the news journal, and the movement made up of Baptists who are “free church Christians to the core” such as formative English Baptists John Smyth and Thomas Helwys.

“We must on a night like this remember their legacy,” he said.

Lolley said Baptists are at work across the world — and Baptists should keep in

BY STEVE DEVANE, *Contributing writer*



The Judson-Rice Award was presented to Randall Lolley (center) by *Baptists Today* Executive Editor John Pierce (left) and Director Mike Queen (right). Paying tribute, Queen, retiring pastor of the First Baptist Church of Wilmington, N.C., said that Lolley had been a hero to him. Photo by Steve DeVane.

mind both “those who make the news and those who report the news.”

Baptists must think about more than public opinion, Lolley said.

“Obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ must be rooted no more in the cheers of the crowd than the jeers of the crowd,” he said.

Before and after the dinner, Lolley and his wife, Lou, mingled with dozens of friends who had come to pay tribute. They smiled, laughed and thanked them for attending.

Baptists Today Director Jack Causey, who serves as ministerial resources coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina, recognized the churches Lolley had served as minister or interim pastor. Many representatives from those churches were present — sitting at tables sponsored by their congregations.

Lolley served as pastor of the First Baptist churches in Winston-Salem, Raleigh and Greensboro, N.C. Since his

retirement, he has served as interim pastor for many other congregations.

Because so many friends and former parishioners were present, Causey said everyone in the room could tell stories about the impact Lolley has had on their lives.

In making a tribute to Lolley on behalf of the *Baptists*

Today Board of Directors, Queen — who left a family business in the late 1970s to attend Southeastern Seminary — told a number of such stories prior to the award presentation.

He described all the past recipients of the Judson-Rice Award (on next page) as heroes, and added: “Randall Lolley has been

See for yourself

To view a video of Mike Queen’s tribute and Randall Lolley’s response to receiving the 2011 Judson-Rice Award from *Baptists Today* on April 14 at First Baptist Church of Raleigh, visit baptiststoday.org/lolley.

that for me.”

Queen recalled his initial meeting with President Lolley when Queen was a first-year student at Southeastern Seminary. Queen’s home church was looking for a pastor — and the chairman of the search committee had asked him to see if administrators at the seminary could recommend a candidate.

When Queen made an appointment to see Lolley, he was told he would only have 15 minutes with the seminary president. So during the meeting, Queen got to the point as quickly as he could — and, after 15 minutes, stood to leave.

Lolley asked why. Queen said he was told that his appointment had a time limit. But Lolley told him to sit down.

Fifteen minutes later, Queen said he again stood to leave.

“Boy, what is wrong with you?” he recalled Lolley asking. “Do you have to pee?”

After much laughter, Queen talked about Lou Lolley, who he described as a “cool woman.” In seminary, Queen and some of his friends had skipped chapel one day and were in the cafeteria. In walked Lou Lolley.

She saw Queen and his friends gathered around a table and said: “Oh my goodness, when I heard who was speaking I knew I was coming here.”

Previous Judson-Rice Award recipients

Charles L. Overby, 2010

James M. Dunn, 2009

Walker L. Knight, 2008

Wayne Flynt, 2007

Cecil E. Sherman, 2006

Walter B. Shurden, 2005

Alma Hunt, 2004

Russell H. Dilday, 2003

Tony Campolo, 2002

Jimmy R. Allen, 2001

Also Queen shared a personal story about Paige Patterson, an architect of the SBC takeover and a president of Southeastern Seminary a few years after Lolley.

Patterson called Queen at his church office in Wilmington. When Queen was told that Patterson was on the phone, he thought it was a friend pulling a prank.

Queen answered the phone by saying something like, “What do you want, you knucklehead?”

It was Patterson, who wanted to have

breakfast with Queen. He agreed to meet him.

While eating together, Patterson asked Queen why he was helping to establish a divinity school at Wake Forest University — where Queen received his undergraduate degree and now serves on the Board of Trustees. Queen responded that if his son decided to go into the ministry, he wanted him to have the opportunity to attend the type of school that Southeastern Seminary was for him under Lolley’s leadership.

Recalling Lolley’s decision to leave the seminary post when he felt that he could no longer carry out his vision for the school, Queen said: “A lot of hearts were broken that day.”

Queen asked all the Southeastern graduates present at the dinner to stand — and several dozen people rose to their feet.

Looking over the many graduates standing, Queen said: “Randall, we are your fault.”

“I accept responsibility,” Lolley replied quickly from his nearby seat.

Baptists Today created the award in 2001 to commemorate early Baptist leaders Adoniram Judson, Ann Hasseltine Judson and Luther Rice. The honor recognizes a current Baptist leader who has shown significant leadership and high integrity. **BT**

What does Bible study have to do with daily living?

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Romans 12:2



Now the content for learning and the context for living come together in one publication — *Baptists Today*.

Order the news journal with Bible studies tucked inside for your class at 1-877-752-5658 or baptiststoday.org. Ask to start with the June issue to get the lessons for each week in July.

Christ-Centered ♦ Bible-Based ♦ Ministry-Focused



CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY DIVINITY SCHOOL

*Within the Campbell community,
students are formed intellectually,
spiritually, and vocationally for the
ministry to which God has called them.*

divinity.campbell.edu
Buies Creek, NC
(800) 760-9827, ext. 1830

Scan this code
on your mobile
device.

