

content for learning. context for living

# Baptists ODAY

NEWS JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2011

Cupful of  
help **38**



[baptiststoday.org](http://baptiststoday.org)

## Back to *Ebenezer*

Historic Atlanta church  
restored to civil rights era

**4**

Judson, Meredith  
keep focus on  
educating women

**10**

*Nur*uring  
**FATH**

**BIBLE STUDIES**

for adults and youth  
**OCTOBER** lessons inside

**17**

**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

**Terri Byrd**  
Contributing Writer

**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.



## NBC II gearing up for November gatherings

11



**Sue Fitzgerald**  
leaves good mark  
on NC hills

42

### IN THE NEWS

Women's colleges  
'highly specialized' 10  
*By Steve DeVane*

Minister sees similarities in Baptist  
revivals, Jewish High Holy Days 36  
*By John Pierce*

### FEATURES

Cupful of help in an ocean of need 38  
*By Keith Herron*

Alabama congregation, volunteers  
meet needs in tornado-damaged  
communities 40  
*By Terri Byrd*

## cover photo

Albert Brinson stands in the restored historic sanctuary of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church where he was baptized, ordained and served as assistant pastor to Martin Luther King Sr. and Jr. **Story on page 4**

### PERSPECTIVES

The face we put on our faith 9  
*By John Pierce*

Conflict as blessing 33  
*By Bill Wilson*

The global importance of Roger Williams 37  
*By J. Stanley Lemons*



14

**Divorce ministry:** Atlanta  
minister publishes guidebook

Quotation Remarks	8
Editorial	9
Media	14
Classifieds	30
Lighter Side	31
In the Know	32
Baptists and the Civil War	34
Reblog	35

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](http://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 17** for more details.  
The new Nurturing Faith Bible Studies section begins on page 18.



## 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](http://baptiststoday.org/storage/ratecard.pdf)
- Inquiries: [advertising@baptiststoday.org](mailto:advertising@baptiststoday.org)

### Individual and Gift Subscriptions

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

### Group or Bulk Subscriptions

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

### Single Issues

- \$4 (includes postage)
- Credit card: [baptiststoday.org](http://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](http://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](mailto:editor@baptiststoday.org)
- *Baptists Today, Inc.*, is a 501(c)3 not-for profit charitable organization.

### Letters to the Editor

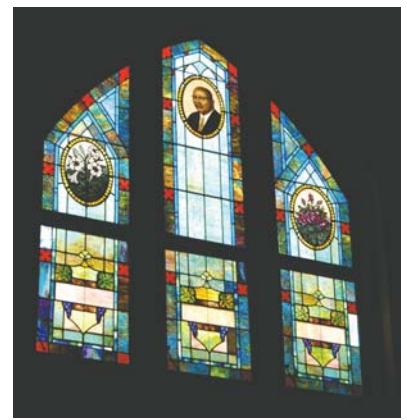
- Limit 200 words
- Email: [editor@baptiststoday.org](mailto:editor@baptiststoday.org)
- Include name, city, state, phone

### Writing Submissions

- Unsolicited manuscripts welcomed for consideration
- Email: [editor@baptiststoday.org](mailto:editor@baptiststoday.org)

### Contact Information

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



STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY JOHN PIERCE

# Back to Ebenezer

Historic Atlanta church restored to civil rights era

ATLANTA — “Welcome to the neighborhood,” said Albert Brinson to visitors coming in and out of historic Ebenezer Baptist Church that has been fully restored to its 1960s look when co-pastors Martin Luther King Sr. and Jr. led the congregation and a much larger movement promoting civil rights.

And the visitors are coming: a young gospel choir from France, an older couple from Italy, and an African-American family from Winston-Salem, with three wide-eyed boys, were among those Brinson greeted as we toured the church.



The National Park Service reopened the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church sanctuary and fellowship hall in April after years of restoration. Baptist minister Albert Brinson, who has returned to his home church in retirement, is pictured in both historic photos on the outdoor display. In the larger photo, he is seated to the right while Martin Luther King Jr. stands at the pulpit. Martin Luther King Sr. is seated to the left. The interior of the sanctuary now looks like it did when the Kings were co-pastors in the 1960s. Brinson said even the wall color is “pretty close” to what he remembers.





Albert Brinson points to a photo of himself sitting in the choir — behind co-pastor Martin Luther King Jr. — in the early 1960s. Brinson was a first-year school teacher who soon went into ministry and was mentored by the Kings.

To the thousands of guests coming through the doors since the National Park Service completed the years-long, extensive renovation and dedicated the landmark sanctuary in mid-April, Ebenezer is a shrine to freedom and a place to honor civil rights martyr Martin Luther King Jr.

To Brinson, a retired pastor and American Baptist leader, it is home. Brinson grew up fatherless in nearby Grady Homes and was taken in by the elder King — whom he calls “Dr. King Sr.” He considered “M.L. Jr.” as an older brother.

After many years of ministry in New York and Virginia, Brinson returned to Atlanta in retirement and rejoined Ebenezer that now carries out its ministry in the newer Horizon Sanctuary across Auburn Avenue from the historic site. He maintains a close friendship with Christine King Farris, the older sister of M.L. Jr.

### MEMORIES FLOW

Walking into the beautifully restored sanctuary, visitors hear the distinctive, booming recorded voice of M.L. Jr. delivering a sermon. Many stand or sit motionless as the great

pulpit exhorts listeners. The purpose of worship is much greater than mere entertainment, says King in his familiar cadence. There are whispers that this message seems more relevant today than nearly a half-century ago.

“That’s the preaching we grew up with,” said Brinson.

Memories flow as Brinson recalls his baptism at age 8 by Dr. King Sr. and the covered-dish homecoming meals in the restored fellowship hall below. The pastor would send young Albert over to get some of Miss Whitehead’s corn pudding — “for Dr. King.”

He recalls going across the street to a little neighborhood soda fountain called Pete’s to hang out with other boys between Sunday school and worship. As the worship time approached, Dr. King Sr. would open the front door and point to his watch. The boys knew that meant their attendance was expected.

“You’ve talked about the sanctuary and fellowship hall, but no mention of the balcony,” I said to Brinson. “You must have gotten in trouble there.”

He smiled and nodded affirmatively. Dr. King Sr. kept a good eye on the youthful

happenings in the balcony and was not afraid to interrupt his sermon.

“He’d yell out, ‘Albert!’” That’s all it took.

Brinson is grateful for the ways the elder King shaped his life as a pastor and surrogate father during his growing years at Ebenezer. King baptized him, mentored him in ministry, and officiated at his and Vivian’s wedding 50 years ago.

“He was old-fashioned all the way,” said Brinson with a smile. “But he’s one of the greatest people I ever met in my life. I wouldn’t be here today if not for him.”

### THE PULPIT

Visitors come to see the pulpit from which M.L. Jr., his father and maternal grandfather (A.D. Williams) preached. But for Brinson, his memory often goes back to an April Sunday evening in 1963 when he entered the famous pulpit for the first time himself.

After graduating from Morehouse College and becoming a public school teacher, Brinson was active in many church activities including singing in the choir.



*“He was not about lifting himself up. He lifted up the cause.”*

Albert Brinson shares stories of the civil rights movement with gospel choir members from France who were visiting historic Ebenezer. Meredith Pierce (left, the writer’s daughter and University of Georgia student who studies French) serves as interpreter during the impromptu educational experience. Brinson greets visitors to the King Historic Site in the “Sweet Auburn” community with: “Welcome to our neighborhood.”

“Ebenezer was always known for its music,” he said. “I sang my first aria right here in the choir — and I was a poor boy from across the street.”

When the call to ministry came to Brinson, he began both academic preparations and gained practical experience when named assistant pastor to the Kings.

He remembers pacing around the study of Dr. King Sr. as the time approached for him to preach his first sermon. (He showed me the church bulletin from that day and his handwritten sermon notes.)

“M.L. came up to his dad’s study and said, ‘Why are you looking so scared?’”

“I said, ‘I am scared.’”

“He said, ‘I would be too. I looked over there and it’s packed.’”

Brinson was not surprised. At the conclusion of the morning service, at which M.L. Jr. had preached, he told the congregation: “I want everyone to be here tonight.”

“From ’63 straight through until he died,” the famed preacher was a source of encouragement for Brinson as he moved into his own ministry.

## NEVER IMAGINED

The historic sanctuary holds tragic stories along with positive ones. Famous faces as well as those familiar to the Ebenezer family turned out for the funeral of the slain civil rights leader in 1968. Then in 1974 a deranged man shot and killed Alberta Williams King, the mother of M.L. Jr., while she played the organ during worship.

“It’s been tragedy after tragedy after tragedy,” said Brinson, noting that A.D. King, brother of M.L. Jr., died in a swimming accident in 1969, and several members of the next generation have died early in life also.

Brinson said the National Park Service allowed a small group of longtime Ebenezer members into the restored building ahead of its official opening. He led a marriage renewal service for his friend Christine King Farris and her husband Isaac on their 50th anniversary.

“You didn’t hear anything but David Stills playing the organ,” said Brinson of walking into the sanctuary for the first time since restoration began. The longtime Ebenezer organist and choirmaster had played at the Farris wedding a half-century ago, and his music had

often filled the old sanctuary.

“It was a very moving time,” said Brinson of returning to the hallowed place. “We were all back together there. It brought emotions and tears.”

To those closest to Ebenezer, the sanctuary is much more than a tourist stop. And while its fame is understood and appreciated, it was never anticipated.

“We never had even the fondest notion this would ever be here; M.L. Jr. certainly didn’t,” said Brinson of the various King memorial sites in the old “Sweet Auburn” neighborhood.

“He was not about lifting himself up,” he said of his longtime, long-gone friend. “He lifted up the cause.”

It was a cause that struck the conscience of a nation and beyond. That’s why the historic sanctuary at 407 Auburn Avenue in Atlanta has been restored to the time when a strong voice of freedom was carried to ears well beyond the refinished pews of Ebenezer.

And it is why so many people — from near and far — are drawn to the simple, yet lovely, brick Baptist church building to see, hear and remember. **BT**



*Baptists Today* is growing and expanding its unique mission to provide an autonomous, national news journal along with excellent Bible studies and other resources for churches.

There is a direct correlation, however, between our effectiveness and the generous support from those who value and wish to share in our work.

So please consider making a three-year commitment to the *Keystone Campaign* that helps us anticipate the support needed to move boldly ahead. With your help, we've got more really good things coming!

To discuss current giving opportunities or including *Baptists Today* in your estate planning, please contact me at 1-877-752-5658 or [editor@baptistsstoday.org](mailto:editor@baptistsstoday.org).

Thanks!

*John D. Bruce*  
Executive Editor

**Good**  
*things*

are happening at  
*Baptists Today*

***I want to***  
***join the team!***

Here's a three-year commitment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (per year) to help *Baptists Today* move boldly ahead in its mission to provide an autonomous, national news journal with excellent Bible studies inside — along with other resources for churches.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**STATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please return this signed pledge form to *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318.

\*Initial pledge may be paid by enclosing a check, calling toll-free 1-877-752-5658 for credit card billing, or donating online at [baptiststoday.org](http://baptiststoday.org).

Baptists Today Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization under the careful stewardship of a trusted, self-perpetuating Board of Directors.

# quotation remarks

“At the root of Islamic extremism there seems to be an idea, broadly accepted through the Middle East, that God is pleased by the punishment and the killing of those who offend Islam.”

—Thomas Farr, director of the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (RNS)

“Christians would do well to take a cue from our cousins in the Jewish community and cultivate a better sense of humor about ourselves. And save our outrage for injustices that are truly outrageous.”

—Religion News Service columnist  
Cathleen Falsani

“Sometimes being a chaplain means that there is not a lot we can do. We're there to be God's presence to kids and families going through the worst things you can imagine and to help them make some sense out of it.”

—Baptist Chaplain Paul Byrd of Children's Hospital in Birmingham, Ala. (fellowship!)

“Contrary to assertions often made by proponents of the gambling industry that social costs of gambling cannot be identified and measured, it is possible to do both. The social costs of gambling are ‘hidden’ only to the extent that they are misunderstood or overlooked.”

—Baylor University economics professor Earl L. Grinols, saying each additional pathological gambler costs society about \$9,393 annually (Christian Reflections)

“Pennsylvanians can shop on Sunday, drink and gamble on Sunday, or buy a motorcycle on Sunday. But you can't hunt.”

—Patriot-News reporter Donald Gilliland on a political battle between two conservative groups: farmers who oppose Sunday hunting and the NRA seeking to repeal the law (RNS)

“Redeeming time means making responsible choices to make the most of the time you have, not just checking things off your to-do list.”

—President Jeff Iorg of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., referring to the Ephesians 5 call to “redeem the time” (BP)

“I flew to the UK recently just to pray for him & sit by his bed.  
What a giant!”

—Rick Warren tweeting about John Stott, a major shaper of the evangelical movement and author of more than 50 books including Basic Christianity, who died July 27 in England at age 90 (RNS)

“This just might be the turning point in the foxhole atheist community's struggle for acceptance, tolerance and respect.”

—Sgt. Justin Griffith, a member of Military Atheists and Secular Humanists (MASH), on U.S. Army officials backing a “Rock Beyond Belief” concert for nonbelievers at Fort Bragg following base support for a Christian concert last year (RNS)

“We have brought out a social capital we maybe even did not know was there. We must rebuild our trust in human beings as fellow human beings.”

—Church of Norway Bishop Tor Singsaas of Nidaros on the nation's response to the July 22 bombing and shootings by Anders Behring Breivik that killed 76 people (RNS)

“[He was] a prophetic leader who deeply inspired me along with countless others across this great nation and world.”

—Isaac Newton Farris Jr., interim president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference founded by his uncle Martin Luther King Jr., on SCLC President Howard Creecy Jr., a Baptist preacher who died suddenly July 28 at age 57 (RNS)

“Our world is so polarized that cooperation is a foreign concept. It is the exception, not the rule. It is expected of children but not of politicians.”

—Cooperative Baptist Fellowship moderator Colleen Burroughs of Birmingham, Ala. (fellowship!)

“We've been having issues with two words in the name — campus and crusade.”

—Steve Sellers, a vice president for the former Campus Crusade for Christ that now goes by “Cru” (RNS)

“When religious leaders whip their constituents into a frenzy with exclusivist claims that ‘we have the truth and no one else does,’ they do a grave disservice to the common good.”

—Pastor Chuck Warnock of Chatham Baptist Church in Chatham, Va. (EthicsDaily.com)



# The face we put on our faith

**H**ave you ever had someone tell you something about Christians that you had to correct? It was at best a generalization or, at worse, a complete misunderstanding of the basic tenets of Christianity.

It is easy to understand how confusing the public perception of Christianity can be to those with limited exposure to persons who take seriously their call to follow Jesus. The faces of Christianity are many and different — and the uglier ones tend to get the greater visibility.

With growing pluralism — even in the most remote communities that long experienced cultural homogeneity — comes a greater need to pay close attention to how our faith is reflected and perceived. Public perception is often built by one person's experience with another person who is identified by the Christian faith.

Single experiences can leave a lifetime impression.

It's interesting, insightful and sometimes embarrassing to hear what those outside the Christian faith believe us to be. Do they see us as humble or aloof, generous or greedy, kind or only interested in our own kind?

Is Christianity perceived as a spiritual relationship, a lifestyle, a belief system, a religious

practice, an attitude or a worldview?

Last month, I plucked a quotation from Southern Baptist Convention President Bryant Wright, a pastor in Marietta, Ga., that probably deserved more attention. He told those attending the annual convention meeting in June:

"I'm greatly concerned about the new idolatry in the church of elevating talk radio or Fox News before the word of God and the person of Jesus Christ when it comes to worldview."

It was a bold and needed warning. So much of the editorial writing from some denominational publications sound like slightly baptized versions of what was said on TV or the radio the day before.

Therefore, the Christian faith gets defined as affirming particular political ideologies and/or narrow doctrinal positions. To reject those is tantamount to rejecting Christ.

While faith certainly informs and fuels our social consciences, we must use caution so that God is not tied to particular political ideologies

on the right or left. A warning to avoid linking the Christian faith to our personal politics should reach far and wide across the ideological spectrum.

Too often the public perception of Christianity is of someone jumping up and down, shouting: "I'm right! I'm right! I'm right!" Perhaps a greater contribution to how Christians are perceived would be our ongoing confessions of often being wrong — therefore in need of God's grace and mercy.

Those of us who wallow in grace should be at the forefront of extending grace.

Often lost in the public perception of Christianity that we create are the basics — those first-taught lessons of Sunday school and Vacation Bible School: Love one another; be kind; treat others in the way you want to be treated; control your anger; give cheerfully; clean up the mess when you're finished.

While we can challenge all who bear the name of Christ to use more caution, the reality is that our role in creating a public perception of Christianity is quite limited. But it is an important, individual role, one that should cause us to ask: "How is the Christian faith that I put on display today being understood?" **BT**



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

**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, or have a bulk order sent to the church. For more information, call toll-free 1-877-752-5658 or visit [baptiststoday.org](http://baptiststoday.org).

# ‘Highly specialized’

*Judson, Meredith remain committed to educating women*

Officials at two women’s colleges with Baptist backgrounds say their schools do not plan to follow a growing coeducational trend.

Judson College in Alabama and Meredith College in North Carolina are among 53 members of the Women’s College Coalition.

Judson’s president, David E. Potts, said the number of schools in the coalition has been decreasing. The group had about 70 members 10 years ago, he said.

“Women’s colleges are highly specialized sorts of places,” he said.

Another member of the coalition, Peace College in North Carolina, will start accepting men next year, school officials announced in July. The school will also change its name to William Peace University.

Leaders at Meredith, which is about three miles from Peace in Raleigh, responded to the announcement by reaffirming their commitment to the school’s status as a women’s college.

“As a Meredith graduate, I know firsthand the value of a women’s college education, and Meredith College is committed to remaining a women’s college,” Meredith president Jo Allen said in a statement released by the school.

Potts said those who think that it’s only a matter of time before Judson, in Marion, Ala., becomes coed are wrong. “We’re determined to not only survive but thrive,” he said.

Other women’s colleges, including some with Baptist ties, have started accepting men or closed.

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Texas, which was then the oldest college for women west of the Mississippi, became co-educational in 1971. Tift College in Georgia merged with Mercer University in 1986 and was closed a year later. The Tift College of

Education at Mercer is named after the school.

Judson, which is affiliated with the Alabama Baptist Convention, makes the most of being a Christian college for women, Potts said.

Judson is the only school in both the Women’s College Coalition and the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, he said. In that way, the school could be seen as the “last woman standing,” he said.

Judson’s leaders see the college’s two roles as filling a niche that now helps attract students from across the nation. Potts said he speaks with prospective students from such places as Colorado, Arizona, Washington state and Wisconsin.

“We really consider the fact that we are faith-based to be an asset,” he said.

Potts said Judson’s enrollment has been about 250 to 300 over the last 40 to 50 years, but in the past decade the number of students has been trending toward 400. Last year, the school had about 380 students, he said.

Judson’s strategic plan calls for it to have about 500 students by the time it celebrates its 175th anniversary in two years, Potts said.

Many educational leaders say schools need at least 1,000 students to be viable, Potts said. However, Judson has the advantage of strong backing from its graduates and the state convention.

“The support of alums and Baptist churches have made the financial equation work for us even as a small institution,” he said.

Judson’s faculty and staff strive to help their students become successful, Potts said. The school wants to help the women reach their

hopes and dreams, while growing in both mind and spirit, he said.

“It fills them with confidence that serves them well throughout their lives,” he said.

At Judson, women in the class of 2012 sing songs that were sung by students at the school 50 to 60 years ago, Potts said. “It’s like a sisterhood.”

Jean Jackson, vice president for college programs and professor of English at Meredith, said that research by the Women’s College Coalition found that women’s colleges do a better job of preparing women to be effective leaders and communicators.

The research further showed that alumnae of women’s colleges develop stronger critical thinking, presentation and writing skills; graduate in four years at higher rates than women at coed institutions; felt better prepared for their first jobs as well as career advancement; and were more likely than others to complete a graduate degree, she said.

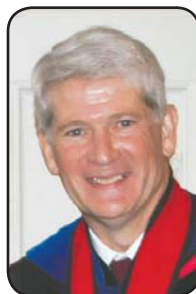
Jackson, a 1975 graduate of Meredith, said she worked closely with professors and staff, learned to collaborate on academic and student government work, formed life-long friendships, and was challenged in undergraduate work and supported in her aspirations for graduate study.

“Like most of the rest of my class, I graduated in four years, confident in my abilities and knowledge, prepared to succeed in whatever I chose to do,” she said.

Meredith has more than 2,100 students, Jackson said. Allen, the college’s president, said the school intends to become an even stronger women’s college.

“In the 21st century, the role of women in business, non-profits, healthcare, schools, and communities and families remains not only relevant but imperative,” she said. “Meredith proudly educates women to lead in these critical regional, national and global contexts.” **BT**

—Steve DeVane is the North Carolina-based contributing writer for *Baptists Today*.



David E. Potts



Jo Allen

*Research showed that alumnae of women’s colleges develop stronger critical thinking, presentation and writing skills and graduate in four years at higher rates than women at coed institutions.*



Baptist leaders representing various groups met at the Carter Center in April to prepare for the multi-site New Baptist Covenant II Celebration set for Nov. 17-19. Photo by John Pierce.

## Taking shape: New Baptist Covenant II gearing up for November gatherings

By Bob Allen  
*Associated Baptist Press*

ATLANTA — Dallas, Denver, Oklahoma City, San Antonio, Seattle, St. Louis and Washington, D.C., have all been nailed down for satellite downloads of a Nov. 17-19 New Baptist Covenant II anchored in Atlanta.

Los Angeles and Philadelphia remain as final prospects for satellite downlinks to worship services and breakout sessions broadcast live from Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, said event organizer David Key.

Key said planners have also opened up opportunities for Baptist churches in any city to partner with another Baptist church from a differing convention or ethnic group to host a web stream.

Announced in April, three years after a Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant drew 15,000 persons from various Baptist groups to Atlanta, NBC II is part of a grassroots effort to unite Baptists in North America around the

mandate from the fourth chapter of Luke to “bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Unlike the first centralized gathering, the second New Baptist Covenant will be held live in Georgia and beamed live to locations in order to save money and allow more people to attend. Plans include ministry opportunities at various sites, allowing relationships to move from worshipping to working side-by-side.

Satellite locations secured to date are Calvary Baptist Church in Denver; St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Oklahoma City; Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio; Israel Baptist Church in Washington; Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas; St. Luke Memorial Baptist Church in St. Louis; and New Beginnings Christian Fellowship in Seattle.

The latest information is available at [newbaptistcovenant.org](http://newbaptistcovenant.org). **BT**

## Study sees link between education and views of heaven

By Cathy Lynn Grossman  
*USA Today*

(RNS) — The old wisdom: The more educated you are, the less likely you will be religious. But a new study says education doesn’t drive people away from God — it gives them a more liberal attitude about who’s going to heaven.

Each year of education ups the odds by 15 percent that people will say there’s “truth in more than one religion,” says University of

Nebraska-Lincoln professor Philip Schwadel in an article for the *Review of Religious Research*. Schwadel, an associate professor of sociology, looked at 1,800 U.S. adults’ reported religious beliefs and practices and their education.

People change their perspective because, as people move through high school and college, they acquire an ever-wider range of friendships, including people with different beliefs than their own, Schwadel says. “People don’t want to say their friends are going to hell,” he says. **BT**

## FIRST PERSON: NBC II ‘already working’ in Denver

By Brian Henderson

DENVER — As I suspect those in other host churches and cities are doing, our New Baptist Covenant II - Denver committee continues to meet, plan and wonder, “How will all of this come together?”

In a recent conversation with one of our committee members, I was reminded that the answer to this question is already being answered.

As my colleague said, “New Baptist Covenant II is already working. Since beginning with our committee, I’ve connected in mission and ministry with Baptists I wouldn’t have if I wasn’t a part of NBC II.”

For all of our anxiety and concern about how we will connect technologically, theologically, ecclesiastically and otherwise, I believe it is important that no matter how our plans unfold on Nov. 17-19, the work that is happening between now and then is bringing us as Baptists together in ways we probably would not under different or ordinary circumstances.

We are relating with each other at the national and regional levels.

As I reported in June, our initial meetings in Denver were challenging because we really didn’t know each other. As we have continued to meet, however, a sense of togetherness has formed among us that I suspect will last long after our NBC II meetings happen in November.

Like other organizing committees, we are in the process of planning our worship sessions as well as our mission projects. Only time will tell how our efforts will culminate in November.

For now, the New Baptist Covenant II has already accomplished what it has set out to do. Baptists in Denver are connecting and covenanting together in mission and ministry. **BT**

—Brian Henderson is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Denver, Colo.

## State Dept. tries to raise visibility of religion

By Lauren Markoe  
*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON — Often accused of ignoring religion as they craft foreign policy, the White House and State Department are trying to show that religion is a rising priority for U.S. diplomacy.

In Istanbul in mid-July, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton promoted a new U.S.-backed international agreement to protect freedom of speech and religion, an accord described by her department as a “landmark” change.

“These are fundamental freedoms that belong to all people in all places,” Clinton said, “and they are certainly essential to democracy.”

Elsewhere in the State Department, its school for Foreign Service officers rolled out a new course on how diplomats can practice “religious engagement.”

The agreement Clinton touted in Istanbul aims to replace what has been the prevailing international response to acts considered defamatory against Islam, such as Quran burnings and inflammatory cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim-majority countries, working through the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference, have often introduced and passed resolutions in the U.N.’s Human Rights Council, and its predecessor body, banning speech that defames religion.

In March, however, the U.S. and other Western nations convinced the OIC to back a plan that instead prescribes education, public debate and interfaith dialogue to counteract religious intolerance.

“It’s making the world safer for religious minorities who want to be free to practice their religion and express their views without fear of being accused of blasphemy,” said Suzanne Nossel, deputy assistant secretary of state for international organizations.

In Istanbul, Clinton met with Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, head of the OIC — which calls itself “the collective voice of the Muslim world” — to discuss ways of implementing the March agreement.

“Together we have begun to overcome the false divide that pits religious sensitivities against freedom of expression,” Clinton said.

“We are pursuing a new approach based on concrete steps to fight intolerance wherever it occurs.” **BT**

## Zimbabwe Baptist seminary principal fired

By Bob Allen  
*Associated Baptist Press*

GWERU, Zimbabwe — Henry Mugabe, principal of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe, has been fired for refusing to accept changes made to the school’s governing documents including adherence to a Southern Baptist Convention faith statement that forbids women from serving as pastors.

According to a series of e-mails and scanned documents forwarded to Associated Baptist Press, the controversy stemmed from conditions for transfer of school property from the SBC International Mission Board to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.



Henry Mugabe

A spokesperson for the International Mission Board in Richmond, Va., said the IMB was not involved in the matter and referred questions to the seminary council of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. The official reason for Mugabe’s termination is insubordination, based in part on his refusal to meet with a new council formed by the Baptist convention to replace the seminary’s board of trustees.

Mugabe, who is unrelated to Zimbabwe’s strongman president Robert Mugabe, said the dissolved board of trustees, not the convention, were his employers and he was under no obligation to attend a meeting he considered unconstitutional.

After locking Mugabe out of his office and

giving him seven days to move from his home, owned by the Baptist Mission of Zimbabwe, convention officials reportedly froze assets for the seminary, blocking Mugabe from paying a 16-member staff and other seminary expenses.

The Alliance of Baptists, a progressive body in the United States that has supported the Baptist Seminary of Zimbabwe through its Bridges of Hope Mission Offering, wired a portion of the needed funds. Mary Andreolli, the group’s minister of outreach and communications, delivered the rest when she traveled to Zimbabwe for an on-site assessment in late June.

“Learning what I have learned about Henry’s situation and the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe agencies the Alliance has supported in the past is both shocking and disheartening,” Andreolli told ABP in an e-mail interview from Zimbabwe. She faulted the International Mission Board for using assets to “manipulate impoverished people and systems in the name of global missions.”

The disciplinary hearings that Mugabe refused to attend centered on his decision to enter into a relationship with the University of Zimbabwe to provide teaching certificates for seminary graduates to help them supplement meager ministerial incomes in the impoverished nation.

Friends of Mugabe say the arrangement was never an issue before, and the convention leaders’ real motive was to change the school from an ecumenical seminary with students from a variety of denominations to an institution focused on granting master’s and doctor’s degrees to Baptist ministers in partnership with an SBC seminary in the U.S. **BT**

## Women show deep drop in church attendance, survey says

By Adelle M. Banks  
*Religion News Service*

Women, long considered the dominant pew dwellers in the nation’s churches, have shown a dramatic drop in attendance in the last two decades, a new survey shows.

Since 1991, the percentage of women attending church during a typical week has decreased by 11 percentage points to 44 percent, the Barna Group reported Aug. 1.

Sunday school and volunteering among women also has diminished. Two decades ago, half of all women read the Bible in a typical week — other than at religious events. Now 40 percent do.

The survey also found a marked stepping away from congregations: a 17 percentage increase in the number of women who have become “unchurched.”

“For years, many church leaders have understood that ‘as go women, so goes the American church,’” wrote Barna Group founder George Barna, on his website. “Looking at the trends over the past 20 years, and especially those related to the beliefs and behavior of women, you might conclude that things are not going well for conventional Christian churches.”

The Ventura, Calif.-based researchers compared surveys of more than 1,000 people in 1991 and 2011. **BT**



Cupola of the St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

## Hungary's new religion law harder on smaller, newer groups

By Jonathan Luxmoore  
*Religion News Service/ENInews*

Christian leaders in Hungary are divided over a restrictive new law on religion, with larger denominations welcoming its curbs on church activities and smaller groups voicing fears for their future.

"We wanted a new law to make it more difficult to establish churches here — and we're happy the present government has now done something," said Zoltan Tarr, general secretary of the Hungarian Reformed Church, which claims around a fifth of the country's 9.9 million inhabitants as members.

The new "Law on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Religions and Religious Communities" was enacted July 12 with backing from Hungary's governing center-right Fidesz party.

Under the law, only 14 of 358 registered churches and religious associations will be granted legal recognition, while others will

have to reapply for legal registration after two-thirds approval in parliament.

However, the final law was "very different" than a draft shown to faith groups in May, said Laszlo Debreceni, a leader of Hungary's Church of God, which traces its roots to 1907 but was stripped of recognition under the new law.

"I don't think anyone will come and tell us we can't worship God," Debreceni said. "But it will raise serious issues that some churches are now on the approved list and others not."

Under the law, religious groups will need at least 1,000 members and a 20-year presence in Hungary to be recognized. The Hungarian Methodist church and Islamic community were among those stripped of their previous legal status.

The law recognizes Hungary's predominant Reformed, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox churches, as well as the Jewish community. **BT**

## First class of Cuban prison chaplains graduates

By Ken Sehested  
*Circle of Mercy Congregation  
Asheville, N.C.*

MANTANZAS, Cuba — With the Cuban government's easing of restrictions on church contact with inmates, retired pastor Francisco Rodés of First Baptist Church, Matanzas, saw an opportunity to increase the Cuban churches' ministry among inmates. As a result, 87 pastors and lay leaders made up the first graduating class of prison chaplains in Cuba.

Co-sponsored by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Cuba and the Ecumenical Seminary in Matanzas, the June graduation took place at the Quaker Center in Gibara, on Cuba's northeast coast. Most of these graduates, from 26 different denominational backgrounds, have done prison visitation for years.

"Few of these chaplains receive economic support for this work," said Rodés, who now serves as the Cuban Council of Churches' national coordinator for prison ministry and has visited prisoners throughout his ministry. "Only about a third are formally ordained. These humble servants of Christ — both men and women [about 25 percent of the graduates are women], including some former prisoners — were eager to have this training, along with the opportunity to get to know others doing the same work."

Each graduate completed 60 hours of training over eight months, held in four major cities in Eastern Cuba. The training team consisted of Rodés; Mark Siler, a prison chaplain from North Carolina; and Lazaro Ceballo, a Cuban church musician. **BT**

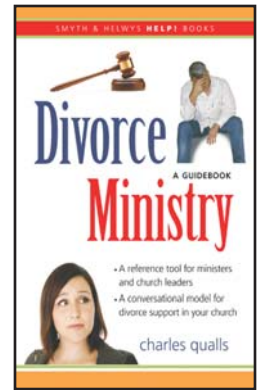


Mark Siler (right), a prison chaplain from North Carolina, spent 10 months in Cuba as part of a three-person prison chaplain training team, co-sponsored by the Cuban Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Seminary in Matanzas. Contributed photo.

Story and photo by John Pierce

**Divorce Ministry:  
A Guidebook**

By Charles Qualls  
(2011, Smyth & Helwys)



# Divorce ministry: Atlanta minister brings research, experience to guidebook



**A**TLANTA — Charles Qualls has a growing reputation in a high-paced, popular Atlanta community. He is “the divorce guy.”

Over the past decade he has led hundreds of Atlantans through divorce recovery groups at Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church where he is associate pastor.

Although Charles, who is married to Elizabeth, has never experienced divorce firsthand, he has developed a passion for helping those who are going through the painful, life-changing experience. He began leading groups for divorced persons 16 years ago while serving on the ministry staff of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, N.C.

His insights, hammered out in both academic and congregational settings, are now being shared in the newly-released book *Divorce Ministry: A Guidebook* (2011, Smyth & Helwys).

Despite all of the high-tech communication tools available today, Charles attracts most participants through a large, street-front banner announcing the divorce recovery programs.

“Peachtree Road is our best advertisement,” he said. “You’ve got thousands of cars and runners passing by each day.”

Charles screens each person through at least a phone call. Although the most recent group was evenly split between genders, most groups are predominantly female and sometimes all female.

“Men have been socialized to not let people see them cry — or sweat,” he said.

So Charles doesn’t worry too much about the gender breakdown, although he once let a man know that he was the only male to sign up — and he chose to wait on another session.

“All-female groups do some good work,” said Charles. “So I don’t mind which way it turns out.”

After the initial eight-week session, participants are invited to sign up for a second-level series of group meetings. Most do. The groups meet in a comfortable, living room setting in the church’s activities building.

“People come in here hurting, feeling beat up, and wondering ‘What am I going to do now?’”

While some participants come to the church for the divorce recovery programs only, others become engaged in congregational life. Attending Bible study and worship is less threatening when they are familiar with the church and know they will find acceptance.

While Charles is glad that he and his congregation are known for their work in divorce recovery, he assures church members that it is not his sole ministry focus.

“I put in just as much time with just as many people on marriage enrichment,” he said. “There is balance.” **BT**

# Q&A: Charles Qualls on the church's ministry to divorced persons

**BT: Those of us who've been around Baptist churches for a few decades remember the stigma once attached to divorce. When and how has that changed?**

CQ: I believe there has been a positive change in that stigma overall. Obviously, you could find some painful exceptions still. If you went back 25 years to my beginnings in ministry, people felt that "single adult" ministry was a fine thing. But, "divorce" ministry seemed to be across a line of sorts.

I heard it explained as when you offered divorce ministry you were really just encouraging people to get divorces. So, if we cared about strengthening marriages we ought not make things any easier on divorcing people.

Culturally, divorce is a fact nowadays. Truthfully, it was back then. People have come around to the notion that a certain percentage of married persons are going to get divorced. No one goes to the altar planning for the marriage to fail, but many will.

This will be a brutal experience to survive. These things we know and understand now. So, the only responsible stance is to offer some transitional healing and support. That's so much better than distance and judgment, which some Christians have offered instead.

**BT: What do divorced persons want from a church?**

CQ: It varies as much as the divorcees do. I would observe that not all divorcees want something spiritual from the church.

Recently, we started a Sunday school class for divorced persons and single parents. The group is off to a really nice start, and my wife Elizabeth and I lead it. But, that's not for everyone who comes through the divorce recovery program.

Most will come and accept the 16 weeks of divorce support I offer (two levels, each eight weeks long) and then go on with their lives. People are more willing to be "consumers of religious goods and services" that the church offers. We had better make peace with that if we are pondering the start of a new divorce recovery ministry in any church.

Some divorcees will be a bit taken aback when they come through the door and receive grace at the church. There are a few, I have determined, that come in almost wanting to be punished for their own failure. But, by far,

I believe most really want the safety to be honest and a peer group of people who are living a similar experience.

Acceptance, confidentiality in the group, a chance to unpack what happened to cause the dissolution of their marriage — and maybe some fresh perspective on life — are what they want.

Divorcees live in a very myopic world when things are at the worst. They can lose touch with the larger world that they live and relate in. In the spirit of Jesus' "cup of cool water," I am convinced that offering these supports is a very Christian response.

**BT: Failure of a marriage can bring shame. How can churches reach out to persons who need a supportive faith community without adding to their sense of failure?**

CQ: Their marriage turned out to be a failure; they themselves are not failures. That difference is a revelation for some.

The spiritual and relational stance with which the church leads really is the key. The kingdom can't afford for the church to heap shame or failure on top of their pain. They get it. They have already graded this portion of their lives far more harshly than the church needs to.

So even our advertising, naming and describing of a divorce support ministry will betray whether we are offering grace or not. In the book, I have included some samples of our street-front banner and some of the online and welcome materials. These are our leading words. They speak of support, a fresh start and new perspective.

The church has to lead with a message that their divorce is not all of who they are. It is a very real, painful part — but only a part.

**BT: Churches put a strong emphasis on families. Does that sometimes unintentionally exclude divorced persons — or other singles who don't fit the typical family model?**

CQ: The traditional model of family is decreasing. Here's our reality: we have married people and we have single people. My hope for churches is that we find a way to offer something meaningful for all of them without being apologetic about any of the ministries.

Like so much of life, balance really is the key. If we look around and find that we look like a married peoples' church, there might be

no mystery why we don't attract singles. Likewise, if we only reach out to singles and not the couples, we'll fail to support them too.

I work privately with 12-15 couples a year in multi-week premarital and "marriage tune-up" sessions. We offer marriage enrichment and parent support opportunities. So, we do a lot of that kind of thing.

Obviously, there is the divorce recovery ministry. And, we do have some singles groups. A lot of work has been done in that area just lately. But, I can't really think of one "couples" class we have except in our youngest adult groups — where we've done some "nearly-wed/newlywed" classes.

My point is that, throughout the vast majority of our adult Bible study groups, there is a blend of married and single persons together. There's health in that. It's harder to walk in and find any one large, noticeable "singles" group here. We just do "church" here in a lot of ways, not couples or singles in the bigger picture.

**BT: From your research on this topic for your doctoral work and the book, what is the most important discovery you have made?**

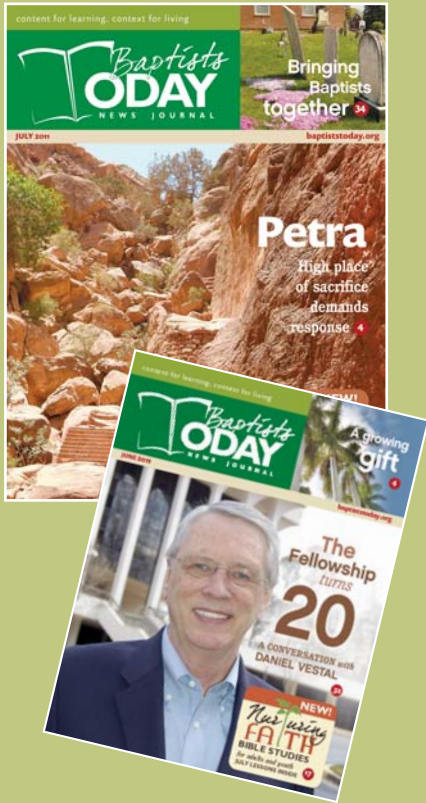
CQ: It's hard to put my finger on an isolated discovery. However, we did test to see if some basic assumptions were true — and if the ministry I have been offering for all of these years was actually doing anything important. So, the project was a vulnerable experience for me.

What I came away with was a more specific understanding of just how isolating and distancing the divorce experience can be. I tested divorcees' perspectives on how their friends had reacted, and how their families responded and on their experiences of loss, pain and otherness.

I also surveyed three-years worth of participants to see whether some specific helps offered to them by the divorce recovery ministry had been helpful and if the overall experience had made any difference in their journeys. We were gratified to see strong indication that these ways of offering support are effective and helpful.

Miroslav Volf's theology of "exclusion and embrace" transformed my understanding of the need, the responsibility and the opportunity. Also, hearing the voices of the divorced persons through the surveys was powerful for me. **BT**

# A new way to do Bible study!



## A GREAT VALUE

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

## Thank you for your good feedback.

The online teaching resources (F.I.T. lesson plans, Digging Deeper and The Hardest Question) are now grouped in a single PDF file for EACH WEEK. With one click, teachers can print out all of these resources for teaching the upcoming lesson found in *Baptists Today*. Check it out at our website [baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible).

## New youth lesson plans writer

Starting this month, the online youth teaching plans that build on the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies by Tony Cartledge are being written by **Jeremy Colliver**, minister with students at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

Jeremy is a graduate of Georgetown College and the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky.

David Cassidy, church resources editor, continues to write the youth lessons and coordinate all of the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies materials found in print and online at [baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible).



Nurturing  
FAITH



**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.

## 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!

## Have something to share?

Want to order? We can be reached at 1-877-752-5658 and [baptiststoday.org](http://baptiststoday.org)



# Nurturing FAITH

BAPTISTS TODAY  
BIBLE STUDIES

Theme for October lessons  
in this issue

## Building the church

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

Teaching resources at [baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible)

### 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](http://baptiststoday.org/bible) to access all of 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](http://baptiststoday.org/bible). These include:

- \* Tony's video overviews
- \* Adult teaching plans by Rick Jordan
- \* Youth teaching plans by Jeremy Colliver
- \* 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](http://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 Cassidy** 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](http://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 **Kelley 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

Oct. 2, 2011


## Live Purposefully

Some readers have trouble warming up to Paul, in part because he holds some very strong — and sometimes near-contradictory — opinions, and in part because he appears to hold such a high opinion of himself. We don't generally consider braggadocio to be an appealing attribute. If someone had confronted Paul about it, however, he might have responded as a talented friend of mine used to do: "No brag, just fact."

### Paul's accomplishments (vv. 4b-6)


Why does Paul speak so glowingly of his own past in vv. 4-6? It is because he wants to show that none of his religious credentials had counted for anything when it came to knowing Christ. To understand vv. 4-6, we have to get the context from vv. 2-3.

Paul was deeply concerned about a persuasive band of people who had gone about seeking to undermine the gospel of grace. Whether the "false teachers" were evangelistic Jews seeking to win (or recover) converts or a Christian sect who believed that Christ-followers should also abide by certain aspects of Jewish law is unclear. It is also uncertain whether such teachers had yet reached Philippi, though their teachings had clearly wreaked havoc in Galatia and Corinth.

Paul, who insisted that salvation is by faith rather than works, minced no words in criticizing those who would require external rituals. He flexed his rhetorical skills in warning the Philippians to "beware of" or "look out for" persons he referred to as "dogs," "evil-workers" and "mutilators" (3:2). 

While pious Jews sometimes referred to Gentiles as dogs, Paul reversed the epithet and aimed it at Judaizing teachers

who distorted the gospel by teaching that grace was not enough. Paul regarded such teachers as more than mistaken: he believed they were doing evil.

The false teachers demanded that Gentile believers be circumcised as Jews in addition to their faith in Christ, but Paul considers that to be unnecessary violence, and refers to those who teach it as "the mutilation," while those who followed his teaching were the (true) "circumcision." 

In vv. 4-6, Paul offers to stack his credentials against his opponents' confidence "in the flesh." His Jewish background was sterling: he'd been circumcised in accordance with the ritual requirements and could trace his ancestry through the tribe of Benjamin as "a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (v. 5a). The latter expression may also imply that Paul was raised to speak and read Hebrew. He was not a proselyte or convert to Judaism, but the genuine article.

Still, Paul could take no credit for being born a Hebrew, so he also emphasized his personal achievements in Jewish life. He identified himself as the most committed of Jews, a Pharisee who sought to keep the law in every respect, so zealous for the Jewish faith that he had once persecuted (literally, "pursued") the church, which was regarded as a threat to Judaism (vv. 5b-6). No one could claim to be more Jewish than Paul — but he had come to understand that neither his pedigree nor his piety could compare with the grace of Jesus Christ.

### Paul's goal (vv. 7-11)

Paul came to see that every advantage or accomplishment with regard to his life as a faithful Jew counted as nothing when it came to faith in Christ: all human gains, whether religious or otherwise, were "as loss" compared to "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (vv. 7-8a). We must understand that this was a real loss to Paul: both his heritage and his achievements had made him a leader within Judaism. He gave up

his position and reputation when he realized that neither could bring him into a justified relationship with God.

The word translated as "loss" can also carry the sense of "liabilities" (NET): Paul understood that what some saw to be spiritual assets could actually be impediments to faith. All human righteousness had to be disregarded in order to trust wholly in Christ. Indeed, Paul emphatically says, "I count them as rubbish ..." (v. 8b). While the NRSV and NIV translate with the palatable word "rubbish," a common meaning of *skubala* is "dung" (KJV, NET, "filth" in the HCSB), a coarse term often used for excrement. Paul's effort at shock value is lost in most translations.

While the false teachers majored on human actions thought to have spiritual value, Paul sought a righteousness that could come only through faith in Christ, not through the law (v. 9). Most translations render *dia pisteōs Xristou* as "through faith in Christ," but many scholars argue that a more natural translation would be "through the faith of Christ" (KJV) or "through Christ's faithfulness" (NET). Both are true: Christ's faithfulness to us makes it possible for us to put our faith in him.

Paul wants to know Christ. The word translated as "know" was important to the members of a Christian sect generally called "Gnostics," who believed that Christ imparted a special mystical knowledge to believers. In contrast, Paul is almost certainly using the word in its Hebrew sense of intimate, personal, experiential knowledge. He does not want to know about Christ; he wants to know him as a present, living, resurrected reality (v. 10).


Most believers would share Paul's desire "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection," but would be less excited about seeking "the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death" (v. 10). Paul may be reflecting on Christ's faithfulness, and wishing to demonstrate an equal willingness to be faithful unto death, but this does not mean he

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



## Resources to teach adult and youth classes

are available at  
[baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible)

was a masochist or would-be martyr in search of suffering. In desiring to know Christ fully, Paul wanted to share the subjective experience of Christ's suffering. 

But what does Paul mean by “if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead”? (v. 11). Is he uncertain about it? The words translated “if somehow” could also mean “so, somehow” (NET), so the sentence may not be as conditional as it appears. It is likely that Paul is simply choosing to speak from humility rather than expressing any doubt about the truth of Christ's promises or the efficacy of his own faith.

Paul's primary thrust is that he wants to be like Christ in every way, from suffering to death to resurrection.

### Paul's determination (vv. 12-14)

If anyone could claim to “have arrived” as a Christian, it would be Paul, who was obsessed with knowing Christ fully. He did not, however, want the Philippians to think that believers should

ever slack off in their efforts to know and serve Christ more fully.

To this end, Paul employs mixed metaphors of hunting and foot racing. With the goal of knowing Christ always before him Paul says: “I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” The word for “press on” (*diōkō*) is from the same verb Paul used in v. 6 to describe how he had “pursued” (sometimes translated as “persecuted”) the church. It was often used to describe a hunter who resolutely pursued his quarry.

Paul, recognizing that he had not yet gained a full knowledge or experience of Christ, was like a hunter who did not turn aside to bemoan past mistakes or celebrate past victories, but focused entirely on what lay ahead (v. 13). Paul was obsessed with Christ.

With v. 13, Paul continues the same theme but shifts to an athletic metaphor,

as he presses on (using *diōkō* again) for the goal — literally, the “goal-marker” that would gain him the prize he sought so earnestly.

And what is the prize Paul hoped to attain? He describes it as “the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (NRSV). The NRSV translation is interpretive, apparently assuming (as many commentators do) that Paul referred to his hope of heaven. The word for “heaven” is not present, however, but a word meaning “upward.” Thus, the phrase more literally speaks of “the upward calling of God ...” Some have suggested that Paul was thinking of the Christian's call to live on a higher plane, or that he had in mind the rewards ceremony at the Olympic games, when winners were called forward to be recognized.

Whatever the nuances of Paul's memorable phrasing, his goal was clear: to know Christ as fully as Christ had known him. That, he believed, should be the goal of every believer. That, he knew, would require a focused effort few would adopt without powerful encouragement. **BT**

## What's Your Goal?

**P**aul was one of the primary leaders of the early church. He spent his ministry traveling from church to church and writing letters to church leaders — all in an attempt to help them grow in faith.

The earliest churches were usually small groups of Christians who gathered in homes to worship and organize for ministry. Since the idea of “church” was new, they were figuring things out together. Because Christianity was also new, governments and rulers were not always kind to those who followed Christ.

Paul cared for these Christians, and wanted their churches to be strong. Travel was difficult and

time-consuming in Paul's day, so he often wrote letters to help churches as they struggled with decisions or problems.

In Philippians (a letter to the church in Philippi), Paul encouraged Christians to watch for those who taught that faith in Christ was not enough.

He encouraged them to be like him (Paul was not known for being modest), and to be constantly striving to learn more about Jesus and what it meant to follow him. Paul hoped that their focus on Jesus would help the Philippians avoid the destructive teachings that were circulating.

In today's passage we hear some of the most memorable words from Paul's writings:

## Youth • October 2, 2011

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:12-14)

Today the church has the benefit of more than 2,000 years of history and experience, yet we still seek to learn more about following Jesus.

### Think About It:

Can we ever know Jesus completely? When was the last time you learned something new about following Jesus? About your faith?



### Make a Choice:

Choose this week to learn something more about Jesus, your church or your faith. Read or watch something new. Spend time in prayer. What you learn might change you.



### Pray:

Ask God to help you learn and grow in faith, and to always be humble about what you do know about Jesus.



# Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Oct. 9, 2011


## Live Joyfully

If you could describe an ideal church, what sort of characteristics would you have in mind? In today's text, Paul is speaking to the Philippians, but his advice would apply to any church that wants to grow and become effective in its ministry. In Phil. 4:1-9, Paul gives several instructions designed to improve church life. Let's talk about three of them.

### Be strong and get along (vv. 1-3)

The first three chapters of Philippians are among the most beautiful words written in scripture. Throughout these inspirational chapters, though, there is an undercurrent of concern. In 2:2, Paul urges the church to be "in full accord and of one mind" — which implies that they were not. In 2:14, he asks them to work together "without murmuring or arguing" — which implies that they were.

The reader begins to wonder if Paul has someone particular in mind. Finally, in 4:2, he names names, and pleads with two well-known women, asking them to get along (4:2).

Euodia and Syntyche were apparently strong leaders in the church at Philippi, where women played important roles from the beginning. The church was born after Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke visited with a Jewish women's prayer group and explained to them the truth about Christ. Lydia, a successful merchant and new believer, then hosted the church in her home (Acts 16:11-15). 


Paul recalls how Euodia and Syntyche had struggled beside him in the work of the gospel. He refers to them as coworkers, members of a team. He loves and appreciates them both. He has no desire to take sides in their dispute, but simply urges them to put their differences aside

and to get along with each other.

The disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche must have been sharp, apparently serious enough to threaten the life and health of the church. Everyone would have known about it. Perhaps the feud put others on edge or confused new believers. If you've ever tried to worship in a church that was experiencing significant infighting, you understand how distracting it can be.

We don't know what the women disagreed about. Paul does not say, and he does not take sides. He doesn't tell one of the women to accept the other's point of view. Rather, he urges them both to "be of the same mind" as the Lord, reflecting his earlier call for the entire church to "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (2:5).

This does not mean they had to agree on every point. In this context, "the same mind" means "the same attitude," an attitude of humility and a willingness to give a little for the sake of the other.

The conflict was so significant that Paul called on a third party to help facilitate some kind of reconciliation. We don't know who this third person is: Paul speaks only of "my loyal companion." Scholars have speculated that it might have been Epaphroditus, Luke, Lydia, Silas, Timothy, the pastor at Philippi, or even Paul's wife! Whoever Paul had in mind, Paul's injunction reminds us that believers should not just stand by and watch a fight, but do their best to facilitate a resolution. 

### Rejoice and pray (vv. 4-7)


These four verses are among the most popular texts chosen as "memory verses," for they promote the positive attributes of joy, confidence and peace — things we'd all like to see in our churches.

Surprisingly, Paul follows his statement of concern about divisiveness with a double rejoinder to rejoice. This suggests that Paul understood that "happiness" and "joy" are not the same thing. Not everything was smooth and easy in


Philippi. Not everyone was happy with each other. Yet, Paul could encourage them to "rejoice in the Lord," to celebrate Christ's presence and their future hope in him.

Paul then suggests three keys to experiencing such joy, beginning with a spirit of gentleness. The word *epieikes* is a beautiful Greek expression. It can be translated with words such as "forbearance" (RSV) or "moderation" (KJV), but "gentleness" (NIV, NRSV) says it best. The word describes an attitude of patient steadfastness that is able to endure even injustice or mistreatment without hatred or hostility.

Many of us suffer from past injuries to the heart and to our pride. Some of those wounds are slow to heal, and we may respond with anger and criticism, or with sulking moods and self-pity. Paul calls us to move past this natural reaction and take on the entirely unnatural quality of a gentle spirit. We need God's help to have that gentle spirit, but when we find it, we discover a sense of deep joy.

To this, Paul adds a note of perspective. Whether Paul had in mind Christ's second coming or his constant presence through the Spirit, his comment that "the Lord is near" adds perspective to one's behavior. Things that irritate us may not seem so important if we keep in mind the bigger picture. 

Secondly, Paul notes that joy and worry don't go together. "Do not worry about anything," he said. *Mad Magazine's* imaginary poster boy, Alfred E. Newman, is famous for his motto: "What, me worry?" Bobby McFerrin gained fame with the song "Don't Worry: Be Happy." Fans of *The Lion King* enjoy hearing Timon and Pumba sing "Hakuna Matata," which they say means "No worries."

We like the notion of having no worries — but that doesn't keep most of us from worrying. There is a place for concerns that lead us to action, but that is different from pointless anxiety over things we cannot control. 

Recognizing this leads to Paul's third key to joyful living: prayer. When we recognize there is nothing we can do,

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



we turn it over to God. And, as we pray, we remember God's past blessing with thanksgiving even as we express our current requests.

The word Paul uses for "prayer" is a general term that reflects an attitude of prayerful reverence before God. The word for "supplications" is more specific — it speaks of special requests and particular concerns.

Prayer opens the door to hopefulness, allowing us to pray specifically for those things we want to see changed. Prayer opens the door to acceptance, helping us to deal with those things we cannot change. Thus, prayer opens the door to peace, enabling us to trust the wisdom and the love of God who cares for us day by day.

Paul wants us to exchange needless worry for faithful prayer, to follow the same course found in the old hymn's admonition to "take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

This trusting attitude leads to a sense of peace that exceeds our understanding, Paul says, a sense of peace so strong that

Resources to teach adult and youth classes are available at [baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible)

it can stand guard over the hearts and minds of believers.

### Think and do (vv. 8-9)

Paul concludes his long list of admonitions with a return to the importance of thinking rightly (cf. 3:15), in consonance with Christ. He then lists eight things that are profitable subjects for Christian thinking; the first six are in the form of adjectives introduced by "whatever," and the final two are nouns preceded by "if there is any."

The six adjectives describe wholesome thinking from a variety of angles, as Paul holds up those things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing (or lovely) and commendable. The two nouns are in

the same vein, as Paul commends excellence and praise. The word translated "excellence" is not just a superlative, but can carry the particular sense of moral excellence (HCSB) or virtue (KJV).

Paul understood that our thought life guides our emotions and our actions. Instead of stewing over injustices, harboring grudges, or worrying about the future, Paul commends giving active, conscious thought to positive things — not only counting our blessings, but also actively contemplating truth, justice and virtue.

So, Paul turns from thinking (v. 8) to action in v. 9. He uses a present tense verb to stress continuous activity in urging the Philippians to "keep on doing" the things the things he had taught them by word and example: "what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me." ⬇

Take a few moments to mentally sort through a typical day. How much of it do you spend dwelling on positive thoughts? How much of your behavior models that of Christ? How much do you feel a sense of peace? Do you see a connection? **BT**

## Be Happy!

How do you handle stress? What is your approach to dealing with challenges and conflict? Everyone faces such pressures, and in today's passage, Paul reminds us that our attitude toward life is a spiritual matter.

He writes "... whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Phil. 4:8 NRSV)

The church in Philippi was apparently experiencing disagreements and conflict, so Paul wrote to encourage them to rise above those tensions and to "rejoice in the Lord." He did not pick sides or

ask the arguing persons to change their views, but instead reminded them that Christian peace comes not from having everyone think alike, but in the joy of receiving and sharing God's love and grace.

Have you ever worked with preschoolers? They can be in a room full of wonderful toys and friends, and yet become very angry or upset over wanting a particular toy. We may smile at such behavior, but we can act in similar ways. We may forget to see the larger wonder and joy of life when we focus on one issue or problem.

Paul's words remind us that God has placed us in a world and in lives that have so much that is

good and wonderful. If we focus on the goodness of God and the joy of living, our attitude creates a positive spirit that pleases God and brings us a peace that can only come through God.

What tensions or issues are weighing down your heart? Can you step back, take a larger look at your life, and see the wonderful friends, family, experiences and opportunities that God is offering? If so, you are discovering the wisdom of Paul's words to the Philippians. You are discovering God's peace.

## Youth • October 9, 2011

### Think About It:

List the things that are troubling you. Then, make a list of the wonderful parts of your life. Include your friends, your family and the things that make you laugh. This is your list of wonderful things. How do you feel now?



### Make a Choice:

This week, when you find your stress level rising, remember your list of "wonderful things" and imagine God smiling at you. Will you choose to focus on the joys of life?



### Pray:

Take another look at your list of "wonderful things" and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Ask for God's wisdom as you seek to focus on seeing the joy of life.



# Thumbtacks



**Philippians 3:4b-14**  
**The Secret Word is *prize*.**

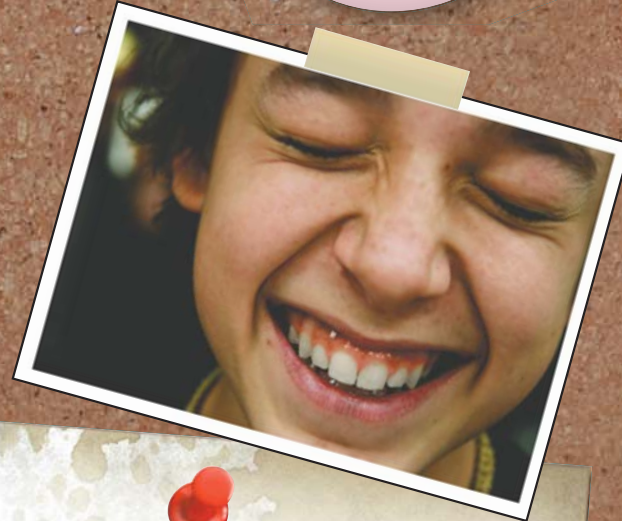
10-2-11

Do you know someone who has it all together? The best clothes, newest phone, cool friends to hang with — whatever you want, they've already got it. They can make the mid-court shot. They know the answer to the teacher's question. They are popular and everybody likes them. What you are left with is ... jealousy — sort of like Luler the hound dog who has beautiful blue-tick spots: all the plain dogs wish they looked like her.

Paul was that "someone" people were jealous of, and he bragged about it a little. He had all the prizes people wanted. When you hear the word prize, what comes to your mind? What do you have that you consider a prize? Even if you aren't the kid who has it all together, your list of prizes is probably pretty long.

Paul had it all. But here he says none of that stuff matters to him! He thinks of all those prizes as if they are just garbage when he compares them with the love and forgiveness found in Jesus. Paul knew a secret: being the popular kid or having the cool stuff can be lonely and empty. Jealousy draws people to you not for yourself but for something you have.

Paul tells us that knowing and following Jesus is the best prize in the world. He put Jesus at the top of his list, and he tried to speak and act so people could tell that Jesus was most important to him. Where is Jesus in your prize list, and how can you change things around so people can tell that being a Jesus-follower is a prize to you?



**Philippians 4:1-9**

**The secret word is *think*.**

10-9-11

Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you; now pick out one sound and try to hear only that one. Like looking for Waldo, it can seem like our attention is being pulled in many directions at once, making it hard to concentrate on one thing. Luler the hound dog is good at focusing her attention. Even from far away she can zero in on a rabbit or squirrel by sight or smell, and she won't let anything distract her!

It is easy to get distracted by things that bother us when we want to concentrate on something else. When you are in class, can you listen well to the teacher or does your mind wander somewhere else? When you are playing a video game, do you have to take a break from it often to rest? When you are with a friend, do you keep thinking of something that hurt your feelings long ago instead of what is happening now?

The goodness of our lives depends on the way we use our attention. We can use it to experience good things or not-so-good things. Sometimes we can accidentally pay attention to a lot of bad stuff, so it takes effort to focus our attention on the things that will do the most good, the things that are good gifts from God: truth, love, honor, honesty, kindness, joy.

Paul says that Jesus-followers like us will have goodness in our lives if we use our attention carefully. Make it your habit to think about those good gifts even when other things are noisy and distracting. Paul says this brings us joy, peace and a calm feeling. Take time today to sharpen your ability to focus your thoughts, and see where Jesus is leading you.



Read the Bible passage  
to find the secret word.



**1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**  
The secret word is **idols**.

10-16-11

Who is your favorite performer on *American Idol*? What about your favorite super-hero or your favorite character in the Harry Potter stories? Have you ever asked yourself why these are your favorites? We want to become like our heroes. So we need to be pretty careful when we choose them!

Lulu the hound dog is naturally good at following. She follows her nose on the scent of something interesting. But mostly she follows her master. She will stay close no matter where we go, even if it's not where she'd like to go, because following is her instinct.

We all want to get better at being Jesus-followers. Having a hero or heroine to follow as an example is a great way to do that. You know someone whose example you follow as a Christian. Maybe it is your parent, a teacher, or coach, a grandparent or the parent of a friend.

Paul reminds us that we tend to imitate the people who are our idols, our heroes, our favorites. Being a Jesus-follower means being a follower of another Jesus-follower, who helps you become the person God wants you to be. As a Jesus-follower, you become the example other people see and copy. One day it will be up to you to teach younger people to be faithful followers of Jesus.

A great Jesus-follower named Mother Teresa once said, "What most people do for money, I do for the love of God. No, I wouldn't dare touch a sick person for a thousand dollars! But I gladly take care of the sick person for the sake of the love of God." Great work can be hard, but you can do hard things when you know God loves you and you practice your faith in Jesus. As you follow Jesus, you become an example yourself.

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**  
The secret word is **gentle**.

10-23-11

Think of a time when you were tempted to tell a lie. You knew the truth, but you were afraid of what would happen if you admitted it. We are tempted to lie for many reasons. We don't want to get in trouble for doing something wrong. We don't want to hurt someone's feelings. The big reason we lie is because we think people will like the lie better than they like the truth. We hate to bring bad news to people! It's a lot easier to say something different and to be tempted to lie just a little or a lot to soften the message.

While Paul was visiting his newly-made friends in Thessalonica, he was good at telling the truth with love, gently. Saying that Jesus Christ is Lord had gotten him into big trouble in another town, Philippi, where he and fellow-apostle Silas were beaten and put in jail because town leaders felt threatened by their message. Surely Paul was tempted to lie to escape being arrested. He must have been brave to travel to Thessalonica and start telling the truth all over again in a new town. But he cared about people very much and wanted them to know the good news, or "gospel," even if it was risky for him. To Paul, sharing the gospel was like a mom taking loving care of her children: gentle truth, given with love, always honest.

You probably can't imagine your mom telling you a lie. This is what Paul is telling his Thessalonian friends: "I love you enough to tell you the truth, even if it gets me into trouble." So how can you as a Jesus-follower do a better job of truth-telling? Is there someone you need to love enough right now to share the truth with, gently?



**1 Thessalonians 2:9-13**  
The secret word is **word**!

10-30-11

Picture this: you are with your best friends at the movies. You leave and walk through the mall to your favorite pizza place to eat supper together. The pizza is delivered to your table and before you pick up your delicious slice of pepperoni with extra cheese, out of habit you bow your head to ask a blessing. Suddenly everything stops! Your friends who are talking, laughing and taking bites of pizza pause and stare at you with funny looks. You freeze in mid-blessing. Do you finish the silent private prayer you are making, or do you grin and chow down because it is embarrassing to be caught praying?

We can feel uncomfortable with our beliefs about God if people around us are uncomfortable when they see us practice our faith. Just look at the TV cable channels that are filled with all kinds of preachers and religious teachers. You would not want your friends to get the idea that you belong in that group! But as Jesus-followers, we never need to feel embarrassed by our faith.

Paul is thanking his Thessalonian friends for accepting the gospel message he shared with them. The idea of Jesus Christ as Lord was a new idea to them, and they received it well and were not embarrassed by it. They were not afraid of what town leaders might do if they let Paul stay with them and preach. They were not the kind of people who made fun of someone who stopped to ask a blessing before devouring his pizza.


# Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Oct. 16, 2011


## Marks of Maturity

What are the marks of a mature Christian? Many of us wonder if we will ever “grow up” in the faith, but it’s hard to tell how much progress we’ve made without some benchmarks for comparison.

Paul seems to have considered three cardinal characteristics to be essential for a mature Christian faith. Three times in his letters he speaks of faith, hope and love in close proximity, as if they stand above other virtues. The most familiar of these is 1 Cor. 13:13 — “now these three remain: faith, hope, and love ...” (NET). The same three attributes are mentioned in Rom. 5:1-5, Gal. 5:5-6 and Col. 1:4-5. And, Paul highlights the triple crown of maturity near both the beginning and the end of his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica (1:3, 5:8). 

### A mature church (vv. 1-3)

The story of Paul’s relationship with the Thessalonians is found in Acts 17:1-10, the account of how Paul preached in the local synaḡogue for three weeks before being thrown out — and taking with him “a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women” who had decided to follow Jesus (Acts 17:4).

The nascent church began meeting in the home of a man named Jason, but Paul and his companions were soon hauled before the authorities and shown the city gates. They moved on to Berea, and later to Athens, but Paul did not forget the young believers in Thessalonica. 

While in Athens, the companions decided to send Timothy back to Thessalonica for a quiet visit, possibly fearing a report that the young church had fizzled out. He returned with a glowing report


that the church was not fizzling, but sizzling. Paul was so pleased that he affirmed the Thessalonians through a personal letter he also attributed to his companions Silvanus (an alternate name for Silas) and Timothy. This is the letter we now call 1 Thessalonians.

Paul typically began his letters with a word of thanksgiving to God, and 1 Thessalonians (unlike Galatians) was no exception. I always find it interesting to see what Paul finds to be thankful for in a given church — and wonder if any qualities of my life or church would inspire similar gratitude.

Paul expresses thanksgiving for three particular congregational characteristics in the church at Thessalonica: “your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3).


Note that each of Paul’s three favorite Christian attributes is qualified by another noun. The apostle is not only thankful for the Thessalonians’ faith, for example, but also for their “work of faith.” The word for “work” is *ergon*, which, when combined with the prefix *en-*, forms the root of the English word “energy.” It carries the sense of activity that is designed to accomplish something; thus, the plural form is most commonly translated as “deeds.”

The Thessalonians’ faith had put them to work: their testimony was not one of words, but of deeds.

Secondly, Paul praises their “labor of love.” In English, we may use “work” and “labor” as synonyms, but Paul is not repeating himself: shades of meaning can be important. The word we translate as “labor” speaks not only of work, but also of tiresome work that involves sweat and fatigue. It is troublesome work, as we would say, “laborious” work. It is the kind of work one might expect servants to do because they are forced to do it, or that low-paid wage earners do because it is the only job available — but Paul attributes the Thessalonians’ labor to love. They worked tirelessly in behalf of the gospel and in behalf of each other, because they loved God and loved each other. Their work was a labor of love. 

Finally, Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians’ steadfastness of hope. Some readers might find this curious: when one already has such deep faith and love, hope may seem like a weak companion. Why is it also necessary, and why did Paul emphasize it by putting it last?

Paul understood that we all will face tragic or trying times when faith and love may be hard to come by, and in those dark nights, hope is what keeps us going. Perhaps you can remember one of those times: the death of a family member, the loss of a job, a painful divorce. In the aftermath, faith may have been shaken and love may have seemed a distant memory: but hope perseveres. We hope to see our loved ones in heaven. We hope for better days and new chances.

The Christians in Thessalonica lived under very trying circumstances. They faced relentless persecution by other groups who thought of the church as a dangerous cult. Yet, they held to a steadfast hope, believing that God would never desert them. Even the threat of death could not defeat their faith, precisely because they were empowered by hope. 

### A learning church (vv. 4-6)

The reader may wonder how the relatively new believers in Thessalonica had learned to live so faithfully. What motivated them to do the work of faith and the labor of love? Where did they discover such steadfastness of hope?

The text makes it clear that they learned it from Paul, Silas and Timothy (and probably Luke, who is not named, but was with them). The Thessalonian believers knew that Paul and his companions had come to them following a life-threatening imprisonment in Philippi, and yet they continued to proclaim the gospel. They saw how their own local synaḡogue relentlessly pursued them, even after they left Thessalonica for Berea, and yet they remained faithful.

The Thessalonians had learned to experience the power of the Holy Spirit and to exercise an active faith that would

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





not give up precisely because they had learned it from Paul and his missionary team.

Paul knew this. He also knew that good Christian role models were in short supply, so he had the audacity to encourage new believers to imitate him and his companions (vv. 5-6).

I suspect that few of us have the confidence or *hutzpah* to challenge others to follow our example and have a faith like ours. But, we have all known others who served as role models for us: we wanted to be like them.

I can name a high school coach, a former roommate and friend, a youth director, several professors, and the late children's television host Fred Rogers as people I have truly admired and sought to be like.

Can you think of people who have influenced your life so strongly that you wished you could share their purity of faith, their zeal for Christ, their leadership ability, their unselfish kindness?

Paul said, "You know what kind of persons we proved to be among you"

## Resources to teach adult and youth classes

are available at

[baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible)

(v. 6). Their example was not so much in what Paul and Silas and Timothy said, but in how they lived.

Most readers could identify with the man who said, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one." Paul and his companions lived even better sermons than they preached. And their lives were so impressive that the Thessalonians were inspired to imitate them — even if it meant they might also experience persecution.


### A teaching church (vv. 7-10)

Paul's great pride in the church extended beyond their willingness to learn from good role models as they grew in discipleship: they took it to the next level and lived in such a way that they, in turn, became examples to others.

Paul, in fact, credits them with becoming models of faith whose reputation had

extended "to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia" (v. 7) — and not only there, but "in every place your faith in God has become known" (v. 8).

We can be sure there is some hyperbole in Paul's statement, but his purpose is clear: he wanted the young church to know that their transformation from idol worshipers to Christ followers and their continued faithfulness despite persecution could inspire other believers throughout the known world.

Contemporary believers would do well to ask if the "word of the Lord" sounds forth from us. Few of us have ever knelt before an idol and called it a god, but we have been subject to the cultural norms of our own day. Could even our neighbors or family members testify how we have turned away from idols of materialism and self-interest to demonstrate a faith that works, a love that labors, a hope that endures? 

What are others learning about Jesus from what they see in our lives? If Paul looked in on a typical day in our lives, would he be thankful? Would Jesus? **BT**

## Growing Up

**D**oes a person have to be old to be mature? How do we know when we are making mature choices?

Today's passage from 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 is the start of a letter from Paul to the young church at Thessalonica. Paul is encouraged by the maturity the Christians have shown, and begins this letter by recognizing how they have "grown up."

Paul points to three signs of their maturity. He writes of "... your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." The key words are familiar ones: faith, love and hope. Is it really that easy? Is our maturity simply shown through faith, hope and love?

If you think about it, treating others through love can be really tough. It is so easy to judge, to avoid, and to treat others in unloving ways.

Living in hope can also be hard, especially when times are difficult. It is much easier to give up, to assume the worst will happen, or to not care.

Faith is perhaps the hardest of the three signs of maturity. Trusting God to be with us, to be "for" us, and to guide us requires deep inner strength and maturity.

Paul is also proud of how the Thessalonians have worked to imitate his ministry, and more importantly, Jesus' life. Maturity often gets a start by

imitating those who are already showing the signs of growth. In the same way that we may work to imitate a great athlete or musician, having a faith mentor helps us see how faith, love and hope are practiced.

The church at Thessalonica went beyond imitating Paul and Jesus, and also became models of maturity for others around them. In particular, they modeled how faith, love and hope could be shown even as they were persecuted for their faith. As they connected with other churches and Christians, their maturity helped others also grow. Perhaps part of growing up is helping others along their journey too.

### Think About It:

List the ways you have grown in how you love others, remain hopeful and trust God. Where are places you need to work to mature?



### Make a Choice:

Choose love, hope or faith and choose to work to "grow up" in that area this week. How will you change the way you relate to others this week?



### Pray:

Thank God for the faith mentors in your life. Ask for God's guidance and strength as you grow and mature. Thank God for helping you try again when you fail.



# Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Oct. 23, 2011

## Leaders Who Care

Have you ever been called upon to defend your actions or to define your role in a given situation? The two tasks have different purposes, but often employ similar strategies. The rhetorical approach Paul adopts in 1 Thessalonians 2 could be interpreted as a defense or a definition, which has led interpreters to approach the text in different ways.

Some see 1 Thessalonians 2 as an apology — not in the chagrined sense of expressing regret, but in the classical sense of defending a position. Theologians who specialize in trying to prove the rational basis for the Christian faith, for example, are called “Christian apologists.”

Others imagine that Paul is defending himself against critics who had sought to discredit him. Nowhere in 1 Thessalonians, however, is there clear evidence that Paul and his companions had been charged with acting or speaking improperly, so it is probably best that we do not read a defensive tone into these verses.

Rather, we may approach the text as Paul’s attempt to define his role as a visiting evangelist and church planter, so the Thessalonians would better understand him. Some writers, including Linda McKinnish Bridges, see this chapter as Paul’s effort to describe his personal leadership style (*1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008], 37).

Paul sometimes speaks so forcefully (as he did to believers in Galatia and in Corinth) that we tend to think of him as an autocratic leader who flaunted his authority. In his letters to Philippi and Thessalonica, however, Paul reveals himself to be a compassionate and collaborative leader who worked alongside new believers and expected no special treatment.

## Leading when it’s hard (vv. 1-2)

The first chapter of 1 Thessalonians focuses on the letter’s recipients, as Paul thanks God for their fervent faith, active love and steadfast hope. There he notes how the believers had learned to imitate him and his companions before becoming examples to others in their own right (1:6-7).

Paul is clearly grateful that the new believers have followed his lead, but reminds them that he had not blown into town demanding that they bow to his commands: he had come to serve among them.

The chapter begins with a word normally translated “for,” though it does not appear in the NRSV. “For” emphasizes the connection between ch. 1, in which Paul talked about his coming to Thessalonica, and ch. 2, in which he speaks of his actions while there.

“You yourselves know” (v. 1) suggests that Paul has no need to present evidence of credibility beyond the Thessalonians’ own experience with him. They know that his time with them had not been “in vain” (the basic meaning of the word is “empty”). His efforts had not been a failure, but profitable. Using a literary device called a “litotes,” Paul emphasizes a positive value by stating the negative of its opposite, and he continues this pattern of negative affirmation through v. 7a.

Paul’s experience prior to reaching Thessalonica had certainly been negative enough. Though much beloved by the believers in Philippi, he and Silas had been dragged before the city authorities, who had them publicly stripped and whipped with rods before throwing them into prison (Acts 16:19-24).

It’s no wonder, then, that Paul spoke of how they “had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi” (v. 2a) before their arrival in Thessalonica. Yet, though Paul and Silas had been publicly and painfully subjected to humiliating treatment, they did not hang their heads in shame, but were filled with

“courage in God” (the essence of the verb is “boldness”) that enabled them to proclaim “the gospel of God” even in the face of stiff opposition (v. 2b). Paul took courage in God, to declare the gospel of God.

The word for “gospel” (*euanggelion*) literally means “good news.” Paul experienced enough bad news to headline the six o’clock report, but through the power of God he transformed it into a bold proclamation of good news — good news that has its beginning and its end in God.

Can you think of a time when you were ridiculed or ostracized because of your faith? Did you respond by slinking away in shame or laughing it off as if you didn’t take it seriously — or did it make you bolder than ever in standing up for Jesus?

## Leading with integrity (vv. 3-7a)

Having spoken of his boldness in proclaiming the gospel, Paul continues in vv. 3-7a with a long string of negative assertions about the manner in which he and his companions had spoken, lived and worked among the Thessalonians.

Some wonder if Paul is defending himself against accusations of misconduct, but it is more likely that he is setting his behavior apart from traveling preachers of various stripes who were common in the first century. These itinerant evangelists for a variety of religions and superstitions were regarded as charlatans, relying on stage tricks or eloquent speech to win over the crowds, then demanding payment or living off the largess of their followers. 📖

Paul wanted to make it exceedingly clear that he did not wish to be considered as just another mountebank who had come to milk the masses. So, he insists, “our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery” (v. 3). Rather, Paul insisted, he and his party had been entrusted with the gospel by no one less than God, and they preached a message designed to please God, not men (v. 4).

Shysters and charlatans used fawning words and “feel good” sermons in search


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




## Resources to teach adult and youth classes

are available at  
[baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible)

of large offerings and greater popularity, but Paul insisted that “we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed” (v. 5), nor in search of human praise (v. 6).

That is not to say that Paul did not believe it would have been appropriate to receive some support. He did not demand compensation, however, even though he and his partners, “as apostles of Christ,” could have done so (v. 7a). 


### Leading with love (vv. 7b-8)


With the latter half of v. 7, Paul further explains his leadership style by turning from the negative to the positive. He and his team had not been deceitful or demanding of the Thessalonians. Rather, Paul says, “we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children” (v. 7b). 

Here is a surprising metaphor. Paul, who is often accused of being androcentric or even misogynistic, describes himself in fully feminine, intimate terms! The word translated as “nurse” (*trophos*) is derived

from a verb that means “to nourish” or “feed.” In this context, with the special reference to “her own children,” Paul probably means to suggest the image of a mother nursing her children.

Have you ever visualized Paul in such a scene? It seems unexpected, but is not unprecedented. Moses once asked God why he had given him so many people to carry in his bosom, like sucking children (Num. 15:12).

And, this is not the only time Paul resorts to a metaphor of motherhood. He spoke as if he had birthed the Galatians, remaining in travail (the same word used for birth pangs or labor) as he struggled to get them on a solid footing (Gal. 4:19). In 1 Cor. 3:1-2, Paul described the Corinthian believers as “babes in Christ,” and was clearly frustrated that they were not yet spiritually weaned: he had to feed them milk rather than solid food. 

Paul’s mothering metaphor serves to soften his image and build community with the Thessalonians. He continues to develop this sense of warm solidarity in v. 8. “So deeply do we care” translates a verb that means “to long for” or “to have a yearning affection for.” As a mother’s love for her children runs deep, so Paul and his friends had learned to care for the Thessalonian believers, yearning for them when they were apart. 

In another surprising twist, Paul indicates that there is more to his mission than proclaiming the gospel: he has fallen in love with the people. Because of that, Paul says, “we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.”

Here is a side of Paul we rarely see. He is not all about business and preaching and counting converts: he loves the people with whom he works. He wants to see them grow and is willing to do whatever it takes to ensure their survival and encourage their development. He cares for them ... like a mother. **BT**

## A Caring Leader

If you go to Amazon and search for books on leadership, you will find nearly 70,000 titles. Clearly, there is a lot of disagreement about what it means to be a leader.

What does a Christian leader look like? Are there unique qualities of Christian leaders that grow from faith in Christ?

In today’s scripture passage, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, Paul works to explain his approach to leadership. Why would he need to do this?

In the days of the early church there were preachers who would travel from church to church, and some were doing so out of self-serving motives.

They would use tricks and gimmicks to please the people, and then collect gifts from them. While this may seem easy to spot, in reality, it has often been difficult to tell the tricksters from genuine leaders.

Paul reminds the church that his leadership is not about gaining their allegiance, but about serving them. His motives are clear: he wants Christians and churches to grow in faith.

In today’s passage, Paul explains his care and love for the Thessalonians. It is a surprisingly intimate expression for him to make. Yet, is it not true that real leaders get to know us and show their care for us across time? We follow their leadership

because their love helps us trust their guidance. False leaders seem to do the opposite, and use others for their own promotion and success.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of Christian leaders is that their leadership is out of service to others and not about drawing attention or praise (or gain) for themselves. Each of us has the ability to be the sort of servant leader Paul describes. By putting the needs of others ahead of our own, and seeking to encourage growth in faith, we can begin to develop the marks of a Christian leader.

### Think About It:

Who are servant leaders in your church? How do they show their care and love for others? Do their actions cause you to want to be more like them?



### Make a Choice:

Want to be a Christian sort of leader? Instead of trying to “lead” this week, choose some ways you can show your care of others.



### Pray:

It is easy for us to focus on our own needs and to seek popularity and influence. Ask God to help you instead find joy in caring for others. Thank God for the servant leadership of Jesus.



# Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13

Oct. 30, 2011

## Bony Fingers

Some readers may remember a country song by Hoyt Axton that was popular back in the mid-1970s. The chorus of the song asked and answered a question: “Work your fingers to the bone, what do you get? Bony fingers!”

If he had known the song, Paul could have been humming that tune as he continued his message on love and leadership to the believers in Thessalonica. Having reminded them of how he and his companions had come to love and care for them with a mother’s undying affection (vv. 7-8), he now speaks of their constant labors among them.

### Our work (v. 9)

Paul appeals to the Thessalonians’ memory of their time together, brief though it had been, recalling their “labor and toil” and how they had “worked night and day” to support themselves financially while also doing the missionary work of proclaiming the gospel.

We note that Paul goes to great lengths to stress the difficulty of their labors and hence the depth of their commitment, using two nouns and a verb. “Labor” (*kopos*) is the same word he had used in 1:3 to describe the Thessalonians’ “labor of love.” It suggests hard work done under duress. The term translated “toil” (*mochthon*) describes strenuous work that requires an unusual expenditure of effort.

The verb translated “we worked” (*ergozomai*) describes labor-intensive work, but can also carry the sense of doing business. We know, according to Acts 18:3, that Paul was a tentmaker, an occupation that required not only skill in design and measurement, but also the difficult labor of cutting and sewing heavy fabrics, leather or rope — precisely the

sort of intensive handwork that might lead to “bony fingers.”

Whether Paul operated his own business or worked on commission for others, we do not know. Nor do we know if Silas, Timothy and Luke joined him in tent making or worked at other professions. Whatever the particular focus of their labors, Paul says they undertook the arduous task of working “night and day” in order to support themselves while also preaching and teaching the gospel. 📖

The NRSV, following its inclusive style, has Paul addressing the “brothers and sisters” in Thessalonica, but only the word for brothers (*adelphoi*) is present. While Paul specifically addresses women in some of his other letters, such as Philippians, no women’s names appear in 1 Thessalonians.

Even if the core of the church consisted of men, as some interpreters believe, it is safe to assume that they had wives and children who would also have been associated with the church. Within the space of 10 verses, Paul uses metaphors of a mother caring for children (v. 7), of brothers (v. 9), of a father teaching his children (vv. 11-12), and of being made an orphan (v. 17). 📖

Both Paul and his readers understood the importance of family, and what it means to work 24/7 to make a living and care for family members. As he worked among the Thessalonians, Paul was not an autocrat, but a collaborative leader who worked side-by-side and heart-by-heart with the new congregation.

### Our witness (vv. 10-12)

In v. 3, Paul insisted that he and his companions had not based their appeal on the negative attributes of “deceit or impure motives or trickery.” Now he turns to a trio of positive qualities to describe their conduct among the Thessalonians, confident that both God and his friends there could testify that their behavior had been “pure, upright, and blameless” (v. 10). 📖

With that triple assertion of positive activity, Paul shifts his overriding metaphor from maternal to paternal. In v. 7, he

had spoken of himself as a nursing mother who tenderly cared for her children. Now, he adopts the role of a righteous father who teaches and encourages his children as they mature (vv. 11-12).

You may have noticed by now that Paul knows the rhetorical power of threes. So, it comes as no surprise that he speaks of his father’s role as “urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (v. 12). 📖

Together, the trio of verbs paints a picture of a father who is present with his children, urging them onward, consoling them when they face difficulties, affirming their progress and challenging them to grow into responsible adults (compare 1 Cor. 4:14-15).

The specific goal Paul has in mind for his faith-children is that they “lead a life worthy of God,” who calls them “into his own kingdom and glory.” The KJV preserves the literal sense of the verb, rendering “walk worthy” rather than “lead a life.” Either translation reminds us that we are called to a continual way of living, a daily walk that both God and others will observe.

The notion of living worthy lives recalls Paul’s similar urging in Rom. 16:2 (“walk worthily of the saints”), Eph. 4:1 (“walk worthily of the calling”), Phil. 1:27 (“live worthily of the gospel of Christ”), and Col. 1:10 (“walk worthily of the Lord”).

### Our words (v. 13)

Many interpreters regard v. 12 as the end of a unit, and see v. 13 as the beginning of a new section. Indeed, it has often been suggested that vv. 13-16 is an interpolation, a paragraph inserted by a later scribe who had his own agenda (see “The Hardest Question” for this lesson). We’ll accept it as Paul’s however, and limit our discussion here to v. 13.

In 1:2-3, Paul had expressed gratitude for the Thessalonians’ work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope. Now he returns to the theme of thanksgiving with another explanation of how they had

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



## Resources to teach adult and youth classes

are available at

[baptiststoday.org/bible](http://baptiststoday.org/bible)

managed to become so mature in so short a time.

The believers had not only imitated Paul, his friends and the Lord (1:6), but they also had “received the word of God” that Paul’s company proclaimed, and had “accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God’s word.” As a result, Paul believed, that word was at work among them.

The word “received” acts as a virtual synonym to “accepted.” Paul uses both words because he wants to emphasize that when the Thessalonians received the message from God that Paul had brought, they accepted it as being truly a word from God, not from men.

“Word of God” in this context is not a reference to the Bible, which is too often held up in idolatrous fashion as the embodied word of God. There was no Bible in Paul’s day. Even the Hebrew canon remained open to debate, and letters such as this one were just beginning the process of being recognized as useful and trustworthy, beginning the long road toward their later inclusion in the New Testament.

“Word” in this sense is a straightforward metaphor for “message.” Paul and his companions had brought the message of the gospel (1:5, 2:4), which he calls the “gospel of God” in 2:2, 8, 9 (see also Rom. 1:1 and 15:16, and 2 Cor. 11:7). That gospel, of course, is the good news of Jesus Christ. Thus, in 3:2 Paul speaks of the “gospel of Christ,” as he does in Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 2:12, 9:13, 10:14; Gal. 1:7; and Phil. 1:27. In 2 Thes. 1:8, he speaks of “the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” The terms describe a common reality. Jesus Christ, as F. F. Bruce notes (*1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco: Word Books, 1982], 62), is not only the subject of the gospel, but also its embodiment.

Christ as both the subject and the embodiment of the gospel word/message is intimately associated with God. As the author of John expressed it in more

philosophical language, Jesus is the Word (John 1:1).<sup>U</sup>

When the Thessalonian believers accepted the gospel message (“words about the Word,” as it were), they also came to know the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit. As Paul put it, “our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1:5) as they “received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit” (1:6) and thus became living examples to believers throughout the land (1:7).

In a sense, this brings us back full circle to the beginning of Paul’s letter. There he praised God for the Thessalonians’ work of faith, their labor of love and their steadfastness of hope — a relationship with Christ that made an observable difference in their daily lives. Now, in 2:13, Paul thanks God for the way they accepted the gospel as a message from God that was actively at work among them and visible to all.

If Paul should observe our lives, would he have similar things to say? **BT**

## Work, Work, Work

**H**ave you felt the satisfaction of working hard to accomplish something worthy? Perhaps it was a personal goal or act of service where you gave of your time and energy to make a difference.

Maybe you worked with others to build a playground, paint a house or clean up an area. If so, you may remember the reality of the hard work and the good feelings that arose when you looked at what was accomplished.

In the same way, Paul is rightfully proud of the church at Thessalonica. They are serving, ministering and living in ways that show their maturity and growth in faith.

In today’s passage, 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, he recalls the effort it took to plant the seeds of faithfulness among the young church. Paul and his companions had to live and eat just like anyone else, and their ministry in Thessalonica included working to support themselves financially.

Whatever sort of craft they practiced, they had to work hard to make a living, while also giving time and energy to the growth of this young church. In today’s text, Paul is looking back and feeling some satisfaction about all that was done.

As a teenager, you are already experiencing multiple demands. You have school work; practices

for extracurricular activities, arts or sports; chores at home; and perhaps also a part-time job. You do not have the luxury of doing only one thing. Can your care for loved ones and your desire to follow God appear in the multiple areas of your life?

Like Paul, our faith is lived out in the midst of the work of life. Sometimes it is really hard work to be responsible in all the aspects of our lives. Paul reminds us that the work of living faithfully in the midst of all the areas of our lives is well worth the effort.

### Think About It:

Where have you already seen the results of your hard work? How have you grown in faith working alongside others?



### Make a Choice:

Sometimes we separate our life of faith from our lives at school, home or work. Choose this week to let your faith guide how you relate to others.



### Pray:

Thank God for the way our lives find purpose and meaning as we work and serve among others.



Your Work

## Classifieds

**Pastor:** Augusta Heights Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., seeks an innovative, passionate pastor with proven experience in church growth and outreach, and the ability to design inspiring, creative worship experiences. Requirements include accredited seminary education, ministry experience and strong preaching skills. AHBC is a diverse congregation that affirms roles of women in ministry through a dual affiliation with CBF and SBC. Submit résumés to [resumes@augustaheights.org](mailto:resumes@augustaheights.org).

**Minister of Music and Worship:** First Baptist Church of Hickory, N.C., affiliated with CBF and SBC, is seeking a full-time minister of music and worship to lead the vibrant and diverse music ministry of the church that weekly ministers to an average of 450 worshippers. He/she must have previously demonstrated abilities in both traditional and contemporary worship settings and must be equally capable and committed to designing worship, directing rehearsals, and leading worship in both settings. Ministry includes fully graded choirs and instrumental programs. A master's degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school in sacred/church music is strongly preferred. Previous experience in full-time church music is preferred. Visit [fbc.cc](http://fbc.cc) for our identity

statement, an overview of music and worship ministry, and a job description. Submit qualified résumés to [musicsearch@fbc.cc](mailto:musicsearch@fbc.cc) or Music and Worship Search, First Baptist Church, 339 2nd Ave NW, Hickory, NC 28601.

**Minister to Students:** River Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, is seeking a minister to students to develop and implement discipleship and ministry events. The student minister will assist in outreach ministries to River Oaks Baptist School. Some ministry experience is desired. Send résumés to [pthomas@robcc.org](mailto:pthomas@robcc.org).

### Minister to Children and Families

**F**irst Baptist Church Dalton, Ga., affiliated with CBF, is seeking a minister to children and families. Our candidate must possess strong faith in Jesus Christ and Christ's call to work with children in a loving and nurturing environment.

The position manages all aspects of ministry: educating children birth-grade 5, training volunteers, coordinating activities, selecting curriculum, outreach, administration and ministerial support, while maintaining high standards of religious education for children.

The MCF will also supervise the director of our children's learning center. Seminary training is preferred. Experience working with children (2+ years) is required.

Applicants should submit résumés to Bill Ireland at [bireland@firstbaptistdalton.com](mailto:bireland@firstbaptistdalton.com) or Spencer Gazaway at [mcf.search@gmail.com](mailto:mcf.search@gmail.com).



## CREATING A CULTURE OF CALL A CONFERENCE FOR MINISTERS COMMITTED TO NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS.

MONDAY, OCT. 17, 2011 • 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM  
LUNCH PROVIDED

**BUTLER CHAPEL - CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY**

CONTACT ELAINE DAWSON - (910) 893-1882

REGISTER AT [DIVINITY.CAMPBELL.EDU](http://DIVINITY.CAMPBELL.EDU)

BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2011

SPONSORED BY THE COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP AND LILLY ENDOWMENT

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" Matthew 9:37-38

## Advertise today

### Print *OR* Web Classified Ads

(1 month)

- line: 75¢ per word
- 1/3 page: \$225
- 1/6 page: \$125

### Web Display Ads

(1 week)

- center column: \$200 / \$150 / \$75
- left sidebar: \$150 / \$50 / \$37.50
- right sidebar: \$100 / \$37.50 / \$25

Details, discounts, reservations:  
[advertising@baptiststoday.org](mailto:advertising@baptiststoday.org)  
478-471-9274

# A guide to excruciatingly correct church behavior

You don't need me to tell you about Judith Martin's *Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior*. You may have read it more than once. Perhaps you have underlined portions for your children or spouse. We love Miss Manners' strong opinions.

For instance, if you have not yet sent a thank-you letter for any gift you received more than 30 minutes ago, Miss Manners has no mercy on you. You are also in trouble if you sent your thank you via e-mail, Facebook or Twitter. There is, in Miss Manners' world, no such thing as a thank-you *note*. You must begin your thank-you *letter* with a "burst of enthusiasm" and make sure it "names the present with a flattering adjective." When one of her gentle readers confides that she has only green ink with which to write, Miss Manners tells her that she must save all her letters until Christmas.



The use of tacky note cards and brightly colored ink are not the only subjects about which Miss Manners expresses strong feelings. The only excuse for declining an invitation to be a pallbearer is "a plan to have one's own funeral in the near future." Don't wear black to a wedding. If you are in deep mourning, you should not come in the first place. Even the young are expected to act with extreme manners. When a 6-year-old reader asks what is important enough to tell his mother when she is talking to company, Miss Manners provides a short list that includes "Mommy, the kitchen is full of smoke."

Good rules come in handy. They help things go smoothly. What would Judith Martin include if she decided to help church people with *Miss Manners' Guide to*

## *Excruciatingly Correct Church Behavior?*

If you are in your 80s, come to Sunday school early. If you are in your 50s, be on time. If you are in your 20s, everyone will be overjoyed if you show up at all.

You may take coffee to Sunday school. If you bring Starbucks, pour it into a different cup so you will not look uppity. Bring the donuts when it is your turn; Krispy Kremes are preferable. Adults never promote to another Sunday school class; it makes the others in the class feel bad.

Women are encouraged to wear hats at Easter. Men are encouraged to wear hats at church softball games. You can wear flip-flops in the sanctuary only if your mother is not the kind of person who reads Miss Manners.

Be on time for worship. This means *before* the music begins. The first note on the organ, piano or guitar is not a starter's pistol for the hundred-yard dash.

Children need to learn the sacred nature of worship. This means no chewing gum, iPods or iPhones. Stare with disdain at anyone whose cell phone rings.

Try not to draw attention to yourself by singing louder than any three people on your pew. The only satisfactory excuses for not singing are life-threatening conditions. If you only have green ink, it is perfectly acceptable for filling out a check.

When faced with the question of what is important enough to whisper to the gentle worshipper seated next to you, it must be as crucial as "Mommy, the sanctuary is full of smoke." When speaking to the pastor after worship, begin with a "burst of enthusiasm" and "a flattering adjective" in

relation to the sermon. After a particularly offensive sermon, use a side exit.

As far as I know, Miss Manners has not written any rules for proper church behavior. It might be helpful to look to someone like Saint Paul for guidance. In Romans 12, he writes: "Let love be genuine. Outdo one another in showing concern. Put others above yourself. Extend hospitality to strangers. Pay no special attention to the wealthy. Talk just as much to the poor. Go out of your way to be kind."

When Paul writes rules for correct church behavior he sounds like my mother: "Be kind. Be sweet. Love everybody. Don't say mean things. Make sure visitors feel welcome." Maybe we don't need Miss Manners. **BT**

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



## In the Know

### PEOPLE

**Courtney Allen** is minister of community ministries and missions at First Baptist Church, Dalton, Ga. She graduated from Wake Forest School of Divinity.

**Dennis Foust** is the pastor at St John's Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., coming from Shades Crest Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., where he served for 10 years.

**Brantley Harwell** of Otto, N.C., died July 22 at age 76. His more than 40 years of ministry included the pastorates of the First Baptist Churches of Barnesville, Carrollton, Morrow and Homerville, Ga. He and his wife Joanne were early leaders in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and have a scholarship named for them at Mercer's McAfee School of Theology.

**Derek K. Hogan** is assistant dean for academic programs and assistant professor of New Testament for the Campbell University Divinity School in Buies Creek, N.C. He has held the teaching position and served as theological reference librarian since 2002.

**Ken Massey** has taken a medical leave of absence that will lead to a transition out of pastoral ministry. He has served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C., 14 years.

**Lance Merritt** is pastor of West Highland Baptist Church in Macon, Ga., coming from Macon's Mt. Zion Baptist Church where he served eight years as associate pastor for youth.

**Cody Neinast** is coordinator of prospective student services and admissions for Logsdon Seminary at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas.

**Bailey Edwards Nelson** is pastor of Flat Rock Baptist Church, Mount Airy, N.C., coming from the associate pastorate of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla.

**Chip Reeves** is pastor of First Baptist Church of Evans, Ga., coming from First Baptist of Allendale, S.C.

**Beverly Dunston Scott**, vice president of American Baptist Churches USA, in 1982-1983, died July 11. She chaired the program committee for the 1997 ABCUSA Biennial in Indianapolis. An educator who taught for

## Hall to retire from Buckner, Reyes to be CEO

(ABP) — Ken Hall, chief executive officer of Buckner International since 1994, will retire from the Dallas-based ministry organization effective April 30, 2012. Buckner president Albert Reyes will assume the CEO title.

Hall, who was elected to the position in 1993, served as president/CEO of Buckner from 1993 until 2010, when Reyes was elected president. Hall has continued serving as CEO. With his retirement, board members named Hall president emeritus as of May 1.

During Hall's tenure at the helm of Buckner, the organization grew to serve more than 400,000 people annually through an array of ministries around the world. He oversaw the expansion of Buckner to include more than

\$200 million in capital improvements, and in 2008, the Buckner endowment topped \$200 million. Today, Buckner lists total assets of more than \$400 million.

Along with the capital growth and improvements, Hall guided Buckner to expand its services beyond the borders of Texas and the U.S. by launching the organization's international ministry arm in 1996.

In addition, Buckner Retirement Services grew exponentially under Hall. Today, it is the largest not-for-profit senior living organization in Texas, according to a recent report by Ziegler and Company.

Hall has served as pastor of four Texas Baptist churches and is a past president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Reyes came to Buckner initially as president of Buckner Children and Family Services. He is the former president of Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio, and also has served as a pastor and president of the BGCT.

Buckner International's roots go back to the 1879 opening of an orphans' home — before expanding into a variety of Baptist benevolence efforts in Texas and then well beyond. **BT**



Ken Hall



Albert Reyes

23 years at Rutgers University, she was a well-traveled advocate for women and longtime community volunteer in Newark, N.J.

**Michael Sepulveda** is minister to children and youth at First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tenn.

**Charles R. Smith** is pastor of Madison Baptist Church in Madison, Ga., coming from Hampton Baptist Church in Hampton, Va.

**Michael Smith** is pastor of Central Baptist Church of Fountain City in Knoxville, Tenn. He moved from First Baptist Church of Murfreesboro, Tenn., where he had served since 2002.

**Bob Stephenson** will receive the Founder's Award from Associated Baptist Press on Sept. 8 at NorthHaven Baptist Church in Norman, Okla. He is an active Baptist lay leader and former co-chair of the national Mainstream Baptist Network.

**Jessica and Darren Williams** are co-pastors of Nomini Baptist Church in Montross, Va.

in your  
**own**  
words

"We chose to advertise for our associate pastor position in *Baptists Today* and received over 50 applications from all over the Southeast... [W]e have filled that position and are very pleased with the results. Your office was very professional and efficient in getting our information out."

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
BOONE, N.C.



# Conflict as blessing: Please don't waste this crisis

By Bill Wilson

Ask any minister, "What is the worst part of your job?" and nearly all will tell you, "Conflict!" Ask any congregation member what they like least about their church experience, and most will answer the same.

Conflict is everywhere people are, and it seems to be escalating. The incivility of our culture is having a toxic effect on ministry and congregations. With our depressed economy and seismic job losses, many lives are deeply stressed.

The FACT 2000 survey of 14,000 congregations found that, in the past five years, 75 percent of churches have experienced some level of conflict. At any given time, one-fifth of congregations are in active conflict.

Regarding conflict as blessing seems foolish and naïve. Is it possible, however, to learn to manage our conflict constructively?

## Speaking up early

Church leaders are wise to address conflict early and proactively before it escalates. The issue is not whether you will have conflict, but what you will do with it.

Following biblical commands means handling conflict with compassion and as much transparency as possible. Speaking up early, rather than sweeping disagreement under the carpet, avoids a host of problems that over time can leave a congregation divided and deeply wounded.

Conflict always causes discomfort, and it can be downright painful. And yet, conflict within a congregation can be a catalyst for healthy growth.

## Growing through the pain

In my experience, it is the rare adult who makes any significant life change without discomfort and pain. Throughout the Bible, God uses conflict to grow people.

Paul, Peter, Martha, Mary, David and Jeremiah are examples of heroes who learned

*"The incivility of our culture is having a toxic effect on ministry and congregations."*

through the ache of failure and conflict. The letters to the early church are filled with instructions for managing conflict. We are not the first to walk this way.

Conflicts and crises make excellent teachers. They often lead to new and better ways of doing things. If a youth leader's misbehavior results in a safer policy for adult interaction with teens, the youth ministry is strengthened. If employee theft inspires a smart policy that minimizes risk, congregational trust is enhanced. When bitter argument gives way to thoughtful conversation, community is built.



## Keys to navigating conflict

At the Center for Congregational Health, we believe there are several keys to navigating conflict. One is to avoid triangulation.

During conflict, it is tempting for people to talk about each other to anyone who will listen. Instead, we are called to take Matthew 18 seriously and learn to talk to each other about the issue. Such conversations must come in from the parking lot to the fellowship hall.

Leaders can facilitate opportunities for guided conversations in a manner that allows everyone to voice an opinion. Mature leaders can help others learn to discuss deep issues of differences, disagreements and disappointments. When people feel belittled, ignored or disrespected, the outcome is very different from when they feel valued, included and heard.

A second practice is to anticipate conflict. Healthy congregations have regular times to talk

about life together. Opportunities specifically devoted to open discussion create a safe place for the congregation to ask hard questions and relieve anxiety.

Deacon or business meetings that include unstructured time for asking questions build trust. Congregational leaders who are willing to hear suggestions and critiques without undue defensiveness model maturity and deepen the fellowship.

A third practice is to get help. As with Paul and Timothy, in some cases, despite the best efforts of leadership and the congregation to remain open-minded and transparent, a polarity cannot be resolved. When conflict gets especially heated, a third-party intervention may be required to enable us to overcome our emotional anxiety and harmful habits.

Finally, we need to learn the art of graceful exits. If a conflict escalates beyond reconciliation, our goal as Christians ought to be to bless one another and then separate. Often, in a worst-case intractable conflict, the two sides take their focus away from the issue and set out to destroy each other. This tears at the fabric of the church and decimates our witness for Christ. We can certainly do better.

While the church of Christ may be filled with sinners and conflict, when we manage conflict in a way that leads to a healthier congregation, we become a message of hope to the larger world. There may be no better way for the church to witness to a conflict-weary culture than to handle its own, internal differences with wisdom and grace.

Crisis and conflict awaken our passions and can motivate us to a better way. When conflict arrives, please do not waste the opportunity to seek to turn it into a blessing. **BT**

*—Bill Wilson is president of the Center for Congregational Health. For more about understanding conflict and a discussion of the levels of conflict, as identified by Speed Leas, go to [healthychurch.org](http://healthychurch.org) or visit our blog, [cntr4conghhealth.wordpress.com](http://cntr4conghhealth.wordpress.com).*

# BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

September is the month of Baptist associational meetings, two-to-three day events normally filled with sermons, mission reports, Sunday school reports and other church-related business. Other than in churchyard talk and private conversations, rarely do events and topics outside the realm of church business surface in associational meetings.

**T**his month, however, churchyard talk and formal meetings of Southern Baptist associations gravitate toward the one topic on everyone's mind: the new southern nation and the war being fought to preserve it.

Gatherings of two associations in Georgia are typical of many throughout much of the South.

Meeting at Traveler's Rest Baptist Church in Macon County, messengers of the Rehoboth Baptist Association insist, "We honestly believe that in this great struggle for all that is dear to us as a people, we have the approving smiles of Him who rules at his will the destinies of nations ... and His sure protection to our friends and relatives upon the tented field."

The Flint River Association, meeting at the Shiloh Baptist Church in Monroe County, "heartily" endorses the "separation

from the North and South and the formation of the Southern Confederacy." Pledging themselves to the "defence and support" of the Confederacy, they credit the summer's military successes to God and "sincerely and earnestly pray that He will guide us in all our efforts and sustain us in all our righteous purposes to a successful and triumphant determination of this war."

Most Primitive Baptist associational gatherings, however, avoid discussion of the war. The contrast between Southern and Primitive Baptists speaks to a wartime divide between the two groups. While many Southern Baptists push separation of church and state to the background in fervent support of southern Christian nationalism, Primitive Baptists by and large stand firm upon their faith heritage of church-state separation.

Many associational meetings in the Border States also address the war. Meeting at Dry Creek Baptist Church in Kenton, Ky., the Northbend Baptist Association bemoans current events:

*Never before in the history of our country have external circumstances furnished elements of distraction better calculated to disturb the peace, spirituality and fellowship of the churches, than those which now environ us.*

*We are in the midst of a political revolution the most astounding, a civil war the most desolating and appalling, and a wide spread excitement which threatens devastation*

150 YEARS AGO

September 1861

*and ruin to all we hold dear in life. As intelligent freemen, heirs to the common heritage of civil and religious liberty, we cannot look upon the ominous events now rapidly transpiring around us without agitation and the most painful solicitude.*

*While anarchy and confusion in many parts of the country have repressed the dictates of reason and justice, giving rise to the wildest disorders, the bitterest denunciations, and the most rancorous feeling of enmity between neighbors, friends and countrymen ... Let us cultivate fervent love for one another, and with a sleepless vigilance give ourselves to prayer that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" may keep us "in perfect peace," that He may overrule the present storm, and cause "all things to work together for good to them that love Him, and who are the called according to his purpose."*

Nearly four more years of this "present storm" of hatred, death and destruction lie ahead in the war over African slavery and the struggle for God's divine favor. **BT**

—For a daily journal along with references to source material, visit [civilwarbaptists.org](http://civilwarbaptists.org).

THE KYLE LAKE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE PREACHING  
at George W. Truett Theological Seminary

**2011 FALL  
PREACHING  
CONVOCAION  
& WORKSHOP**

SEPT. 26-27, 2011 • WACO, TEXAS

featuring  
**Dr. Joel C. Gregory**  
Professor of Preaching  
at Truett Seminary

**BAYLOR UNIVERSITY**  
1845

Register online by September 20, 2011  
at [www.baylor.edu/truett/preachingconvocation](http://www.baylor.edu/truett/preachingconvocation).  
For more information, call 1-800-BAYLOR-U, option 5.

# Hats off to a courageous congregation

*Selections from recent blogs at*  
[baptiststoday.org](http://baptiststoday.org)

**By Tony W. Cartledge**  
Contributing Editor

I would like to publicly congratulate Flat Rock Baptist Church of Mt. Airy, N.C., for its courage in following God’s leading, even at the cost of being spurned by kindred congregations.

And I would like to congratulate a group of pastors and messengers to the Surry Baptist Association for demonstrating just how harsh and damaging an inerrantist, literalist interpretation of scripture can be in the hands of those who pursue “doctrinal purity.”

We can learn from both examples.

Flat Rock Baptist Church, feeling led by the Spirit of God, recently called Bailey Edwards Nelson to serve as pastor. Nelson, a talented and committed 28-year-old recent graduate of the McAfee School of Theology, just happens to be a woman.

Within two weeks, a group of “concerned pastors” in the association felt the

need to respond, being locked into the same rigid and inadequate understanding of scripture that led fundamentalist theologians of the new Southern Baptist Convention to promote a revision of the *Baptist Faith & Message* statement that, among other things, removed Christ as the criterion for interpreting scripture, rejected the priesthood of the believer, and restricted women from service as pastors.

To remain consistent with their inconsistent interpretive approach (which picks and chooses which texts to take literally), said pastors determined it was their sad duty to offer Flat Rock Baptist the opportunity to demonstrate unity with the association (possible only through firing the new pastor) or to be lovingly booted from fellowship.



Bailey Nelson

Knowing a lost cause when they saw it, the Flat Rock folk declined to participate in a formal discussion with a foregone conclusion, while 80 percent of those who did participate voted to exclude the church from the association.

Those who can’t see through their inerrancy-fogged glasses will miss the opportunity to observe a vibrant ministry unfolding at Flat Rock, and that’s a shame. But those Flat Rock members who were courageous enough to risk listening to God will see blessings aplenty.

I’ve seen women do incredible work as pastors, and I know too many gifted women whose leadership has been lost to the churches because too many congregations are afraid to step beyond human-forged bars and dare to hear the voice of a God who is generous and free and capable of calling whoever God chooses to the sacred service of God’s people.

May it not always be so. **BT**

## Simpler things

**By John Pierce**  
Executive Editor

With all the political animosity in the news, I was glad for a simpler conversation. That’s what I find outside the season ticket holders’ gate at Atlanta’s Turner Field where “The Chief” is always first in line.

Actually, he’ll work his way to front of the line even if he’s not first. But who’s going to argue with the team’s most loyal fan?

Robert “The Chief” Walls had been wearing his tacky Indian costume (with tennis shoes) to games for a long, long time. To most Braves fans, July 28 was known as Chipper Jones bobble-head night. To Chief, however, it was number 1,140.

That’s right; Chief has not missed a home game in more than 13 years. And that was not the beginning of his well-known presence.

After the ’93 season his mother casually asked him what he wanted for his next birthday, even though it was not until spring. He quickly responded, “Braves season tickets.”

That was the end of the conversation, he said, until a packet was delivered to him

just after the ’94 season began. Robert said he had pulled out his old Halloween costume for opening day that year and was surprised by the attention — so he decided to wear it to every game.

“I had started something,” he said to me with a grin.

It takes effort for Chief to attend. He lives in a group home in the northern suburbs and uses a combination of public transportation and old-fashioned hoofing to get to and from the ballpark. Sometimes a fellow fan will give him a ride home.

His streak would go all the way back to ’94 except he missed one game to attend a birthday party for his grandmother and her twin sister when they turned 90.

You can spot him at each game in the front row of the right field stands — or when he makes his second-inning walk around the stadium where he often pauses for photos.

The players and coaches appreciate Chief’s loyalty too. Bullpen coach and former Braves catcher Eddie Perez shares a birthday and has treated Robert to a celebratory meal. And pitcher Peter Moylan gave one of his gloves to Chief — though we kid him about having not yet snagged a homer with it.

When not at the ballpark, Robert is busy



cleaning the Old Navy store near his home or playing tennis, softball or floor hockey in Special Olympics events. We hear of his successes outside the gate.

Talking baseball and life with the Chief is a wonderful break from all the political debate in the news. In fact, it seems a little closer to what life is supposed to be. **BT**

# ‘Getting right with God’

Minister sees similarities in Baptist revivals, Jewish High Holy Days

STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga. — Each September, retired pastor Wayne Martin sends out Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur greetings to Jewish communities across Georgia. This act of goodwill is one effort of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia’s interfaith network that Martin chairs.

“Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are considered the holiest days of the Jewish calendar — in fact, they are referred to as ‘The Days of Awe,’” said Martin. “Therefore, it is very important that any greetings for these special times speak to the noblest and best attributes of these holidays.”

So before sending out the greetings, Martin runs them by his friend Rabbi Ronald Bluming of the Independent Reform Synagogue, Congregation Tikvah L’Shalom, which currently holds Shabbat services at the Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain. The rabbi, said Martin, checks the communication “not so much for ‘what to say,’ but for ‘what not to say.’”

Rabbi Bluming not only reviewed the Baptist-to-Jewish greetings, but also offered additional insights into the upcoming holidays.

“September or October is when I see the weeks of preparation come to a head for what most Jews consider to be the most important holidays of our year,” wrote Bluming. “I have been preparing sermons and getting myself spiritually focused.”

Bluming said sermons during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur require more preparation. Those attending these special services are seeking inspiration, said the rabbi.

“My challenge is to open their minds and hearts while they listen,” said Bluming. “Jews who rarely attend during the year are among those who now will flock to the Synagogue.”

Bluming said he tries to draw in listeners with a humorous story before moving on to more serious matters. Sermon materials are organized in folders: three for Rosh Hashanah and two for Yom Kippur.



## GLORIOUS BLAST

Rabbi Ronald Bluming blows the shofar, a ram’s horn, which signals the arrival of the Jewish New Year. Pastor Bob Browning (left) of Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., and Wayne Martin, chair of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia’s interfaith network, look on.

“I concentrate on the meanings of the holidays,” said Bluming. “Rosh Hashanah means ‘head of the year,’ when the year changes to the next number. We reflect on our accomplishments and disappointments of the past year, to allow us to make positive changes in the coming year.”

Rosh Hashanah begins a 10-day period of introspection that culminates with the solemn day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, he explained. Therefore, sermons on Yom Kippur tend to be more somber than those on Rosh Hashanah.

“On Yom Kippur, Jews atone for their transgressions and hope that God will write them in the Book of Life for the coming year,” said Bluming. “God willing, we will be here next year to observe Yom Kippur once again. There is no ‘fire and brimstone,’ just serious talk and a message of measuring one’s life and the world around us.”

Bluming described the High Holy Days as “first and foremost a spiritual period” when the faithful “reflect on and consider the nature of our deeds over the past year and to face the new year with new resolve” — and with an understanding that “God will be the final judge.” Secondly, he added, the reuniting of friends and family provides an uplifting atmosphere.

Fasting on Yom Kippur, he said, allows for full attention to be given to prayer and creates the feeling that the soul is being cleansed. In recent years, Yom Kippur has become a time also when non-perishable foods are brought to the Synagogue for the local

food banks.

“Yom Kippur concludes with one more glorious blast of the shofar that seems to reach up to the heavens,” said the rabbi. “And we all wish each other a sweet and happy new year.”

Martin said after hearing the rabbi’s description that he had the strange feeling of having “been there, done that.”

“The more I thought about it, the more I saw a certain similarity in Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the old Baptist revival,” said the retired pastor.

“With dates almost ‘set in stone’ these (revivals) were seen as sacred times for many church members,” said Martin. “It was quite common for churches, then as even now, to have members who were lackadaisical about regular church attendance, yet they could always be counted on to attend revival services and often these members were first to come to the altar to ‘rededicate their lives to Christ.’”

Martin said there is something that draws people back to their spiritual roots.

“We may have a different understanding of holy matters, but it does seem that Baptists and Jews are strangely alike in our need for special times to retune our lives to the sounds and tones of genuine faith,” said Martin. “The pleas of the evangelist to those in the Baptist pew to ‘turn your life over to Christ’ are not unlike the rabbi’s Yom Kippur challenge to congregants to confess their sins, atone for their transgressions and to trust God’s tender mercy to write them in the Book of Life ... The call in both pulpits is to get right with God and start living the godly life!” **BT**

# The global importance of Roger Williams

The greatest contribution the U.S. has made to world religion is the concept and practice of separation of church and state, which was started in Providence, R.I., with Roger Williams in 1636.

Even if nothing in the rest of the history of Rhode Island were remarkable, Providence would still have that one world-class contribution to its credit. It was the first place in modern history where citizenship and religion were separated, where freedom of conscience was the rule.

While his ideas were reviled and attacked in the 17th century, they became embodied in the U.S. Constitution in 1789 and the Bill of Rights, appended to it in 1791.

Have you wondered why there is a Roger Williams Lodge of B'nai B'rith? Why the oldest synagogue (Touro Synagogue, in Newport) in America is in Rhode Island? Have you ever wondered why Rhode Island never had a witch trial — nor hanged, whipped or jailed people because of religion?

Massachusetts hanged four Quakers, and Virginia imprisoned dozens of Baptists. Maryland, which was created as a haven for Roman Catholics, came to outlaw Catholic priests and prohibited Roman Catholics from inheriting property. These things did not happen in Rhode Island because Williams founded Providence to be a “shelter for those distressed of conscience.” Rhode Island’s freedom of religion prevented such religious laws and abuses.

It is well to recall how this came about. Williams got into serious trouble in Massachusetts when he challenged both the political and religious establishments by asserting that the government had no role in religion. Moreover, he challenged the legitimacy of the colony itself by charging that it had stolen its land from the Indians.

So he was tried and convicted of sedition, heresy and the refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the colony that required him to swear in God’s name. In October 1635 he was

ordered banished to England, whence he had fled in 1630 because of religious persecution.

Before the banishment could be carried out, however, he fled from Salem into the snow in January 1636 and trekked to the Narragansett Bay. In June he left the shelter of the Wampanoags and crossed the Seekonk River into the domain of the Narragansetts. From Miantonomi and Canonicus he acquired Providence. His relations with the Narragansetts were so cordial that Providence and the Narragansetts remained allies for the next 40 years against the efforts of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Plymouth colonies to destroy them both.



When the householders first gathered in Providence to form their town government, they agreed that they could make rules and laws in “civil matters only.” In 1644 when Williams secured his charter for the “Province of Providence Plantations in Narragansett Bay in New England,” that charter was for a “civil government.”

For Williams, separation of church and state was for the protection of the church from the corrupting effects of government. Williams wrote repeatedly that true religion needs no support of the government and that government support invariably corrupts religion.

All of the neighboring colonies regarded Providence Plantations with undisguised horror and worked for the first hundred years to dismember and destroy this “hive of heretics.” But the principle that Williams planted in Providence in 1636 came to be the law of all of Rhode Island and then a basic principle of the United States.

What was the founding principle of Providence — freedom of religion (which demands separation of church and state)

— now holds out a hope for the whole world where religious intolerance is the basis of so much strife.

Williams believed that whenever and wherever the government tried to meddle with religion by trying to define it or control it or enforce it, or even to support it, religion was corrupted by such efforts. He and his good friend John Clarke, of Newport, shared the view that the key to a peaceful society was complete separation of church and state.

Nearly everyone else believed that peace was possible only when everyone was united in a single church in a single state. Williams’ core religious principle held that each person had freedom of conscience and freedom to practice their faith.

His position on freedom of religion was wildly radical in his day and, nearly four centuries later, this basic principle is still wildly radical in great swathes of today’s world. Religious freedom does not exist in most nations on the planet.

What would Williams think of the idea that our nation was founded as a “Christian nation”? Certainly Providence and Rhode Island were not founded as a Christian government.

It is deeply troubling to know that a pastor of one of the largest churches in Texas once declared: “Separation of church and state is the product of some infidel’s mind.” To call Williams an infidel reveals profound ignorance of our nation’s history.

Williams utterly regarded the idea of a “Christian nation” as “blasphemy.” So, he established a government that was confined to “civil matters only,” and this has become a model for the world. **BT**

—J. Stanley Lemons is emeritus professor of history at Rhode Island College and historian for the First Baptist Church in America. This column is reprinted with permission from The Providence Journal.

*One volunteer  
reflects on the  
aftermath in Joplin*

# Cupful of help in an ocean of need

A May 22 tornado destroyed 6,700 homes and 800 businesses in Joplin, Mo., while claiming 160 human lives. It was the deadliest in a round of severe storms hitting several states this spring.



JOPLIN, Mo. — When the news broke on Sunday evening, May 22, that a tornado had hit Joplin, it was difficult to know the extent of the damage. Darkness had fallen shortly after the storm hit.

**A**s crews moved into the area the next morning, they were stunned to discover what a camera lens could not contain and words could not describe.

The next week, with an event so devastating in our own home state of Missouri and so close to Kansas City, Holmeswood Baptist Church minister Kathy Pickett and her high school seniors talked of shifting their upcoming mission trip from Helena, Ark., to the relief efforts in Joplin, just two hours south.

Within a few days of the storm, Bob and Joyce Barker volunteered to serve as on-site coordinators for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship by serving the practical needs of the many work teams that would need lodging and other arrangements. Since late May, the Barkers have been building relationships with the wide-ranging government and religious groups that are offering aid for an overwhelming crisis.

Over the past decade the youth group at Holmeswood has partnered annually with “Together For Hope,” the CBF’s emphasis on the 20 poorest counties in the nation. A few years back, they visited Helena and the



Kathy Pickett (left), who led youth from Holmeswood Baptist Church in Kansas City to do relief work in Joplin, adds her name to a wall famous for the ongoing work of an unknown artist.



foliage and left denuded.

Most returning survivors described the strange sense of disorientation, as they had to pay close attention to find their houses since all signs of recognition had been destroyed.

Many homes were turned into broken piles of lumber and debris. Walking through the rubble was eerily personal as the possessions of the families were strewn about randomly: family photos, a child's shoe, a coloring book and a twisted bicycle frame.

"This was someone's home," was a constant, unspoken thought.

It was a powerful, dynamic storm that first hit the ground on the western edge of the city — doing little damage other than stripping trees in the uninhabited outskirts of the town. Even then it was measured as a serious F4 tornado.

Once on the ground in the city's west side and moving eastward, the storm intensified to a deadly F5 level, the highest rating, meaning winds were greater than 200 mph — peaking between 225 and 250 mph.

This was the seventh deadliest storm to hit the U.S. since records have been kept.

Considering the size and scope of the damage, experts consider the resulting 160 deaths and 1,000 injured as modest. When seeing the damage firsthand, one wonders how hundreds more weren't killed.

By mid-July, the Holmeswood group had prepared themselves to enter the chaos of a mind-boggling army of volunteers and aid service workers. The Barkers made arrangements for the team to stay in a small Nazarene church not far from the destruction.

The youth arrived with the attitude they would do whatever needed to be done without making any demands for themselves. With that attitude, some older youth and sponsors partnered with The 700 Club team called Operation Blessing in a singular reclamation project similar to an *Extreme Makeover* reality show.

A house that had been severely damaged but left standing because of its sturdy concrete block walls was gutted and rehabilitated by an army of volunteers for a father and his four children. Other youth worked in a church that had

generously opened its facilities as a center where homeless families could receive needed items from the donations that had flooded into Joplin from all over the country. There they sorted food and clothing for distribution.

It was not uncommon for such undamaged Joplin churches to open their doors completely to whatever the need, even invading the sacred space of the sanctuary with bulk storage of food and clothes and other necessary items one might envision in the face of losing everything. Such inconveniences to the congregation were judged to be necessary realities, thus making sacred their place of worship by the visible reminders that their worship of God includes such acts of kindness.

For several days, the Holmeswood youth were assigned to a central warehouse run by the Adventist disaster relief agency where pallets of nearly everything one can imagine were stored. The warehouse was about the size of a football field and commercially outfitted with racks that stacked pallets of goods five-stories high.

This centralized system was the first stage of the sorting of goods that had come from all over the country. Once sorted and catalogued, those items were then available to churches that had volunteered to serve as a distribution site to displaced residents.

Working in the warehouse were volunteer teams of all faith backgrounds from Amish to Pentecostals. A novelist from Dallas and his high school son were concluding three weeks in which they had worked together as a father-and-son volunteer team.

Over the years Kathy Pickett has led our church's youth to tackle projects that are challenging and important. She has stressed that their purpose is to serve others as Jesus would serve and to not expect to be served. It is the type of work youth are capable of and eager to do.

Our youth have learned that when they do these things in a generous spirit, they are doing what God wants them to do. As a fellow traveler and partner with them, I have seen them do amazing things: a hammer raised to nail down a shingle, a pallet of paper towels sorted and inventoried into an elaborate system of distribution that would make Walmart proud, an assembly line to make sack lunches for other volunteers — all given as though it was a cup of cool water offered to the thirsty.

In truth, it was a small cupful of help in an ocean of vast need. **BT**

—Keith Herron is pastor of Holmeswood Baptist Church in Kansas City, Mo., and moderator-elect of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

poverty of the Mississippi River delta as a part of their commitment to spend a week working in one of these identified counties each summer.

But Joplin's need was compelling, and the group unanimously determined to respond. Plans were quickly redirected, parents were consulted, and arrangements for the week were renegotiated.

The storm that hit Joplin had percolated in the heat and humidity of the flatlands of southern Kansas, the land of Dorothy and Toto, before crossing the state line into southwest Missouri. The super-cell first hit the western edge of Joplin and scraped a raw swath about one-mile wide and seven-miles long — right across the city's belly.

It annihilated 6,700 homes along with 800 businesses both small and large. This storm was no respecter of creeds or denominational differences as the houses of God were hit as savagely as the homes in the neighborhoods. Churches were leveled with heavy sanctuary beams crashing down upon the pews beneath them.

Schools, stores and the St. Johns Regional Medical Center were devastated. Six persons died when the tornado struck the hospital. Five of those deaths were patients on ventilators who died when the building lost power and a backup generator failed. The sixth victim died while visiting another patient.

Because all visible signs of the neighborhood were destroyed and street signs and utility poles were missing, street names were spray-painted in the middle of the intersection to help direct aid workers toward survivors. Even the trees left standing had been stripped of their

# Coming together

Alabama congregation, volunteers still responding to tornado-damaged communities



Wendell McGinnis looks over the remains of his destroyed home. A piano is one of the few recognizable items salvaged from the ruins. McGinnis, who was carried by the tornado into an open field, says he was sustained through the experience by his faith, family and friends.

**J**ACKSONVILLE, Ala. — “It’s gone. It’s all gone.” Those were the words Wendell McGinnis spoke to his wife, Carol, by phone the evening of April 27 after surviving one of the deadly tornadoes that ripped through Alabama destroying their home.

Amazingly, he had survived being picked up by the tornado and set back down in a field on his property with the pieces of his home strewn all around him. With his clothing torn from the force of the tornado, he walked half a mile to the neighbors’ home and borrowed their phone to call Carol.

Then McGinnis stood and looked out across the empty lot where their home once stood.

“We knew it was close but didn’t realize it was headed our way,” he said. “We are so blessed to be alive.”

The tornadoes of April 27 worked their way across Alabama devastating multiple towns and cities, leaving cars overturned, homes flattened, and many people killed or injured.

## STORY AND PHOTOS BY TERRI BYRD

The First Baptist Church of Williams, just outside Jacksonville, Ala., immediately opened their doors and became the center of calm and help in the midst of the storm in their community. Within the first few weeks they served more than 1,000 meals, helped people find temporary housing, handed out supplies to hundreds of families, and helped connect victims of the storms to needed services and resources.

“Everyone has come together to do whatever they can,” said Mike Oliver, pastor of First Baptist of Williams. “People have volunteered hundreds of hours to help others in [the communities of] Williams and Webster Chapel.”

Over the recent months, the church and community have transitioned from emergency relief and debris removal into long-term recovery and rebuilding.

The congregation has formed a separate corporation named “The First Baptist Church

of Williams Community Resource Group” to oversee the rebuilding ministry. The focus of their work is primarily with the most-neglected and needy in their community.

Two rebuilt homes were dedicated in late July with a third home being finished a few weeks later. They have poured the footings for three more new houses and hope to see at least six more built in the coming months.

“We hope to do more,” said Oliver. “We’re praying for the volunteers to continue to come, for the funds to help rebuild, and for the emotional and spiritual well-being of the families.”

The McGinnis family, despite losing most of their earthly possessions to the tornado, found hope and comfort in their faith and the outpouring of love they received from their church family.

“You learn real fast what’s important,” said Wendell. “Faith in God, family, and our church sustained us.” **BT**

—Terri Byrd is the associate coordinator for Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.



# A moment with Mike Oliver

**T**ornadoes pay no attention to long-range planning. They just happen — and someone has to respond.

Pastor Mike Oliver and the congregation of First Baptist Church of Williams near Jacksonville, Ala., found themselves surrounded by clear and immediate needs when the deadly storms of April 27 swept through their area.

So the church threw open the doors and rallied to be of service. A few months into the experience — which has shifted from emergency response to long-term rebuilding — Oliver was asked by Terri Byrd of Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to offer some reflections.

*Terri Byrd:* What have you learned from having this tornado land on your doorstep?

**Mike Oliver:** This situation has really confirmed my belief in the relevance of the local church. One of the FEMA representatives told me that the recovery really is being run by local churches in communities all across Alabama.

The “community-minded missional church” is the presence of Christ. We will continue to be active in the recovery in Williams and Webster Chapel as long as it takes.

I’m proud of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship churches and of ALCBF who have been great to come alongside of us in our efforts.

*Terri Byrd:* What has surprised you the most?

**Mike Oliver:** First, on the sad side, there is an appalling silence by some churches, even in our own county. I’ve been surprised by the churches who have not had any response at all — who continue to do their programming as usual without reaching out in any way — even to say they are praying for us.

But on the good side, I’ve been amazed by how much our church has been able to do.

## To find out more about the disaster

relief efforts of the First Baptist Church of Williams, visit [fbcwilliams.org/tornadorelief](http://fbcwilliams.org/tornadorelief) or contact the church at (256) 435-5020. College interns working with the church can answer questions and schedule teams to help with the rebuilding effort.

For information on working through Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, in Williams, Webster Chapel and other hard-hit areas around the state, visit [alabamacbf.org](http://alabamacbf.org) or contact Terri Byrd at (205) 835-8117 or [terri@alabamacbf.org](mailto:terri@alabamacbf.org).

We’re not big, don’t have a lot of money, but God has really empowered us to help a lot of people.

There are people and churches who have been very generous. Anytime we’ve asked, we have received. And we’ve received without even asking!

Thanks to the gifts and funding we’ve received, we have already finished building several houses and have more in process. God is really at work in this community, and it’s been amazing. **BT**



Pastor Mike Oliver (center) of First Baptist Church of Williams near Jacksonville, Ala., meets with Carol and Wendell McGinnis whose home was destroyed by a tornado on April 27.

## DIG DEEPER!

*Pastor Will Watson of United Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., writes:*

**A**bout a month ago I noticed the write-up in *Baptists Today* regarding the Nurturing Faith Bible Studies — and that Tony Cartledge was going to be penning these studies.

I knew ... the students in our study would be engaging material that followed the Lectionary text while asking difficult scriptural questions (that may or may not be answered in our time together).

I was extremely excited to see the immediate impact the study made. One layperson told me on the way to choir rehearsal, “I really enjoyed Bible study tonight!”

Additionally, I had various verbal exhortations over the next few weeks as we continued to meet. Not only were they happy to be thinking critically about the Genesis text, but they also were certainly looking forward to the unique life of Jacob as seen through the careful lens of the Spirit.

... I use Tony Cartledge’s “Hardest Question” to stimulate further discussion and find out where the Spirit leads it from there.

I cannot begin to tell you how transformational these Bible studies have been. As a pastor, Tony’s written and video explanations help guide me ... There is no way to describe how much I desire for all our Baptist churches to be doing these studies! They have helped us all think differently — and that is a good thing.

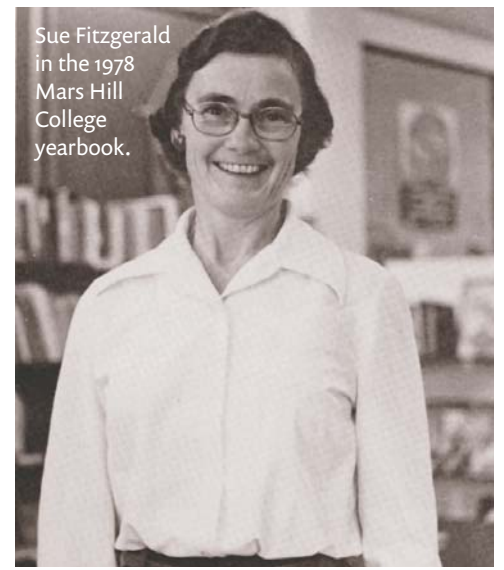
Although we use them on Wednesday nights and not on Sunday mornings, you can see that they are easily adaptable to any time frame within your church discipleship block. I feel confident knowing that our weekly studies will continue to be challenging and life-altering as we seek to be Christ-centered and Bible-based.

Thanks, Tony, for answering the call to develop these fascinating studies!

*Nurturing*  
**FATH**

**The Nurturing Faith Bible Studies by Tony Cartledge are found right here — in the center section of *Baptists Today*.**

# Sue Fitzgerald leaves a good mark on the hills of North Carolina



Sue Fitzgerald  
in the 1978  
Mars Hill  
College  
yearbook.

MARS HILL, N.C. — **“I always wondered if I really did anything,”** said 80-year-old Sue Fitzgerald as she prepared to move this summer from Mars Hill, the town she had called home for 48 years, to be closer to family in Winston-Salem, N.C.

**L**ike everything else she has ever said, the statement was made with genuineness and humility. But for those acquainted with her history, it seemed laden with irony.

Since coming to Mars Hill in 1963, Fitzgerald has held pivotal and trailblazing roles as the founder and only director of the Christian Education Center at Mars Hill College, as one of the first ordained female Baptist ministers to serve in North Carolina, as minister of education and interim pastor at Mars Hill Baptist Church, as a teacher of seminary extension courses, as founder of a countywide program for handicapped children and adults in the late 1960s, as mentor and teacher to hundreds of college students, as a hospice chaplain, and as the most recent president and director of Madison County Neighbors in Need.

During those years, Fitzgerald received honorary doctorates from Mars Hill College and Wake Forest University, largely for her work with the Christian Education Center. She has preached baccalaureate sermons at Wake Forest and her alma mater, Meredith College in Raleigh. A scholarship for women in the ministry was named for her, and she has been featured in two books about female Baptist preachers.

In May she received the prestigious Spirit of the Hill Award from Andover-Newton Theological School where she received her seminary degree.

To everyone but Fitzgerald, it seems obvious that she has, indeed, *done something* with the almost five decades she has spent in Mars Hill. But if titles and honors were the stuff of success in Fitzgerald’s mind, she would not be the woman that so many love and admire.

“Success to me is ministering to people

where they are and helping them to grow and opening myself to them so they can help me too,” she said. “I always prayed, ‘Lord help me to help one person today; help me to listen.’ Because if I listen, I get more, but I also know how to be able to help.”

Even after 48 years in the North Carolina mountains, the gentle southern lilt of Fitzgerald’s speech gives her away as a native Virginian. Born and raised in Gretna, Va., she attended Meredith College, where she double-majored in religion and education while playing four varsity sports: softball, basketball, field hockey and soccer. A leg injury during her freshman year never fully healed and has caused her to walk with a cane through much of her life.

Fitzgerald taught religion in the public schools of Virginia for one year, a job that introduced her to “the joy of teaching.” Then she became a minister of education at a church in Lynchburg, Va.

Finding that she enjoyed writing literature to meet the needs of the church, she decided to attend Andover-Newton Theological School in Massachusetts. Graduating in 1959, she became a minister of education in Franklin, Va.

Then in 1963, Fitzgerald came to Mars Hill Baptist Church as education minister, a position she held for 12 years. There, she continued writing curriculum for the church and worked with the enormous collegiate Sunday school department, filled each Sunday with students from Mars Hill College. Always the educator, she developed an internship program with college students to help direct the program, and she met with them weekly.

“The interns would have to come to my office for weekly meetings, and I pushed them.

I just felt it was my job to help them grow,” Fitzgerald said. “If we don’t think, we never grow.”

Pastor David Smith of First Baptist Church of Lenoir, N.C., was a Mars Hill sophomore in 1966 when he began his internship with Fitzgerald. The ostensible purpose of his weekly meeting with Fitzgerald was to plan for that week’s lesson. But looking back, he said, “The ultimate purpose was mentoring of students — very quiet, but very powerful one-on-one mentoring of students — and that’s what she did for me.”

Smith had not at that point decided to be a pastor, but he now credits Fitzgerald’s mentoring with guiding him toward a more mature faith.

“I wasn’t sure what I wanted to be,” he said. “She was very kind to me, but she was also very challenging. She did not believe in sloppy thinking or shallow faith. She was always just pushing me to grow.”

Glenn Graves, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mars Hill, calls himself “one of Sue’s boys.”

“She was like a surrogate mother to me,” he said. “She is as transparent a person as you’ll ever meet: open, loving and caring.” But her gentleness, he warned, should never be mistaken for weakness.

“She is also very forthright, and she has a fierce tenacity,” he said, “especially when she wants you to learn something.”

Even while she was teaching and influencing college students, Fitzgerald began teaching pastors and laypeople throughout the region when she instigated seminary extension courses through the French Broad Baptist Association.

Edith Whitt, registrar of Mars Hill College,

got to know Fitzgerald as a 17-year-old when she took her first seminary extension course. “She taught courses in Bryson City, Asheville, Weaverville, Spruce Pine and other places,” said Whitt. “I went with her to some of them.”

Though an effective minister, Fitzgerald at first refused to be ordained. Her reasoning was that all Christians should be ministers.

“Finally, I said, ‘OK God. If you want me to be ordained, then the church has to ask me.’ Then I just dropped it. And it wasn’t long after that that the minister of the church knocked on my door and said the deacons wanted the church to ordain me.” So, she agreed; that was 1973.

As Fitzgerald got to know people in the small churches that dotted the hills of western North Carolina, she saw that small, rural churches did not have access to the kinds of materials, ideas and resources that larger urban churches had. A plan for meeting the educational and resource needs of small churches began to germinate in Fitzgerald’s mind and heart.

One Sunday, then-President Fred Bentley of Mars Hill College mentioned his desire for the Baptist-related college to hire someone to build relationships with people in the churches of Madison County and western North Carolina. Immediately, Fitzgerald saw how the needs of the college and the churches could work together, and said: “I have a plan.”

She and Bentley met the next morning and the Mars Hill College Center for Christian Education Ministries was born — a program she directed for 20 years.

“The joy that I had at the college was that it was so creative. I did all these things, not because I knew it all, but because I knew that I could give them resources and I could open up the ideas, and then they could figure how to do it,” Fitzgerald said. “If you had a problem, my philosophy was that if I give you 10 ideas, you will think of the 11th that will be your answer.” **BT**

—Teresa Buckner is media relations coordinator at Mars Hill College in Western North Carolina.



Sue Fitzgerald working at Madison County Neighbors in Need. Photos courtesy of Mars Hill College.

## 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](http://baptiststoday.org). Ask to start with the September issue to get the lessons for each week in October.

# WHEN YOU'VE TAKEN CARE OF THE HERE & NOW

*it's easier to think about the* **HEREAFTER.**



The way we see it, thinking about life's spiritual journey is more than enough to handle. That's why we're devoted to your financial path. Nobody understands the complex tax laws and other monetary issues you face quite the way MMBB does.

For over 100 years we've been providing investment, retirement and insurance benefits just for those who serve the church, both ordained and lay. To learn more about MMBB and our exclusively focused financial products, visit [www.mmbb.org](http://www.mmbb.org) or call **1-800-986-6222**.

The better you plan now, the more comfortable you'll be hereafter.



**REAL PLANNING, REAL SOLUTIONS. THAT'S OUR CALLING.**