

Baptist Progress

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By **JASON CURRY**

We had a great time at TBHC's Celebration Day! A big thank you to all our sponsors: JAG Construction, The Avenue Church, Living Hope Church of the Nazarene, Stonegate Church, Farley Street Baptist Church, Plymouth Park Baptist Church, Guardians of the Children.

Thank you for your help with our big day. It meant so much to us. If you are interested in sponsoring or serving at one of our events, contact us at www.tbhc.org. There were activities for everyone. We saw kids playing at our water slides, horseback riding, "train" rides, and face painting. It was a fun day for everyone. If you were a fan of history I hope you took time to experience our walk down memory lane with our TBHC History Tours. If you missed out this year, plan to join us next summer.

We had a lot of fun with TBHC's Alumni. They each are a heritage from God as to how He makes a difference in people's lives. We know this is a place that matters to each one. The alumni hosted an auction on our behalf and raised over \$2,500. They enjoyed a meal together and reminisced over times gone by. Seeing what God has been doing in the lives of our TBHC alumni is so heartening to the task that God has given us to care for the fatherless.

Thank you everyone who brought your Change for Children cans to Celebration Day. C4C cans are one of the best prayer tools we have. Not only are we challenging you to fill the can, but every time you drop your gift in, please say a prayer for us. Dedicating your gift before God and asking Him to be with us and for us.

There is nothing better we can ask for. So, if you filled up your can and want to continue praying for us this year, feel free to request another can. One of the best ways I teach my kids to give is to ask them to choose one denomination of coin to put inside the can. That simply means they get to set aside some for TBHC!

Thanks for remembering TBHC and helping bring kids Home!

Jason Curry is the president of the Texas Baptist Home for Children. Contact him 629 Farley St, Waxahachie, TX 75165, 972-937-1321 or jcurry@tbhc.org. For more information, visit www.tbhc.org.





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\$106 for 106 years of ministry

By **JERRY FULTON**

Baptist Progress was established as the official publication of the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas in 1912. The purpose of *Baptist Progress* is to promote interest in missions, evangelism, benevolence and Christian education among the churches of the BMA of Texas.

This year, *Baptist Progress*, will celebrate 106

years of ministry. In order to meet our budget for the year, we are asking churches, classes, groups and individuals to give \$106 for 106 years of ministry to *Baptist Progress*. A list of those who give will be published in our July issue. Offerings may be mailed to *Baptist Progress*, P.O. Box 2085, Waxahachie, Texas 75168.



▲ Jerry Fulton

Letter to the Editor

To Pastors, Leaders, Christian Workers and Staff, and all who profess Christ as Savior

Several of those to whom this is addressed are experiencing very difficult times..., in ministry, churches, individual circumstances, etc., Many are facing things in their lives that they never anticipated but they are happening. As we get older, some things naturally change and we have to adjust from day to day as they change. But some of the problems that Pastors, Leaders, Churches are facing may be brought on by our own doings, which we don't like to confess to. For example, I have been pastoring 47 years and I can reflect back on some things that I have gone through that could have been different if I had handled things in a little different way. Believe it or not, I WAS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT! Pastors, admit it, your ministry is not yours...it is a place that God has placed you in to do HIS ministry, to promote His Church, His Agenda. I want to say that I have loved the people in the churches that I have been given the privilege to serve as Pastor even though some of them truly, not judging, were a pain in the neck because of their 'self-centered' agenda. Just because people don't want to follow does not change the leadership we are to exhibit. Our agenda, if it is ours, if we have to run everything, may not always be right. There are others to consider and use in working out the ministry work of the Lord Jesus. God is to be honored in and through HIS Church! Ephesians 3:21.

I have some pastor friends that are hurting!

Why? Could it be that the divisiveness in your staff or in your congregation might be of your own doing? Please connect with this fact: THERE IS NO PROBLEM, GREAT OR SMALL, THAT CANNOT BE RESOLVED IF THINGS ARE DONE GOD'S WAY! We may have to "eat some crow" and admit our failings so God's work can progress.

Professed Christians...please reference this truth. Ephesians 4 encourages us to be in unity because we are part of the body of Christ. Don't run away and leave your church just because you disagree or don't like someone, your Pastor in particular! Set down with whoever and work out God's will and follow His instruction so the body will not be

divided but unified. There are too many 'little' congregations today because of such

Buildings don't make a church, large numbers don't make a church, but children of God willing to follow God to be fishers of men and carry out His will of building up His church is what is important. Not my will, but His Will. Consider this truth before making the wrong decision and causing more hurt to the cause of Christ.

May God speak to each of our hearts and be given His rightful place in our hearts, lives and work He has assigned us to do.

In His Service,
Jerry Phillips
Pastor of Calvary, Arlington

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BMA retirement plan next steps



By **STEVE CRAWLEY, Ph.D.**

Executive Director Elect

As shared previously, you will find important information about the BMA Retirement Plan and the programs within the plan on the website www.bma-retirement.com. To assist further in the transition process, we wish to address some frequently asked questions and outline your next steps:

I am a current participant in the existing 401(a) plan; how do I access my account information? For online access to your current (if applicable) account that was part of the former 401(a) plan, go to www.retirementlogin.com/envoy. The first time you login, your username will be your Social Security number (no dashes). Your password will be the last 4 digits of your Social Security number, and your "Role" will be "Account Holder."

How is the money from the former 401(a) plan now invested? The 401(a) plan funds originally held by Manning & Napier are now invested in a Faith Based Target-Dated Portfolio. You do not have to take any further action on the account. This investment provides younger participants with a more aggressive asset allocation for growth and older participants with a more conservative allocation for wealth preservation. The former 401(a) plan is now frozen and will be closed in December of 2019. You will receive instructions prior to that date explaining your options, including rolling the account over to the new BMA 403(b) (9) Retirement Plan if you are still employed or into an Individual Retirement Account if you are already retired. Envoy Financial will assist each participant throughout this process.

Will my current distributions continue uninterrupted? Yes, for those setup to receive current monthly distributions, those disbursements will continue as normal.

We wish to participate in the new BMA 403(b)(9) Retirement Plan; should we continue with the default Basic Plan or instead choose the Choice Plan? Every church will participate in the Basic Plan. This default plan option is the best fit for your church if: your church only wants to make an annual contribution on behalf of your pastor in October each year (even churches choosing the Choice Plan are encouraged to make this annual contribution as an added benefit for its pastor; see www.bma-retirement.com for suggested amounts based on church size); your church wants to make monthly or other contributions on behalf of your pastor but does not want to allow the pastor to make voluntary contributions to the plan himself; your church desires only a single investment option for the participant [faith-based, age-based, Target Dated Fund]; your church does not want to make retirement contributions for non-pastoral paid staff; your church does not want a loan or hardship withdrawal provision.

Choose the Choice Plan (instead of the Basic Plan) if your church has multiple staff members (paid staff in addition to the pastor) and wants to make retirement contributions for the staff as well as its pastor; your pastor or staff want to make voluntary retirement contributions through payroll deduction; your pastor and staff want to have flexible options in their choice of investments; your pastor or staff want to roll monies from other retirement plans into the new 403(b)(9) plan; your pastor or staff want loan and hardship withdrawal options.

If we stay with the default Basic Plan, what are our next

steps? Both monthly and annual contributions will be sent by the church treasurer or payroll administrator to MRS – P.O. Box 995 – Conway, AR 72033. To ensure proper posting, the church's check is to be accompanied by the Basic Plan Contribution Form available online at www.bma-retirement.com. Forms may also be obtained from the MRS office in Conway or from Envoy Financial. Once the initial contribution has been remitted to the plan, you can view your account online using the instructions shown previously. Note that you will not be able to access your account online if there have never been any contributions remitted to the plan on your behalf.

If we instead choose the Choice Plan, what are our next steps? Churches/entities choosing to participate in the Choice Plan on behalf of their pastor and staff will need to set the plan up for their church. There are four forms that must be submitted to Envoy to establish the Choice Plan for your church: Church/Ministry Resolution; Church/Ministry Adoption Agreement; Church/Ministry Schedule of Plan Administration Duties; and the Church/Ministry ACH Debit Authorization for Retirement Plan Contributions. The forms required to set the plan up for your church/entity can be downloaded from the website at www.bma-retirement.com. The instructions needed to complete the forms are provided as well. Your church treasurer or payroll administrator will need to complete an employee census template provided by Envoy Financial to report each participant's name, Social Security number, date of birth, etc. for enrollment.

I am my church or entity's treasurer or payroll administrator—what are my next steps? Administration of the Basic Plan consists simply of sending in an annual or monthly contribution check and Basic Plan Contribution Form (found at www.bma-retirement.com), and sending to MRS – PO Box 995 – Conway, AR 72033. The Basic Plan administration is very similar to what has been done in the past. Administration of the Choice Plan is a bit more involved but not complicated. After reviewing the information for the Choice Plan available on the website www.bma-retirement.com, contact Envoy Financial and they will guide you through the next steps to create a seamless on-going process for submitting the retirement contributions and withholdings. For information on either the Basic or Choice Plans, you can reach the Envoy Financial Employer Service Team at (888) 879-1376. You can also email questions to PlanSponsor@EnvoyFinancial.com.

Review of next steps: (1) Determine whether you will participate in the default Basic Plan or instead choose the Choice Plan; (2) Become familiar with the website information: www.bma-retirement.com; (3) Obtain the forms you need for the Basic or Choice Plan; and (4) Encourage your pastor and staff to participate.

Dr. Steve Crawley is executive director of Ministers Resource Services. Contact him at 844-262-8634 or steve@bmaamerica.org.



Making A Difference

It's something that can't be described in words. This came from an article I wrote promoting church camp in our Oklahoma Baptist paper in 1957.

I was 14 years old when I attended my first National Youth Encampment at Latham Springs, Texas. My brother, Lowell Kenmore, invited me to join the group from his church which is now called Jefferson Heights Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. Mrs. Pearl Orr (Gerald Orr's mom) drove the car for me and four other giggly teenage girls and what fun we had! During the drive, and at camp, that dear lady became our "mom away from home." Most days went well, but I worried when my new friends planned "fun surprises" for her. They said this was just part of camp and the counselors expected it. Sure enough, Ms. Pearl graciously joined in the fun, and her patience was nothing short of amazing.

And so was camp! In summary, here were a few highlights I shared in that 1957 article. I had never heard anything like it! Over 1,000 voices blended together in beautiful praise to God. I looked forward to the afternoon small group Bible studies . . . to the evening services with sermons and so many people responding to God's call. But I especially loved the share time in our cabins before going to bed at night.

It was fun to re-read my early impressions of camp but these few words lifted from an article written so long ago pale in reality to the impact that first experience had on my life. It affected my priorities and my calendar every summer for many years to come. I had to smile when I read: The day we left the encampment grounds, I promised I would go back. And like many of you, that's a promise I have kept!

What a difference it has made for all of us who have gathered up our children and teens and made the trek to Daniel Springs Encampment year after year. That includes those who worked behind the scenes to make it happen. One year Bob and Virginia Morton, Ridgecrest Amarillo, bought a new station wagon just in time for our trip to GMA Retreat. They handed me the keys saying this was God's car designated for ministry. That would not be the last time their vehicle made the trip to Gary, Texas!

Taking our youth to camp doesn't end when the week is over. The influence of our faithful counselors and the commitments made take root, thrive and blossom in the lives of many young people as they find and follow their own personal ministry.

Payton Gooden, a member of South Park in Ft. Worth, found Jesus as Savior at Daniel Springs in 2014. This summer, at age 16, she felt God leading her back to camp to help others find that same joy she has experienced the last four years.

Kim (Brogdon) Smith, one of our GMA girls in Amarillo, shared this: "One of my best memories during GMA Retreat was listening to the testimony of Judy Wallace on how to have a daily quiet time of prayer and Bible study. I went home and implemented her plan. I am so grateful for counselors like Mrs. Judy who share from their heart." Kim is the wife of Bro. Richard Smith, pastor of Farley Street, Waxahachie, Texas.

Lisa Kakilala said: "The whole experience of attending GMA camp at Daniel Springs was surreal for this Oregonian girl . . ." It was at camp she realized what a big God we have and today she feels compelled to share this with people of all ages, introducing them to Jesus, disciplining new believers as they learn His Word, memorize it and experience of joy of service. Lisa is married to Filomeno Kakilala, and they serve as our foreign missionaries in Manila, Republic of the Philippines.

For the ministry of Daniel Springs Encampment . . . all who support it . . . and to our dedicated staff who serve, The Heart Connection honors you this month. May this great work live on as you continue to invest in our youth and make a difference! Philippians 1:6.

Pat Quesenbury has been active in ladies' ministry for years. She is a pastor's wife, mother and active member of the Women's Missionary Auxiliary. Contact her at pquesenbury@gmail.com.



BMA of america



Lifeword Cloud Q & A

By **HOLLY MERIWEATHER**

Lifeword Media Ministries

For those of us who are technologically challenged, Lifeword's new initiative, the Cloud, is difficult to understand and even harder to explain. But finally, after sitting in on many meetings, looking at charts and timelines, and watching someone draw a picture, I might be able to explain it by answering some of my own initial questions.

How does Lifeword's Cloud help people find answers? By providing a platform for audio, video and print materials on Lifeword's website that point people to the truth of the gospel. Specifically, that content consists of already-produced, quality programs (formats) currently being "metatagged" for anyone who Googles certain key words in their heart language.

When does all this happen? Sometime in June lifeword.org will look very different. Phase One will be complete once the Cloud is built, then Phase Two begins and content will be uploaded to it.

What exactly will that content be? Five "starter" languages have been targeted because of the quality and amount of programming each one has: English, Swahili, Spanish, Arabic and Garifuna. The following will be available to speakers of those languages who are searching for answers:

ENGLISH

Four audio and video formats: *Day by Day*, *Day by Day* radio, *Harvest Gleaner Hour* (15-minute), *Reach America* radio, and *The Lori Cline Show*

SPANISH

Eight audio and video formats : *El Contacto Cristiano* (Christian Contact), *Palabra Viva* (Living Word), *Palabra De Vida* (Word of Life), *Amigos Cristianos* (Christian Friends), CaFe

(for newlyweds), *Radio Bautista* (to Puerto Rico), *Paroxeando* (to young people in Mexico), *Mi Cuaderno Espiritual* (My Spiritual Journal, to El Salvador)

ARABIC

Two formats in audio and video: *Min Hasad Al Ayyam* (From the Harvest of Bygone Days) and the Joe Costa video series

SWAHILI

One audio format: *Neno Uzima* (Word of the Chief)

GARIFUNA

Four audio formats: *Lumalaly Inaruni* (Voice of Truth), *Mesa Redonda* (Round Table)/ Word of the Chief, *Asenihantina* (Fishermen), video

After content in these five languages has been uploaded and all the kinks have been worked out, programs from Lifeword's 40-plus languages will gradually be added. So how will Lifeword reach even more people groups? The long-term goal is to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" in 200 languages of the world.

To make that happen, Lifeword now owns the domain name <http://jesustoyou.com/>, which means if anyone asks that question or a version of it, they will be directed to lifeword.org. (Go ahead, try it. It's pretty cool!)

Google "Jesus" right now and you'll get 881 million results with Wikipedia at the top of the list, but once the Cloud initiative is complete, lifeword.org should be near the top. If that doesn't give you the holy goose bumps, I don't know what will.

Our God is limitless, and in time Lifeword's reach will be as well!

Back to the Philippines we go

By **STAN SCROGGINS**

Missionary to the Philippines

Back to the Philippines we go. We've had a wonderful 10-week furlough visiting churches, WMAs, Brotherhoods, schools, colleges and seminary all over the BMA in nine states. Please know how grateful we are for every kindness showed us. We return to some exciting things happening at the Bible College and our church planting in the Philippines: Doug & Diane Lee, our "bestest" friends, Jimmy & Julie Walker's arrival in July, over 30 new students at the Bible College, new property and building for our Ranion church plant on Palawan, and improvements to the mountain church on Negros.

God has opened doors to some great contacts and partners interested in coming to help with various projects, most important being a rejuvenation of our girl's and boy's dorms. Anyone interested in being part of a work crew should let me know and I will be glad to put you in touch with teams planning a trip.

First, Magnolia, Arkansas, our home and sending church, continues to be a source of support and encouragement. Thank you Pastor Brent Summerhill and all our dear friends for praying, encouraging and helping us take the Gospel to Southeast Asia.

All our BMA Mission leadership are a constant blessing to us. Even though we raise 100 percent of our support we receive unlimited encouragement and lots of other benefits which make being a missionary undeniably easier. Thank you Executive Director John David Smith and Director of International Missions Eric Johnson. You guys are the best. All the support staff in Conway work behind the scenes everyday helping to support and improve services to missionaries. They are all worthy of your support. Does your church desire to be a missional church? Then begin and even increase your support to our national missions department. In this way you will be supporting, partnering and encouraging every BMA missionary, nationally and internationally.

We would also thank Editor Jerry Fulton and *Baptist Progress* who always include reports from us and all missionaries helping us keep our message before all BMA churches and people.

Stay in touch with us. Go to thescroggins.com and sign up for our newsletter and contact us through imessage, messenger, Facebook and email: stan@fbcmagnolia.com; gojvcrusaders@msn.com.

Liberty Association hosts rally for Baptist Medical Missions International

By **CHARLES JOHNSON**

Pastor of Rosewood, Gilmer

Liberty Baptist Association held a rally at Willow Oak, Gilmer for Baptist Medical Missions International May 17. Pastor Anthony Anderson welcomed the 60 messengers and guests to the meeting and read Scriptures.

After a short business meeting, directed by moderator Wayne McKay, Dr. John Ladd, M.D., assistant director of BMMI and his wife, Shirley, shared about the ministry of this outreach group around the world. Dr. Ladd shared slides and experiences

of nations where he has held clinics including Nicaragua, Haiti, Peru, Jordan, Greece, the Philippines and Israel.

A generous offering was received for BMMI from the 12 churches represented at the meeting. Following the service, the host church served delicious snacks in the fellowship hall.

The next Liberty meeting will be held on Thursday, August 16, at Stone Ridge Baptist Church in Kilgore. This will be a rally for Lifeword Media Ministries.

BMA Of america



BMA Information Services Where Information Powers Relationships



WHAT IS BMA INFORMATION SERVICES?

Information Services is a resource center for all entities of the BMA. Every year an information survey is sent to each BMA church. The information collected, along with information about our national association, departments, agencies, and auxiliary ministries, is used to produce the annual *BMA Church Directory and Handbook*. This resource exists for the benefit of our entire BMA family, **but its value depends directly on your participation.**

WHAT INFORMATION DO WE COLLECT?

- Church info – address, phone number, website, etc.
- Church staff – names, roles, and contact information
- Church ministries and stats – membership, attendance, growth, and ministries offered

WHY DO WE COLLECT THIS INFORMATION?

Accurate information empowers communication, and effective communication is a vital element to any healthy organization. Information also provides valuable insights such as changes in leadership, changes in ministries, and kingdom-impacting statistics that influence how associational leaders react to the ever-changing landscape of our churches.

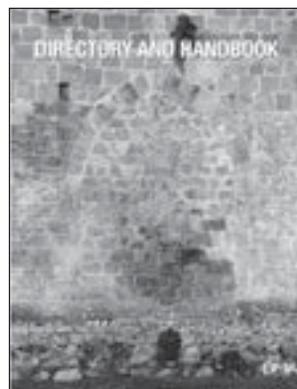
INFORMATION SERVICES AT WORK FOR YOU

Data Collection – We are making it easier to provide

information. Update your church information by using our secure, online portal at www.bmaamerica.org/church-survey.

Digital Directory – We are working to provide secure access to a digital directory, which will enable the most up-to-date information to be accessible at any time.

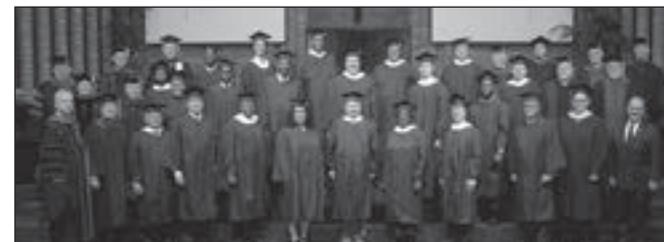
Resources – We are creating a resource center at www.bmaamerica.org where your church can easily find information, get questions answered and access new tools and services.



WHAT CAN YOUR CHURCH DO?

Complete the Annual Church Survey. The information survey is sent to each church between August and September. Churches have until the end of March to provide their information. If you are new to the BMA or unfamiliar with this process, please contact your Information Services team. We are here to make the process as easy as possible. Contact us at:

BMA Seminary's Sixty-First Commencement



By **DR. PHILIP ATTEBERY**

BMA Seminary Dean

Twenty-three individuals received a degree from the Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary of Jacksonville during commencement exercises conducted Saturday, May 19, 2018. First Baptist Church in Jacksonville hosted the event.

Henry D. Coleman of Henderson, Texas; Regina Durham of Tyler, Texas; and Kenneth Johnson of Tyler, Texas received the Associate of Divinity degree.

Jack L. Blankenship, Jr of Jacksonville, North Carolina; Curtis R. Durham, Sr. of Lufkin, Texas; James W. Henderson of Palestine, Texas; and Joe Simalonda of Lusaka, received the Bachelor of Arts in Religion degree.

Cortney T. McCall of Shreveport, Louisiana received the Master of Arts (Pastoral Theology) degree. Julio F. Ba Gonzalez of Humble, Texas; John B. Bockmon of Tyler, Texas; Mark S. Buckner, Sr. of Cleveland Mississippi; Michael Shawn Cook of Whitehouse, Texas; Johnny Everette of Morrilton, Arkansas; Kevin Simmons of Spurger, Texas; Sandra J. Williams of Tyler, Texas; and Dustin R. Wisely of Magnolia, Arkansas received the Master of Arts (Religion) degree.

Stephen L. Davenport of Teague, Texas; Matthew Dean of Fort Worth, Texas; Michael Lathan of Houston, Texas; David W. Vandergriff of Lufkin, Texas; and Christopher J. Walls of Palestine, Texas received the Master of Arts in Church Ministries degree. Randall R. Barlow of Blooming Grove, Texas and Marvin L. Green of Palestine, Texas received the Master of Divinity degree.

Mr. Randy Veach of Manila, Arkansas presented the commencement address. Veach, president of Arkansas Farm Bureau, is a deacon at Little River Baptist Church in Manila, a BMA Seminary trustee, and third-generation farmer. In 1998, Mississippi County, Arkansas chose Veach's family as Farm Family of the Year. In 2012, Veach received the Honorary American Future Farmers of America degree for lifetime service to youth and agriculture education. In 2014, he was recognized as the Burlsworth Foundation's Legends Honoree.

BMA Seminary provides accredited theological education to qualified individuals by seeking to equip them for Christian service and leadership roles. The seminary supports the educational needs of the Baptist Missionary Association of America and other groups who share a like commitment to the authority of Scripture by offering certificates, associate, bachelor, and masters' degrees.

Invitation to Greece



By **RALPH IZARD, M.D.**

The Baptist Medical Missions International, commonly called the BMMI, has been invited to minister to the refugees in Greece. This is the first time we have worked in a nation which is part of the European Union. Therefore, we have limited our clinical time to three days and reserved one day for sightseeing. There will be restrictions different from most clinics that we set up around the world. We look forward for the opportunity to minister to these refugees.

We then plan to fly to Tel Aviv, Israel for six days. During the tour of Israel, you will see the Jordan River, Masada, the Dead Sea, the Garden Tomb and the Garden of Gethsemane. You will walk the

Via De Larrosa, visit Bethlehem and many more exciting areas that truly bring the Bible to life.

Before returning home, we plan to cross the border to Amman, Jordan to visit Zarka Baptist Church and attend service with our missionary, Sam Jordan.

We, in turn would like to invite you to go with us. This is a medical trip, but we are opening it up to anyone who would like to travel with us. If you are led to be part of this BMMI team, please email the BMMI at ralph@bmaam.com or angela@bmamissions.org for more information. We plan to depart for Athens on Oct. 22 and return from Ammon, Jordan on Nov. 4, 2018.



church health

Three P's of Evangelism

By LARRY BARKER

Evangelism seems to be taking a back seat to almost every other kind of activity in churches today. Several authors have expressed concern about how even church plants can grow and do well but not reach the people that need to be reached the most, the lost. One recent survey was shocked at how many in full time ministry say they do not have the “gift” of evangelism. In John 4:35 Jesus said, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”

In *The Evangelism Handbook* Alvin Reid says, “The church growth movement influenced many in the latter half of the twentieth century. It offered a three-tiered look at the process of evangelism. The three components are these:

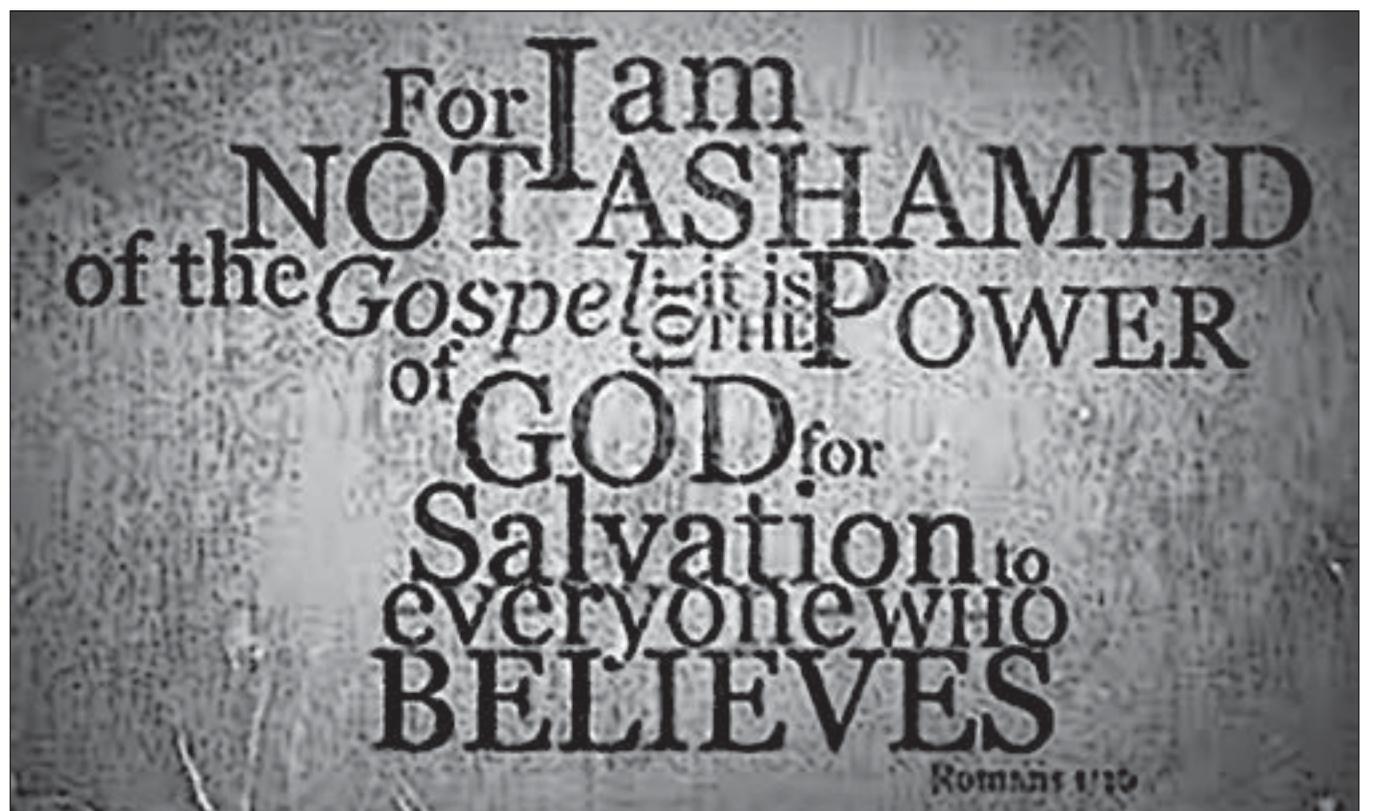
P-1, Presence. For example, agricultural, medical missions.

P-2, Proclamation. Presenting the gospel in an understandable manner.

P-3, Persuasion. II Corinthians 5:11 encourages hearers to respond.

An analogy for this definition is a house. In *presence evangelism*, people's needs are met; they see a demonstration of the gospel, and, therefore, a foundation is built on which the gospel can be communicated. Because the church growth movement began on the mission field, its importance is obvious. Cross-cultural issues must be considered in a viable presentation of the gospel. Increasingly, in a post-Christian or even an anti-Christian culture in America, presence evangelism has a place. Servant evangelism (covered later) fits in nicely in our context. *Proclamation evangelism*, to continue the house analogy, allows the light of the gospel to penetrate through the windows. People not only need a foundation, but they also need direction. The gospel can never be presented by a demonstration only; there must also be a proclamation. Finally, *persuasion evangelism* leads people into the relationship they need with Christ. One can live in a house and not be family; by persuading people to follow Christ, we are inviting them to join God's family.

There are strengths and weaknesses to this definition. The weakness comes when believers define evangelism at the P-1 level only. We must build bridges, but we must also do more. Still others stop at the P-2 level. This definition is complete when we see it as a whole. That being said, it is positive in that when we are stopped short of a complete presentation of the gospel, we know we have at least provided some aspect



of the gospel that the Holy Spirit can use. In other words, we should always seek to present Christ through presence, proclamation, and persuasion; but when we cannot, we can be thankful that on some level we have presented Christ.”

Reid defines evangelism as, “Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by word and life in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that unbelievers become followers of Jesus Christ in His church and in the culture.” One problem is that many see the term “evangelize” as the work of the evangelist and the preacher proclaiming the good news in a formal setting. While that is true, it is also simply sharing the good news one on one. It is every child of God telling others the good news of what Jesus Christ has done for them. Every believer on this side of heaven owes every non-believer on this side of hell the gospel!

The gospel is the good news. It is not bad news and we need to share it with those God has placed in our circle of influence. Here are three things to do: 1. Pray for those you know who are not followers of Christ. Do not underestimate the power of prayer. You can share the good news but only God can transform a life. 2. Ask God to show what you could

do to build a bridge to them through an authentic relationship. People are farther away from the cross today which requires patience and starting with the very basics. 3. Be willing to do whatever God shows you so that you might be able to share the good news with them. Once you have gained their trust they will then allow you to speak into their lives because they can see who you are, not just what you are saying!

Remember to be ready to listen to their story, share with them your story, but always be ready to share His story. We must pray for boldness and be ready and proactive in sharing the gospel with others. If we will begin our day by asking Him for an opportunity to share His love with someone He will provide that open door. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost and now we are His messengers!

Larry Barker is the pastor of Cornerstone, Jacksonville. He also serves as the operations director for North American Missions. For more information or to contact him, visit www.bmamissions.org.



insights for pastors

Improve Your Preaching

By DR. ALLEN TILLEY

While preaching is a divine mandate (Romans 10:14), good preaching requires hard work. Dr. Joe Pendleton, the retired preaching professor at our BMA Seminary, said, "It's a sin to bore people with God's transforming truth." Pastor, when was the last time you tried improving your preaching style? As a preacher for almost forty years, let me share eight ways we can improve our communication of God's Word.

Be intentional. Good preaching doesn't happen accidentally. The moment we stop learning is the moment we stop growing. Even the best preachers have areas that need improvement. Don't let pride keep you from being your best. Set aside time each week to work on your communication skills.

Improve your spiritual life. Never substitute sermon preparation for your personal devotional life. Because preachers empty themselves on Sunday, they must refill themselves throughout the week by spending ample time in God's Word and in prayer. Preachers who are out of touch with God cannot create a spiritual thirst in others.

Watch successful preachers. Pastors of larger churches post videos of their sermons online. Check them out and see

what they do, how they do it, and how they say it. Although you never want to imitate anyone, you can pick up tips on how you can more effectively communicate God's truth.

Watch yourself. Have someone record your sermon, and then review it critically. Look for distracting gestures and repetitive words or phrases. Ask yourself these questions: Was the message clear? What could I have done better? Would an illustration have helped drive the point home? What should I do differently?

Rehearse your sermon. Instead of wishing for a do-over, practice your sermon the night before. Every Saturday night, I retreat to my office and preach my sermon three times, trying to memorize my manuscript and polish my delivery. On the third time, I stand in front of a mirror to watch myself, looking for the best mannerisms to accompany my sermon.

Ask for a critique. After gaining permission, send a video copy of your sermon to a trusted pastor whose preaching you admire, asking that he be brutally honest in his assessment. Sometimes a new sight of eyes can uncover blind spots that you never knew were there. After the review, thank him and

provide a gift for his services.

Recruit prayer warriors. Ask them to pray for you throughout the week as you prepare and then pray for you while you preach. Divine help always improves a sermon. Every Sunday as I step into the pulpit, I know I have a lady in our church praying for me in our prayer room, giving me confidence as I preach.

Study passionately. Every sermon should have solid exegesis, exposition, and application. Never step into the pulpit without thoroughly studying God's Word. Study so intently that you will be the world's foremost expert on that passage as you preach. Haphazard preparation is the product of a lazy preacher.

Dr. Allen Tilley is pastor of First Baptist Church of Carthage, Texas. He has over 30 years of pastoral experience, and God has continually blessed his ministry with dynamic spiritual and numerical growth. Contact him at allen@firstbaptistcarthage.com.



Obituaries

ELIZABETH LESLIE

Mildred Elizabeth Burke Leslie, 92, passed away May 1. She was the widow of BMA Pastor Clyde Leslie, who was a BMA of Arkansas missionary and served 18 churches for more than 60 years.

Elizabeth received an AA degree in Home Economics from A&M College in Magnolia in 1946 and was a school teacher. She loved to teach beginner Sunday School and VBS and was often the church pianist. She also taught music schools with her husband and was the pianist who accompanied singers for two radio programs in Rogers and Springdale, Arkansas. She was an accomplished seamstress and was employed at Stroud's Department Store in Rogers.

Survivors include a daughter, Dorothy (Greg) Parsons of Jacksonville, Texas; three sons, James (Anita) Leslie of Damascus, Arkansas, Paul (Kay)



Leslie of Bigelow and Daniel (Jackie) Leslie of Enterprise, Alabama; 16 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren and five siblings — Leonard (Georgia) Burke of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Millard (Sue) Burke, Stamps; Patria Owens of Gilmer, Texas; Gloria (Wayne) Bagley, Wichita Falls, Texas; and Alfred Burke of Allen, Texas.

Funeral services were held at Shiloh Union Baptist Church in Stamps, Arkansas on May 7 with her nephew, Tim Reddin, and son-in-law, Dr. Greg Parsons officiating. Interment was at Bingen-Ozan Cemetery near Nashville under the direction of A.O. Smith Funeral Home.

A. FRANK ROBERSON

Bro. A. Frank Roberson of the Boswell Community in Walker County was welcomed into the waiting arms of his Lord & Savior Jesus Christ in the early



morning hours of June 6, 2018. He was 88.

Known to many of his friends and family as "Preacher," Roberson was a retired Baptist pastor who had served in the ministry for 54 years. His pastorates included Pin Oak Baptist in Cleveland, Calvary Baptist in Huntsville, First Baptist in Quitaque, Texas Avenue Baptist in League City, Bullard Southern Baptist in Bullard, Trinity Baptist in Willis and Center Hill Baptist in Oakhurst. Early in his ministry he served as associate pastor of Eastside Baptist Church in Baytown.

Through God's grace, "Preacher" was able to lead many to Jesus Christ, and served his congregations with compassion and Divinely led encouragement and forbearance. He deeply loved his Lord, his family and his country.

"Preacher" was born Feb. 6, 1930 in Clay County, Ala., to James Henry "Sam" & Audra Ethel Scarborough Roberson. He was the youngest son in a family of 9 children and was the final one of the family to be called home to his Maker.

"Preacher" is survived by his wife of 67 years Maxine Colburn Roberson of Boswell,

daughter Vanna Kay Walker & husband Jimmy of McQueeney, son C.N. "Kooter" Roberson & wife Rebecca of Huntsville, and son Jack Frank Roberson & wife Amy of Dallas. He is also survived by grandchildren — James Pike Walker Jr. of McQueeney, Justin Grant Walker of San Antonio, Jordan Emily Walker of Austin, Jacob Marshall Roberson of Cypress, Allison Christine Ozols of Dallas, and Samuel Franklin Murdock Roberson of Poplarville, Miss. — along with 7 great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

"Preacher" was also a U.S. military veteran — having spent time as a member of the U.S. Army following World War II.

A graduate of Galena Park High School, "Preacher" also attended Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville and earned his A.A. from Lee College in Baytown. He also studied at Southwestern Theological Seminary of Houston.

Funeral services were June 9 at First Baptist Church, New Waverly. A private interment followed at Boswell Cemetery.

BMA TEXAS



MISSIONS

Your Church's Mission Movement in Texas

North Texas Multiplication Network

Matthew Prather – Lead Planter
The Bridge Mission in Waxahachie / Midlothian
BMAT Provides: Salary, Training

John Harris – Lead Planter
Foundations Community Mission in Benbrook
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching,
Training and Accountability

Ronnie Mills – Lead Planter
Coming September 2018 to Fort Worth
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching, Training and
Accountability

Donny Sadler—Lead Replanter
Bethel White Rock in Dallas
BMAT Provides: Funding, Coaching, Training, & Accountability

Labeeb Tashman—Arabic Planter in Dallas
BMAT Provides: Funding, Coaching, Training, and Accountability



East Texas Multiplication Network

Neptaly Molina- Lead Hispanic Planter
Iglesia Bautista Mission in Nacogdoches
BMAT Provides: Funding, Coaching,
Training and Accountability

Hervin Antonio - Hispanic Planter in Wills Point
BMAT Provides: Funding, Coaching,
Training and Accountability

Jaime Garcia - Lead Hispanic Planter
Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida Mission in Gilmer
and Mesquite
BMAT Provides: Funding, Coaching, Training and Accountability



Central Texas Multiplication Network

Cesar Leal - Lead Hispanic Planter
Coming September 2018 to San Antonio
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching, Training and Accountability

Chris Mindi—Indian Planter in Leander
BMAT Provides: Training, Coaching and Accountability

West Texas Multiplication Network

Chris Driver – Network Leader
BMAT Provides: Funding, Coaching, Training and Accountability

Jerry Bingham—Journey Fellowship Mission in Loop—BMAT Provides: Funding, Training
Cameron Dockery — Whitharral Mission-
BMAT Provides: Training
Mike Watt — Tahoka Mission - BMAT Provides: Training
Nick Brockway — New Home - BMAT Provides: Training

Cristian Martinez - Lead Hispanic Planter
Grace Harvest Baptist Mission - Lubbock
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching, Training and Accountability



Southeast Texas Multiplication Network



Cliff Robertson – Lead Planter
The Carpenter's House Mission in Lake Jackson
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching, Training and Accountability

New Plant on Demi-John Island
Coming out of The Carpenter's House Mission
BMAT Provides: Training

Brandon Durham – Lead Planter
Redeemer's Love Mission in Houston
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching, Training and Accountability

Arnulfo Maldonado
Texas Hispanic Multiplication Coordinator
Planter in Spring
BMAT Provides: Salary, Coaching,
Training and Accountability

Santos Lopez
New Hispanic Plant in Port Arthur
BMAT Provides: Coaching, Training and Accountability

Antonio Gonzalez
New Hispanic Plant in Clute
BMAT Provides: Coaching, Training and Accountability

Jaime Enriquez
New Hispanic Plant in Houston
BMAT Provides: Coaching, Training and Accountability



By HEITH MITCHELL

This month, we are pleased to announce that you are supporting two new missions. Bro. Labeeb Tashman is moving into an apartment alongside many Middle Eastern immigrants. Pray for him as he shares Christ and makes disciples. Also Bethel Baptist Church of White Rock is starting a new church seeking to engage their community. Pray for them as they seek to walk a unique replant model and engage their community for Christ.

Your Texas Mission Movement has grown so much that I want to share a big picture view with you. On the previous page is a look at all our current mission endeavors. The BMA of Texas and the Kingdom of God are on the increase!

I would love to come and share Texas Missions with your church. I have open dates and look forward to hearing from you.

A WORD FROM YOUR MISSIONARIES CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ— GRACE HARVEST BAPTIST MISSION, LUBBOCK

Since we came to Lubbock, I planned to get to know the churches in the area with the purpose of avoiding a “competition feeling” between churches and also in order to learn what other churches are doing here to make disciples.

This practice has been of great benefit and I encourage you, pastors and church planters, to get to know and to pray for other churches in your area. Thankfully, there are more churches in our city that God is using to make Himself known.

One of the immediate benefits of this practice has been to know the areas or groups of people in my city that are not being reached with the gospel. Another benefit is the insight of pastors that have lived and ministered in Lubbock and can provide the knowledge that I could only learn by myself in many years of living here.



▲ Christian Martinez

JAIME GARCIA— IGLESIA BAUTISTA NUEVA VIDA MISSION, SPLENDORA

Thank you for your support and great interest in the Kingdom of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. I am happy to belong to an association that has love for the Hispanic work.



▲ Jaime Garcia

NEPTALY MOLINA— IGLESIA BAUTISTA MISSION, NACOGDOCHES

Please join us in prayer for the following things:

1. For the progress of the Missionary work here in Nacogdoches.
2. The mission will stabilize each member to have a close relationship with the Lord.
3. For good physical and spiritual health of the Missionary Pastoral Family, Molina Perdomo.
4. For the migratory documents and to work with quality in the Work of God.



▲ Neptaly Molina

CLIFF ROBERTSON— CARPENTER’S HOUSE MISSION— LAKE JACKSON/CLUTE

God is moving! People are coming to Christ and growing in Christ! We are excited about what He is doing. Thanks BMA for all your support! God is using each and every one of you to reach our community for Christ!

WORK OPPORTUNITY: Carpenter’s House has possession of their new (old) building and can use help with demo and remodel work. They welcome individuals and teams that want to help. Contact Cliff at drciffrobertsonjr@gmail.com.



▲ Cliff Robertson

JOHN HARRIS— FOUNDATION COMMUNITY MISSION, BENBROOK

We have some work projects that could use extra hands this summer! If you would be willing to spend a Saturday helping us, we would love to have you! Email me and I will give you details. We also have a new MissionLife Group starting this month. Be praying that we will be able to help them spread the mission and vision of Foundations church by loving others in Benbrook!



▲ John Harris

MATTHEW PRATHER— THE BRIDGE MISSION, MIDLOTHIAN/WAXAHACHIE

The month of May was a busy month at The Bridge. The school year came to a close and now we are heading into summer. The end of the year allowed us to serve at one of our local Elementary schools several times in May. We were able to provide water for field day and bless the teachers with desserts and drinks for teachers’ appreciation. Every opportunity we have with the school comes with opportunities for conversation and to continue to build relationships. Please continue to pray for us as we invest in our community. Also, this month, I have seen a lot of fruit beginning to show itself in many of the different relationships that I have built around town. Many different families have begun to show interest and are beginning to show interest in church. Please continue to pray for these relationships and that they might come to know Christ. We are looking forward to the many different things we have planned for June to continue to reach out to our community. Thank you for your continued prayers and support. We would not be able to do what we do without it!



▲ Matthew Prather

RONNIE MILLS— INTERN—PREPARING FOR FORT WORTH

We believe God wants to do something great through Kingdom Chapel, and for that reason we are committed staying on journey with



▲ Ronnie Mills

BMA Seminary Library Director Blaylock Retires after 52 Years

By DR. PHILIP ATTEBERY

BMA Seminary Dean

Dr. James C. Blaylock of Jacksonville, Texas has retired after fifty-two years of service to the Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary’s Gerald D. Kellar Memorial Library.

Blaylock began working as the library’s assistant director in 1966. Under his direction as director, the library’s main collection grew from just 4,650 books to more than 85,000 in 2018 along with an additional 25,000 items in the library’s physical collection.

In recent decades, Blaylock oversaw the digitization of the Library card catalog and the adoption of electronic research databases for use by the students and faculty of the seminary. Blaylock especially enjoyed collecting and maintaining items related to the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America, and BMA ministers. In 2016, the school received a 17th century Sefer Torah scroll, which it named after him.

Blaylock earned an Associate of Arts degree from Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel, Mississippi, a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at Tyler, a Master of Science in Library Science from East Texas State University in Commerce, Texas, and a Bachelor of Theology and Master of Religious Education degrees from BMA Seminary. He received the Doctor of Divinity degree from BMA Seminary in 2011.

Blaylock celebrated 50 years in the Gospel ministry in 2010 and has served four Texas churches as pastor, including First Baptist Church of Maydelle, and Corinth Baptist Church of Jacksonville. He appeared in *Personalities of the South* in 1974, *Who’s Who in the Southwest* three (3) times, and to *Who’s Who in Religion* four (4) times. He is author of numerous articles and four books: most of these dealing with Baptist or local church history. He retired as editor of the BMA of America’s Baptist News Service in 1999 following 30 years of service as editor or associate editor.

Blaylock earned the respect and admiration of all his colleagues and is well-known in Jacksonville for his commitment to the community’s senior adult population.

Blaylock has impacted the lives of many employees, including the many international students who have worked in the library over the years as they attended school at BMA Seminary. Frances Thomas, a current student and library worker from Nigeria, says that she will miss Brother Blaylock’s fatherly presence and gentle nature. Alicia Johnson, the Library’s Public Services Supervisor, has worked with “Brother B,” as she refers to him, for more than twenty-five years and will also miss him greatly.

Jacob Gucker, the Assistant Library Director since 2012 and a graduate of BMA Seminary, has accepted the position of acting Library Director, effective May 22, 2018. Gucker has worked with Blaylock for more than seven years and is grateful for the practical knowledge and wisdom accruing from his time under Dr. Blaylock’s supervision. Gucker’s credentials include a Master of Divinity from BMA Seminary (2011) and a Master of Library Science from Texas Woman’s University in 2012. He is excited to see what God has in store for Kellar Library and BMA Seminary.



▲ Dr. James C. Blaylock

BMA TEXAS MISSIONS continued on p.13



Bible Study: The Key to Walking With God

By SHARON COLE

Profiles of Virtue, written by Jackie Ricks, is a study of the virtuous woman passage from Proverbs 31:10-31. The author divides the passage into various virtues and identifies a different Bible woman who exemplified each one. Along with examining the woman's life in depth from the scriptures, Mrs. Ricks also discusses a woman whom she has known who displayed the same quality in modern times. This book would make an excellent individual study as well as provide a ladies' or girls' Bible class with lessons on Christian living.

Add to Your Faith, is a Bible study written by Jackie Ricks based on the WMA motto, 2 Peter 1:5-7. Mrs. Ricks examines each characteristic mentioned in the passage similar to the way she treated the qualities in the virtuous woman passage in her Bible study, *Profiles of Virtue*. Then she looks at a Bible woman's life, discussing that particular virtue. Some of the women are: Rahab, Anna, Deborah and Mary of Bethany. Finally, Mrs. Ricks discusses a modern woman she has known who has exemplified the same characteristic. There will also be a worksheet packet for those who prefer not to write in their books or for those without their own book when studying in a group. You may order this book from Jackie Ricks by phone, text or email at 903-245-5715, or jdbricks@att.net. You may also order from Amazon.com or createspace.com.

People are People, is another book Jackie has written. It is a biography/Bible study of the life of Dr. John and Shirley Ladd, long-time missionaries to Mexico. Retired from the missions field, they reside in Tyler, while Dr. Ladd is the associate director of the Baptist Medical Missions International (BMMI). The Ladds travel world-wide treating both the body and soul.

RECOMMENDATION OF BIBLE STUDIES

I'd like to recommend a couple of Bible studies that we have done with the ladies in our church and community. I hope you and your ladies enjoy them and grow in your walk with the Lord! So first, about the author...*Priscilla Shirer is a wife and mom first, but put a Bible in her hand and a message in her heart and you'll see why thousands meet God in powerful ways at her conferences and through her Bible studies. Through the expository teaching of the Word of God, Priscilla desires to see people not only know the uncompromising truths of Scripture intellectually but experience them practically by the power to the Holy Spirit. For the past sixteen years, Priscilla has been in full-time ministry to women. She and her husband, Jerry, have founded "Going Beyond Ministries," and count it as their privilege to serve believers across the entire spectrum of the body of Christ. The first book is *Fervent: A woman's battle plan**

to serious specific and strategic prayer. Each chapter will guide you in crafting prayer strategies that hit the enemy where it hurts, letting him know you're on to him and that you won't back down. This book was the 2016 "Book of the Year" winner. The next book is, *Breathe*. One of the greatest challenges among women in our culture is taking time to cease from all the activities and just breathe. We are in bondage to busyness. We constantly strive to complete the limitless to-do lists that hinder us from experiencing all that God has for us. By neglecting time for tranquility, serenity, and repose, we limit our Christlikeness and miss out on some of God's greatest gifts. In the Old Testament, Sabbath was given to the Israelites as a gift, and it is still a gift to us today. If you are weary, worn out, and exhausted, then the concept of Sabbath will change your life.

Kristi Key, Texas WMA 3rd Vice President

FATHERS' DAY

This past Sunday we celebrated or recognized a day we call "Fathers' Day." We recognize the earthly father who brought us physically into this world. While many enjoy their father's presence, others only have memories. Choose the good memories. Remember the times you sat in his lap to hear a story, worked a puzzle together, went on a fishing trip, or just sat on the front porch and enjoyed each other's company eating a bowl of ice cream. It has been said that fathers are God's representatives in the home. He is to be the spiritual leader, responsible for his children's Christian education. Many times a young person's difficulties and trouble can be traced to the lack of a strong father image in the home. If a child is to ever accept and learn to call God, Father, earthly fathers must learn to deal with their children as God deals with them: with grace and loving understanding and forgiveness. Although discipline must be issued at times, it must never be cruel. God's design for discipline is instruction. A child is not likely to find a father in God unless he finds something of God in his earthly father.

TEXAS SUNBEAMS

The Texas State Sunbeam Houseparty is June 26-27 this year. We will meet at Jacksonville College in the SUB. Registration fee is \$15 and the theme is "CIA-CHILDREN IN ACTION." Program Chairman, Shera Clair, is working diligently getting the program ready. Each district attending has been assigned a particular responsibility such as bringing snacks, games, crafts, name tags, goody bags and contests. The project this year has been: "Lifeword Community Radio with a goal of \$1,200. If your church does not have a Sunbeam program, this would be a good opportunity to

come and talk with the Sunbeam Promoter, Vera Koonce and Assistant Promoter, Shirley Hoffpauir. They would be happy to work with you in organizing a group in your church. Children from birth through 3rd grade are taught the Bible and trained in church activities. Their chief objective is missions. For more information contact the Promoters: Vera Koonce, 281-642-5356 and Shirley Hoffpauir: 903-843-3388.

STATE WMA PROJECT

As you are praying for your Texas State Missionaries, remember their need for a large box trailer in planning events in their outreach ministries. You can either purchase the needed items or give liberally from your heart toward purchasing the trailer and/or needed items. For more information contact our Project Promoter: Diana Morris: 903-288-7575; grammydi1013@msn.com. Send your offerings to the WMA Project to: Corresponding Secretary, Jo Strong, 149 NW Suzanne Terrace, Burleson, TX 76028. Our total so far for the project is \$2,342.63.

Sharon Cole is the editor for the Texas WMA. Contact her at S9Co@aol.com. For more information on the Texas WMA, visit www.texaswma.com.



Tired of Fluctuations of the Stock Market or the Low Rate of Return on Certificates of Deposit?

A charitable gift annuity offered by the BMA Foundation can provide you a fixed income amount for the remainder of your life at a rate higher than most certificates of deposit.

IN ADDITION

- You receive a federal income tax deduction the year of the gift.
- Your annuity income can be partially income tax-free.

Contact BMA Foundation Executive Director Charles Atsbery for current annuity rates and additional information. charles@bmaamerica.org or call 501-472-2183



*Annuities issued by the National Christian Foundation on behalf of the BMA Foundation

From *Here* to *There*. EIM's Labor of Love.

By **FONDA NORRIS**

Evangelistic International Ministries Shepherd's Bag Coordinator

EIM is excited to let everyone know that another shipment has left *here* and made it to *there!* "*Here*" being our EIM Shepherd's Bag Storage Warehouse in Warren, AR and "*There*" being the Central American country of Honduras! After being held up a few months by the Presidential election last November we finally were able to complete our paperwork with the new government and connect all the dots and get this Labor of Love filled with **14,890** Shepherd's Bags shipped and ready to be used to glorify our Heavenly Father, make our Savior's Name Famous and declare the truth of the Saving Gospel in schools and villages across Honduras. We are thankful God allowed us to complete this in time since Bro. Rocky Goodwin, EIM's Director, will be leading distribution mission teams to Honduras in June and July going into schools and handing out Shepherd's Bags and preaching Jesus. It really doesn't get any better! Pray with us for God to open the eyes and hearts of all the children of Honduras as well as adults that will hear the Gospel before receiving their gift. Especially that they will hear not only with their ears but that they will hear and accept with their hearts the free gift of salvation.

We continue to be pleased with the overwhelming benefits of switching over to a cost efficient unisex Shepherd's Bag. Just a few of the main benefits have been: It allows us to control the items that go into a bag insuring they will present the truth of Scripture in a heart language the children can understand and that the items going into the bags are safe for children, all children receive the same items keeping the distribution of the bags fair and equitable, it has greatly simplified the logistics and organization both here and abroad, costs are kept lower allowing us to assemble more bags which in turn lets us make bags all year long. More bags mean more children hear the Gospel. Our motto here at EIM is "It's not about the bag, it's about the Gospel." It is only the

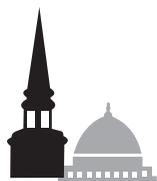
tool that God can use to open the door for the preaching of the Gospel while at the same time bless needy children with fun and useful gifts while presenting them with the Eternal Gift of His Son. We stand in awe and amazement that He has allowed EIM to be a small part of His Big Plan around the world.

Yes, the shipment to Honduras was a lot of hard work. But are we done for 2018? Oh, No way dear friends! We currently have almost 10,000 Shepherd's Bags already completed, boxed and stored at our shipping warehouse ready to go to the country of Tanzania and we will continue to work until we have enough to fill a container. Our goal is to ship this container at the end of summer. By the way, this is our very first shipment of Shepherd's Bags going to Tanzania so we couldn't be more excited that God has opened yet another country for the Shepherd's Bags to be distributed in. These bags will contain our Gospel Story Books the children can color in and the John 3:16 Frisbees which are both especially designed for the Shepherd's Bag Ministry in the heart language of Swahili for the children. To date our books and Frisbees have been translated into seven different languages! Amen!

Would you please pray for us as we continue to do what God has called us to do in the Shepherd's Bag Ministry for the past 19 years? And that is to offer ourselves up to be found faithful, be willing to work hard and do any task in order to see a shipment come together so that it can go to a child in need of Jesus, to be diligent and good stewards of all monies that He burdens people to give to this wonderful, Christ Centered children's ministry. It all goes to get Shepherd's Bags into the hands of children around the world. What better way to invest our lives into seeing people saved and come into the Kingdom? Thank you all for praying, encouraging us and giving. We love you!



Adams Award/Moral Action Scholarship Fund Established



The launch of the Adams Award/Moral Action Scholarship Fund for BMA Seminary students was announced in a joint letter last week from BMA Seminary President Dr. Charley Holmes and Moral Action Director Dr. John M. Adams (along with the Adams Award Sub-Committee — Dr. Kevin Clayton, Richey Hester and David Inzer). The letter said, in part:

"The BMA of America and the BMA of Mississippi Moral Action Boards of Trustees have established an Adams Award/Moral Action Scholarship Fund at the BMA Theological Seminary in Jacksonville, Texas by unanimous vote on April 17 in Jackson, Miss.

"The June 24 and July 1 Moral Action Freedom Offering will go to further establish the \$20,000 scholarship to help a deserving (BMA) Seminary student. The scholarship fund already has \$10,000 as of May 1. This is a continual/perpetual fund.

"We humbly ask for your support (in these special

offerings, and that your church consider) the possibility of placing this in your church budget as 'Adams Award/Moral Action Scholarship Fund.'"

The Moral Action Freedom Offering goal is \$35,000 from the 1,300 BMA churches and individuals. The offering will be divided between the award/scholarship fund (\$10,000) and \$25,000 for Moral Action Freedom offering for expenses, travel, hotels, etc. Offerings should be sent to Moral Action, P.O. Box 305, Mantachie, Miss. 38855.

SCHOLARSHIP TERMS

The Adams Award, sponsored by the BMAA Moral Action Committee in honor of Dr. John Adams:

- Scholarship will be awarded each fall semester to an exemplary student preparing for pastoral ministry.
- Preference will be given to students with limited financial support from other sources.
- Preference will be given to BMA students.

- First semester students are not eligible.
- Applicants must have a minimum GPA of 2.5.
- Recipient will be selected by BMATS Scholarship Committee with subsequent notification to BMAA Moral Action Committee.
- Initial award after funding by BMAA Moral Action Committee will be \$500. Remaining principal balance will be held in the BMAA Foundation Fund and be open for additional contributions. The amount of future awards will be determined upon consultation between BMATS and BMAA Moral Action Committee.



▲ Dr. John Adams

LEAVE IT TO CLEAVER



Random thoughts from Hebrews

By DR. TONY CLEAVER

HEBREWS 1:2 "IN THESE LAST DAYS... HE HAS SPOKEN TO US BY HIS SON."

Many prophets spoke the word of God. Now in the last days God speaks by His Son. What do the last days mean? It can mean latest, ultimate, concluding, final, or remaining. So, in the remaining, concluding or last days God gives us on this earth His message of importance. That message is spoken by His Son. God did not send a prophet, but rather sent His Son in the form of a human being. One perfect human being spoke the words of God to imperfect humanity. Good Reader we are included in these words of hope, healing, and salvation. The messenger of God-Jesus-made us right with His Father by giving His life on the cross for us. The old-time railroad crossing sign said: "Stop, look, listen." We need to do the same with the one who speaks to us in the last day kind of time. Jesus is God's word from Heaven.

HEBREWS 1:14 "ARE THEY (ANGELS) NOT ALL MINISTERING SPIRITS SENT OUT TO SERVE THOSE WHO ARE GOING TO INHERIT SALVATION?"

What a great question! Some questions have such wonderful possibilities that one answer cannot contain the complete fullness of multiple truthful and correct responses. We have sentimentalized angels to be chubby cherubs who shoot love arrows at sweethearts on Valentine's Day. Not so. Angels are the messengers of God. Angels played dramatic and episodic ventures in the lives of both the Old Testament and New Testament saints. This passage gives us one glimpse of the large truth of an ongoing angelic presence with the saints of today. It must not surprise anyone that the God who sent His messengers to the former saints still does the same for today's saints. No, angels are not the magic genies in a bottle for Christians. They are not a good luck charm when all else fails. Dear Reader, you have felt, sensed, and been aware of these messengers in your life. No, you are not crazy. You are simply recognizing what the Scriptures say about a ministering spirit with you.

HEBREWS 2:18 "FOR SINCE HE HIMSELF HAS SUFFERED WHEN HE WAS TEMPTED, HE IS ABLE TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE TEMPTED."

I understand medical students not only practice on cadavers but also at times practice on each other. They then know how it feels for a procedure to be applied to their own bodies. So, Jesus in the days of His flesh, suffered temptation, endured hostility, had hunger,

knew friendship and its betrayal. He experienced joy and gladness with His people, and He entered into the normal activities of life as any person would. So, in his excruciating death-his stripes, his crown, his cross-He knew what it was to have temptation. Good Reader, we do not have a Savior without His humanity. He was with us. He was like us. He had temptation. Yet He did not sin. He knew what it was first hand to be tempted that is why He can come to us with good and merciful help. The drowning swimmer asks for help. As we come to overwhelming temptation we too can say, "Help" for there is One who knows what it is like to be tempted.

HEBREWS 3:13 "BUT ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER DAILY..."

There is not one who does not want and at times desperately needs encouragement in the Christian journey. If the Apostles got discouraged, what about those who are not "super Christians?" What about us way down here on the spiritual low rung of the ladder? A careful hand on the back, a warm voice of appreciation, a kind card, text, visit, or phone call can do wonders for any who are just about to stop with Christianity because of life's tumultuous explosions. Many will be quick to judge, condemn, even tell the discouraged how they ought to have executed a life choice differently. Few will take the time to encourage another so that the daily journey can be on the road again. Dear Reader, you remember, don't you, when someone kindly and courteously, and in depth of heart encouraged you?

HEBREWS 5:7 "DURING HIS EARTHLY LIFE, HE OFFERED PRAYERS AND APPEALS WITH LOUD CRIES AND TEARS..."

Most Christians don't think of Jesus crying, wailing aloud to His Father. But He did, and He was heard because of His reverence. He knew the only source of saving help was His Father. In His crying out He was learning obedience to God. Perhaps Christians should emulate their Lord. It seems current prayers have no crying out. Prayers tend to have no tears today. Prayers are a shopping list delivered to "someone up there." Dear Reader, when we pray like Jesus to the God of heaven, we can come to the domain He entered in prayer. He found deliverance. He found obedience. He found the One who could save Him. So, during earthly life the woman, man, boy, or girl can offer prayers like the Lord Jesus with loud cries and tears. God listens to this kind of prayer.

HEBREWS 6:4 "...WHO HAVE FALLEN AWAY."

Where is the young couple who vowed in the presence of God and family their everlasting love? Is this not the couple in divorce proceedings? Where is the young woman or man who pledged their faith to Christ and His Church who followed in Christian baptism? Are they not "out of church" today? Where is the business person who promised her/his new business to the Lord? Is that business person not the one engrossed with "making more and more" rather than on Christ? The list is endless regarding those who once were in the Christian life, but now are not. Falling away in Christianity is a difficult subject, yet looking around it is a real, tangible, and actual process in the lives of many. The writer of this passage is encouraging believers not to fall away. Dear Reader, is your life one of falling away? Has your faith grown cold? Are the pages of the Scriptures you once read daily now closed? To the open door of the congregation of believers you once assembled, do you disdain? Be encouraged not to fall away from your faith in Christ. Rekindle the testimony of your life today! Don't fall away!

HEBREWS 12:1 "...SINCE WE ALSO HAVE SUCH A LARGE CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US..."

Clouds envelope us as we fly in aircraft. Clouds cloak us we go into the fog on water. The cloud of witnesses to the faith cover us in the same way. The people of God surround us urging us to go on. The witness group says to us: "Go forward to the end of faith in Christ! Keep on with faith! Finish your course in faith!" They are like a cheering section to us. They encourage us to look to Jesus who Himself finished His race even though He went through the cross. As we keep our eyes on Jesus, the roar of the crowd around us—that heavenly cloud of witnesses--their words of cheerful reassurance moves us to endurance. We lay aside those things that are hindrances to the high calling we have in Christ.

Tony Cleaver is the director of distance learning and a professor of Biblical studies at Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary in Jacksonville, Tex. He is an author and writer of the popular newspaper column, Leave It to Cleaver. He may be contacted at tony.cleaver@bmats.edu.



BMA Texas Missions cont.

Him and what He has called us to. Pray for us as we seek His Kingdom first. We know He will provide the rest.

PRAYER REQUESTS FROM THE FIELD

-Pray that God provides the funds and the laborers for more evangelistic disciple making churches.

-Pray for souls saved, disciples made, leaders equipped and sent out to start again.

-Pray for each of your mission points as they shift into summer ministry mode.

-Pray for your missionary's spouses Amanda Durham, Gloria Garcia, Manuela Molina, and Jaime Driver as they face health issues.

PRAISE REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

-Amanda Durham is seeing improvement in her health!

-Hombre de Hombre Hispanic Retreat was a real blessing

this year with over 100 men in attendance and 1 surrendering to preach!

-Crossroads Church of Rowlett, Redeemer's Love Mission in Houston, The Church at Valley Ranch in New Caney, and Antioch Mission in Georgetown are all hosting new resident interns!

-God continues to answer your prayers on behalf of your mission effort!

Heith Mitchell is the director of BMA of Texas Missions. Contact him at P.O. Box 73, Waxahachie, TX 75168, 972-923-0757 or hmitchell@bmatexas.org. For more information, visit www.bmatexasmissions.org.



UPCOMING EVENTS

JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE SUMMER II AND FALL TERMS 2018

Summer II (Reduced tuition rates and no fees): July 9 – August 2

Fall 2018: August 16 – December 7

FALL 2018 EARLY REGISTRATION:

New Student Registration:
July 20 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Walk-in Registration (no appointment needed):
June 12 and 26 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
July 17, 31 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

FALL 2018 REGISTRATION:

August 10 and 13 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Visit www.jacksonville-college.edu for a list of course offerings.
For more information, contact Admissions at (903) 589-7100, admissions@jacksonville-college.edu.

GOD'S GIFT

HEAVEN IS A FREE GIFT!

It is not earned or deserved. No amount of effort or good works can earn a place for you in heaven. Why?

Because . . .

MAN IS A SINNER.

"For all have sinned . . ." (Rom. 3:23) Because of this, man cannot save himself. GOD. On the one hand, God is merciful and does not want to punish us. Yet God is just and must punish sin. God solved this problem for us in the Person of . . .

JESUS CHRIST.

He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and rose from the grave to purchase a place for us in heaven—"the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

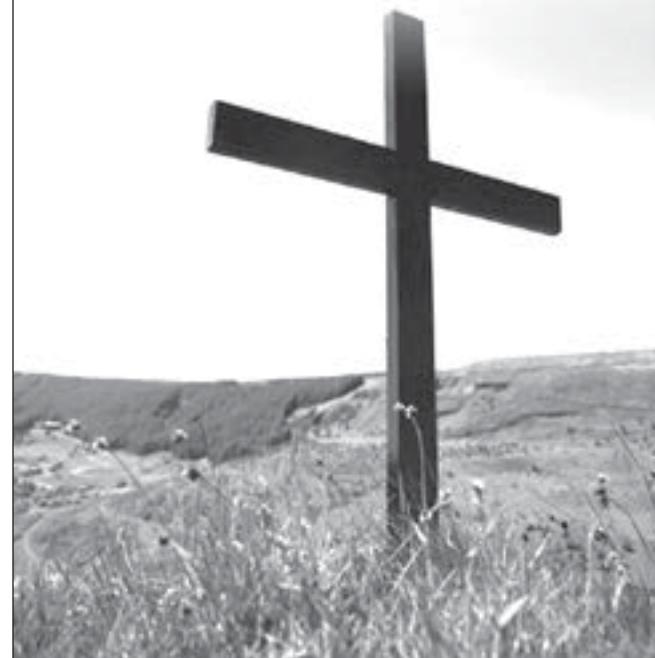
THE GIFT IS RECEIVED BY FAITH.

Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life. It means resting on Christ alone and what He has done, rather than what you or I have done to get us into heaven. "Believe on (or trust in) the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

SO MAY WE ASK . . .

Have you received God's free gift of eternal life? The Bible assures us in 1 John 5:13 that we can know we have eternal life.

Do you know for sure that you are going to heaven when you die? The Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you are willing to repent (turn away from your sin and to the Lord Jesus) you can receive the free gift of eternal life by simply praying: Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins, and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation, and I accept your free gift of eternal life.



NEED A PROJECT FOR VBS?

How about allowing your students to take an active role in world evangelism?

With EIM's Shepherd Bags, children can reach other children with the gospel of Jesus Christ. These bags are placed in the hands of children in need around the globe.

For more information on how your church can get involved, contact Fonda Norris at 870.226.3626 or fnorris@eimworldwide.org.



www.eimworldwide.org

EVENTS

SPECIAL SERVICE

DATE: June 29, 2018

PLACE: Little Flock, Lufkin

TIME: 7 p.m.

SPEAKER: Dr. John Adams,
Moral Action Executive Director

105TH HOMECOMING

DATE: July 1, 2018

PLACE: Little Flock, Lufkin

TIME: 10 a.m.

SPECIAL GUESTS: Southern Plainsmen Quartet

SPEAKER: Bro. John McGuire

EAST TEXAS MISSIONS DISTRICT MEETING

DATE: August 28, 2018

PLACE: Centro De Vida Mission,
1013 S. Robertson Avenue, Tyler, Texas

TIME: 6 p.m.

118TH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

DATE: November 5-6, 2018

PLACE: Calvary Baptist Church, Fairfield, Texas

pastor & staff changes

JACK HARDY is the new pastor of Little Flock, Jewett.

M&M Tours Presents: July 17-24, 2018 - (8 Days)

Amish Guided Tour - Ohio
Tour of Noah's Ark & Museum

Also Great Music Show at
Renfro Valley, Ky - \$998 pp

Call for place of pickup
Call Charlie @ 1-800-700-9620

PERSONNEL & POSITIONS

AVAILABLE POSITIONS

YOUTH PASTOR—Anthony Drive, Ennis is seeking a bivocational youth pastor. Salary is \$18,000 per year plus home with utilities paid. Must love the Lord and live a godly lifestyle, be a self-starter and have some formal biblical education or plans to begin. Duties include training up our teens (6th-12th grade) in God's Word, arranging and executing all camps, missions and activities, planning Bible studies for Sunday morning and Wednesday evening and being accountable for all money received for youth activities. Send resume to Pastor Matt Walker at mattwalker@adbcennis.org. ^{7/18}

PASTOR—First, Rice is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please contact Jason Fisher at 903-467-7299 or email fbricegale@yahoo.com. ^{6/18}

MUSIC—First, DeSoto is seeking a part-time music minister. Must be a Christian. Must be able to play a musical instrument to lead the congregation in worship and provide lyrics for the congregation to participate in worship or use the material available. Time frame is Sunday (2 Services 10:45 a.m./6 p.m.) Wednesday (1 Service 6 pm). Send résumé to fbcdesototx@gmail.com to schedule an appointment. Call 972-223-7448 for more information. ^{TFN}

PASTOR—Hill Creek, Whitehouse is seeking a pastor. Send resume and recorded sermon to Hill Creek Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1287, Whitehouse, Texas 75791. ^{TFN}

AVAILABLE MINISTER

SCOTT SCHULLE is available for to serve as an interim pastor or a bivocational pastor within 50 miles from Rusk. Contact him at 903-948-0058 (cell) or 903-795-3886 (home). ^{7/18}

FREE PIANO AND ORGAN

SAND FLAT, GRAND SALINE has a free 1958 upright piano in good condition, as well as a free 1978 Yamaha organ with sounds panel in excellent condition available. Contact church office at: 903-962-3804. Leave church name, location and phone number.

JOB OPPORTUNITY AT JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE: LIBRARY ASSISTANT

Jacksonville College is seeking a full-time library assistant to work in the Norman Library beginning in August 2018. Responsibilities include keyboarding and filing, record keeping and uploading of statistical data, and supervision of student workers. Familiarity with current computer applications, flexible work hours, and a commitment to continuing professional development are required. A working knowledge of library methods is preferred.

Churches in review

May 20, 2018

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
Anthony Drive, Ennis	43	121	
First, Omen	35	69	
First, Palmer	56	74	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	13	28	
Jackson, Joaquin	58	94	
Little Flock, Lufkin	115	115	
Little Mound, Big Sandy	28	48	
New Harmony, Tyler	249	296	
New Hope, Mineola	77	134	
Olde Tyme, White Oak		51	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	51	68	
Pine Brook, Tyler	23	54	
Rosewood, Gilmer	152	236	
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	40	70	
Security Calvary, Cleveland		91	
Simmons Hill, Diana	12	14	
Yellowpine Macedonia, Hemphill	17	28	

May 29, 2018

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
Anthony Drive, Ennis	46	112	
First, Omen		49	
First, Palmer	47	60	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	30	49	
Jackson, Joaquin	82	141	
New Harmony, Tyler	264	319	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	41	55	
Rosewood, Gilmer	127	220	
Sand Flat, Grand Saline		128	

June 3, 2018

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
Anthony Drive, Ennis	38	98	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	18	40	
Jackson, Joaquin	75	129	
Little Flock, Lufkin	110	210	
Little Mound, Big Sandy	36	51	
New Harmony, Tyler	259	335	
New Hope, Mineola	58	130	
Olde Tyme, White Oak		52	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	42	51	
Pine Brook, Tyler	24	70	2 by baptism, 1 by statement
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	49	68	
Security Calvary, Cleveland	19	43	
Simmons Hill, Diana	12	20	
Yellowpine Macedonia, Hemphill	14	21	

June 10, 2018

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
First, Palmer	44	53	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	20	30	
Jackson, Joaquin	67	116	2 by statement
Little Flock, Lufkin	103	105	
New Harmony, Tyler	264	298	
New Hope, Mineola	68	131	
Olde Tyme, White Oak		51	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	44	72	
Pine Brook, Tyler	31	83	
Rosewood, Gilmer	104	191	
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	54	84	
Security Calvary, Cleveland	22	40	
Simmons Hill, Diana	16	20	

Sunday School Lessons

The Lord is with us in the waiting

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: June 1, 2018

TEXT: Psalm 37

In this blessed Psalm we see the very essence of victorious living. But in that pursuit of holy living, there are some issues which seem to bog the Christian down in that pursuit. David was confronted with questions about:

1. We are not to waste our time fretting over the prosperity of the wicked.: verse 1: David expressed his dismay over this in Psalm 73. "Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. . . ." The thoughts of the prosperity of the wicked seemed to torment him, until he said in 73:17 "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."

2. We are to spend our days relying on the Lord God for our victory:

The imperatives for the believer are clear:

a. We are to trust in the Lord; dwell in the land (be settled and at home) verse 3

b. We are to delight ourselves in the Lord which results in our desires being aligned with his.

c. We are to commit our path to Him.

d. We are to rest in the Lord (Hebrews 4:1-4) To fail to do so is to live a faithless life.

3. We are to avoid human passions: verse 8-9 Human passion refuses to yield vengeance to God

4. We are to take comfort in the truth God rewards the faithful and cuts off the wicked. verses 10-24

5. We are to take comfort in the Lord's promise of provisions to His faithful: Verse 25.

Talking yourself out of spiritual depression

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: June 8, 2018

TEXT: Psalm 42-43

Have you ever been awakened in the middle of the night with an all consuming, desperate desire to commune with God the Father - perhaps feeling empty for having neglected Him or else you've been buried in cares of this life?

Do not ever let anyone tell you Christians are immune to depression, sadness or discouragement. And few people in scripture were gripped by it like David.

He found himself, on occasion, to be spiritually dry. Verse 1. When a child of God recognizes this, he is driven to God, sometimes out of desperation.

He sometimes is driven to the question, "God, are you there?" verse 3. "Why is my soul in turmoil?" verse 5

He suffers heartache as he remembers worship celebrations of the past with his brethren. verse 4. Hermon and Mount Mizar are far from the place where God had made His presence known. (Similar to the heartache of the Tribe of Judah captive in Babylon in Psalm 137.

He suffers the scorn of his enemies, taunting him and questioning his God. — verse 10

In the end, he acknowledges his hope is in his God, Who is his Victor. Verse 11.

Lord have mercy

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: June 15, 2018

TEXT: Psalm 51

Although the believer in Christ has been made free from the law and from eternal death, that believer still inhabits this "body of death" as Paul called it in Romans 7. That means, as long as you live on this earth, in human form, you will be badgered and enticed by Satan to stumble into sin. He knows he can never reclaim you - that you can never again come into condemnation, but he has a sick fixation on causing you to lose your joy in the Lord — to lose your witness.

An unbeliever doesn't feel the sting of separation from God's fellowship because an unbeliever cannot identify with having had fellowship with Him. You do not miss what you never had.

When a true believer falls into sin, his spirit is immediately pricked by conviction. He runs to God for Mercy. Psalm 51:1

When a true believer falls into sin, he wants to be thoroughly (and repeatedly) cleansed of iniquity and guilt. 51:2-3 and 7

When a true believer falls into sin, he knows the actual Person against whom those sins are committed. David could have said, "I have sinned against Bathsheba." He could have said, "I have sinned against Uriah." He might have said, "I have sinned against Israel." 51:4

When a true believer falls into sin, he realizes where that sin originated. 51:5

When a true believer falls into sin, he realizes he has not acted in Godly wisdom. 51:6

When a true believer falls into sin, he realizes his joy is diminished and he begs to be restored. 51:8; 12-13.

When a true believer falls into sin, the separation from fellowship with God is misery. 51:11

Perspective lost, perspective gained

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: June 22, 2018

TEXT: Psalm 73

The writer of Psalm 73 Asaph, a musician of the Levites, and a descendant of Levi (1 Chronicles 6) was fully aware of God's goodness to His people, but he almost let that truth be overridden in his heart because of his obsession about the prosperity of the wicked.

He had a misguided conception of the wicked: He envied their wealth, and it seemed life was easy for them - it appeared that no trouble ever befell them. To borrow the title from a popular book written by a televangelist in recent days, Asaph saw the wicked were having their best life now. They were not troubled — not plagued with opposition. verse 2-5

They were obviously prideful of their plight. verse 6

They dwelt in bounty: verse 7. They had more than their hearts had the capacity to wish for.

They were corrupt. verse 8. Corrupt people who have reached the top rung of the ladder, whether in politics, the corporate world, or in the community, have a powerful sense of entitlement. They deem themselves as untouchable and above the law. There seems to be a separate set of legal standards for them than from the general population. Sound familiar?

Their prosperity drove them to godlessness. verse 9.

The wicked seem to prosper while those who follow God and

God's worship preference

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: June 29, 2018

TEXT: Psalm 95

Our own worship style preferences have no doubt created one of the greatest holy wars in the 2,000 year history of the church. I personally am blessed by a large choir, pipe organ and large grand piano to be used in helping me to worship. But a vast number of the upcoming generation prefer contemporary.

How about our Holy God? After all, it is His preferences on worship that really matters.

1. He desires — and deserves that all expressions of worship be directed totally to Him. 95:1-2. We are to come before Him with songs and psalms of substance and a heart of praise, expressing joy to Him because He is God above all other gods — the true and living God.

2. He is sovereign, and has spoken everything into existence. verse 4-5

3. He is to be worshiped with a sincere, transformed heart. verses 6-7

4. The writer of Hebrews made reference to Israel's provocation in the remaining verses (8-11) The Israelites could not worship God because they were embittered and hardened in their hearts because of the wilderness, and the dread of entering into the promised land. They provoke God to wrath, and in doing so, were not permitted to enter it. Numbers 14.

Actually, God is not interested in whether we worship with tambourines, drums, and guitars, or with a pipe organ and classical choral arrangements. God is only interested in the condition of heart. Is your heart hardened? verse 8. Is your heart resistant to Him? verse 9. Is your heart faithless? verse 10. If so, then no world class orchestra and state-of-the-art choir is going to lift your hearts in worship to Him. But if your heart is pure, pliable, and submissive to Him, then your worship will be acceptable to Him with the music of an upright piano and a Heavenly Highway Hymnal.

His righteousness, seem to be plagued. Asaph was beginning to convince himself that his consecration to the Living God was an exercise in vanity. verse 13

But Asaph's vision was made clear when he entered the house of God. It was then he understood the plight of the wicked. it was then he realized the wicked would be brought to destruction. He then realized the foolishness and ignorance of wallowing in self-pity.

The lesson we take away from this Psalm is, "Remain near God — never forsake the assembly of the saints, and the result will be that you will have a right perspective on God's favor on you — and His eventual judgement on the wicked. Psalm 73: 17

Paul Gauntt is the pastor of First, Palmer. He served for a number of years as the BMA of Texas Department of Church Ministries director. He has served several churches as pastor, and is a correspondent and featured article writer for Baptist Progress Contact him at pop.gauntt@gmail.com.





JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 2018



Graduating members of the prestigious Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society



Senator Robert Nichols delivered the commencement address.



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