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Cultural Barriers: A Crisis of Complacency

By Larry Barker, VP of Church Strategy and Training

There certainly are several cultural barriers here in the United States and the trends we are observing now point toward the reality of spiritual darkness in-

creasing and progressively worsening, not getting better. That is not intended to cause us to wave a white flag of surrender but instead to understand the depth of the conflict and the need for prayer in the midst of spiritual warfare. The fastest-growing demographic in the United States is the “nones.” These are those who choose no religious affiliation at all. They have a definitive resistance toward any type of organized religion.

Several years ago, Lifeway Research said about the rise of the religious nones: “Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) represent the first generation in history where a majority had no religious or church background.” The Millennials said they were not against Jesus but did not want to be part of an organized church. In 1950, church attendance was at an all-time high, but now it is at an all-time low of less than 50%.”

Thom Rainer recently wrote, “Nearly seven out of ten (69%, Cultural Research Center) American adults self-identify as a Christian. With an adult population (18 years and older) of 259 million (census.gov), 179 million people in the U.S.

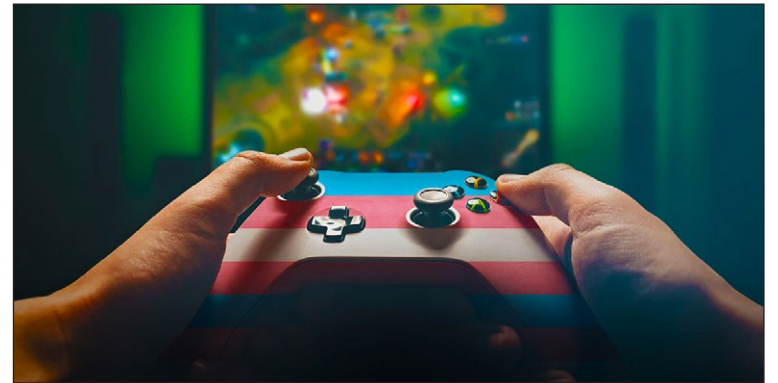
self-identify as a Christian — 179 million. That’s a lot of people.” This group, Rainer says, is composed of up to 60% being what he calls “CHRINOs” (CHRistian In Name Only). The complacency and complexity of today’s culture will require much prayer for God’s direction in reaching people with the gospel.

The complacency is not only in the culture but it can be seen in the church as well. Recent surveys point to the radical discrepancies between what church members say they believe and what they actually do. Who does not believe prayer is important? And yet, the average focused prayer time is only two minutes a day. Most agree that we should give back to the Lord, yet only 2.4% of church membership does. We talk, teach and preach the importance of discipleship, yet less than 1% of church members say they were ever intentionally disciplined.

We say we believe in evangelism, but when church members were asked how many times they had “shared with someone how to become a Christian, 78% say zero.” The reality is that many churches have become even more inwardly focused since COVID. That time caused us to make changes and give up some “preferences” we were not ready to turn loose of. Now our sanctuary has become more of a sanctuary where we primarily look forward to hanging out with people who have the same preferences, believe what we believe and think like we think. Actually, we are holding on to our preferences tighter than ever.

Have we fallen asleep to the Great Commission and the purpose for which our church exists? You may have a good group of people coming “in” for services and other activities, but are you as committed to going “out” on mission? Dave Harvey in *Stronger Together* stated, “But a local church cannot be truly healthy when a heart for missions is conspicuously absent and the fruit of this omission is celebrated as a strength.”

Maybe you wonder where to start and how to get back on mission. Begin with prayer! It is amazing to see that a praying church becomes a caring church, and a caring church becomes a going church.



Groomers vs. Gamers: “Call of Duty” Gets the Pride Month Treatment

By S.A. McCarthy, News Writer • The Washington Stand

Press “F” to pay respects — yet another franchise has fallen on the battlefield of Pride Month. Last year’s intense backlash against incessant Pride Month propaganda caused many corporations to tactically reconsider their allegiance to the LGBT agenda (washingtonstand.com/commentary/companies-scrap-overthetop-pride-plans-to-avoid-junes-backlash-for-business) and scale back their noxious promotion of rainbow-themed everything. But others, despite having witnessed the financial carnage brought on by boycotts against Target and Bud Light, decided to step on the Pride landmine anyway. Now, the beloved “Call of Duty” video game franchise (published by Activision, in case you’re wondering who to boycott) has been felled by the rainbow brigade.

To celebrate Pride Month, “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III” now features a free downloadable bundle allowing players to decorate their

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AR Department of Health Reports “Zero” Abortions in 2023

No abortions were reported as occurring in 2023 in the state according to the vital statistics released by the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH).

The ADH publishes annual reports every June documenting the number of abortions performed during the previous year. While Arkansas law prohibits abortion — exceptions are allowed for situations in which the mother’s life is at risk — none were reported.

Rose Mimms, executive director of Arkansas Right to Life, applauded the report, saying Arkansas’ strong pro-life laws are protecting thousands of women and unborn children from the tragedy of abortion. “Undoubtedly, many Arkansas pregnant mothers were spared from the lifelong regrets and physical complications abortion can cause and babies are alive today in Arkansas. That’s a win-win for them and our state,” she said.

Mimms added, “Arkansas is known as The Natural State and the Land

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CENTRAL BAPTIST COLLEGE PROFILE

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Terry Kimbrow
President

Sports News

By Erik Holth



CBC Baseball Coach, Four Players Named To NSB All-Arkansas Team

Natural State Baseball (NSB) announced the 2024 All-Arkansas Team on June 6, with Central Baptist College well represented. **Coach Dr. Aaron Brister** was named Coach of the Year, while **Austin Teal** earned All-Arkansas third base and **Cade McBride** was All-Arkansas in left field. **Jacori Hicks** and **Gram Middleton** both earned honorable mentions.

Brister led CBC to a 38-15 record this season and an appearance in the American Midwest Conference (AMC) tournament championship game. The 38 wins was the second most in a season in program history, and Brister moved past 300 wins at CBC during the season.

Teal was a first team All-AMC selection at third base and batted .427 this season with six home runs, a team-high 53 RBIs and a team-high 33 stolen bases which was good for a tie for second in the state in steals.

McBride earned Dual Position Player of the Year and Newcomer Player of the Year honors from the AMC and led the team in hits with 78 and batting average at .438 which also helped him earn AMC All-Tournament team honors.

Hicks closed the season strong, batting .377 with 14 extra base hits and 35 RBIs after the calendar flipped to April.

Middleton was an AMC first team selection at pitcher and led CBC in wins (seven), innings (65 and 2/3), strikeouts (74) and ERA (3.15), while also throwing three complete games and combining on a no-hitter on March 15 at William Woods.

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Being the Youth Pastor To Your Own Children

There are many challenges in student ministry. However, one that doesn't find its way into many training manuals or seminars is being the youth pastor to your own children. My theory is that many in student ministry either don't make it past those years or have had a bad experience and don't want to talk about it. It can definitely be a time of testing.

Not only are there strange emotions and challenges for your teenager, but church and youth group members bring weird expectations to the table when your teenagers enter the group. They are afraid you will play favorites and give your teenager time and attention that belongs to their children. So, how do we navigate all these expectations and needs? Here are a few suggestions:

- **Talk with your parents about your entering student.** They need to understand that you are a parent just like they are. You are trying to navigate home, school, church and the varied interests of your teenager. Communicate with them and allow them to express their concerns. Don't grow defensive during these conversations. Listen and speak to concerns as they arise.

- **Be sure to have volunteers you trust with your teenager.** When my children entered my youth ministry, there were a handful of adults who made a huge difference in their lives. I think about the way John O'Connor and Nathan Betts poured into my son. Laura O'Connor was among the ladies who cared for my daughter. I trusted these volunteers the way many parents trust the youth pastor of the church. I knew their theology to be sound and they loved my kids. There is not much more you can ask for.

- **Don't forget to disciple your children at home, not just at youth group.** One area I didn't do as well, at least in a formal manner, was disciplining my own children at home. We teach that parents are the primary disciple-makers for our students, but it is easy to limit that disciple-making to youth group time. Be intentional with your teenagers.

- **As you teach, don't use your children as examples unless you talk to them in advance.** Your



(L/R) Riley Carson, John O'Connor and Kat Carson. John served as a volunteer and became the youth pastor right before we left to serve at Calvary Baptist Church of Fayetteville. John shared his love for music and Jesus with both of my kids.



(L/R) Kat Carson with Elaine Simpson, one of the many who invested in her while we served at Temple Baptist Church of Rogers.

teenager does not want to be embarrassed. Talking about their struggles or inability to listen to their parents is not a great approach. There are times to talk about their victories and celebrate good things in your family, but make sure that you talk to your teenager in advance.

- **Have "check-ins" with your children.** As your teenager is involved in your student ministry, you need to keep the lines of communication open at home. Talk on a regular basis to your children about how things are going. Talk to them about challenges they are facing within the group. My son has shared with me some of the challenges he faced during those years. There were moments of jealousy from other students. He navigated them well, but it was an extra challenge that he endured. Your "check-ins" could also be a part of your discipleship time.

Hopefully, these suggestions can help you as you start to navigate the waters of pastoring your own children. We would love to hear how you successfully work with your children in your student ministry. Join us at Facebook.com/groups/StudentMinistryMattersCommunity and share your ideas.



CBC Alumni Association "Join in June" Promotion

It's back! The CBC Alumni Association is excited to announce that the "Join in June" promotion has returned for a limited time. During the month of June, alumni who join the CBC Alumni Association will be eligible to receive an exclusive gift as part of the promotion.

Join or renew your membership today and receive a free alumni cup. Memberships are \$35 per year for an individual and \$50 for a couple. Visit cbc.edu/alumniassociation to join today!

If you're already a member, no worries. You can purchase an alumni cup for only \$10. Contact Mallory Guyton at mguyton@cbc.edu for more information.

Mustangs in the Making

You are invited to enroll your children or grandchildren in our Mustangs in the Making program, a free program for children from birth through their senior year of high school. It allows the CBC Advancement office to pay special attention to our "Future Mustangs" and help them build a love for CBC early on. Each birthday, your child/grandchild will receive a birthday card as well as a gift on

certain milestone years. To enroll visit cbc.edu/makingmustangs or contact Mallory Guyton at mguyton@cbc.edu or (501) 205-8875.

Legacy Leaders

Legacy Leaders is another giving program that was created to help alumni and friends of CBC give back. The purpose is to recognize individuals that believe in the mission and future of Central Baptist College. Your contribution, whatever the amount, will have a big impact on the future of the college and in the lives of our students. To join legacy leaders, visit cbc.edu/legacyleaders.

- **Pillar** — \$10 per month
- **Tower** — \$25 per month
- **Sustainer** — \$50 per month
- **Leader** — \$75 per month
- **Old Main** — \$100 per month
- **1952** — \$250 per month

Homecoming 2025

CBC will host its annual Homecoming activities beginning Monday, Jan. 27 and continuing through Saturday, Feb. 1. Several events will take place during the week as we gear up for our main events on Friday and Saturday. Be sure and save these dates for Homecoming 2025.



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KNOWING THEREFORE
THE TERROR OF THE
LORD, WE PERSUADE
MEN

Presence, Proclamation Or Persuasion

How should we evangelize and share the good news of the gospel? Many methods have been provided, such as the Roman Road, Four Spiritual Laws, Evangelism Explosion, Evangelism in One Verse and Gospelize. Let me make this clear — train your people and show them how to share the gospel. Do not be guilty of giving them a challenging responsibility without showing them how to carry out that task. Decide on a biblical method and give your people the ability to share the gospel clearly, concisely and scripturally. Knowing what to do helps to remove some of the paralyzing fear in witnessing.

It is easy to always gravitate toward the method, but the greater obstacle, quite often, is the motivation. Why are so many believers unconcerned about reaching unbelievers with the gospel? Could this go back to an intentional focus on what became known as “lifestyle” evangelism? I Thessalonians 1:7 tells how the believers there became “ensamples, imitators, followers” to others because of how they lived out the truth of the Scriptures. Many began saying that you must not only “talk the walk but walk the talk.” Undoubtedly, your life must reinforce what you proclaim as truth, but is “lifestyle” evangelism enough?

I Thessalonians 1:8 speaks about how the Word of the Lord “sounded out” which speaks of how the message rang out and echoed for many more to hear its truth. God’s timing is challenging at times, but it can also bring great joy when you see His hand at work. Preparing for this article, I received a notice of a *Church Answers* blog posted by Dr. Chuck Lawless entitled, *Living in the Tension of Great Commission Urgency*. This was a great reinforcement to head in the direction God was leading. Why does it seem there

is so little passion and pursuit of those doing life around us who are far from God and not born again?

This article is not about methodology, where you can so easily become paralyzed, but it is about motivation. No matter what your soteriological position is, Adrian Rodgers challenged all churches to have an invitation and if you “whistle *Just as I Am*, the elect will know what you are doing.” In *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, David J. Hesselgrave wrote about the importance of communicating well, especially when it comes to a topic as eternally important as the gospel. In chapter six, he covers the “why” question that addresses every believer’s responsibility and obligation to communicate Christ’s story.

There are three terms he defines and clarifies — presence, proclamation and persuasion. Each term intensifies the assignment of every follower of Christ. Hesselgrave stated, “I will now argue that the early missionaries understood their commission to make disciples of all nations involved the ultimate in communication — not only reinforcing the Christian message behaviorally, nor simply delivering it verbally in writing or speech, but also persuading men and women to be converted and become faithful and fruitful followers of the Master.” Where does our responsibility as ambassadors for Christ begin and end?

II Corinthians 5:19-20 says, “... God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Chuck Lawless said, “That’s the Great Commission tension the

title of this blog post points toward. We cry out, ‘Come, Lord Jesus’ (Rev. 22:20) even as we plead with others, ‘Be reconciled to God.’ We do want Jesus to come back, but we want our loved ones and friends to turn to Christ before He does.”

Are we to press those we proclaim the gospel to for a verdict, to make a decision? How motivated are we to do something about that tension? Lawless offered that this call to be reconciled to God drips with urgency. He offered that living with Great Commission urgency involves praying with urgency, turning from our own sin with urgency, recruiting prayer warriors to join us in praying with urgency, proclaiming the gospel with urgency and trusting God with urgency. Does this not describe Paul’s heart in Rom. 9:3, “*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*”

Where is our urgency and passion to persuade unbelievers to be reconciled to God? Hesselgrave challenged every believer to see that in Acts 2:40, Peter did not stop with only proclaiming the truth of the gospel, but with many words, he continued to exhort (persuade) them to be saved. The Apostle Paul had this same passion to persuade, as clearly seen in Acts 9:20-29, where in verse 29 it states that he disputed with them. Then in Acts 26:27-28 notice Paul’s desire to persuade, not just proclaim, when he asked Agrippa if he believed. Agrippa’s response was, “*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*”

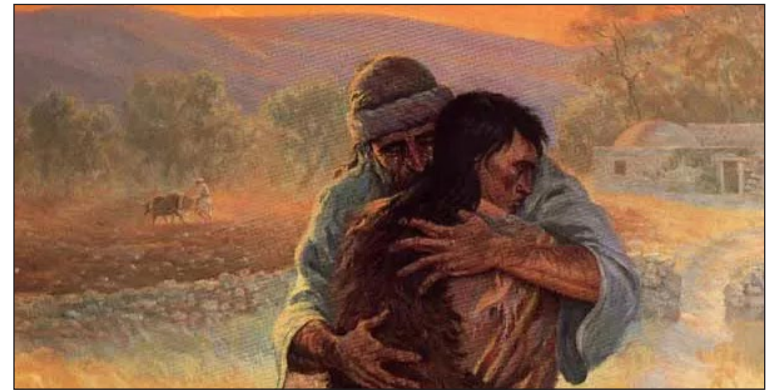
Hesselgrave continued, “But one must ask whether we can legitimately attack this problem by soft-pedaling terms while emphasizing others (i.e., teach, instruct, proclaim), or by subsuming terms like ‘dispute,’ ‘reason’ and ‘persuade’ under the activity of teaching... Obviously, to be genuine and effective, persuasion ultimately must be the result of the activity of the Holy Spirit. He is the ‘divine hidden persuader.’” We must not ignore the action verbs that point to our persuasive activity and not settle for “presence” or “proclamation.” II Corinthians 6:1 challenges us to urge others to not receive the grace of God in vain.

Allow me to hopefully persuade you by sharing a little more from Hesselgrave, “We have seen that our biblical mandate is conveyed in clear words — preach, teach, witness, proclaim, evangelize, exhort, rebuke, reprove, beseech, warn, persuade. The missionary, therefore, is a witness. He is a bearer of good news. He is a teacher. But he is more than these. Whatever else the missionary is, he is a persuaded man persuading others.”

Just Thinking...

By Dr. Tom Mitchell

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Love Lessons From A Loving Father

I was just thinking about the upcoming Father’s Day that celebrates the men who are called daddy, dad, pop or papa. It reminded me just how important fathers are in the molding of the lives of their children.

How sad it is when some men do not take the time to spend with their children or to even display affection and deep love for those children. In this column, I want to share some things about the Father who cares — who truly loves His children. Of course, I am referring to our Heavenly Father, who is also called by several names: God, the Almighty, Jehovah and especially Father.

From Luke 15, the Holy Spirit inspired Luke, the doctor who traveled with Paul, to write about a lost son — a prodigal, who decided to leave his home, his family and true love. Here are some lessons we can learn:

• **A lesson from a father who is generous** — Jesus said, “... *There was man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.*” (Luke 15:11-12 NIV). Not only was that father generous, he was fair. That is a very good example of who children can learn from good old dad — if they only pay attention. May we never forget that our Heavenly Father is fair in all His dealings with His children.

• **A lesson from a father whose life was disrupted by a wayward son** — I cannot properly identify with such a situation because our son has never been wayward. But as a pastor, I have witnessed just how terrible it is for a father and mother when the children stray toward what the world offers rather than what Jesus Christ offers. Some do not hear again from that wayward child after he or she departs. Worry sets in, and the father lies awake at night, just praying and wondering if the child is well or if he or she is even alive. The prodigal was enjoying what the world had to offer — until it was no longer appealing.

“*Not long after that, the younger son got together all that he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything*” (Luke 15:13-16).

That young man had no Western Union, no bank transfers and no cell phone. He was totally destitute! Finally, the young man came to his senses, realized his foolishness and that he had sinned against his dad. He decided to go back home.

• **Learn from a father who longed for reconciliation** — “... *But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him...*” The father didn’t stand on the front porch with his arms crossed, just waiting to chastise his boy. No. “*He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him*” (Luke 15:20).

• **Learn from a father who does not show partiality** — Despite the older brother’s objections to the reconciliation and complaining, the father displayed fairness to both sons. The older brother, who had been at home, was actually far away from his father. Our Heavenly Father loves us with unconditional love. Even when believers backslide in their walk

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By Executive Editor
Jeff Herring

Journey
with
Jeff



A Busy Time of Year

I have spent over 30 years working with students in some capacity since I surrendered to the ministry on Nov. 7, 1992. Although I am not currently “on staff” as a student pastor, I still work with our high school ministry at Antioch in Conway as a volunteer. As anyone who works in student ministry understands, this is the time of year when things get really busy — mission trips, church camps, Vacation Bible School, SOAR, etc.

I am blessed to be able to serve as a sponsor for many of our trips throughout the year. We just returned from a mission trip to Oklahoma City, where we worked with Grace Harbor Church. It was a blessing and a reminder of why I love working with students. I was able to spend some time investing in the lives of students as we worked together in a variety of ways over the five days.

The busy times will continue over the next few weeks. Next week (June 17-20), I will be at church camp. I am the director for the BMA Youth Camp that currently meets at Budd Creek Baptist Camp in Greers Ferry. This is a camp began in 1978 and I have been honored to serve as the camp director for over 20 years. We have just under 450 campers registered to arrive on Monday. Please pray for our speaker, Chris Vines, worship leader, Doug Mickan and all those who will be at camp. Each year I tell the campers they are not there by accident, but God has brought them to camp for a purpose. Please pray for God to move in the lives of all those at camp.

Special Emphasis Update

Thank you to those who are still giving to help us meet our goal. Although our time of promotion is in March and April each year, we count all Special Emphasis offerings received through the end of our fiscal year (Aug. 31) toward the goal. If you would like to know more about why we are raising these funds, visit BaptistTrumpet.com/SE2024.

2024 Special Emphasis • Goal — \$30,000

| Previously Reported (May 22) | \$21,490.00 |
|---|--------------------|
| Church at Willow Beach, North Little Rock | \$590.00 |
| Beacon, Taylor | \$92.20 |
| Calvary, Marvell | \$125.00 |
| Calvary, White Hall | \$1,415.00 |
| Total | \$23,712.20 |

DISTRICT CALENDAR

Greenbrier Dist. WMA; July 11, 10 a.m.; Springhill, Greenbrier.

United Dist. WMA; July 13, 10 a.m.; Hattiesville, Hattiesville

Jonesboro Dist. Brotherhood; June 25; Discover Mission, Prospect, Jonesboro.

Central Ark. Dist. Brotherhood; July 15, 6:30 p.m.; North View, No. Little Rock.

Central Ark. WMA; July 20; Landmark, England.

HOMEcomings

Marcus Hill, Enola, June 23; 10 a.m.; lunch to follow; Kim Leach, pastor.

Bodcaw #2, Rosston, July 14; 11 a.m. worship, Dr. Eric Goble message, lunch to follow; Bruce Porter, pastor.

Bodcaw #1, Bodcaw, July 28; 10:30 a.m.- devotional (John Ed Dorman); 11 a.m. — message (James Ross); potluck to follow; Tim Vines, pastor.

ABORTION

(Continued From Page 1)

of Opportunity. Legally induced abortion is contrary to the will of the people in Arkansas clearly and precisely articulated by Amendment 68 to the Arkansas Constitution: “Section 1: Public funding — No public funds will be used to pay for any abortion, except to save the mother’s life. Section 2: Public policy — The policy of Arkansas is to protect the life of every unborn child from conception until birth, to the extent permitted by the Federal Constitution. Section 3: Effect of amendment — This amendment will not affect contraceptives or require an appropriation of public funds.”

The three reports released by the ADH in June list the number of abortions performed in the past year, the number of women who experienced complications from abortion and the number of abortions necessary to save the life of the mother. All three reports show no abortions during 2023. In the past, Arkansas has averaged about 3,200 abortions per year.

A group currently is working to place the Arkansas Abortion Amendment on the November ballot. The measure would write abortion into the state constitution, and it would prevent the Arkansas Legislature from enacting protective laws concerning abortion during the first five months of pregnancy and up to the moment of birth — allowing thousands of abortions every year and possibly paving the way for taxpayer-funded abortions in Arkansas.

Mimms urged pro-life Arkansans to join the Decline to Sign campaign underway to defeat the amendment effort. More information about how to get involved in this is available at artl.org.

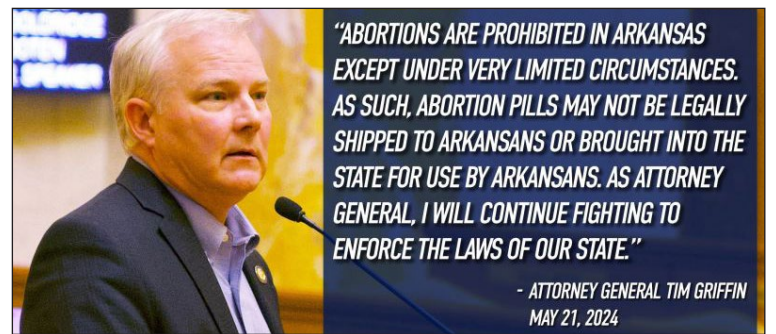
FATHER

(Continued From Page 3)

with Christ, the Father is always ready for us to return, and He welcomes them back with a love like no other.

A good earthly father will emulate the character of his Heavenly Father. Sometimes even dads need to return to the Heavenly Father who loves them so. They may need to repent and return to the Lord. They may need to gather their family together, put their arms around them, hug them, kiss them and show them they are truly loved.

Dads, the Bible teaches that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Your closest neighbors are your family. Love them as Christ has loved you — totally and unconditionally.



- ATTORNEY GENERAL TIM GRIFFIN
MAY 21, 2024

ARTL Applauds Attorney General Tim Griffin

Arkansas Right to Life (ARTL) Executive Director Rose Mimms applauded Attorney General Tim Griffin May 21 for issuing cease and desist letters to New York-based Choices Women’s Medical Center, Inc. and Aid Access of the Netherlands for potential violations of the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act (ADTPA) related to abortion pill marketing and sales.

“Arkansas Right to Life applauds the actions of Attorney General Tim Griffin in his efforts to protect pregnant women in Arkansas from those who prey on them and seek to profit monetarily when they are in crisis,” said Mimms. “Arkansas Right to Life supports the efforts of the ‘Every Mom Matters’ initiative of the Arkansas Department of Health and the almost 50 nonprofit pregnancy resource centers around our state that offer actual resources that assist in healthy pregnancies and outcomes for mothers and families who plan to parent or place a child for adoption.”

Griffin’s cease and desist letter reads: “Abortions are prohibited in Arkansas except under very limited circumstances. As such, abortion pills may not be legally shipped to Arkansans or brought into the state for use by Arkansans. My office has verified that both Choices Women’s Medical Center, Inc. and Aid Access are advertising the availability of abortion-inducing pills to Arkansans in contravention of our laws.”

He added, “These companies must cease and desist advertising relating to the performance of abortion services in Arkansas immediately or face the possibility of lawsuits from my office. As Attorney General, I will continue fighting to enforce the laws of our state.”

The Attorney General has the authority to sue violators of the ADTPA and seek civil penalties of \$10,000 per violation. Griffin said both companies must provide written notification within 14 days detailing the actions they’ve taken to comply with the cease-and-desist letter.

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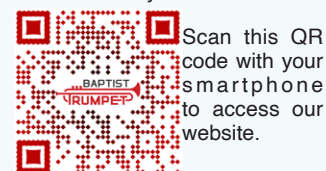
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What I See...
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By Stuart Estes
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It's Been a While

It's been a while. So, first, let me start by saying "I'm sorry" for not communicating more about The Hedge. God is still continuing to work in this ministry, and that is something I should be more diligent to let you know about.

Since I last shared with you, a lot has happened at The Hedge. We've seen a whole school year fly by. We've seen new faces turn into regulars. We celebrated new graduates at our last gathering of this spring semester. And we've even completed a face lift of our downstairs worship space.

Hindsight is 20-20, so the old saying goes. When I think back on this past year, I see how it's very easy to get shortsighted — to be so preoccupied with what is right in front of you that you can't look past it. As I've been reflecting on the past year, I see that reality has been true for me.

Before I get into that, I want to acknowledge that God's sovereignty overarches human shortsightedness. I don't want to diminish all the work He has been doing at The Hedge, but I do want to be honest — some of that work has been to teach me that I haven't spent enough time setting my sights on the horizon.

This is my third full year of leading this work, and over the course of those first two years God was stirring us to life in some pretty spectacular ways. The ministry that was in financial disarray had been brought right-side up by His gracious provision. The ministry that had lost its identity on campus was starting to gain traction in certain spaces as a place that students wanted to be a part of. Small gatherings of as few as 6 on a Tuesday night had grown to be consistently over 20.

This past year, it seemed like some of that was stalling or maybe even going backward. It seemed to me

like we were trying really hard to be the "right" kind of ministry, but we still weren't there. I was wondering if we had hit the glass ceiling.


I'll admit it, I was getting a little frustrated — mostly at others, though. I was frustrated that students weren't inviting others to The Hedge. I was frustrated they weren't prioritizing evangelism. I was frustrated people who had been involved were bailing out for other things.

One Tuesday night, I was about to preach, and I remember thinking, "Is this really what these students need? Another night of worship when most of them are in church and have this same kind of thing on a Sunday morning?" I just pushed that thought down because you can't teach with something like that floating around in your head! But the next morning, I was able to get alone with the Lord, and I brought this before Him in prayer. As I confessed these feelings, His Spirit began to point something out to me — my desires for His glory were not what they should be, and this was at the root of why things had started to stall at The Hedge.

Now, fast forward to today, and I can confidently say that I had done some things over the course of a year — out of a lack of fervency for God's glory and shortsightedness — that had led the work to this plateau. It's taken me about a month and half of processing to get to that conclusion, but I know it to be true now.

Over the summer months, I'm making some changes in the ways I think about and do this work. My plan is to share some of those things with you as I work through them. Hopefully, I can share with you how the Lord continues to deal with me and this work as we move forward.

Thank you for your support and prayers for The Hedge!



Leave it to Cleaver

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When God Doesn't Guide

I have prayed and prayed for God to guide me. He hasn't answered my prayer. I have asked God for direction for my life. He has not given me direction. What do I do? Gideon (Judges 6) asked God for a sign that the fleece be wet and the ground be dry. Then he asked for the ground to be wet and the fleece dry. God replied as Gideon had requested. What happens when all is wet and all dry at the same time? What do I do? Here are some things we can do as we ask God for leadership when there seems to be no immediate answer:

- **Keep on asking.** God is interested in your well-being and the well-being of His kingdom. God is not annoyed at your asking for direction from Him. He is honored when we truly ask for direction from Him. We must ensure that we seek His direction rather than blessings on our escape plans when we are in trouble.

- **Look for change.** Many times, prayer changes me. Many times, prayer changes circumstances, even those people around me. There may be movement in the condition in which I find myself. New insights occur when we are open to the presence of the Living God.

- **Read and reread the Scriptures.** The Bible is the guide for my life. It is authoritative for my journey. It is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path. There is no human condition the Bible excludes. I will find more than a hint in the Book of books.

- **Enquire of spiritual mentors.** Some people are good guides. They are spiritually sensitive to your journey and will give you godly and sound counsel, not "Here's what you need to do now" advice.

- **Try a "new" path.** If I am stuck at a dead end, maybe I need to go back to the crossroads to find my way. Returning to "basics" and the starting point many times reveals which end of the rope you are holding.

What do I do when God seemingly does not answer my request for direction? Rather than giving up on God, the above tried and proven ways are most helpful.



Break Out the Truth Bible Conference; June 16-19; 6 p.m.; Sun.-A Case for Genesis (Cory Mitchell), Mon.-Jesus Through Israel (Allen Morton), Tue.-The Gospels (Jarod Hendry), Wed.-Eschatology (Dr. Tom Mitchell).

Gospel Concert featuring Karen Peck and New River; June 28; 7:30 p.m.; Landmark, England.

Gospel Singing featuring Harper Collective; June 29, 6 p.m.; Oak Grove, Jonesboro.

SOAR 2024; July 3-5; Live! By Loews Convention Center; Arlington, Texas.

Student Ministry Workers Retreat; Sept. 14; Central Baptist College; Conway.



Antioch, Conway; June 17-20, 9 a.m.; *Scuba*.

North View, No. Little Rock, July 7-11; *Shine*.

Prospect, Jonesboro, July 8-11, 6 p.m.; *Good News Cruise*.

County Line, Marvell; July 8-12; *WildLive*.

Zion, Fordyce; July 8-12, 8:30 a.m.; 4 yo-5th grade; *Scuba*

Ark. WMA Ladies Retreat; Sept. 27-28; Central Baptist College, Conway.

Re:Charge Leaders Oasis; Oct. 1-3; Calvary, Fayetteville.

BMA of Arkansas Mtg.; Nov. 7-8; Central Baptist College, Conway.



Retired BMA Pastor's Wife Dies

Barbara Jean Morrison, 77 of Pea Ridge, passed away May 20. She was the wife of Larry Morrison, former BMA of Arkansas missionary and pastor, she was a member of Bethel, Bentonville.

Her husband pastored a number of churches in Arkansas, including: Garden Springs, Jefferson; Beacon (now Murrell Heights), El Dorado; Little River, Manila; Commerce Road, Pine Bluff (BMA of Ark. Mission); Beech Street, Crossett; and Unity, Rogers (Benton County Mission). He also pastored Riley, Kan. and served as associate pastor at Fairview, Blytheville.

Barbara served in the Juvenile and Child Support Division with the Benton County Circuit Court until she retired in 2008.

Survivors include her husband of 59 years, Larry Morrison; two sons, Carter Wade (Amanda Sanders) Morrison of Fayetteville and Ross Lynn (Rebecca Lambrecht) Morrison of Brooklyn, NY; two brothers, Ronnie Lynn (Chris) Ellison of Pine Bluff and Timothy Paul Ellison of Little Rock; one sister; Lynette Fowler of Bentonville; and one granddaughter.

A graveside service was held at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Hiwasse on May 22, with Perry Morgan and Ron Schultz officiating. Arrangements were by Epting Funeral Home in Bentonville (eptingfuneralhome.com).



Vicky Ann Townsley Gray, 74 of Plumerville, passed away June 6. She was a member of Calvary Baptist Church.



Blooming Grove Church in Rector is in search of a bi-vocational pastor. For more information, contact Tim Barnum at (870) 335-8061, Roby Ward at (870) 476-7013 or Ben Isom at (870) 595-4499.



Holes in Our Story: The Unseen World

My heart through Stand Firm Ministries has been to encourage believers to remain faithful, and especially to encourage the emerging generation to stand firm. In my research, I'm convinced that one of the main reasons 65-80% of children raised in our churches leave the faith is because they don't see the story they're invited into as big as it truly is. This is heartbreaking because the upcoming generation wants to give their lives to a cause that counts, and we know that following Jesus is the greatest cause. There's no more significant "cause story" in the world than the one told in Scripture. The story of truth recorded in the Bible, unfolding in the present and inviting us to be a part of it, encompasses all of reality. Our modern portrayal of that story often makes it a separate, unrelated narrative to the rest of the world. I know this isn't what we want or long to convey. That's why I spent so much time sharing my series of articles on *The Epic Story of Truth*.

If you followed that series closely, you saw the prevalence of some biblical topics we don't include as much as others in the church and our conversations on the Bible today. I highlighted two of them — the end times and God's continued plan for Israel. There's a third subject that had traces in nearly every individual Bible story we looked at. The subject is in almost every event within the Bible. That's the unseen world — Satan, angels, demons, and all that is in the spirit world. Now, we do address these things on occasion, but I have come to find out I didn't have a biblical view of the actuality of angels and demons, nor did I realize the unseen world has prominence within Scripture. I can't speak for anyone else, but I didn't have a biblical view. Most of the treatment of these topics I hear isn't what I would consider

biblically solid. I let tradition and modern thinking shape my views rather than the Bible itself.

When I talk about having a biblical view of the unseen world, that comes by recapturing the first-century mind of the original audience of the Bible. We get small glimpses of the view of the audience that received the New Testament when reading the Bible, but their view of the angelic world is laid out thoroughly in the intertestamental writings. These are books written after the close of the Old Testament until the time of Jesus that aren't included in the Bible. If you've picked up a Catholic Bible, they are the included "bonus" books. Though not in Protestant Bibles, they're quoted in the Bible and even by Jesus. Studying those books is a loaded topic, but they are the closest we can get to understanding more about the Bible's original audience mindset. I'll address that topic later, as I am launching into a series on the unseen world of the Bible, but with this article, I wanted to give five reasons why this topic matters:

- **The unseen world is a major part of the Bible.** The spirit world is in the Bible a lot — likely more than we realize! Therefore, if it's in the Bible, it's important, and we must have a biblical foundation of the topic like we aim for with every other topic. In Acts 20, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to preach the whole counsel of God.

- **Like when Jesus came in His first advent, the activity of the unseen world will ramp up leading up to His return.** If you want to tally up a long list, go through the Book of Revelation and tally each time it talks about angels. You will have to be committed to finishing because it is a lot. There are also wild passages such as Revelation 9, which talks about fallen angels

Revivals

New Liberty, Emmett; June 24-28; 7 p.m.; John David Watson, evangelist; Billy Chris Langston, pastor.

Bodcaw #2, Bodcaw; July 15-17; 7 p.m.; Mon.-Tue.-Dr. Eric Goble, Wed.-Harper Collective Band; Bruce Porter, pastor.

Bluff Springs, Rosston; July 20-23; Sun. 5 p.m., Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Sun.-Tues. — Kenneth Bobo, evangelist, Wed. — Damien Rogers, evangelist; Donnie Dillard, pastor.

County Line, Marvell; Aug. 4-7; Sun. 5:30 p.m., Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Todd Smith, evangelist.

Landmark, England; Aug. 4-7; Sun. 6 p.m., Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Master's Voice singing, Ricky Capps, evangelist; David Inzer, pastor.

released from under the Euphrates River and demons coming out of the abyss. The Bible indicates that the unseen world will play a prominent role at the end of the age. We saw the same thing when Jesus came in His First Advent.

- **We can't understand spiritual warfare if we don't have a biblical foundation of the spirit world.** Though we may not talk about angels and demons regularly in the modern church, we do talk about spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is real, but if we don't have a biblical foundation of the spirit world, we can't accurately prepare and fight this spiritual war.

- **As paganism returns and grows in the United States, we all will be confronted with conversations about the spiritual world.** Until the spread of Christianity, the Gentile world was dominated by paganism and spiritism. Therefore, as Christianity wanes in places, there will be a return to these practices. We are seeing this in the United States. There is a rise in paganism, spiritism and witchcraft. I'd argue that the first followers of Jesus were prepared to encounter these things, but we're not today, as we have neutralized much of the spirit world of the Bible.

- **The world is increasingly providing alternative explanations of the unseen world.** The lost world has always tried to explain the spirit world in its own way. Today, we chalk up their explanations as mythologies and fairy tales, but then we do the same ourselves. Have you seen shows like History Channel's Ancient Aliens? It could be that the Bible might have answers that we're not providing the world around us.

— Jake is a state missionary and would love to share about the work in Northwest Arkansas and encourage your church to stand firm. (standfirmministries.com)



Who Will Stir the Water?

In John 5:1-15, we read about a pool in Jerusalem called Bethesda. Around it lay a great number of disabled people — blind, lame, paralyzed. It was believed at that time that an angel would come down from Heaven and stir the water, and the first one to get in the pool would be healed. One man, a paralytic for 38 years, didn't have a chance to get in the water first. Most likely he was brought to the pool yearly filled with hope that this would be the year he would be healed. Year after year, he was taken away filled with hopelessness.

One day, however, everything changed. Jesus came to Jerusalem to attend a feast of the Jews. When He saw the man lying there in such dire condition, He asked, "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6 NIV).

At that time, the man did not know Jesus nor did he understand the question. Attempting to explain the situation, he replied, "Sir... I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me" (John 5:7).

Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (John 5:8). Immediately, the man was healed, no longer chained by his infirmity. Jesus had set him free. His despondency turned to joy. Being the Sabbath, the Jews weren't too happy about the situation because it was against the law to carry your mat on that holy day. Later, when the man met Jesus at the temple, he "went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well" (John 5:15). And that was that!

The man's original hope was in the wrong savior. He thought if he could have just gotten into the water stirred by an angel, he would find healing. He was not expecting to find spiritual healing.

People today are desperately looking for spiritual healing, for someone or some thing to "stir the water" and promise them a way to get to Heaven. Some "churches" invite them to be a part of their fellowship. They have already stirred the water; you just have to keep the law and abide by their rules. In some places, baptism is your guarantee into Heaven. Others stir the water by asking a person to "plant a seed" by donating a large amount of money to their organization, and telling them that by doing so, God will be pleased and bless them a hundred times over. In one so-called church, you can stir your own water by believing whatever you want to. They say the way to Heaven is through many different doors — as long as you are sincere.

Sadly, none of these options will give eternal life. Only Jesus can do that. There is no false hope like the world offers. Jesus came into the world to seek and to save those who are lost. Confessing our sins and trusting Him as our Savior guarantees our home in Heaven.

A favorite hymn of mine reminds me that no one has ever cared for me like Jesus. In Scripture, the Lord says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). There is no waiting for years to catch His eye, and no standing in line behind other people. The paralyzed man realized that right away. Jesus looked at him with compassion and changed his life forever.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). And it will be immediate — Jesus stirred the water a long time ago. We must let the world know where their hope can be realized.



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Temptation — Gen. 29:1-12 (Part 2 of 3): The Warning Signs

Last week, we looked at two conditions connected to the storm of temptation. Now, let us observe the warning signs.

Statistics show couple after couple today repeatedly state that it was loneliness that drove them to adultery. Of course, that is no excuse to cheat, but we are trying to find causes. By now, husbands and wives should be aware of the danger of loneliness. A person can eat, sleep and spend their life with someone and yet be lonely. We overlook our spouses when we become so consumed in ourselves or others. That is when our actions spell trouble.

From a casual reading, we can tell the real cause for Potiphar's wife's actions was selfish lust. We are told Joseph was a goodly person and well favored (handsome). She cast her eyes upon him literally with desire. Now listen to James, *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"* (James. 1:14-15).

Potiphar's wife was driven by uncontrolled lust that made her do what she did. And having position, she could justify her sin by blaming someone else. We need not be guilty of blaming someone else for our sin. Adam tried and it didn't work then either. The marriage vows say, "for better or worse, till death do us part." Johnny Cash said, "I fell into a burning ring of fire. I went down, down, down and the flames went higher." This could describe many a person struggling with temptations.

One thing that will help is this — don't assume too much. Have an open line of communication with your spouse. Couples would be better off talking more than sulking. God is greater than any problem, and all we need do is pray. Think of such betrayal as if you robbed someone with a gun. It is just something you do not do unless you have serious issues. Yet spouses are guilty every day of nearly stomping the life out of their spouses. So, as a Christian, recognize the negative potential of loneliness and lust, not only in ourselves but also in others.

We must avoid the call to temptation when we are tempted (in many areas of life such as to fight, lie, cheat, sensual, etc.). We must say "no" to the very idea. *"But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Gen. 39:8-9).

Here we see two things. One was the destruction that giving in to temptation could bring to one's success. Joseph reaffirms his great success and why giving in to temptation not only can ruin a career, but it may even wreck a family. And secondly, he thought, "What this will do to my spiritual life? How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Notice he did not say against Potiphar but God, because sin of any form is against God. Joseph knew, like all sins, there is always a price to be paid, and a judgment one must face.

When all else fails to shut out the call of temptation, just remember who you are — a child of God — and that one day you will stand before Him and give an account of those things done in this life.

From Our Missionaries

Misión Creciendo en Cristo (Growing in Christ), North Little Rock: Juan Carlos Posadas writes, "Do you remember Benjamin and Alanis, a Venezuelan couple we helped with some paperwork they needed to complete? Last week, they expressed their desire to get married, so I offered

them some premarital talks. We had nine hours of talking about marriage in light of the Word of God. They were very attentive, participated and shared their lives, and it was obvious that they were seeking God's teaching in His Word.

"We began cleaning the exterior of the building Thursday

— washing walls, cutting bushes, cutting tree branches that hindered lighting, cutting grass and repairing equipment. We had to stop Sunday afternoon because of the coming storm. Thank God for the willingness of these brothers to maintain the building."

Ebenezer, West Little Rock: Ruben Isturiz writes, "Last Sunday, we had a recognition of our four young people who graduated from high school. We prayed for them and gave them a small gift. Some of them will continue their university studies, and we are praying that God will continue to open doors for them. We have few young people in Ebenezer right now, but we are praying that God will continue to bring new young people to our congregation.

"In past articles, I told you about Neymar, one of our children who is being treated for cancer. Thank God, he is getting better. He and his family connect to Ebenezer online every Sunday. Georgina is Neymar's mom, and she had asked us to pray for Colton, who was undergoing cancer treatment. This week, we found out that Colton had lost the fight against his disease. Georgina has been strengthened by God throughout this time, and she has been a missionary to other parents who are in the same circumstances. Let us pray for her and all her family for strength.

"Ebenezer continues to thank God for all of you and for your prayers. If it were not for the support you give us, it would be very difficult to have this ministry among the Hispanic community. To God be the glory!"

Faith Chapel, Flippin: Johnny Shew writes, "We had another great week at Faith Chapel! We had a really good number for worship even though, once again, several were out for various reasons. But we also had several visitors, aside from our 'faithful visitors,' with one first-time visitor. It was a really good service.

"The building is showing progress. The painters are coming Monday or Tuesday, and we have almost finished the siding on the

new addition the Master's Builders helped us with. It is going to be so nice to finally move in and begin to use the new building. There is so much work involved in building a new building like this, but it will be so worth it when we are able to be in there — and we know it will be soon.

"Thank you all for your continued support, and especially for your prayers! God is hearing and answering them. Please continue, and we will continue to lift you up in prayer as well."

Faith Journey, Benton: Bryan Clay writes, "The mission loves this time of year! The summer always brings the opportunity to share God's message through Vacation Bible School with children in our area who might not otherwise be involved in a church to hear about Him.

"I was asked to be the speaker at Celebration Baptist Church in Haskell this past week at their Mega Kids Camp. The main theme of this week was about being the Light of the World and the Salt of the Earth.

"We had a good group of young adults and children in attendance this week at Faith Journey. We spoke on needing boldness in our lives for Christ and how to achieve that in our ministry. We need to study the Word and ask God to give us opportunities to share His story with others who come into our daily walk. We are praying that each of us gains more boldness in Him to make His kingdom known."

Misión Gracia Soberana (Sovereign Grace), NWA: Roberto Marcelletti writes, "We met with Pastor Dana William and his wife, Kimberly on Tuesday. He is the pastor of Cornerstone, our mother church, and he told us they are very happy to be part of our mission. He also shared that they were there to help us grow, and we could immediately notice it since they are helping us with the church expenses by donating equipment to maintain the church. They also invited us to a fair where they were going to have a stand to publicize their church. We shared the table and gave out information about our church and distributed tracts. Nine people were also able to evangelize.

"I was sharing the gospel with five families this week in a place where they go to look for food.

"We had a low attendance Sunday because there was heavy rain at the time of the service and several families were on trips for the holidays."

Epic Life, Pea Ridge: Jake McCandless writes, "We had a



Bodcaw #1, Bodcaw one by baptism; Tim Vines, pastor.

First, Bald Knob gained two by baptism; Matthew Grantham, pastor.

First, No. Lewisville received three by baptism and two by letter since last report; Jerry Evans, Interim Pastor.

Macedonia, Magnolia reports one by baptism and one by letter; Joe Owens, pastor.

Milligan Ridge, Manila welcomed three by baptism; Jeff Knowlton, pastor.

Providence, Hope witness one by baptism; Casey Curtis, pastor.

great week with our Connection Groups. Three of the four sustaining groups met, and the Woodbridge Connection Group had a packed house with 21!

"This week was also our monthly Collective Gathering, which is where all our Connection Groups meet to celebrate what God is doing and to worship corporately. The night often involves testimonies, multiple Scripture readings and multiple prayer times. This week was more like a traditional service, with a time of worship and a full message. I shared a message entitled, 'What if the Disciples Carried Out Their Mission Like Us?' We looked at the continual line of disciple-making since the generation of the 12 disciples, and we don't want it to end with us. We constantly talk about the core of what we're to do as Christ-followers — to follow and fish.

"It was a difficult night because it was the last night our worship leaders, Robby and Leah Herrage, would be with us. They had moved to the area from Mobile, Ala. to lead us in worship and have been with us since the beginning. We have been able to have their leadership through the Silas Partnership."

El Faro #2 Hispanic Mission, Cabot/Jacksonville: Michael Hight writes, "Yesterday, I had the privilege of speaking at Celebration Baptist Church in Haskell. We lived in Haskell when the mission started, and it has been exciting to see how God continues to bless them.

"This is a big week for me — I am meeting with the neurologist from Arizona on Tuesday to get my final diagnosis and a treatment plan. I am praying for some concrete answers.

"We have set the time to start our mission's public worship services and will spend the summer working toward that day. Please keep us in your prayers!"



BMA of Oklahoma And Just the Crumbs

By David Langley, President • BMA of Oklahoma

Just the Crumbs is a nonprofit organization that began in December 2014 to help those in need. Its founder, BMA Minister Lavon Haden, started the ministry by simply handing out hot dogs to the hungry in his town of Columbia, Miss.

His goal was not to ask for money, but for anything people had in excess that he could sell — hence the name “Just the Crumbs” (JTC). This vision has resulted in the establishment of four thrift stores, the profits of which go to disaster relief projects.

This past month, tornados struck here at home in Oklahoma. I am not new to tornados, but I am new to a disaster relief outreach we now support through the BMA of America. We were a beneficiary of this ministry. With their semi-truck, 53-foot mobile kitchen and multiple trailers to help with disaster relief, they provided much-needed help in Marietta and Sulphur, Okla. We have a church close by in Roff that is pastored by Wayne Edgar. His dear wife, Susie, lost her sister-in-law. Please pray for them and others in our state.

At this writing, two other cities in Oklahoma also were hit. BMA of Oklahoma (BMAO) people were on the ground alongside JTC serving meals. We thank each volunteer and those who sent financial support from Arkansas and Oklahoma. I don't know much about multimedia, so I just tried to reach out as best I could. It was devastating to see the damage to these communities. My wife and I traveled to Sulphur to serve alongside JTC, and what a blessing these folks were. Thank you, BMAO, for serving in this area of ministry in times of such great need.

Food and lodging will be provided for volunteers at the disaster site. Brandy Haden asks us to pray that we would reach the lost. “That’s the whole concept of what we do,” he said, “create opportunities to witness. There’s no better time to do that than when people are in need.”

To donate to BMA Disaster Relief, partnering with Just the Crumbs, or to volunteer, contact Angela Rice at angela@bmamissions.org or call the BMA Missions Office at (501) 455-4977. For more information about BMA Disaster Relief and Just the Crumbs, or to sign up to be a first responder, visit www.bmamissions.org/disasterrelief.

If you would like to volunteer, contact Mike Angus at (228) 669-1108 or Beth Haden at (662) 582-6667. You can also give a tax-deductible donation by clicking the “Just the Crumbs” button on the BMA National Web Site (bmamissions.org/disasterrelief) or send by mail to Just the Crumbs, 10 Wagon Trail, Sumrall, Miss. 39482.

2024 BMA Salary And Benefits Survey

BMA Financial and BMA America Information Services are partnering on the second BMA Salary and Benefits Survey. The purpose of the electronic survey is to provide churches with benchmark data to inform and assist in the establishment and maintenance of viable compensation packages for their pastor and staff. The data resulting from the study will be made available with respect for the autonomy of each local church, but we hope the information will provide an objective resource in considering appropriate staff compensation.

The survey is designed to be completed by all church staff personnel and is completely anonymous. An email was sent out on May 30 to all pastors and staff in our database. If you did not receive an email and would like to participate, please go to bmafinancial.org and complete the survey online. For questions about the study, call (844) 262-8637 or email Chief Development Officer Ryan Johnson at ryan@bmaamerica.org.



GAMERS (Continued From Page 1)

guns in Pride flag colors, transgender flag colors and a whole host of other LGBT-themed colors. Perhaps most shocking of all is the inclusion of transgender flag-colored bullets. Given the rise in violent school shootings perpetrated by those who identify as transgender, featuring pink-white-and-blue machine gun rounds seems worse than insensitive: it’s callous.

Video games have, of course, featured LGBT content in the past, but the fall of “Call of Duty” is an especial blow as the franchise has been a staple for boys for over 20 years, a proving ground where young men could pit their skills against each other and make believe, at least for a little while, that they were soldiers. War is an inherently masculine activity and for centuries, boys have played at war. Whether it’s turning every single stick and branch found on a hike into a sword, pitting a legion of little green army men against a motley battalion of Lego cops and knights on the bedroom floor, declaring a Nerf war with the whole first floor of the house as a battlefield or 360 no-scoping Nazi zombies on a screen, boys begin training for war at a young age — it’s practically inevitable.

More than just inevitable, though, it is noble. Men are inherently designed by God to provide and protect and have an innate desire to risk their lives in defense of something worth risking their lives for. That is why films like “Braveheart” and “Saving Private Ryan” are so successful and so impactful — they depict a man risking or even sacrificing his life in war for the sake of something worth dying for. A common internet meme denotes this same theme: men only have two fantasies — one is raising a family and maybe owning a farm, while the other is loading a rifle and holding off the enemy in a final stand, giving others a chance to escape and survive.

The ultimate example of this, of course, is in the person of Christ. As powerful as it is when Mel Gibson’s William Wallace cries out, “Freedom!” on the executioner’s block, as moving as it is when Tom Hanks’s Captain Miller whispers, “Earn this” with his dying breath, these are but echoes of Christ’s all-encompassing sacrifice on the Cross. J.R.R. Tolkien, himself a World War I veteran and the author of the mythological war novel *The Lord of the Rings*, encouraged his sons to look to Christ crucified for inspiration. “There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity and the true way of all your loves on

earth,” he wrote.

The masculine desire to fight for something worth fighting for and die for something worth dying for — and, indeed, the desire to triumph in the face of insurmountable odds — is itself a yearning to be like Christ. This fact also is evinced in the games boys play. In an effort to increase its share of the girls’ toys market, the Lego Company conducted a series of studies several years ago, examining the differences between how boys play and how girls play. In one experiment, groups of boys were asked to build a castle, and separate groups of girls were asked to do likewise. Upon completing their castles, the boys immediately began staging a war, explaining that they saw the castle as a mere “backdrop” to their combat. The girls, meanwhile, began examining the castle and finding ways to improve it. To boys, combat was the heart of the endeavor.

Another experiment found that when boys play with a toy — a Batman action figure, for instance — they try to become more like that toy; they learn all that they can about Batman, they try to imitate his voice, they try to be him. The experiment found that girls, on the other hand, try to make their toys more like themselves. None of this, of course, is to disparage the way

girls play — the way girls play is beautifully and wonderfully suited to their God-given feminine identity. The point is simply to emphasize the unique way in which boys play.

When boys play at war or combat — whether with wooden swords and trash-bin-lid-shields in the backyard or with high-tech automatic rifles on a screen — they are doing more than just relaxing or “having fun,” they are training themselves, modeling themselves, shaping themselves into something else. With the invasion of the venomous LGBT agenda into boys’ games, it is less and less likely that boys will grow into men modeled after Christ crucified. No, they may now be riddled with transgender bullets and grow into some grotesque caricature of men — modeled after the groomers who took over their games.

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Know the Facts about the Radical AR Abortion Amendment!



The Arkansas Abortion Amendment would enshrine limitless abortion up until the moment of birth.



If adopted, the proposed measure would render many current laws protecting the unborn, protecting parental rights, and protecting the pregnant mother null and void.



If this ballot measure is adopted it would make it impossible and illegal to pass any common-sense protections for the unborn child or her mother in the future.



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It is not in the best interest of women, children, families, and the future of our state to pass the Arkansas Abortion Amendment.

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