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Passion Play trails to premiere with 'Dirt Church' festival

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

EUREKA SPRINGS – Long known for hosting America's most-attended outdoor drama, The Great Passion Play is now leveraging its campus' natural beauty for a new outreach opportunity – professionally designed and constructed mountain bike trails.

"We started building hiking and nature trails through the Holy Land Tour area with youth mission trip groups in summer 2016, and it really started to snowball from there," said Kent Butler, director of marketing for the Passion Play.

"After hiking the trails with members of the local Carroll County Ozark Off Road Cyclists organization in fall 2016, we saw that hiking was just the beginning and that mountain biking especially was something that people wanted to do," said Butler.

Kelsie Scott serves on the Passion Play's staff as director of missions, organizing mission trip opportunities associated with the play's various ministries.

Kelsie Scott's husband, Alex Scott, grew up in the Texas hill country, where his father

founded and operated Camp Eagle, a Christian outdoor adventure camp. Beginning at age 12, he designed the camp's mountain bike trails and, with the help of his father and numerous volunteers, brought them to reality.

In 2016, Camp Eagle expanded by forming a second campus in Morieta, N.M. After the new campus was designated as a new venue for the Big Mountain Enduro Series mountain bike competition, Alex Scott was tasked with building new trails for the event.

"This was his first real 'gig' as a professional trail builder.

The trails were a big hit at the race and are some of the professional racers' favorites," said Kelsie Scott. "Alex then realized he could really do what he

loved for a living. He knew he wanted to start his own company one day, but he definitely needed some more time and training under his belt."

Alex Scott spent the summer of 2017 working with Tony Boone Trails based in Salida, Colo. The job allowed him to hone his craft and flesh out aspirations of starting his own trail-building business.

When Boone decided he wanted to stay closer to his



Butler



Alex and Kelsie Scott



Two men ride through one of the new mountain bike trails located on the campus of The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs. Jagged Axe Trail Designs photo

home and family in Colorado, Alex Scott jumped at the opportunity to incorporate his own business and take on a contract in the Arkansas Ozarks. Jagged Axe Trail Designs was founded in 2018.

The Scotts believe their move to Arkansas was a divine appointment for more than one reason. In addition to allowing Alex Scott the opportunity to begin a self-employed career doing what he loves, Kelsie Scott's college degree in theater and love for working with students and youth made her well-suited for a position with the Passion Play.

"It was truly a God-thing that we ended up at the Passion Play. ... I knew I wanted some work outside of running the trail-building business and after interviewing with Kent to see where I could fit in at the

play, it was evident God wanted me involved in the summer mission trip program," said Kelsie Scott.

As the play's director of missions, Kelsie Scott schedules youth groups to come and participate in various service projects on campus. She also participates in the organization's main event: The Great Passion Play.

"It is really incredible how God works to bring the right people together," said Kelsie Scott. "The fact that the trails are able to be professionally built by believers and used to benefit the mission of Christ blows my mind."

In celebration of the grand opening of around 16 miles of recently completed mountain bike trails on the 700-acre

Floyd called to lead SBC EC

DALLAS – The Great Commission, the Cooperative Program, supporting pastors and listening to Southern Baptists will be among the early emphases of Ronnie Floyd's leadership, the Arkansas pastor said during a press conference and a Facebook Live session April 2 following his election as the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) president and CEO in Dallas.

"Everything that I will lead for and toward will be the Great Commission of Jesus Christ," Floyd said. "I believe that it is a great need in our convention of churches to remind people all of the time that we are here to cooperate together to reach the world for the Lord Jesus Christ."

Floyd, 63, was elected on a ballot vote of 68-1 held during an executive session of nearly four hours. He is the EC's seventh chief executive.

Asked about his perspective on movements relating to social justice issues within the SBC, especially within the convention's seminaries, Floyd said, "As a pastor, we are involved constantly in matters of social ministry and trying to forward social justice in our communities because the gospel leads us to doing that. But, again, that's not the gospel," he said.

"My commitment would be to try to learn, to learn what is going on on our seminary cam-



Floyd

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See **FLOYD** page 3

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Read them on Page 10.

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ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Arkansas DR vols support relief work in Neb., Iowa

ARKANSAS Baptist disaster relief (DR) volunteers are supporting existing relief teams in Nebraska and Iowa following recent flooding.

Arkansas Baptist DR's unified command is currently serving in four satellite locations in Bristow, Neb.; Fremont, Neb.; Bellevue, Neb., and Shenandoah, Iowa, according to Randy Garrett, Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) DR director.

In addition, Arkansas Baptist shower/laundry unit is currently deployed to North Bend, Neb.

"It continues to look like this will be a long term deployment," said Garrett.

"Please keep those traveling to aid in recovery in your prayers. Also, please continue to pray for those that have been impacted by the flooding that they will receive both the needed physical assistance as well as the spiritual healing they need," he said.

For more information on Arkansas Baptist DR, visit absdisasterrelief.org.

OBU's Hurst selected for U.S. Dept. of Edu. committee

ARCADELPHIA - Ouachita Baptist University's Susan Hurst, associate vice president for student financial services, recently was selected to serve on the U.S. Department of Education's Accreditation and Innovation Negotiated Rulemaking Committee.

"My role is to represent the financial aid community during the negotiated rulemaking sessions where I have the opportunity to advocate for students and institutions to ensure quality, affordable education for the future and assess whether current policies are effectively serving students," Hurst said.

For more ABN Digest, go to arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest

Georgia legislators approve fetal heartbeat bill

ATLANTA - A controversial pro-life bill approved by the Georgia Legislature awaiting the governor's signature has abortion advocates across the country taking notice.

The Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act, also known as the fetal heartbeat bill, was approved 92-78 after 35 minutes of debate by the Georgia House of Representatives March 29. The bill was sent to Georgia governor for his signature after the House agreed with the version passed through the Senate, *The (Ga.) Christian Index* reported.

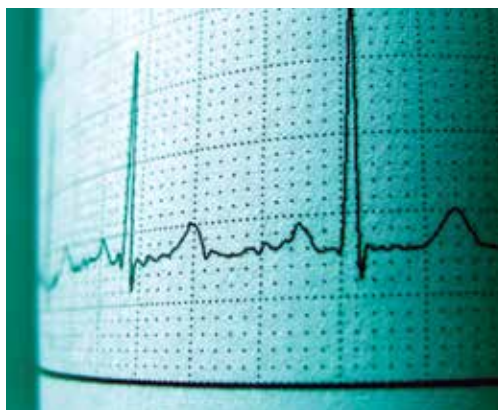
Gov. Brian Kemp has maintained strong support for the bill's passage dating back to his gubernatorial campaign and is expected to sign it.

The action by Georgia legislators brought a swift rebuke from abortion advocates across the country, who say the bill is one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the country and violates a woman's right to choose.

Essentially, the bill prohibits an abortion procedure after

doctors can discern a fetal heartbeat, which is at about six weeks of pregnancy and before some women even know they are pregnant, according to abortion advocates.

Similar bills have been signed into law recently in



Mississippi and Kentucky, and other states - including Missouri, Texas, Tennessee and Florida - are expected to consider like measures in 2019. Abortion advocates expect to mount a challenge to the laws, which may result in the U.S. Supreme Court reconsidering the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion.

Larry Page, executive direc-

tor of the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council, said the Arkansas Legislature passed its own version of the fetal heartbeat bill a few sessions ago, but the law was struck down in federal court.

"The federal district court that heard the lawsuit against Arkansas' heartbeat bill ruled the major provisions of the law unconstitutional and its requirements unenforceable, with one notable exception. The court held one provision of the law valid as a requirement. The court found that the requirement that an abdominal ultrasound procedure be done was appropriate and that the pregnant woman was to be informed of the results," said Page.

"The detection of a heartbeat would not prohibit the abortion, but a woman was free to forego the abortion if she chose to based on the presence of a heartbeat in her unborn child. Based on anecdotal evidence, we now know that the Arkansas heartbeat bill has saved the lives of some

children and for that we are thankful."

Thomas Hammond, executive director of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board applauded the action of the Georgia Legislature.

"Technological advancements have only confirmed what the Word of God tells us - a living human being exists within the womb and that life must be protected as the most innocent among us," said Kemp.

"Georgia values life," Kemp said following the bill's approval. "We stand up for the innocent and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. The legislature's bold action reaffirms our priorities and who we are as a state. I thank these lawmakers for their leadership and applaud their undeniable courage."

"Our efforts to protect life do not end here. We must work to ease the adoption process, find loving homes for those in our foster care system, and protect the aging and vulnerable. Together, we will ensure that all Georgians are safe and have the opportunity to live, grow, learn and prosper."

'Eggciting' events communicate meaning of Easter

Margaret Colson
Arkansas Baptist News

THIS YEAR SOME Arkansans may find more than chocolate bunnies at Easter; some may discover new life in Jesus Christ.

First Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, is hosting its seventh annual Easter Eggstravaganza at 2 p.m., Saturday, April 13. The event is "an eggciting family event celebrating the true meaning of Easter," said Bryan Bolton, minister of music and children at the church.

"The Easter Eggstravaganza gives us another way to teach the kids and their families that Easter is not all about bunnies and finding eggs, but finding the Savior Who came to save us all from our sins," he said.

Launched in 2013, the event has offered through the years a variety of activities, such as a "peep-a-palooza," a glow-in-the-dark egg hunt and even science experiments, all with the goal of having "every member of the family learn about

the cross and price that Jesus paid and how their lives can be transformed for eternity," he said. This year's event will have a "stations-of-the-cross" experience with hands-on activities for children and their families. The annual Easter event always opens with a group game, a time of singing, an interactive retelling of the Easter story and the gospel presentation, concluding with that year's main activity.

Although publicized in the local newspaper, most who attend the Easter Eggstravaganza are already involved in the church. "I cannot explain it. I have wrestled with it every year and have no answer as to why we cannot gain a better impact on the community," Bolton said.

"My hope for this year is to be more intentional about sharing the salvation expe-

rience that comes with the Easter story," he said, "and through all the fun and games better prepare the kids and their families to understand how they can experience God's



A petting zoo at the 2018 Easter Eggstravaganza at Calvary Baptist Church, Little Rock, brings many smiles.

love."

Calvary Baptist Church, Little Rock, will host an Easter Eggstravaganza at 3 p.m., Sunday, April 14. The church has hosted an Easter event for church families for several

years, but this year it will be open to the community.

The church wants "to do more in our community and have a safe place for families to come together for fun activities," said Julie Nelson, children's minister at Calvary.

Several activities are planned for the afternoon event, including a petting zoo, inflatables, a food truck, egg hunts, balloon animals, crafts and a visit from the Easter bunny.

"We want our community to see how much we care for them and want them to be a part of our lives," she said.

"We would love to minister to those around our church and be a place for them to bring their families to come to know, grow and share Christ."

Contact Margaret Colson at margaret@arkansasbaptist.org.

FLOYD

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pushes a little bit more in that. I know a lot of things that are written, but I would be interested to talk to the presidents and let them bring me along. ... I am a listener, and I think that's why people follow me and they are willing to come around me - because I am a unifier and I listen to people."

Floyd emphasized his support for SBC President J.D. Greear's efforts to combat sexual abuse in churches. Southern Baptists must "do everything we can" to help victims and resource churches to prevent abuse, he said.

"I will say again and again that our work together as Baptists to take the gospel to the ends of the earth is dependent ultimately on our ability to prioritize and accelerate our giving through the Cooperative Program," as well as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, said Floyd.

Championing evangelism and missions in his new EC role is in keeping with the recommendations of the SBC's Great Commission Task Force (GCTF), which Floyd chaired in 2009-2010. The task force presented a series of recommendations affirmed by messengers in 2010 and aimed at

increasing the convention's evangelistic effectiveness. The GCTF recommendations led to EC recommendations approved by SBC messengers in 2011.

Local churches, Baptist associations, state conventions and the SBC all have sought to implement the GCTF's recommendations, Floyd said. He commended state conventions for increasing their CP giving to SBC causes by more than 4 percentage points collectively since 2009-2010.

As Southern Baptists advance the Great Commission among people of all ethnicities, Floyd said the SBC should seek to be known as "the greatest multigenerational, multiethnic and multilingual denomination in the United States of America."

Drawing from his 42 years of pastoral experience, Floyd said that he plans to carry out his work at the EC with a pastor's mindset and a love for local churches.

"I will think like a pastor," Floyd said. "I will champion pastors. I believe in the church, and I will champion the church" as "the body God has anointed" to accomplish the Great Commission.

With just more than two months remaining until the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting, Floyd invited Southern Baptists to "join us in this grand task" in Birmingham and, in the meantime, to "undergird

this gathering with prayer like never before."

Floyd said in remarks following his election that he would resign April 7 from the longtime pastorate of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and begin his EC leadership immediately.

As senior pastor of Cross Church, Floyd's SBC service has included two years as convention president, two years as EC chairman and a term as SBC Pastors' Conference president.

"We're going to come and we're going to reach the world with all we have and call this convention up to a level that we all need to go to," Floyd told the EC. "Please pray for us."

The strong affirmation he received from EC leadership, he said, followed his prayer that the Lord would clearly declare His call for Floyd to serve in the new post.

Floyd alerted his congregation March 31 to the possibility of his election.

"The thought of parting from you has been gut-wrenching for Jeana and me. Words cannot describe it," Floyd told his congregation. "The sense of loss is undeniable. But the sense of calling at this point is greater."

During his 33 years at Cross Church, the congregation has baptized more than 22,000 people, according to a press kit distributed by the EC. Cross Church has planted 148 other churches in North America and across the globe under Floyd's leadership, including congregations in 26 of the North American Mission Board's 32 Send Cities. By May 1, 2020, Cross Church plans to have planted at least one church in all 32 Send Cities.

Cross Church has given nearly \$11.5 million through the Cooperative Program (CP) during Floyd's pastoral tenure, according to data from the SBC's Annual Church Profile. CP is Southern Baptists' unified method of funding missions and ministries in North America and throughout the world.

In 2017, Floyd was appointed president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, a role in which he has overseen the annual National Day of Prayer emphasis each May.

Greear, issuing an endorsement of Floyd, said, "Ronnie

Fifteen years later, he chaired the SBC's Great Commission Task Force (GCTF), approved by messengers in 2011, that established Great Commission Giving, revised the North American Mission Board and International Mis-

sion Board ministry assignments and reduced the EC's portion of CP funds from 3.40 percent to 2.99 percent. Great Commission Giving is a category encompassing CP as well as direct gifts to SBC entities, Baptist associations and state convention ministries.

As pastor of Cross Church since 1986, Floyd has led the congregation to give \$1 million or more through CP annually since 2015, according to ACP data. "Only a few Southern Baptist

churches in history" have given that amount, Baptist Press reported in 2015. The church's average worship attendance increased from 1,800 in 1986 (when it was known as First Baptist Church of Springdale) to more than 9,200 in 2018 across several campuses.

Floyd serves on an informal evangelical advisory council for President Donald Trump. Last year, Floyd said serving on the advisory council is not an endorsement of the president or his policies. Floyd also said he has had opportunity to express the gospel to Trump.

He served as general editor of LifeWay Christian Resources' Bible Studies for Life curriculum from 2013-2017 and has authored more than 20 books, including "How to Pray," now in a 20th anniversary edition. He is online at ronniefloyd.com.

Floyd holds both master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and an undergraduate degree from Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas.

He and his wife Jeana of 42 years have two sons and seven grandchildren.

Floyd's April 2 Facebook Live message is available at facebook.com/BaptistPress/videos/2378018709094510/.

Story compiled from reporting by the Baptist Press and Arkansas Baptist News.



Members of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) join in prayer for Ronnie and Jeana Floyd after Ronnie Floyd's election April 2 as the EC's new president. Photo by Adam Covington

Floyd's passion for prayer and spiritual awakening, combined with his strong support for our cooperative mission, his tireless energy, and his demonstrated commitment to raising up the next generation make him a unique gift to the SBC at this hour of transition."

As SBC president from 2014-2016, Floyd emphasized prayer, spiritual awakening and racial reconciliation. At each of the two SBC annual meetings Floyd presided, an entire evening session was devoted to prayer for spiritual awakening in America.

Floyd's friendship with Jerry Young, president of the predominantly black National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc., eventuated in a November 2015 meeting where 10 Southern Baptist pastors and 10 National Baptist pastors discussed concrete ways to achieve racial reconciliation and foster national healing. Floyd presided over the SBC Annual Meeting when messengers adopted a 2016 resolution renouncing display of the Confederate battle flag.

Floyd served in SBC leadership roles during at least two previous notable junctures in the convention's history.

He was EC chairman from 1995-1997, when the SBC adopted the Covenant for a New Century restructuring plan that reduced the number of convention entities from 19 to 12.

BIKE TRAILS

continued from page one

Eureka Springs campus, The Great Passion Play is hosting the Dirt Church Mountain Bike Festival April 13-14.

Billed as an event for the entire family, the Dirt Church festival will include three timed mountain bike events: cross country, harescramble and a gravity stage race.

In her joint role with Jagged Edge and the Passion Play, Kelsie Scott helped to plan the festival, with all proceeds of the event going toward maintaining and expanding the trails.

The Ozark region is known nationwide for its mountain bike trails. In 2017 *National Geographic* named Bentonville, just 39 miles east of Eureka Springs, as one of "America's 20 Best Mountain Bike Towns."

While enthusiasts come from far and wide to experience the heralded trails firsthand, for Butler, the Scotts and the Passion Play organization as a whole, the chief goal of the campus' new mountain bike trails is to provide a new and relevant avenue for sharing the gospel with all who visit.

"The play really hopes that the trails will bring more people to the property so that we can show them Who Jesus is and love on more people. We are also really striving to be a part of the growing mountain biking community in Eureka Springs," said Kelsie Scott.

For more information on The Great Passion Play's mountain bike trails, visit greatpassionplay.org. For more information on the Dirt Church festival, visit jaggedaxetraildesigns.com/dirtchurch.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

Editorial & Opinion

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..."

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

Springtime renewal and the hope of Easter

Springtime means a lot of different things to different people.

In the western United States, crowds of sightseers have been converging on towns for weeks now to view the explosion of desert wildflowers brought about by uncharacteristic winter rain showers. The "super bloom," as it is being called, brings new meaning to Isaiah 35:2 (ESV), "it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God."

For some, like in my own household, this time of year means spring-cleaning inside and extensive yardwork outside. For me, cleaning and purging my house of clutter are good for sanity, as well as the soul.

For Christians across the

globe, springtime and Easter celebrations remind us of the hope we have in the sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

While a large part of society – fed by secular marketers – relegates Easter to bunnies and candy eggs, even today the true meaning of Easter is still inescapable to society – providing a platform of sharing the hope of Christ to the lost.

Without the resurrection our faith is useless and meaningless. Easter is a celebration that Jesus was indeed Who He claimed to be: God in the flesh Who came to save humans from their sins (ref. 1 Cor. 15:17).

For Christians, beyond the hope we have in salvation and the forgiveness of sin, Easter reminds us that God is sovereign and rules a living kingdom: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

But he laid his right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades'" (Rev. 1:17-18, ESV).

For believers, while each day we die physically, our renewal comes through Christ: "So death is at work in us, but life in you. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:12,16, ESV).

Finally, the resurrection of

Jesus and the celebration of Easter are previews of Christianity's ultimate victory over the enemies of sin and death:



"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55, ESV).

While Easter is the highlight of the Christian calendar – much like springtime of renewal and rebirth – it shouldn't be.

The resurrection of Jesus should serve as a reminder of God's intervention into human history as the hope-giver and sovereign provider of

all good things, not the least of these being life, and life eternal!

Tim Yarbrough is the editor/executive director of the Arkansas Baptist News.

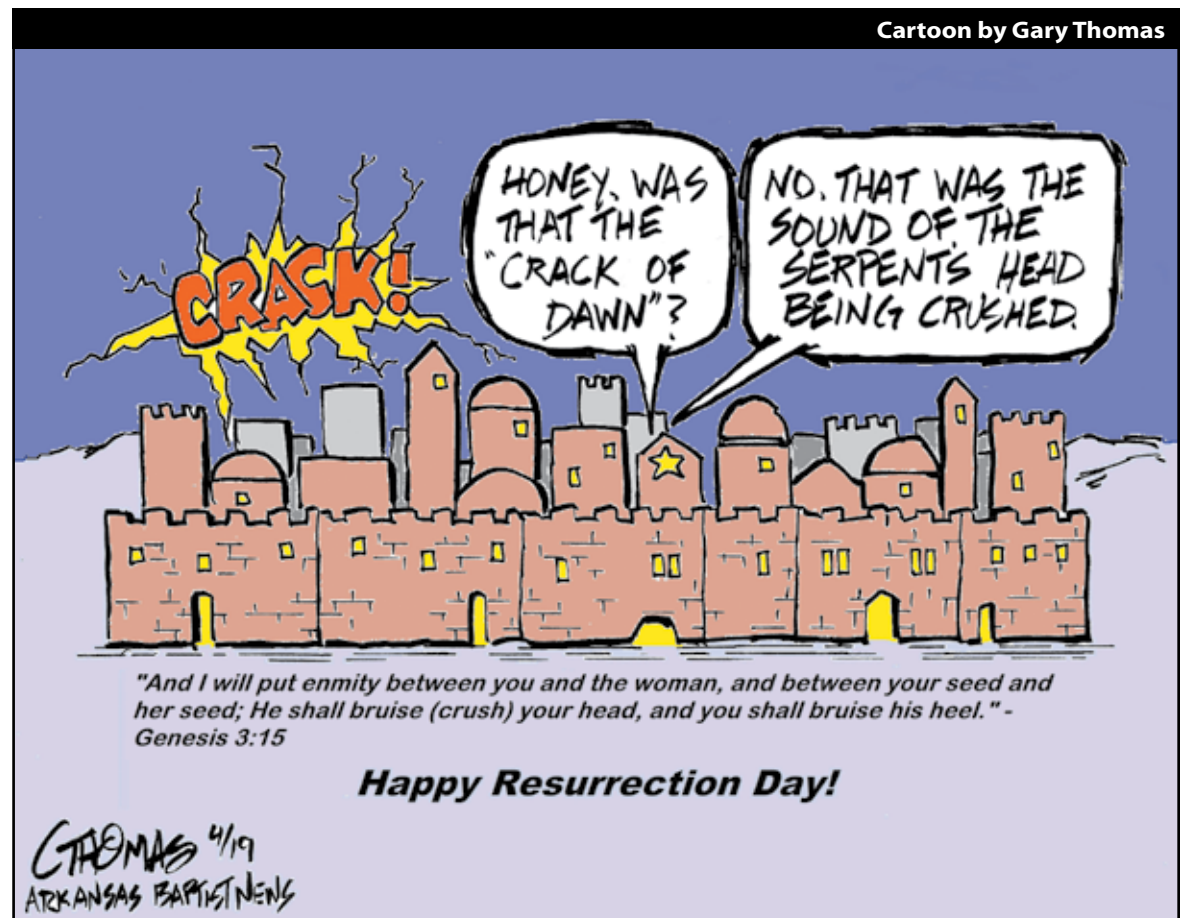
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As the largest religious publication in the state, the *ABN* strives for journalistic integrity, fairness and balance in its reporting of Baptist and evangelical news.

We advocate for the cause of Jesus Christ.
We report the news based on our Christian worldview.
We uphold high standards of journalism and Christian ethics.

Cartoon by Gary Thomas



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I'm reading through the Bible this year, but I'm stuck in the Book of Numbers. How can I get through it?

The Book of Numbers is among the least favorite books in the Old Testament for two main reasons: 1) the book's lackluster title and 2) the large census found within it. However, a careful reading of the entire book uncovers an exciting story.

The book's English title does not come from the Hebrew, but from the Greek *arithmoi* and Latin *numeri*. The book's Hebrew title is much more descriptive: *bmidbar*,



Baptists Ask

Ken Gore

which means "in the wilderness." On one level, the title describes the Israelites' journey from Mount Sinai to Moab. On another level, the title serves as

a metaphor for the spiritual journey that the Israelites take as they drift from God's commands.

The census looms large within the book. The Lord told the Israelites to count all of the men who were capable of fighting against the Canaanites. This number (603,550) excluded women, children, the Levites and men under 20 years old. This gave Israel a significant number of warriors to take over the land.

Unfortunately, once the Israelites left Mount Sinai, they appear to have forgotten everything that God had taught them. On their journey from Sinai to Moab, the people rebelled through their grumbling and varied disobedience. They became tired of the journey. They complained about the food, the water and even Moses' leadership. In each instance, God made it clear that He was not happy with them. When God finally invited them to cross into Canaan, they refused because they were afraid. This disobedience cost them an entire generation, as the Lord would not let them in the land for more than 40 years.

Some amazing and bizarre things occur within the book. A donkey talked. The earth swallowed people alive. A wooden staff produced almonds, and people received leprosy and plagues. God brought so much quail to the people that they loathed it. The "prophet" Balaam came from a distant land to hurl curses at Israel, only to provide blessings instead.

At the end of their journey, they took a second census. Although this group of warriors totals less than the first (601,730), none of these individuals had been counted in the first census. Though the people of Israel had been rebellious, God remained faithful to them. He still prepared them for their journey into Canaan.

It is disappointing that the book's original title did not get placed into the English Bible. The Book of Numbers is truly a journey "in the wilderness." As they made final preparations to cross into Canaan, the Israelites came out of their spiritual fog and moved into a better faith relationship with God.

Ken Gore is professor of biblical studies at Dallas Baptist University. Send your questions to tim@arkansasbaptist.org.

A faith of their own

One of the most endearing things about campus ministry is that college-age individuals are just beginning to figure out who they are and what they want to be; therefore, they are ready to be challenged to change. No matter their religious backgrounds, students are in a place where they are choosing what they want to believe.

Christian institutions, compared to secular educational institutions, have a larger percentage of students who grew up in the church and claim to follow Christ, but the desire for campus ministry is the same – to introduce students to Christ and challenge them to understand and take hold of their faith.

As campus ministries help students journey and grow, students have opportunities to put their faith to action – serving their peers on campus, serving in the local church, going on mission to share the gospel with those who haven't heard it, and also reaching out to other students on campus who don't know Jesus. This then steers them toward realizing where God is calling them to ministry.

Campus ministry at a Christian university, such as here at Williams Baptist University (WBU), is uniquely able to partner with professors in keeping scriptural truths at the forefront of students' education at a critical time in their lives.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 (CSB) gives us some great insight into where we are today, no matter the overarching ethos of the institution: "For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they

want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

With so many divergent messages at students' fingertips, we must continually fight for the minds of our students. We must continually engage our students with the Bible's true message of repentance and grace, and then we must equip them to take the story of redemption to the rest of the student body.

College students are, arguably, at the most impressionable time of their lives, and our calling at WBU is to help shape those lives. In the office of campus ministries, we are blessed to play a vital role in that life-changing process in a way that offers meaning and fulfillment to the students, and, most importantly, brings glory to God.

Shannon Lane is director of campus ministries at Williams Baptist University.



Williams Baptist University

Shannon Lane



ABCHomes

Ryan Ropp

Recently, I had a conversation with a pastor in the northeast Arkansas Delta who expressed to me, "People don't accidentally end up at our church; we are in the middle of nowhere." This pastor's desire to help the local Body of Christ reach the lost was palpable.

If you drive through the Delta, it is more common to see a sign for a church pointing down a dirt road than to actually come across the church. How do you direct your congregation to the neighbors they should love, when you step out the front door of the church and all you can see in any direction is a rice field?

The Church has the privileged call to love God and love others. Across that rice field and all of creation, any pastor can hear the echoes of God's great commandment

to love Him and to love our neighbor as ourselves as the path to eternal life (Luke 10:25-37). Yet, just like the lawyer in Luke 10, we can find ourselves looking to Christ

and asking, "How?" What can we do to inherit eternal life? How do we love God with every-

thing we are and love our neighbor as ourselves?

I love Jesus' response to the lawyer in Luke 10 that tells us clearly the two cannot be separated. This is also why I love what God allows me to do in working with Arkansas families who need the love of Christ.

The child welfare system is flooded with families searching for love and life. The local church is searching for the broken in order to introduce them to Jesus, the embodiment of love and life. Foster care and the church are a match made in heaven. When

the two meet, we witness the building, strengthening and restoring of family. Individual families find the hope of love and life that they have been searching for, and the church family experiences restored strength to love both God and neighbor.

The work of Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries allows our staff to be on the front line with the local church. Through our Connected foster care ministry, we provide a way for the church and the child welfare system to come together for the glory of God.

When you find yourself staring across the rice field wondering where your neighbors are, get Connected with us. It is our mission as Arkansas Baptists to live out the great commandment with you and your church as we care for Arkansas families.

Ryan Ropp is foster care coordinator for Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries (ABCHomes).

Letters to the Editor welcomed

The Arkansas Baptist News (ABN) welcomes Letters to the Editor regarding issues of concern to Southern Baptists in Arkansas.

Send Letters to the Editor to tim@arkansasbaptist.org or to our mailing address. Letters must be typed, double-spaced and 300 words or less (fewer words, the



better). Letters must be signed and marked "for publication" and may be edited to fit space requirements.

Small, struggling churches fill American landscape

IN MANY congregations in the United States, new faces in the pews have become rare.

A new study from Exponential by LifeWay Research found six in 10 Protestant churches are plateaued or declining in attendance and more than half saw fewer than 10 people become new Christians in the past 12 months.

"Growth is not absent from American churches," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "But rapid growth through conversions is uncommon."

The research gives a clear picture of the state of Protestant churches in America today. Most have fewer than 100 people attending services each Sunday (57 percent), including 21 percent who average fewer than 50. Around 1 in 10 churches (11 percent) average 250 or more for their worship services.

Three in five (61 percent) pastors say their churches faced a decline in worship attendance or growth of 5 percent or less in the past three years. Almost half (46 percent) say their giving decreased or stayed the same from 2017 to 2018.

More than two in five churches (44 percent) only have one or fewer full-time staff members. Close to nine in 10 pastors (87 percent) say their church had the same or fewer number of full-time staff in 2018 as they had in 2017, including 7 percent who cut staff.

In 2018, few churches added new multi-site campuses (3 percent) or were involved in some form of planting a new church (32 percent). Sixty-eight percent say they had no involvement in church planting. Around one in 10 (12 percent) say they were directly or

substantially involved in opening a new church in 2018, including 7 percent who were a primary financial sponsor or provided ongoing financial support to a church plant.

"The primary purpose of this study was to obtain a set of objective measures on churches' reproduction and multiplication behaviors today as well as to understand their core context of growth," said Todd Wilson, chief executive officer of Exponential. "By combining these measures, we can help churches think about multiplication."

Declining, plateaued or growing?

Twenty-eight percent of Protestant pastors say their church has seen worship service attendance shrink by 6 percent or more compared to three years ago.

Another 33 percent say their church has remained within 5 percent, while 39 percent say their congregation has grown by at least 6 percent since the first quarter of 2016.

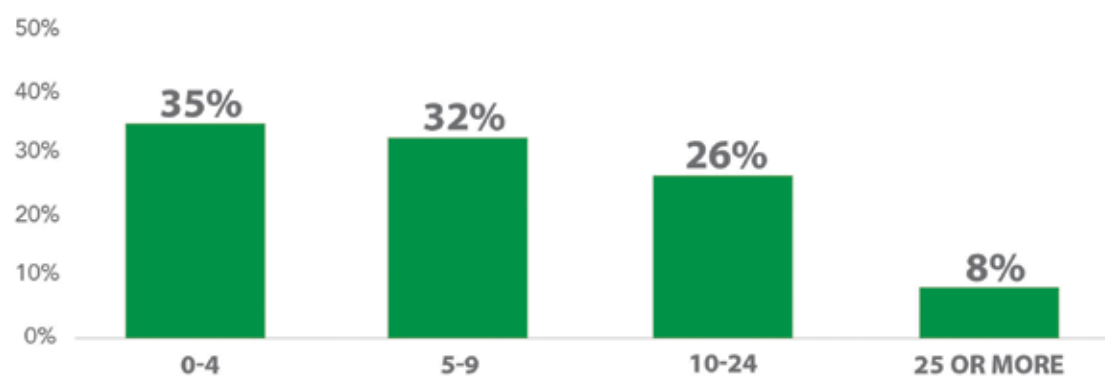
More than half of 18- to 44-year old pastors (55 percent) say their church is growing, while 33 percent of pastors 45 and older say the same.

Evangelical churches are more likely to be growing (42 percent) than their mainline counterparts (34 percent).

Less than a quarter (23 percent) of churches with an average worship attendance of fewer than 50 say they are growing, while most churches with 250 or more in attendance (59 percent) are growing. Among denominations, Holiness (56 percent) and Baptist (45 percent) pastors are more likely to say their churches are growing than Methodists (33 percent) and Lutherans (25 percent).

New commitments to Jesus Christ as Savior per 100 attendees

According to Protestant pastors:



Church conversions

The lack of growth in worship attendance in most churches is matched by a lack of new commitments to Christ last year.

Fifty-four percent of pastors say fewer than 10 people indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior in 2018, including 8 percent who had none.

In some ways, however, those numbers mask deeper evangelistic issues. When evaluating churches based on the number of conversions per 100 attendees, 67 percent had fewer than 10 per 100 people attending their church. Around a third (35 percent) had fewer than five new commitments for every 100 people attending their worship services.

Forty-six percent of smaller churches (fewer than 50 in worship services) say they had 10 conversions or more for every 100 in attendance, while only 18 percent of churches 250 and above meet that benchmark.

While there are no major

differences between evangelical and mainline churches in terms of new converts, denominational differences do exist.

A majority of Pentecostal pastors (57 percent) say they saw 10 or more new commitments to Christ in their church last year per 100 attendees. The next closest denominations are Lutherans (39 percent), Holiness (38 percent) and Baptists (35 percent).

A quarter of Methodist (25 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed pastors (23 per-

cent) say they had 10 or more new commitments to Jesus in 2018 per 100 attendees. Half of Methodist pastors (50 percent) had fewer than five new commitments last year.

"Much work has been done to go deeper on measuring church health," said McConnell. "But it is still helpful to look at the observable factors of 'noses, nickels and new commitments.' Strategies, programs and rules-of-thumb work differently depending on the trajectory of a church."

Sam Moore Evangelistic Ministries



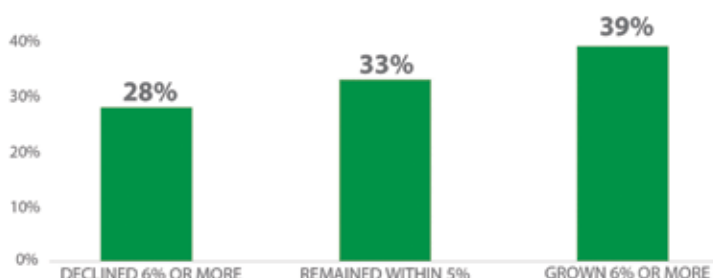
479-381-1170,
sam@evangelistsammoore.com

Sam Moore is a vocational evangelist and a native of Arkansas. He has the gift of an evangelist and the heart of a pastor. He is available for Revivals, Crusades, Harvest Days and Witness Training. Now scheduling for 2019-20.

www.evangelistsammoore.com

Change in U.S. church attendance over the last three years

According to Protestant pastors:



RIDE & SHINE

making a new day possible for children in Arkansas!

CAR SHOW

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MAY 18

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Please contact Joshua Townsend at 501-410-1567 or jtownsend@arkansasfamilies.org.






ARKANSAS BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

Compassion Journey provides poverty perspective

EL DORADO – To understand what life is like in another country, most people have to travel there. However, Compassion International has changed that with Compassion Journey.

“The Compassion Journey is an interactive experience that helps visitors gain a deeper perspective on what life is like for a child growing up in severe poverty,” said Steve Spriggs, director of community marketing for The Compassion Experience. “The tour gives us a chance to tell a story in an interactive way that is not only educational and impactful, but also provides a chance to make an individual impact in the life of a child in poverty.”

The free and family-friendly audio tour guides people to six

hands-on learning stations that represent realities for children growing up in extreme poverty, including what they eat, how they live, what they fear and their dreams.

Compassion International, a child-advocacy ministry that has paired people with children living in extreme poverty for more than 50 years, started Compassion Journey as a way to advocate for children in developing nations and to help Americans understand global poverty.

“Global poverty is something that is hard to really imagine without traveling to the developing world,” said Leslie Serrano, a Compassion International advocate and volunteer leader from West Side Baptist Church, El Dorado.

“The Compassion Journey brings this reality to our doorsteps, helping us to teach our children and ourselves about the blessings that always come when helping the least of these.”

West Side hosted a Compassion Journey event on Friday, Feb. 22, with 180 people from Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana walking through the interactive stations. In all, 17 children received sponsorships.

“Spiritually, people were moved to sponsor children because they were able to see that kids in Compassion International’s programs are being taught the gospel right along with physical needs being met,” said Serrano.

“Hearts were softened; spiritual eyes were opened, and gratitude was elevated” as people walked through the event, Serrano noted.

“Let’s face it: We live in a land of resource and blessing. It’s very important to teach our children a more comprehen-

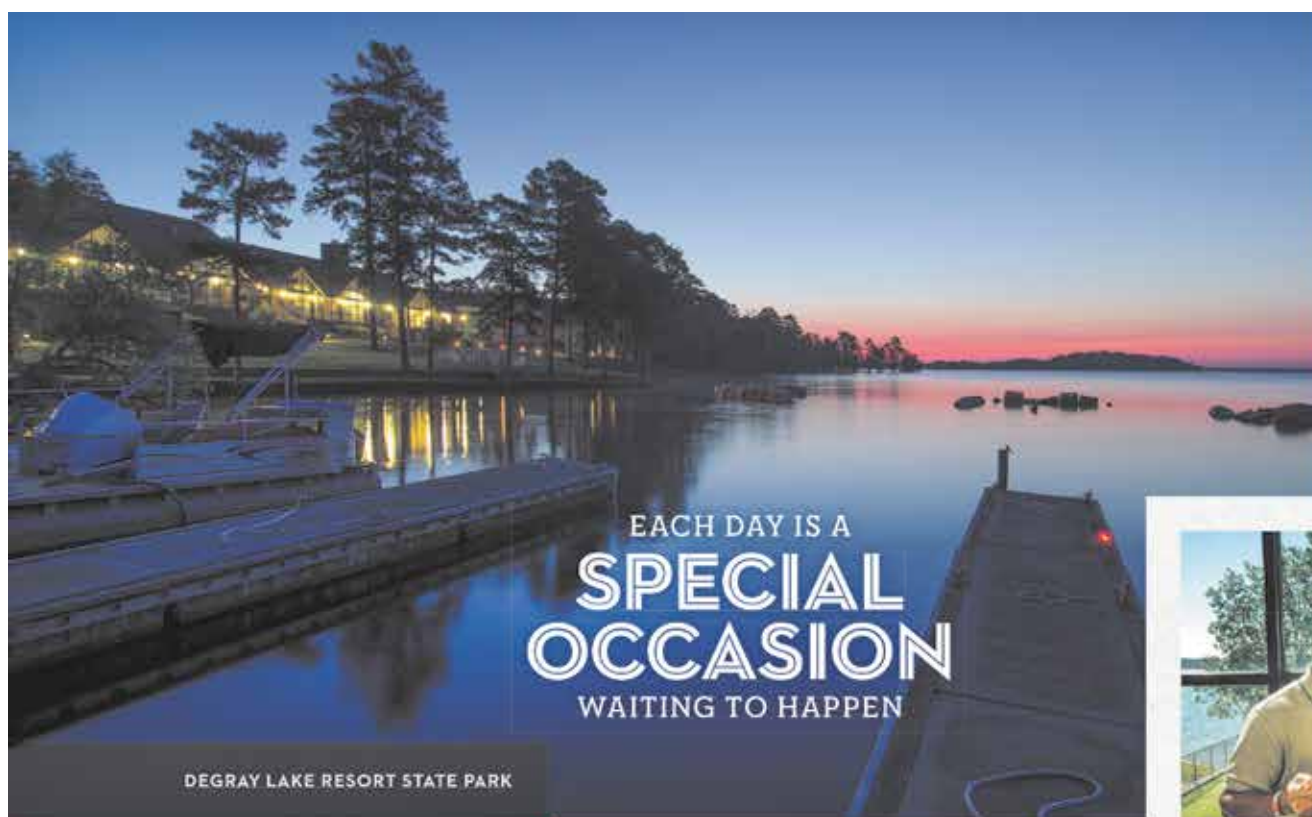


Compassion International started Compassion Journey as a way for Americans to see what life is like for children in developing countries. People are guided by children’s voices through six interactive stations and have the option to sponsor a child at the end of the tour (above). West Side Baptist Church in El Dorado hosted Compassion Journey Feb. 22, with 180 people from Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas attending the event (lower left). In all, 17 children were sponsored at the West Side Baptist event. Photos by Compassion International and West Side Baptist Church

sive global context,” Spriggs added. “I believe we should challenge ourselves to learn more, face the facts straight on and ask ourselves how we and our families might make a positive difference in the lives of others.”

The next Compassion Journey experience in Arkansas will be held from noon to 7 p.m., April 26-29, at Family Church in White Hall.

For more information about sponsoring a child, visit compassion.com.



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#ARStateParks

Working past 65? Here's what to know about Medicare

IF YOU PLAN to work past 65 and keep the health insurance you've had from your job, you're likely to wonder what, if anything, you need to do about enrolling in Medicare.

About one in six older Americans now remains in the workforce beyond what was once the traditional retirement age. And the number of older workers will only grow over time.

One reason is that Social Security now requires you to be at least 66 to collect your full retirement benefits. Retiring earlier means a smaller Social Security check.

Then, too, a number of 60-something workers continue to pursue their careers because they can't afford to retire. Still others simply prefer to stay engaged and on the job.

Whatever the reason for postponing your retirement, you still need to consider Medicare as you approach your 65th birthday and qualify for the health care coverage.

First, you should visit with your company's human resources manager to determine how your employer-provided insurance will fit with Medi-

care. That's also true for anyone turning 65 and receiving health care through a working spouse's group plan.

Most workers will want to sign up for Medicare's Part A, which usually has no monthly premium and covers hospital stays, skilled nursing, home health services and hospice care.

Of course, like most rules of thumb, there's always an exception. And this one is no different.

If your employer coverage takes the form of a high-deductible insurance plan with a health savings account, you should defer enrolling in Part A. That's because the Internal Revenue Service forbids you to continue contributing to your tax-advantaged savings account once you have Medicare.

When you sign up for Medicare's Part B, which covers doctor appointments and other outpatient services, mostly depends on how large your employer is.

If your or your working spouse's company has 20 or more employees, your employer-provided insurance will remain your primary coverage

and will pay your bills first. You can delay enrolling in Part B until you stop working.

If your or your spouse's company has fewer than 20 workers, Medicare will become your primary coverage, and your employer coverage will be secondary, so you should sign up for Part B.

Assuming that you're not yet receiving Social Security benefits, you'll need to enroll in Medicare by contacting Social Security at (800) 772-1213 or socialsecurity.gov.

Completing the online application is fairly simple and typically takes 10 to 30 minutes.

You should do this during what's called your "initial enrollment period," which runs from three months before the month you turn 65 to three months after your birthday month. For example, if your 65th birthday is in September, you can sign up any time from June 1 until Dec. 31.

There's also the question of whether you'll need to enroll in Medicare's prescription drug coverage, also known as Part D, when you turn 65 or whether you can put



off that decision.

Again, you should consult with your company's benefits manager. If your employer plan includes drug coverage that's at least comparable to Part D coverage, you won't need to sign up right away.

When you do finally stop working, you'll be able to enroll in Medicare (Parts A or B) without risking a late penalty during a special eight-month enrollment period. You'll also have two months to select a Medicare drug plan without a penalty.

To learn more about how

your employer health plan works with Medicare, visit medicare.gov/publications and view the booklet "Medicare and Other Health Benefits: Your Guide to Who Pays First" or call (800) 633-4227 to request a free copy.

Understanding how your insurance choices fit together as you continue working beyond 65 will help you get the best care for your dollars.

This article and the opioid article below were written by Bob Moos, Southwest public affairs officer for the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

11 million Americans misuse prescription opioids yearly

WHILE PRESCRIPTION opioid medications – such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine and codeine – can help treat pain after surgery or after an injury, they carry serious risks, like addiction, overdose and death.

Those risks increase the higher the dose taken or the longer the pain medications are used, even if taken as prescribed.

Risks also grow if taken with other medications, like benzodiazepines (commonly

used for anxiety or sleep) or with opioid medications from many doctors or pharmacies.

More than 11 million Americans misuse prescription opioids every year. In fact, opioid misuse has become so prevalent that the government has declared it a public health emergency. Opioid overdoses accounted for 47,600 deaths in 2017, and 40 percent of those deaths involved a prescription opioid medication.

For years, Americans overestimated the benefits of opioids and underestimated the risks. Many people became regular users of the painkillers, often quite innocently, with a prescription from a doctor after surgery or an injury or as treatment for a chronic condition. Few thought their growing dependence would lead to addiction.

Medicare works closely with drug plans, pharmacists and health care providers to ensure that beneficiaries use these powerful pain medications ap-

propriately. Federal health care officials recently introduced new guidelines for opioid prescriptions in the Medicare Part D drug program.

To avoid potential problems, consider asking your pharmacist to do a safety review of your opioid pain medications when you fill a prescription.

A review is especially important if you have more than one doctor who prescribes these drugs. In some cases, the Medicare drug plan or pharmacist may need to talk to your doctor before filling the prescription.

Your drug plan or pharmacist may do a safety review if they determine you're taking potentially unsafe opioid amounts, or if you take opioids with benzodiazepines (like Xanax, Valium or Klonopin) or if you're using opioids for the first time. New users may be limited to an initial seven-day supply or less to reduce the possibility of long-term use

and addiction.

If your pharmacy can't fill your prescription as written, the pharmacist will give you a notice explaining how you or your doctor can contact your drug plan to ask for a coverage decision.

If your health requires it, you can request a fast decision. You may also ask your plan for an exception to its rules before you even go to the pharmacy, so you'll know if it will cover your medication.

Some Medicare drug plans will have a drug management program to help patients who are at risk for prescription drug abuse. If you get opioids from more than one doctor or pharmacy, your plan may talk with your doctors to make sure you need the medications and are using them safely.

The safety reviews and drug management programs generally won't apply to you if you have cancer, get hospice, palliative or end-of-life care, or live in a long-term care facility.

ABCHomes to host first car show in Monticello

MONTICELLO – Celebrating its 125th anniversary, Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries will host the first Ride and Shine Car Show, May 18 to help raise funds to meet the needs of children and families in crisis.

The car show will be held at the Baptist Home for Children in Monticello, 222 W. Pope Street. The show is open to all automobile makes and models. Regis-

tration begins at 8:30 a.m., with the show starting at 11 a.m. Awards will be presented at 1 p.m.

Car enthusiasts will be able to showcase their classic and new vehicles, as well as help children in need. Food vendors will be on-site.

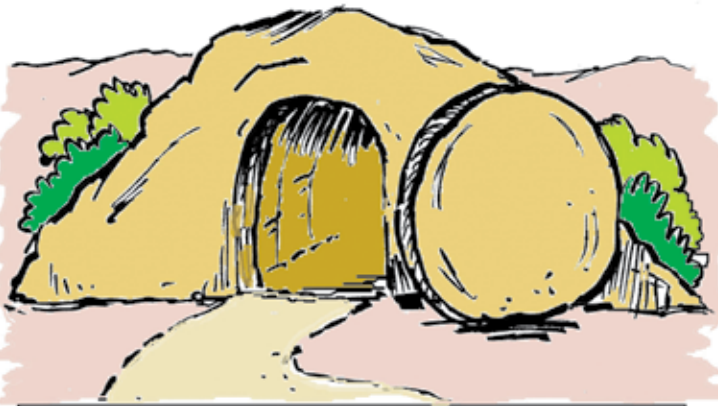
Registration is available by calling (501) 410-1567. For more information, sponsorships or to schedule an interview, email sprather@arkansasfamilies.org.

Gospel Games

"An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."

2 Timothy 2:5 (CSB)

EASTER WORD SEARCH



Find the following words that relate to Easter.

MARY	ALIVE	RISEN
MAGDALENE	VICTORY	GRAVE
BELIEVE	GARDEN	
PETER	NAILS	
JOHN	CROSS	
JESUS	FORGIVENESS	
RESURRECTION	ANGEL	
TOMB	ROLLED STONE	
EMPTY	JERUSALEM	

THOMAS
ARK BAPTIST NEWS

J	F	I	Q	A	M	Q	S	N	E	D	R	A	G	V
E	T	O	M	P	E	M	P	T	Y	T	O	M	B	I
R	A	U	R	E	T	E	P	E	V	A	R	G	E	C
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A	C	M	A	L	I	V	E	V	A	F	J	S	E	R
L	R	E	S	U	R	R	E	C	T	I	O	N	V	Y
E	O	N	J	Z	I	E	B	N	C	U	H	A	E	T
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G	E	G	W	F	N	M	A	R	Y	X	S	S	U	X
H	N	F	X	O	M	A	G	D	A	L	E	N	E	I
A	R	O	L	L	E	D	S	T	O	N	E	I	H	D

Across

1. Where to find a franc
5. Fabulous bird of prey
8. An early inhabitant of Moab (Deuteronomy 2)
12. Bread spread
13. I love (Lat.)
14. Mount ____ (ancient peak)
15. "Is the seed yet in the ____?" (Haggai 2:19)
16. Isl. off east coast of Afr.
17. City in Oklahoma
18. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are ____" (Lamentations 3:22)
21. ____ache
22. Climbing vine
23. "a time to ____" (Ecclesiastes 3:2)
26. King of Judah
27. Eur. country
30. "Thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine ____" (Leviticus 18:14)
31. ____ hill
32. "And the ____ was upon the

- earth forty days and forty nights" (Genesis 7:12)
33. To cause to become (suffix)
34. Wt. meas.
35. Weird
36. Swiss river
37. Ref. book
38. "because his ____ fail not" (Lamentations 3:22)
43. Extinct creature
44. Cut with an ax
45. Promises
47. Danish measure
48. Excerpts may have been (abbr.)
49. Bibliog.
50. Male deer
51. Can
52. "yet he abideth faithful: he cannot ____ himself" (2 Timothy 2:13)

Down

1. Haircut style
2. Actor Hale
3. "Paul was brought before ____ the second time" (2 Timothy 4:2)

4. "be ____ with your wages" (Luke 3:14)
5. "there shall no ____ come upon his head" (1 Samuel 1:11)
6. Gulf of ____
7. "he is before all things, and by him all things ____" (Colossians 1:17)
8. "Haman the Jews' ____" (Esther 8:1)
9. Word written on the wall (Daniel 5)
10. In the same place (Lat.)
11. Quant's clothes
19. Pet
20. Southern univ.
23. Hadad's city (1 Chronicles 1)
24. Later became Bethel (Genesis 28)
25. One (Scot.)
26. Years (Fr.)
27. ____ East
28. Roman tot's age
29. Direction
31. "____ believed God"

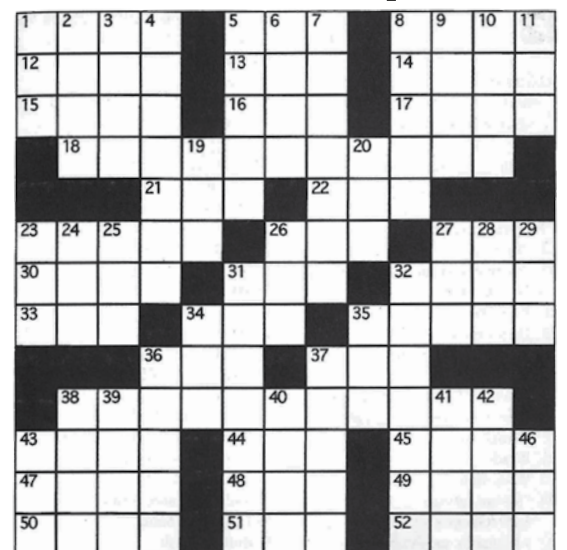
(James 2:23)

32. "But the high places were not ____" (1 Kings 15:14)
34. "The lot is cast into the ____" (Proverbs 16:33)
35. "as she continued praying... ____ marked her mouth" (1 Samuel 1:12)
36. Preposition
37. Equally clever
38. "ye shall find a ____ whereon never man sat" (Mark 11:2)
39. Auditoriums
40. "the kings of Sheba and ____ shall offer gifts" (Psalm 72:10)
41. Observe
42. Fowl not to be eaten (Deuteronomy 14)
43. German article
46. Roguish

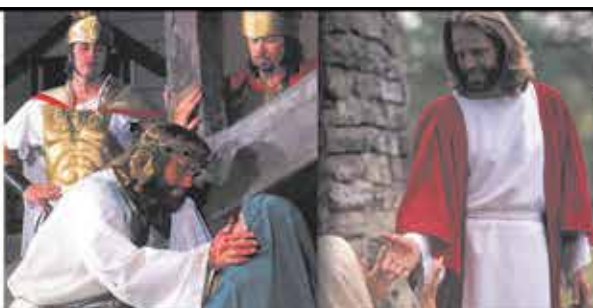
Crossword by Barbour Publishing, Inc.

arkansasbaptist.org

ABN Crossword puzzle



Crossword answer, page 10



www.GreatPassionPlay.org

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Saturday performances
April 19 and 20

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Editor's Note: The Arkansas Baptist News would love to share your church news with the state. Send your information to sarah@arkansasbaptist.org or call 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5153. Please submit information three weeks prior to the event.

Obituaries

Cecil Howard Webb, Jr., 84, of Maumelle, died March 22.

Webb pastored Forest Tower Baptist Church in Hensley and Plainview Baptist Church in Little Rock. He also worked for 38 years as a teacher for the Arkansas state school system.

He was preceded in death by his wife, daughter, two grandsons and a sister.

He is survived by two daughters, his wife, four stepchildren, 16 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren, a sister and a brother.

The funeral was March 26 at Little Rock Funeral Home.

Lewis Edwin Branson, 82, of Star City, died March 25.

Branson was a former pastor at Rankin Chapel Baptist Church in Dumas. He was a retired maintenance and transportation supervisor and school bus driver for the Dumas Public School district. He served as chaplain for Dumas athletes.

He was preceded in death by his sister.

Branson is survived by his wife, three sons, 12 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held March 28 at Griffin Funeral Chapel followed by a burial at Tyro Cemetery.

Ronald D. Raines, 79, of Jacksonville, died March 27.

Raines served as a Baptist minister for 60 years in Conway, Bigelow, McGehee, North Little Rock, Stuttgart and Jacksonville. After he retired, he served as interim pastor for numerous churches in Arkansas.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Raines is survived by his wife, three children, eight

grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held March 30 at Second Baptist Church in Jacksonville followed by burial at Rest Hills Cemetery in North Little Rock.

Church life

First Baptist Church, Osceola, will host an Easter egg hunt at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, April 13. The event will have pizza, a bounce house and prizes.

Milestones

Zion Hill Baptist Church, Cabot, will celebrate its 160th anniversary beginning at 10:55 a.m., Sunday, April 14. There will be a potluck lunch and a

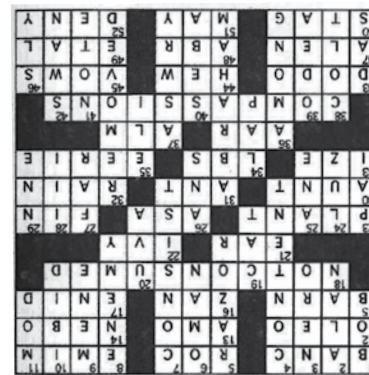
concert by Grand Prairie.


Rob Davis will celebrate his 20th anniversary as pastor at First Baptist Church, Harrison, Sunday, April 14.

Steve Pelz, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in El

Dorado, will retire June 9. He has served Ebenezer for 20 years and has spent 47 years in the ministry.

See crossword on page 9






S-CORE

S-Core symbolizes Servant Discipleship at the CORE of Camp Siloam and the Christian life.

Come to understand the ways of Jesus, explore fundamental concepts of Servant Discipleship, and be stretched as you put your faith to action. If you have finished your 9th grade - 12th grade year - JOIN US!

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June 16th - 28th (Session 2)
June 30th - July 12th (Session 3)
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You may be the One!

The Baptist Ranch, Harrison, is seeking a houseparent couple.

This full-time position includes salary, housing, medical and life insurance, training, annuity after one year, and paid leave. If you're looking for a ministry working with a great group of children and teens, contact: Roger Langlie at (870) 741-5784 or rlanglie@arkansasfamilies.org

arkansasfamilies.org



Classifieds

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Viola, is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. Send resumes to VFBC Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 295, Viola, AR 72583. Text 870-321-1892. Email droper@bksalem.net. Visit Facebook: F.B.C. Viola Friends.

FBC, Ash Flat, seeking **bi-vocational pastor** for a small congregation. Contact Carl Fuller, 870-994-2139 or mail resume to FBC, PO Box 335, Ash Flat, AR 72513.

Bi-vocational pastor needed - Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Trumann, AR. Send resume to philhe45@yahoo.com or mail Phil Hendrix, PO Box 682, Trumann, AR 72472.

First Baptist Church, Jonesboro, AR, is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. Please email resumes to lsalven@fbcjonesboro.org or mail to First Baptist Church, 701 S. Main St., Jonesboro, AR 72401. We welcome you to visit our website, fbcjonesboro.org, for more information about us.

Stanfill Baptist Church in Northern Pulaski County, AR, is prayerfully seeking a **pastor**. Visit <https://sites.google.com/view/stanfillbaptistchurch> or email stanfillpastorsearchteam@gmail.com for more information.

Saltillo Heights Baptist Church in Conway, AR, seeking **full-time or bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resumes to westk28@gmail.com.

Mt. Hebron Baptist Church, Joy, AR, seek-

ing a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resume to Dewey Townsend, 4422 Hwy 36 West, Searcy, AR 72143.

Witt's Chapel Baptist Church in Maynard, AR, is seeking a **pastor**. Send resumes and references to: David Byers, 1340 Legate Road, Maynard, AR 72444.

Bigelow Baptist Church, Bigelow, AR, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resumes to brandonrakridge@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church, Hector, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resume to 801 East 16th Street, Russellville, AR 72801, or email: arvba@suddenlink.net.

East Side Baptist Church, Paragould, AR, is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. Please mail resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, East Side Baptist Church, 529 E. Court Street, Paragould, AR 72450, or email resumes to: brichey@connect2eastside.com. You may also include a sermon DVD or a link to a sermon video/audio.

Victory Baptist Church, Back Gate, AR, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to: pastorsearch@vbcbackgate.com.

Mountain Top Cowboy Church, Heber Springs, is searching for a **full-time senior pastor**. Mail resume to the Pastor Search Committee, 45 Heber Springs Rd., Heber Springs, AR 72543, or go online to www.mountaintopcowboychurch.com and click on "Pastor Search" for more information.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Jefferson County Baptist Association, on the Southern part of the St. Louis Metro area in Missouri, is searching for a **full-time director of missions**. The association has 45 congregations at the present time. Much of the county is rural and we have several rural and small-town congregations. We also have suburban congregations that are thriving. Interested individuals should submit a resume to Rev. Wayne Kuenzle, P.O. Box 169, Cedar Hill, MO 63016.

First Baptist Church, Lepanto, Arkansas, is seeking a **F/T youth pastor**. Parsonage provided. You may e-mail resume to kyle@fbclepanto.com or mail to First Baptist Church, PO Box 400, Lepanto AR 72354.

First Baptist Church, Lockesburg, is seeking God's will for a **bi-vocational youth pastor**. Please send resume to Youth Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 53, Lockesburg, AR 71846 or email to FBSecretary@outlook.com.

Cocklebur Baptist, Ward, AR is prayerfully seeking **part-time worship leader**. Accepting resumes until June 1. Email resumes to cbc4138@gmail.com or mail to Attn: Worship Leader Search Comm., 4138 Cocklebur Rd, Ward, AR 72176.

We are seeking a **bi-vocational youth and family ministries pastor**. Send resume to Open Door Baptist Church, 2400 W. Oak St., Rogers, AR 72758 or email

opendoorroggers@gmail.com.

Central Baptist Church, Bald Knob, AR, seeking **bi-vocational music director**. Send resume to P.O. Box 226, Bald Knob, AR 72010 or email Bro. Paul Barker: pbarker0512@gmail.com.

Mt. Gilead Baptist Church in Bethel Springs, TN, is seeking a **full-time student & music pastor**. We are a growing church with a heart for people all over the world. Please email your resume and/or DVD's to mlarue2020@gmail.com or mail to Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, 6185 Rowsey School Road, Bethel Springs, TN 38315, ATTN: Search Committee. For questions call 731-607-1000.

Cullendale First Baptist Church, 1850 Cash Rd, Camden AR 71701 is seeking a **full-time student minister**. Send resumes to wadetotty@cullendalefbc.org or mail to the church address.

North Central Baptist Association is seeking a **full-time associational missionary**. Send resumes to ncbaclinton@gmail.com or mail to: NCBA, 268 Main St., Clinton, AR 72031.

Balboa Baptist Church, Hot Springs Village, is seeking a **part-time worship leader** of a casual celebration service reaching retiring & still-working adults. Send resume to debbiebalboabaptist@gmail.com.

The First Baptist Church Paris, AR, is looking for a **part-time music director**. For more information, contact Harlin Brewton at

hbrewton@hotmail.com.

Glendale Baptist Church, Booneville, is seeking a **full-time minister to students**. For more information visit our website at www.glendalebc.org.

Maple Avenue Baptist Church of Smackover, AR, is seeking a **P/T student minister**. If interested, please call 870-310-5508 or email benmc@mapleavenuebc.com.

Woodland Heights, Conway is seeking a **full-time student pastor for 7th-12th grades**. Looking for a strong leader to reach students and equip them for ministry. Experience and a theology degree preferred. Send resume to resumes@whbconway.org.

South Main Baptist Church, Crossett, is seeking a **bi-vocational youth pastor**. Send resume to: smbcsecretary@windstream.net or PO Box 430, Crossett, AR 71635.

Perryville FBC is seeking a **bi-vocational music director**. Send resumes to pvfb.church@gmail.com.

MISCELLANEOUS

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APRIL 14, 2019

The ability to command others comes from a position of authority. Historically, these positions of authority are obtained by election, appointment, succession or by overpowering someone weaker.

The religious aristocracy questioned Jesus' authority. From the first verse of this book, Mark asserted that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. Jewish teachers in Jesus' day would quote a well-known and trusted rabbi to support their teaching. Jesus did not do this. Rather, He would say things like, "I say to you," or "I command." To authenticate His sovereign authority, He would perform a miraculous act like He did in Mark 9:14-27.

Jesus, Peter, James and John came down from the mountain to find the other nine disciples in a dispute with the scribes over the disciples' inability to heal a demon-possessed boy. The demon would render the boy speechless, throw him down, make him foam at the mouth, make him grind his teeth and make him rigid (Mark 9:18). Jesus had already given them power over unclean spirits (Mark 6:7).

Jesus called the disciples an "unbelieving generation" (Mark 9:19). He connected their failure with faithlessness. They wanted to know why they couldn't drive the demon out. Jesus said it required prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). Undoubtedly, they had been neglecting the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting.

The father wasn't even sure Jesus could heal the boy. Jesus told him, "Everything is possible to the one who believes" (Mark 9:23). The father confessed, "I do believe! Help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Jesus drove

the demon out of the boy.

We will face failure in our faith if we drift away from the spiritual principles we learned at the beginning of our relationship with Christ. We will also have failure if we neglect reading and studying the Word of God. We will also experience failure in faith if we stop relying on the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit for guidance, power to withstand temptation, and spiritual wisdom to recognize truth and error.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Commands

MARK 9:14-27 (HCSB)

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

God won't forgive this sin

MATTHEW 12:22-32 (HCSB)

for driving out demons (Matt. 12:27)?

Jesus concluded that He drives demons out by the power of God and that the kingdom had come. They are either for Him or against Him. They will either help gather with Him or scatter. This leads directly into His discussion of the unpardonable sin.

Jesus said any blasphemy or slander against the Son would be forgiven. Why? This is true because the way to forgiveness is repentance. But, any blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. Why? This is true because the way to forgiveness has been rejected.

If you oppose the Spirit of God, you are opposing the only Spirit Who can draw you to salvation through repentance.

The question often arises, "Can Christians commit the unpardonable sin?" Most Bible teachers agree that if you are worried about committing this sin, you haven't committed it. Blasphemy against the Spirit is a lifelong refusal to respond to the Spirit's conviction of sin and the refusal to accept the forgiveness Christ offers.

APRIL 21, 2019

Jesus was flogged, dressed in purple, and had a crown of thorns pressed on His brow. The soldiers kept hitting Him with a reed and spitting on Him. They mocked Him with false worship, stripped Him of His purple robe, and redressed Him in His own clothes. He was led out to the place of crucifixion.

Humanly, Jesus did not have the strength to carry a cross. The soldiers pressed a man passing by into service and had him to carry Jesus' cross (Mark 15:21). This man was "Simon, a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Mark 15:21). Simon was probably a Cyrenian Jew who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He had no idea that he would end up meeting the Passover Lamb and carrying His cross. Church tradition holds that Simon trusted in Christ and then went home and led his sons to the Lord.

When the soldiers arrived at Golgotha with Jesus, the mockery continued. He was crucified between two criminals, and the spectators yelled insults at Jesus. The

chief priests and scribes mocked Jesus as Messiah and as King (Mark 15:29-32).

At noon, a miraculous darkness came over the land for three hours. The Jews would have been reminded of the first Passover. The ninth plague was three days of darkness, followed by the death of the firstborn. The darkness at Calvary was God's announcement that His Firstborn was dying for the sins of the world. They should have also understood it to mean that judgment was coming.

When Jesus breathed His last, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). The tearing of the curtain represents that God tore aside the wall of separation between Him and sinful humanity. The centurion had witnessed everything Jesus experienced and said. Jesus' final breath moved the centurion to confess, "This man really was God's Son!" (Mark 15:39).

Sin created a gap between God and man. Jesus' death bridges this gap and provides access to God the Father.

I have a friend whose wife had been battling cancer for years. She became very sick, and a week later she passed away. He said to me, "It happened so quick." Although we know death is coming, it seems to always take us by surprise. Short of the Rapture, we will all die physical deaths.

In the context of Lazarus' death, Jesus told Martha that her brother would live again. She was an orthodox Jew and knew there was life after death. But Jesus was talking about something more miraculous and larger than

what she was thinking. He said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Notice that He didn't say, "I can resurrect people, and I have life." He said, "I am resurrection; I am the life." Martha was referring to an event, but Jesus was referring to His person. He didn't just have life; He is life. He was promising something that went beyond the miracle of bringing Lazarus back to life.

Jesus told Martha that those who believe in Him, even if they die, would live

(John 11:25). He asked her, "Do you believe this?" Martha responded with great faith, "Yes, Lord, ... I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (John 11:27).

Jesus told Martha that to have spiritual life she must believe. This is a lesson He gave Thomas (John 20:24-29). After Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to all the disciples except Thomas. When they told him they had seen the Lord, Thomas attached his believing to seeing and touching (John 20:25). Eight days later, when they were all

together, Jesus appeared to them and said, "Peace to you!" (John 20:26). He invited Thomas to examine His hands and His side. Jesus didn't want Thomas' faith hindered, "Don't be an unbeliever, but a believer" (John 20:27). Thomas responded in faith, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Jesus said that those who believe without seeing are blessed (John 20:29).

When we trust Christ as Lord, even though we die, we will live forever!

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Saves

MARK 15:27-39 (HCSB)

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

You'll never die

JOHN 11:25-27; 20:24-29 (HCSB)

Featured commentary writer



Gerald Nash

Gerald Nash is a registered respiratory therapist and EEG technician at St. Mary's Regional Health System in Russellville. He is involved in medical research, determining antibiotic resistance in tuberculosis. Nash leads a small group and is involved in many ministries at Second Baptist Church, Conway. He has attended several universities and seminaries, including Williams Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His degrees include a bachelor of arts in Christian ministries, master of arts and doctor of ministry in pastoral studies, and master of arts in theological studies. He is currently studying archaeology and paleography and volunteers on the Cairo Geniza Project, deciphering and analyzing ancient Greek and Arabic documents. Nash enjoys reading, bass fishing and spending time with his family. He and his wife, Mary Ann, love to travel, explore ancient ruins and go on wild animal safaris.

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