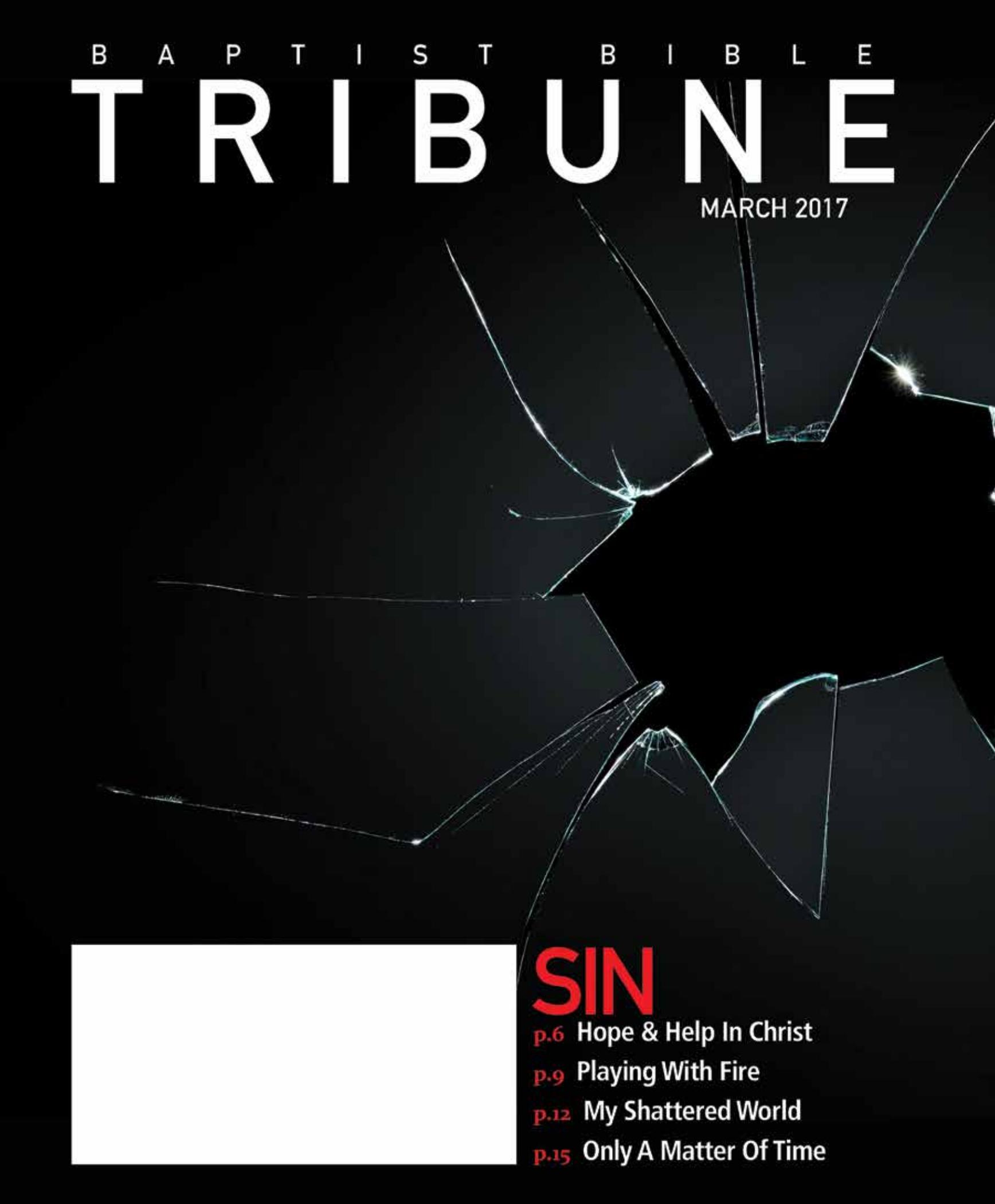


B A P T I S T B I B L E
TRIBUNE

MARCH 2017



SIN

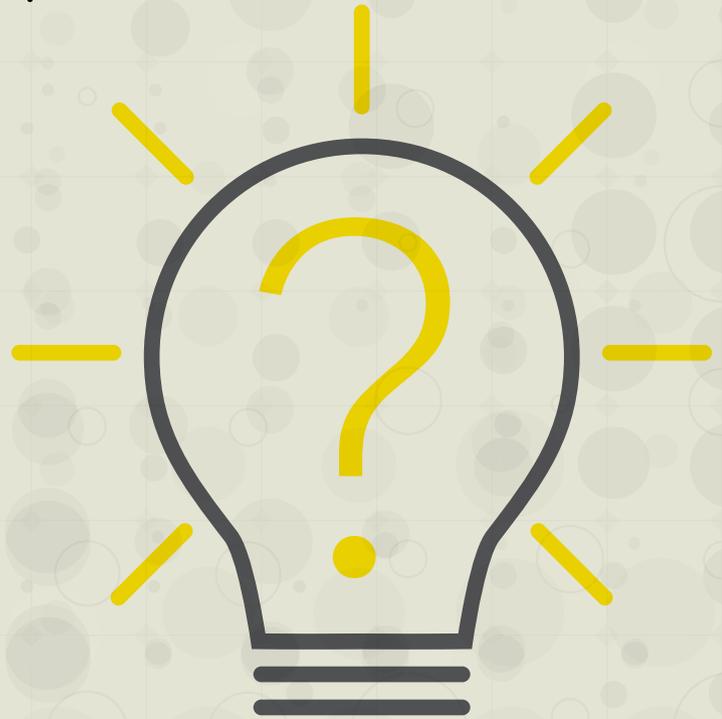
p.6 Hope & Help In Christ

p.9 Playing With Fire

p.12 My Shattered World

p.15 Only A Matter Of Time

Why?



I love what we do at the *Tribune*! Each issue represents months of hard work and I love holding that finished product in my hand. I have loved expanding our ministry to include a mobile app, a leadership podcast, and a social media strategy that promotes BBFI churches and mission works, as well as the upcoming BBFI Coaching Network. I am excited for what the future could look like as we continue to expand our ministry.

As I prayed asking God for His wisdom and direction regarding the *Tribune*, one question kept coming to mind: Why? Why do we exist? For almost 67 years the *Tribune* has been telling the good news of what God is doing through the churches and ministries of the BBFI. It has served as the face of the Fellowship. While serving as communication director/editor, I have focused on what we should do,

not why we do what we do. Our why is essential.

During the May 2016 business meeting, I said, "If things don't change, there may not be a *Tribune* by this time next year." There is hope, but the fact is we need to raise \$150,000 in this year's Annual Tribune Offering. This is a God-sized goal, but this amount has been raised before and I believe it can, and must, be raised again.

To participate in this offering, you can send a check directly to the office (720 E. Kearney St., Springfield, MO 65803) or give online through the *Tribune* website, BBFI website, or mobile app. If you would like to participate, but can't immediately, visit www.tribune.org and select "Annual Tribune Offering" to make a digital commitment. This helps us in our planning.

How much should you give? A good place to start is with the cost of

the magazines you receive, which is \$15 a year. Any amount beyond that goes toward providing other valuable resources to pastors, churches, and missionaries. Whatever you decide, we appreciate your participation in our annual offering.

If you have any questions or need more information, don't hesitate to call us at 417.831.3996. We are committed to the Lord and to our Fellowship and are determined to do our best on your behalf. Your support helps us to do so.

Randy Harp
Communication Director, BBFI
Editor, Baptist Bible Tribune

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ON THE TABLE

Sin

by Randy Harp | Editor

Sin! We know it is all around us but it is not a subject most people, including myself, enjoy talking about. When I first mentioned to the team here at the *Tribune* my idea to devote an entire issue to the topic of sin, there was hesitation. I wrestled with the idea for a few months. So much can be said on the topic, but what would be most beneficial to our Fellowship and the readers of the magazine? I am thankful for our contributors this month. Kevin Carson provides a solid theological approach to the topic and we included an edited sermon by Mark Milioni. Phil and Josie Cunningham share an extremely transparent account of their personal battles as a result of Phil's sin while pastoring a BBF church in California.

By the time you read this, our strongest push for the Annual Tribune Offering will be behind us. This does not mean we no longer need your financial support. At the Fellowship meeting in Tyler last month, I presented my strongest case for *why* pastors need the Fellowship and *why* the Fellowship needs the *Tribune*. The *Baptist Bible Tribune* is the only magazine solely devoted to sharing what God is doing in and through the churches of the BBFI, what God is doing in and through BBFI missionaries serving all around the world, what God is doing in and through our educational institutions, and what God is doing with the church planting efforts. But it is much more than a source of information. The *Tribune* also seeks to inspire and challenge ministry leaders and church members. One of our most rewarding goals is to complement the pulpits of BBFI churches. I love to hear the many ways pastors use the *Tribune* in their churches.

Pastors and ministry leaders, I also want to remind you of the upcoming BBFI Coaching Network launching this month. This is a great opportunity to take the next step in your personal and professional leadership. Last month's *Tribune* highlighted several benefits of being part of a coaching network. (If you missed that issue, it is available online and via our BBFI mobile app.) One of my core beliefs is that growing churches are led by growing leaders. I have learned this from personal experience. All registrations for this session must be in by March 15. See page 24 or visit www.bbfcoaching.org for more information.

As always, thank you for allowing me to serve Christ as I serve you.

SIN



Help And Hope In Christ **6**

In the battle against our sinful natures, we are never tempted beyond our ability to resist, but we must take a proactive approach.



Playing With Fire **9**

How one small compromise led to years of deception and guilt. Coming clean was only the beginning of Phil Cunningham's journey.



My Shattered World **12**

Josie Cunningham's whole world was smashed to pieces. Everything would have to be pieced back together, but nothing would be the same.



Only A Matter Of Time **15**

The tragic consequences of hidden sin are written across the pages of the Bible, and in this case, the news headlines.



Don't miss any of the *Tribune's* digital offerings on our website www.tribune.org. You can find old articles, a digital page-turn version of this month's magazine, and a link to sign up for the *Tribune* Update email.

COLUMNS AND DEPARTMENTS

- 4** BBFI Leadership Perspectives
- 19** State Fellowship Spotlight: Michigan
- 22** Urban Current
- 23** Fellowship News
- 30** Afterwords
- 31** The DailyFeed

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FROM THE PRESIDENT THE BATTLE RAGES ON

Every pastor knows we must meet certain standards to serve in leadership in the local church. The New Testament books of Timothy and Titus describe these qualifications. Living above reproach means we are living a life of righteousness that is seen by others.

One of ministry's greatest pitfalls is to forget we are still in a battle with sin. People often put pastors into some kind of super-Christian category. It would be great if we no longer dealt with sin in our lives. Unfortunately, that's not the case. The reality: in this fallen world, the battle rages with evil and sin for all, pastors included. Paul's candidness is shocking when he writes about his struggle with sin:

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:22-25)

We must never forget we are all in a battle with sin. Early in ministry, I realized the only way I could teach others was as a fellow pilgrim seeking God's help to live the truths of scripture. I desperately need personal Bible study and a commitment to prayer. My daily prayers must include "forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us." I also need friends with whom I can be honest about my struggles. In our Fellowship, we can find trusted friends to walk with us in this area. We want to be a place where "no one stands alone." As pastors, we can walk in holiness only by the grace of God.



Eddie Lyons
BBFI PRESIDENT

WORLD MISSIONS AN URGENT MESSAGE

World missions exists for three main reasons. First, because Christ's command to go into all the world is clear (Mark 16:15 and restated in Acts 1:8).

Second, God's Word shows all people need salvation and forgiveness for their sinful nature and rebellion against God. While it is true many have not heard of Jesus or know little about the true God and His will, all men have at least some awareness which points them to God. Sadly, they have either rejected or ignored it.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them ... so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:19, 20).

The apostle Paul gives a clear path in Romans 10:13-15 on how to make sure the lost hear of Jesus and call upon him for salvation.

The fact that only Jesus can meet everyone's need for salvation is the third reason for world missions. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Since there is no other God, no other savior, and no other way of salvation, it is vital churches do all they can to reach people everywhere with the free offer of forgiveness and eternal life to all who receive Christ as personal Savior.

Because of the world's sins there is an urgency for world missions and the need for more missionaries. Why do we send missionaries to the regions beyond and support them with our prayers and finances? The answer is given in Luke 24:47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."



Jon Konnerup
BBFI MISSION DIRECTOR

BBFI LEADERSHIP

CHURCH PLANTING HOW IS RESTARTING A CHURCH DIFFERENT FROM PLANTING A CHURCH?

Ralph Wilson, in his article "Restart," states, "One of the most common blocks to growth in a declining or dying congregation is leadership that is closed to faith and a vision of the future." Often, these entrenched "old-timers" have difficulty accepting a new vision and new direction.

Not every church is a good candidate for a restart. Rural areas losing population, areas of ethnic change, and declining neighborhoods are difficult. The area around a restart church needs to have a definable target group of sufficient size that may be effectively reached by church ministries.

One reason a restart church

may not make progress with a new vision or direction is because the leadership who contributed to the decline or death of the church was not successfully changed. The changes you desire may not happen even with a new steering committee if there are negative power struggles with a nucleus of long-standing members calling the shots. There must be an overwhelming welcome of new people and new leadership to the church. Without the excitement of welcoming new guests and new ideas there will be a half-heartedness of corporation for change.¹

Restarting a church and starting a church from the

ground up requires tremendously different skill sets and mindsets. The restarter is a person with a vast amount of coordination and patience while the latter tends to be a person of strategies and applications. It is true planting a church and restarting a church have many of the same characteristics, but the approach and process is very different.

1. Thoughts gleaned from an article by Ralph Wilson, Joyful Heart Ministries.



John Gross
BBFI CHURCH PLANTING (APEX)

BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE IT'S BROKE

It was an unusually quiet Tuesday evening at the Milioni house. I was getting ready to leave for patrol as a police officer for the city of Albion, my brothers were doing homework, and my mom was folding laundry when a slamming door interrupted the peace. My father stood there, disheveled, glasses askew, holding the steering wheel of my sweet 1976 Monte Carlo Coupe. He had hit a deer on his way home. The mechanic arrived, looked at the car, took his stubby cigar out of his mouth and declared, "It's broke." The car could not be repaired.

A few weeks ago, Chris Williams, the facilities director at BBC, came into my office with

similar bad news about the boiler in the W. E. Dowell Fieldhouse. The boiler, which was installed in 1968 when the building was constructed, has been failing for many years. Except that Percy Phillips kept it running with duct tape and prayer. Chris met with the specialists to see what could be done. The diagnosis this time, "It's broke." The parts needed to repair it are no longer manufactured, and, even if they were, it still would not work.

The Fieldhouse is one of the most important buildings on our campus. It houses our cafeteria, our gymnasium, and serves as our auditorium during Fellowship Week. We must replace the heating and cooling

system immediately in order to use this great building. The price tag is steep. The original bid was \$1,000,000, but God is already at work. A local contractor and hospital have generously donated time and equipment, which brings the cost down to \$500,000.

We will begin raising funds for this very necessary project in the next few weeks. This is something we must address immediately. Please pray for this project and consider how you can be involved.



Mark Milioni
BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE PRESIDENT

PERSPECTIVES

BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE THE QUESTION I'VE BEEN DYING TO ASK

I have questions. Why do the HD channels on my TV go squirrely only during hockey games? Why do I always drip coffee out of my mug when I'm wearing a tie? I've got a whole list of them. You probably do, too. Some are so private they are for God alone. Others, we aren't quite sure who to direct them to. But I have this particular question that has been bugging me, so I'm going to go ahead and ask you.

Why has there been a marked decline in commitment to Christian education in the past couple of decades ... among us?

Not too long ago, in almost all of our churches, Christian education (K-12 and higher education) was a staple in our

conversations. I know not all of the attempts at Christian schools were exemplary, but the need was there — on that we almost all agreed. But it's not that way anymore.

This is perplexing particularly given the prevailing views of our culture have become stridently more anti-biblical. No question about that. Moral sin is not only epidemic, but almost universally embraced. It's viewed as hate speech if you even say, "Wait a minute!" Nobody thinks our children and young adults live in a context that better supports godliness. It's a full-blown cultural war against that. No place is that more evident than on the college campuses. I

read it in industry briefings all the time. Binge drinking and drug use is out of control. Sexual assaults are the dirty secrets of the university system. High-tech cheating is now a game. "Education" has unquestionably come to be not only secular, but almost exclusively anti-Christian.

Hence my question. In these times, isn't it logical, isn't it incumbent that we value Christian education more than ever?



David Melton
BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE PRESIDENT

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SIN: HOPE AND HELP IN CHRIST

by Kevin Carson

How would you describe your struggle with sin? An unexpected guest? A stalking enemy? A dangerous raging river? A constant threat? An unwanted intruder? An intense war? Sin relentlessly wreaks havoc in the world and in people. Sin blemishes. Sin distracts. Sin impoverishes. Sin steals. Sin breaks. Sin stains. Sin scars. Sin misdirects. Sin deceives. Sin distorts. Sin enslaves. As followers of Christ, sin occupies the space around us, formerly dominated us, and continues to influence us (Ephesians 2:1-3). Often, when we confess it or desire to fight it, the well-meaning yet woeful advice we receive from others is, “Well, stop it.” If it were that simple, who would struggle with sin at all? Why would Paul exclaim, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death” (Romans 7:25)? Thankfully, the good news is, there is help and hope in Christ.

WHY IS THE BATTLE WITH SIN SO HARD?

The Bible describes the problem with sin as a war. The desires of the flesh war against the desires of the Spirit. They are opposed to each

other and often leave Christians doing the exact opposite of what is biblically expected (Romans 8:5-17; Galatians 5:16-26). In Paul’s analogy, the flesh refers to an internal drive that is opposed to God; in fact, it is God’s enemy (Galatians 5:17). The flesh desires what is in opposition to God and godliness. The flesh encourages sin; so much so that all sin is called the “works of the flesh.”

What makes the flesh so powerful? It is ever-present. Sin is so entrenched in each person that Paul calls it a law warring against the law of God (Romans 7:13-25). As a law it compels, coerces, bullies, and intimidates us to do what it wants. It promises us rewards when we follow its will or commands, and threatens us when we do not. Similar to the law of gravity, even when we do not pay attention to it specifically, it always exercises its power against us.

Sinning less and becoming more like Jesus Christ in day-to-day living is akin to rowing upstream or skiing uphill. Both are extremely difficult, if not seemingly impossible. Thankfully God has not left us

alone in our battle against sin. Instead, as we seek to honor Him in daily living, He works in and through us to conquer sin’s stronghold (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13).

HOPE ARISES FROM CHRIST’S WORK IN YOU

At salvation, Christ removes your sinful disposition, the old man, who formerly dominated your being (Romans 6:6-7; Colossians 3:9-10). Honoring God in anything was impossible before salvation. However, when you accept Jesus, you become a new man. Impossibility becomes possibility, inability becomes ability, incapacity becomes capacity, and you can live a life that honors God (Colossians 3:12-17).

This divine change begins in your inner man (2 Corinthians 5:17). God gives you a new heart that desires to follow His will and not to submit to the desires of the flesh. God made you a new creation in Christ and uniquely equipped you to conquer sin and live for Him.

Although you have been equipped to grow in Christlikeness, living for Jesus takes effort. This process demands concentrated

energy as you set your mind on the things of Christ (Colossians 3:1-4). As you focus on Christ, you also identify areas in your life where you need to change. After recognizing these problem areas, you seek to replace them with thoughts, motivations, attitudes, words, and actions that honor Christ. The Apostle Paul describes this process through a series of commands where the Christian is to “put to death” and “put off” that which is sinful (Colossians 3:5-9) and “put on” what is consistent with the lifestyle of a follower of Christ (Colossians 3:12-17).

Specificity is important. You know the taste, touch, look, sound, and smell of sin; you live it. With practice, you become increasingly capable of pinpointing unrighteousness in your life. However, many Christians suffer disappointment and fail to change when they neglect to consider righteousness with the same precision.

Two observations: 1) to just put off is not enough, and 2) generalizations are the enemy of real change. Using Paul’s example of daily clothing, whenever one takes off specific layers and items of clothing, it is helpful and necessary to put on other specific layers and items. Related to conquering sin, if you fail to get specific in terms of righteousness and settle for religious platitudes, clichés, truisms, or general principles, growth can be hindered. For example, a conviction to love your neighbor more produces minimal change. But, when you determine to write a note of encouragement, to say a word of kindness, to listen carefully in a conversation, or to provide a meal for dinner, you are intentionally changing your actions in an effort to love your neighbor. Hope for victory over sin and progress in Christlikeness grows as you experience Christ’s work in you through the Spirit’s power as one who is in Christ.

BATTLE RAGES IN THE HEART WITH DESIRES

After identifying the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that need

to change, there is an additional step toward long-term change. The real war takes place in the heart — where the process of sin begins. James writes, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin” (James 1:14-15). Notice how he described the process. What you want, crave, or desire creates a trap that leads to sin. He uses a fishing and hunting metaphor to describe how your own desire captures you. He then transitions to a pregnancy metaphor where desire conceived leads inevitably to the birth of sin.

The biblical principle is clear: whatever you live for (your momentary desire) will influence everything else in your life. Jesus used the example of fruit trees to explain this process (Luke 6:43-45). No one would ever expect to get apples from a peach tree or peaches from an apple tree. The fruit always matches the root. So whatever it is you desire in your heart — that thing which exercises control over your heart — determines what you do. Your desire is the root; your response is the fruit. It becomes imperative then to identify what rules your desires since that alone determines whether you honor God in

your thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions. As Jesus said, “From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

As a way to understand this principle better, think of your life as a kingdom and your heart as the throne room. Whatever you desire essentially sits on the throne of your heart. Christians should desire to love and honor the Lord in everything. But in many instances (possibly even seasons of life), instead of desiring to glorify God, something or someone else occupies the throne. Life is then lived worshipping and serving a God-replacement, an idol, an imposter on the throne of the heart.

Change becomes likely as the believer recognizes what it is he or she is living for at the desire level. Once identified, confession is made to God and commitments are made to live for something different. But committing to change alone is not enough. As mentioned above, the hard work of determining what to specifically “put on” for righteousness is essential.

HELP BEGINS WITH THE WORD OF GOD

How do you identify what righteousness looks like? How do you grow in wisdom and discernment on the journey? How do you develop good ideas regarding the “put on” that is necessary? The answer for all these questions is the Word of God. James provides the process or structure necessary to get the answers that help the Christian honor God in daily living. “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25). This process culminates in blessing.

First, the process of growing in righteousness begins by looking into the perfect law of liberty, which is the Bible. The idea of *looking* here is to stoop down and observe carefully or intently. Why do we need to look carefully into the Bible? The Bible text expands our categories of thinking. It

**CHANGE
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UPON YOU.**

**YOUR HOPE OF CHANGE IS
BASED ON THE FAITHFULNESS
OF GOD HIMSELF.**

develops our vocabulary. It provides us wisdom. It teaches the character of God. It chronicles His actions, especially the sending of His son. The Bible provides the window for us to watch Jesus' love as he engages sinners like us.

Second, the follower of Christ must continue in the Word. It is not enough just to read it or study it; instead, the goal is to continue in it. Just as looking is intentional, so also is continuing in it. Memorizing what you study is one way to continue in the change you are considering. If you struggle with memorizing, write the verses out on a card and determine to read it 25 times per day. Mark on the back of the card each time you read and consider it per day. Over a short period of time, you will find you have essentially memorized it. Another way is to write out the key verses you are studying on a few cards. Place the cards in locations you visit often. When there, take a moment to read over the card and consider its meaning and application to your circumstance.

Third, do not be a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word. The intended end of Bible study is application. Carefully think through

the meaning of the text you are looking at with the goal of specifically putting it into action. Consider questions like these: What fruit should become prevalent from this text? What does God want me to think? What does God want me to say? What does God want me to do? If I am going to practice godliness in this moment, what would that look like? How might Jesus respond in this situation in order to honor the Father and do His will?

Bringing a friend into this process is also very beneficial to help you make changes. Because sin is so deceitful and the potential destruction so great, all Christians need someone to exhort them daily (Hebrews 3:12-13). This daily conversation provides a very practical way to help your endurance as you strive to fight a particular sin.

VICTORY IS POSSIBLE IN THIS MOMENT, AND THE NEXT MOMENT

Is fighting sin easy? No. It would be nice if there were a silver bullet, a magic potion, or an easy button for sanctification. It would be nice if there were anything that would make this process easy. The reality is, there is not. God's goal is for us to depend upon Him as we

eagerly wait for the future day when we will struggle with sin no longer (Romans 8:18-39).

How do we know victory is possible regardless of the sin in which we struggle? The Apostle Paul points us to the character of God. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). When he refers to "no temptation," he means you will never be in any situation or pressure-filled circumstance that is greater than the grace given to you through the faithfulness of God. Your ability to have victory does not depend solely upon you. Your hope of change is based on the faithfulness of God Himself.

God provides the grace to say no to sin, the grace to put off those things that do not honor God and replace them with what does honor Him, the grace to identify what it is you really desire, the grace to confess and cultivate greater God-honoring desires, and the grace to say or do what God wants you to do. God provides grace unto change.

SIN: PLAYING WITH FIRE

by Phil Cunningham

I love comeback stories.

A story of someone who was discouraged, depressed, and had given up hope, until God brought him back. In Acts 3, we read about a hopeless man in a hopeless situation. The man was crippled since birth and could not help himself. Yesterday he begged, tomorrow he would beg. There was little hope for his future.

Have you been there? You might not be physically crippled, but maybe a failed business or a fractured relationship or an abusive situation left you feeling worthless. Has a poor decision put you in bondage to the point where life seems hopeless? Have you done something or had something done to you that left you in such despair you couldn't lift your head? Have you ever ruined or damaged every relationship you held dear? What if, like the crippled man, your only hope for the future lies in a miraculous intervention?

If any of the above describes you, then **I have a comeback story to tell you. Through God's grace, it is my story.** A story of how God took a mess I created and kept His promise of Romans 8:28. I'm not proud of what I'm about to share, but I am so thankful God rescued me. I praise Him that He specializes in redeeming, restoring, and recommissioning wounded, broken people such as myself to fulfill His purposes.

>>>>>



MY LAWYER HAD ASSURED ME,
**“YOU’RE GOING TO
 A COUNTRY CLUB
 PRISON.”**
 HIS WORDS COULD NOT
 HAVE BEEN MORE UNTRUE.

I grew up in a pastor’s home.

By the time I was six, I’d committed hundreds of verses to memory — and it would be those very verses that sustained me during my darkest hours. I was saved at age 12 and surrendered to ministry at age 17. I have always loved going to church and meeting with God and His people. After high school, I enrolled at Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College where I attended for three and a half years. I transferred to Baptist Bible College for my senior year. During that year, I met my lifelong friends, but more importantly, my future wife, Josie Lewis Cunningham. To this day, Josie is the most Christlike person I know.

Josie and I were married in 1979 and moved back to California to serve in the church my parents planted. It was in Yorba Linda, and we served there the next 27 years. I was student pastor, worship leader, school principal and administrator, and then senior pastor. We truly loved the people of that town and our church.

Then, at age 42, I made a seemingly small decision. In my mind, my compromise was justifiable — I deserved more money. I certainly never imagined it would turn into an eight-year journey of deceit and embezzlement. But the bondage of my secret sin took its grip. I lost the joy of my salvation and was no longer a dynamic soul-winner. I cried a lot because of guilt, and even experienced health problems because of the tremendous burden of sin. I gradually learned one decision, one bad choice, one small compromise can begin the downward spiral that ends in destruction.

In January 2006, I could take the guilt no longer and told Josie about my sin. Satan loves secrets, and he had convinced me I could never be free, truly free, from this sin. I need to interject here that my sin caused

major marriage mistrust. It was only God who touched Josie’s heart years later to see I truly was a changed man.

After telling Josie, I went to the church board and confessed my sin. I was soon asked to resign from responsibilities which I had been a part of for 36 years. I made immediate, voluntary restitution and truly desired to honor God in my response to the pain I had inflicted on others because of my sin. Financially, it took almost everything Josie and I had to pay for what I had done.

I’m thankful for a great biblical counselor, Ken Nichols, who helped me get to the root of my sin. I can still remember him saying after our third meeting, “Phil, you’ve done a horrible thing, but you’re not a horrible person.” Oh, how I needed those words of compassion and grace!

Because of my sin, I faced two primary questions: How long would God’s hand of chastisement last? Would He ever use me again? At age 50, following my confession and resignation, God unwrapped His sovereign plan that included severe consequences for my sin. The Orange County District Attorney’s office pressed charges, and the three-year court process began. My criminal lawyer explained that because I had made voluntary restitution, and because 250 favorable letters from community leaders had been written, I would not likely go to prison. In the end, I found myself plea-bargaining for two years in California state prison. In June 2009, at age 54, I began serving my prison sentence.

In Romans 8:28 Paul states; “And we

know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” This is one of the many verses God

used to lift my head during this time. If we don’t believe God is at work in all things for our good and to bring Him glory, we’ll never be overcomers. By the time I went to prison, I knew God’s hand of chastisement was off me, yet my fears were more than I could fathom. My lawyer had assured me, “You’re going to a country club prison.” His words could not have been more untrue.

I was loaded on a bus and driven to the back lot of the prison grounds. I was stripped naked, along with the other prisoners, in front of women guards. This was my introduction to prison life, and the difficult days that followed were life changing. One of the sayings in prison is, “I came in on my own and I’m leaving on my own, so don’t bother me.” Prison becomes a very lonely place. It was there I experienced the hardest days of my life. I love people and am not one who would do well living in the middle of nowhere by myself. Yet, four different times in prison, God allowed times of isolation, each lasting over 15 days. It was in these times God assured me He alone was enough. His ways certainly are not my ways.

Shortly before I started serving my sentence, I was diagnosed with a physical condition known as sleep apnea. About six months into my sentence, I was experiencing great difficulty sleeping, even breathing. This particular prison had the reputation of having



no good doctors because it was so far from any major cities (Ironwood is in the middle of the Mojave Desert). Yet I am so grateful for the prison doctor who discovered a huge mass on my throat and determined my artery wall had blown out and was blocking my airflow. The surgery that followed kept me in the hospital 13 days.

While I was shackled to that hospital bed, Satan attacked my mind. He whispered, “You’ve visited hundreds of hurting people, and yet no one cares about you.” Satan always attacks our area of neediness. I wish I had time to tell you what God did for me in that hospital. It was just one of the many times God miraculously reminded me, “Phil, I haven’t forgotten about you.”

After surgery, the doctor told me the procedure had gone well, but I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. For the next several months I endured surgery, radiation, and trips back and forth to the hospital while in shackles, in a cage, in the back of a van. Oh, how I give thanks that today, seven years later, I am cancer free! In the good times and the difficult times, God showed His faithfulness.

Let me share briefly some of the lives who were forever changed because God allowed me to go to prison. As I prayer-walked at each place God sent me, I saw His mighty power to save, forgive, reconcile, and give new purpose to many men. I offered family and marriage counseling, understanding most of the men I encountered in prison had ruined every relationship in their lives. God encouraged me with continual ministry opportunities and reminded me He sent me to that prison as the answer to a wife’s or a mother’s prayer.

God allowed me to personally lead 73 men to place their faith in Christ. He brought peace where there was war, and, although many were still behind bars, their chains had

been released. It quickly became apparent there were two kinds of men in prison. There were those who were evil and controlled by Satan and those who were trapped by Satan but desperately wanted hope, a new life, and a future. It was also evident that when you live for Jesus in a dark place, you will suffer consequences. I faced fears and situations I’d never experienced before. I could tell you stories where I cried aloud and quoted God’s Word. I could share my Acts 16 story where I was beaten, and new believers bandaged my wounds and deeply cared for me. I know for certain if God is for us, it doesn’t matter who or what is against us!

It’s been almost seven years since I got out of prison, and people often ask why I smile so much. “I have so much to smile about!” is my reply. I am like the woman in Luke 7 who was forgiven so much. How can I not love my Lord with all my heart? He showed me that no matter what I faced — whether loneliness, persecution, health issues, or rejections — He is faithful. He reminded me of all the messed-up, broken people in the Bible He used to accomplish His plan, and He desired to use me. He assured me His ways (although unexpected at times) are best, and, if I would pay attention, I could trust Him and have joy.

God has given Josie and me a wonderful place to serve and opportunities we never imagined. God heard our cries and brought us out of a horrible place. He put a new song in our hearts. We have found the words of William Carey to be true, “The future is bright because of the promises of God!”

God is the author of my comeback story and He is more than enough!

Continues on page 12 with Josie Cunningham’s testimony



PSALM 40

**“HE HEARD
MY CRY
... AND
BROUGHT
ME OUT OF
A HORRIBLE
PLACE ...
HE PUT A NEW
SONG IN MY
HEART ...”**

**THESE ARE THE WORDS
OF A RESTORED MAN!**

SIN: MY SHATTERED WORLD

by Josie Cunningham



In 2006, the book of Job became my nighttime storybook. I held my ears and my heart close to the Word of God as He carried me through the most gut-wrenching experiences of my life. My husband's confession of embezzlement, and his resignation as pastor after 27 years, plunged me into a challenge that seemed utterly impossible. I found myself in a relentless pursuit to hear the voice of God.

My childhood years in the Carolinas consisted of working on the farm with my dad after school, enjoying home-cooked meals, and saying prayers at bedtime. My parents modeled unconditional love and their intentional choice to have me in church to learn about God was the greatest gift they ever gave me. I realized my need for a Savior at the

age of nine. I made a public confession of my salvation in the small country church where I can still hear them singing, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me. And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

With the desire to follow God's guidance, I packed my Bible and a few belongings and

left for Baptist Bible College at the age of 19. It was there I surrendered my will to God to fulfill His purpose for my life. Phil and I met in my last year of college, got married the following year, and moved to California to serve in ministry. It was there we raised our three children, developed friendships, and served and loved our church family. Phil

and I grew up together in many ways. We did not have a perfect marriage, yet our love for one another was no doubt confirmed and sealed by the grace of God. J. D. Greer speaks truthfully when he states marriage is when two sinners come together to be a reflection of Christ. He says God gave you your spouse on purpose; God has a higher agenda.

I did not go into my marriage thinking of it as a ministry opportunity. Now, however, I look through a different lens. Often, upon hearing Phil's testimony, people are curious to know how our relationship could survive such deceit and destruction. Who would put up with one who preached God's Word while in a stronghold of sin? What happened to bring unity where the bond of trust had been ripped so quickly apart? When did God appear in the burning bush and tell me what to do? Where was I when God gave me direction, and why would I choose to walk a journey of restoration and suffer the ridicule on public display? I do not wish to dwell on my husband's sin, nor do I wish to make this about me. I do, however, wholeheartedly desire to promote my dearest friend, my Savior, my Deliverer, my Counselor, my Refuge, and my mighty God!

Through this trial, I was deeply wounded and changed. I experienced anger like never before in my life. I grieved for my children, for the embarrassment and pain they experienced. I grieved with them over the loss of their dad as they knew him — when he was handcuffed and taken from the courtroom to prison, I knew he would not return the same. I grieved the personal losses birthed from Phil's secret sin. They were innumerable, yet worthy to be shared. I lost many friendships, both within the community and among the church family. These families were not my projects in ministry — I loved them immensely. In one day, with my husband's confession, I walked out of the church, never to see many of those families again. I grieved the death of me, the person I was. I mourned the loss of a marriage I thought was built on trust, and the loss of a husband as I once knew him. These initial consequences of sin placed me in my own

prison of darkness, and I often found myself lying in a fetal position in my bed, lifeless.

Where were all those friends I had served with and cried with during their times of sorrow and pain? Some asked if I was going to divorce Phil, others told me I should and that I did not deserve this pain. I had several urgent choices to make. Would I stay in this marriage? Would I forgive? Christians are commanded to forgive. To me, there was no choice to be made. Isn't that what the cross is all about? How to demonstrate the challenge

"I GRIEVED THE DEATH OF ME, THE PERSON I WAS. I MOURNED THE LOSS OF A MARRIAGE I THOUGHT WAS BUILT ON TRUST, AND THE LOSS OF A HUSBAND AS I ONCE KNEW HIM."

of that choice was something I could not fathom at the time.

Six weeks before Phil sat down with me to verbally unleash the years of his bondage, I had purchased the Bible study *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* by Beth Moore. God, no doubt, prepared me for the response He most desired. I knew God was sovereign and even this circumstance had been filtered through His loving hands. As I read through the chapters of Job, I agreed with his words, "Who am I that I should accept good from God and not evil?" Was I being persuaded that I was entitled to a fairer life? I wanted God to know I was going to trust Him, and I fell on

my knees when it occurred to me He knew He could trust me.

Satan may have power over our circumstances, but he is defeated by our faith. I'm grateful our faith is not based on our feelings — it is an act of obedience. My response to Phil would affect my children, my friends, my family members, those who stood by me during this time, and possibly those who did not, and my decision would affect generations to come. My response would be a reflection of whom I worshipped. Job blessed

God with his response in his grief; I chose to do the same. We have this treasure in jars of clay to show this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

As I spent countless days and nights pleading for God's help, it was clear my decision was to stay in my marriage and trust God. This choice was based solely on obedience to God and my love for Him. At this point of the journey, I had no feelings of love within me. I knew I loved my husband and I knew I loved God, but there was no movement in my heart. I was emotionally flatlined and feared I would never be able to feel and express love again. One particular night comes to mind as I laid my head on the pillow. Suddenly the room filled with a black cloud. As I looked up, creatures with long arms and fingers were grasping

for my mind. I recognized this act from Satan and began to rebuke him in the name of Jesus. Phil and I spoke scriptures aloud, proclaiming I had been covered in the blood of Jesus. Within a few moments, the demons and the cloud of darkness dissipated. I truly believe my mental state was saved from a nervous breakdown on this particular evening. The power of God's Word rescued me that night and through the years that followed.

God began the restoration of my broken heart as I surrendered piece by piece, day by day, the overwhelming pain and resentment that consumed me. God strategically placed counselors in my life who not only shared

their wisdom and knowledge but purposed to help me come through this circumstance with God's fingerprints on my response. This was my greatest desire. I did not want to have the victim mentality for the rest of my life, ending up bitter, isolated, and ineffective for my Lord. Yet, as I battled depression, I felt I had been stripped to bareness and was forced to face the fact I would also have a new look and a different touch.

As I unfolded the letter from the courts of California to read my husband was facing criminal charges and was to appear in court, where he was later sentenced to prison, another part of me died. Grief was becoming too familiar. Phil was shackled and taken from the courtroom and I returned to my home in North Carolina to live with my parents, with whom we had been living prior to Phil's sentencing. Phil and I both were so grateful for my parents' grace during these years. We lost our home and most of our finances, and the unconditional love they showed brought healing in so many areas of our lives. I continued to work at a small church in my hometown, and it was there God showed me more of Himself.

I wondered how I was going to make it emotionally without Phil around. I would go to sleep at night with my Bible, and many

nights cried myself to sleep. I could not talk to Phil, as my only communication with him was via letter. There were days self-pity and loneliness cried for my embrace. During this season, I was given the book *Choosing Gratitude* written by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. She speaks of ingratitude as the first step away from God and as one of the enemy's most lethal weapons. I determined to thank God aloud for blessings every day. I would go for walks and do nothing but thank God for His touch on my life and for His promises.

While Phil was in prison facing his own health issues, my dad was diagnosed with leukemia in October 2009. My dad and I had always been close. He was my prayer warrior. As I began taking my dad for blood transfusions, I received word the life-threatening surgery to remove the mass in Phil's throat had been scheduled for December 7. If Phil made it through the surgery, according to the doctors, there was a strong chance he would never talk again. Then, on December 5, I received a phone call from my sister-in-law who was panicked as she told me she found my brother dead in his recliner that morning. As I delivered my brother's eulogy, my husband was undergoing surgery as a prisoner in a hospital where no one was allowed to visit. On the day of Phil's

surgery, I walked into my office at work and fell on my knees. God met me there that morning. I truly felt His presence pick me up as though I was a little baby. He placed me on His shoulder, He gently patted my back, and reminded me He was with me and He would take care of me. Some might think I was hallucinating, but I tell you, I was not. God is real. I was reminded again of Job when he said at the end of his storm, "my ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you."

I grieved the loss of my brother and cared for my father's feeble body at night. I gave thanks Phil's surgery had been successful and prayed God would keep him safe as he faced a second surgery for thyroid cancer. Soon, I was told my dad had only a few weeks to live. Could I bear any more pain? God so graciously allowed me to be with my dad when he went into eternity. Was this really another death, another funeral, another opportunity to brag on God — a sovereign God, holy and perfect, who gives and who takes away? Blessed be the name of the Lord!

As I bathed Phil in prayer from a distance, God held me and was faithful to meet my every need. God brought Phil through his second surgery and used him mightily to bring inmates into the Kingdom. We both continued to heal from our wounds, and God, in his mercy and grace, brought Phil back home July of 2010. We both felt we had faced our own wars that year. God had sustained us and reminded us He alone is enough. He was faithful as we stood in battles with grief, sickness, depression, loneliness, betrayal, and the evils of this world. He sent friends, old and new, to love us, He financially met our needs and, by His grace and mercy, he kept our family together.

Ten years after it all began, I now sit writing these words with a heart full of compassion — a heart that can receive and express love again, and a heart filled and overflowing with gratitude to my Lord. He has healed my broken heart and bound up my wounds. He has restored, repositioned, reconciled, and renewed. My response to these chapters of my life: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God — and not from us. God, alone is enough."

"I DID NOT WANT TO HAVE THE VICTIM MENTALITY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE, ENDING UP BITTER, ISOLATED, AND INEFFECTIVE FOR MY LORD."



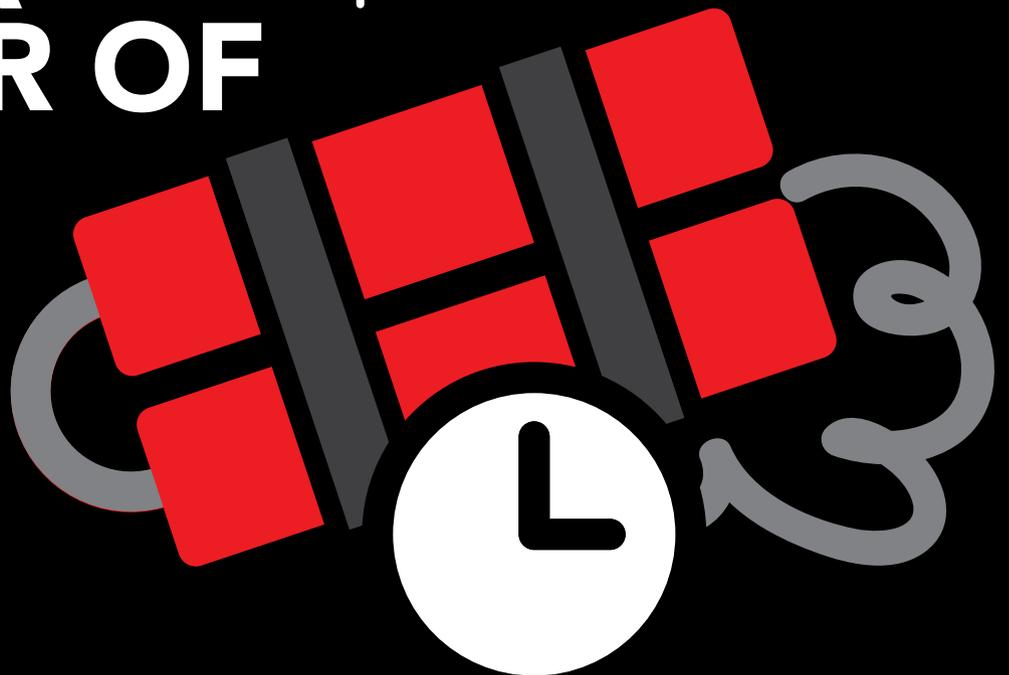
SIN: ONLY A MATTER OF TIME

by Mark Milioni

This is a story of
two tragedies.

Two fathers, millenia apart, risked their lives and families all for the fleeting pleasure of dancing with the devil. While everything on the outside looked promising, both men suffered from serious problems deep within. Problems that would cost lives and bring terrible hurt.

>>>>>



*Throughout this article, names have been changed in an effort to remain sensitive to the those involved.

After 40 years in the wilderness, a long-anticipated crossing of the Jordan, and the inspiring victory at Jericho, the children of Israel found themselves approaching the diminutive city of Ai. Brimming with confidence and faith in God, Joshua and the Israelites charge into battle against Ai, only to suffer a crushing defeat and the loss of 36 lives. A distraught Joshua fell upon his face, seeking the Lord and an explanation. Notice God's response:

So the Lord said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. (Joshua 7:10-12)

There was sin in the camp. And it was not the outwardly visible kind of sin that is easy to assess. Buried under the tent and in the heart of a man named Achan was a far more sinister variety of disobedience. The kind that lurks beneath the surface, emboldened by deception, thriving out of sight. Contrary to God's command, Achan had taken some of the spoil from Jericho for himself (Joshua 7:1).

Now, for another story. I first met Dylan* when we were kids. He lived down the road from my family. He had a brother my age and he was a couple years older. I lost contact with him until the mid 1990s when he, his wife, Jackie*, and their newborn son visited the church I pastored. They seemed like a great family — sharp, well-groomed, godly husband and father. Dylan had a charisma about him that caused others to laugh and like him. His wife was the sweetest lady you could imagine. She was quiet, very petite, and loved her family. They appeared to be a tremendous addition to any church.

LESSON #1: DECEIT OPENS THE DOOR TO DEVASTATION

You cannot play with the truth no matter how insignificant the details may seem, and still walk with God. So often Christians toy with truthfulness without considering it a problem. Rather than confessing his sin, Achan lied and tried to get away with it. He was deceitful and selfish (Joshua 7:16-20).

Shortly after Dylan started coming to our church, I heard him telling others he was a state high school champion in tennis, track, and boxing. Then, one day I overheard him tell someone he was 25 years old. I grew up with him and knew he was older than me — and I was 31 at the time. When I confronted him about his deceit, he brushed it off and said he was just having fun. At that moment, I sensed something was very wrong.

LESSON #2: UNACCOUNTABLE TIME IS UNACCEPTABLE

Achan's confession to Joshua in Joshua 7:19-21 reveals another fatal vulnerability that ensnares Christians today. He saw the spoils, he wanted them, so he took them. He was tempted, he was weak, and he was alone. Unaccountable time is unacceptable because it gives sin opportunity.

After a couple of years, Dylan and Jackie had another little boy. Dylan got involved in pornography and began to hang around younger guys who were unbelievers. They went places and did things Jackie didn't know about and he lied to cover up his actions.

One Saturday night, a woman in the church called to tell me Dylan had tried to assault her. She pushed him away, literally out the door. I told her to call the police, but she wouldn't, afraid of her husband's reaction. I demanded she tell her husband. The next day at church, Dylan said everything was okay, he had already talked to this woman's husband and it was a big misunderstanding. I demanded he tell Jackie, or I would. He got a little upset, but then agreed. That night he said he had told her about the incident ... he lied.

The next Sunday he came forward, emotionally apologized to his wife, and agreed to do right. One condition placed on him was to attend a men's Bible study I hosted on Sunday nights. He attended faithfully at the beginning. When he would miss a night, I would ask Jackie if she knew where he was. He always told her he was at church, yet he explained his absence to us with a story about being at home that night.





LESSON #3: SIN WILL CONTROL YOUR DESIRES, AFFECTIONS, AND ACTIONS

One day, Dylan made Jackie mow the lawn. When he didn't like the way she was cutting it, he yelled at her and hit her, knocking her off the mower. She called me asking what to do. I told her to go to the house of a sweet couple in our church who had promised to help and protect her. She was clearly in fear of physical harm and even death.

I confronted Dylan. He promised to get counseling, he came before the church and put emotion on display again. He fooled many. In the meantime, I called Dylan's previous pastor. His first words were, "Well, I wondered how long it would take." Dylan was accused of sexual assault while a member at his church and had physically attacked two other ladies in his church.

A couple weeks later, Dylan went to a friend's house and waited until this man left for work. Dylan then pounded on the door until the wife answered. He forced himself in, grabbed her, and tried to rape her. Thankfully she managed to get away. This time the police were called and Dylan was arrested and sent to jail. The following Sunday we had a church meeting to dismiss his membership and told people to be careful should he get out. He was dangerous.

LESSON #4: YOUR THOUGHTS LEAD TO ACTIONS

Achan saw something that was not his, something he could not have, and desired it for his own (Joshua 7:21) — his actions were based on his heart attitude. Dylan's involvement in pornography led him to fantasize about other women and, before long, looking at pictures wasn't enough. He desired someone and something he was not allowed to have, and he acted on those desires.

As a result of the incident with his friend's wife, Dylan accepted a plea bargain and pled guilty to a lesser charge. He spent 90 days in jail and was then put on a home monitoring device. He was not to leave his mother's house.

LESSON #5: SIN LEADS TO DEATH

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:15)

Early one Sunday morning, I received a phone call from the hospital. Jackie's body had been found in a car near her home. I got to the hospital and was asked to call Jackie's mom and step-dad. I called Dylan's mother's house. He wasn't there, but his boys were. This was the first time Dylan had been allowed off the

electronic tether and he was supposed to be at a class for prisoners.

I left for church trying to figure out how to tell our church and lead the services that morning. When Dylan got home, he pretended shock and cried. He called me and said, "I loved her. You know I loved her?" I made arrangements to go with Dylan to tell his boys after church. I took another member with me. When we got to his mother's house, Dylan looked at his sons and, without emotion, sadness, or care, said to them, "Boys, Pastor Mark has something to tell you." I looked at him, and at that moment had no doubt he had killed Jackie.

Jackie's car had been made to look like it was in an accident. It looked like she went out late at night for a gallon of milk, crashed her car, and died in the accident. An autopsy proved inconclusive as to the cause of death. I truly felt that Dylan was getting away with murder.

The police investigation continued, uncovering a growing number of inconsistencies among the evidence. When Jackie's body was found, she was not wearing her glasses or any undergarments. Yet Jackie had very bad eyesight and could not drive without contacts or glasses. She also never bought milk in gallon size or the brand found in her car. It was soon discovered that the gas

station where Dylan had just started working sold this brand of milk — and he had been in the store and purchased a gallon of milk the previous evening.

Jackie's body was exhumed and re-examined in a second autopsy. This time, the cause of death was determined to be suffocation by strangling. Finally, police had enough evidence and Dylan was arrested for murdering Jackie.

LESSON #6: **BE SURE YOUR SINS WILL FIND YOU OUT**

Achan tried to hide his sin, but it was revealed in the end.

Just before Dylan's trial began, I received a call from his lawyer. I was a witness for the prosecution. He was very pleasant. At the end of the conversation, he asked what I knew about Jackie and what kind of person she was. I told him all the nice things she had done and what a great person she was. Then he asked, "Would it surprise you if she was having an affair with her boss?" Shocked, I could tell he was taunting me with something he was not going to reveal. I ended the conversation and immediately called the prosecutor.

He confirmed that while testing Jackie's clothing for DNA to determine if Dylan

had raped her, the forensic lab found DNA samples from two people. One was Dylan's, and the other belonged to Jackie's boss. This man was a great businessman, a deacon in his church, and a public school board member. He was also Jackie's best friend's husband.

While all the suspicion pointed to Dylan, another suspect had to be investigated. During the trial, the defense attorney tried to paint the boss as the murderer. He was innocent of murder, but was found guilty of sin, and the newspapers let it be known.

The jury deliberated for an entire week, sidetracked by a single juror who refused to find Dylan guilty. The hung jury resulted in a re-trial three months later.

LESSON #7: **SIN DESTROYS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

Because of his sin, Achan's entire family lost their lives (Joshua 7:24-25). Sin always brings destruction, and almost always on a greater scale than we imagined.

In the first trial, the prosecution thought their big evidence was the gallon of milk linked to Dylan. But the second trial revealed a more damaging piece of evidence and testimony, delivered by Dylan's five-year-old son.

After Jackie's death, police had found a

sandal in her bedroom. A single sandal. But they needed a witness to identify the sandal. In front of his dad and the large crowd at the trial, Dylan's son testified he saw his dad with those sandals on earlier that day.

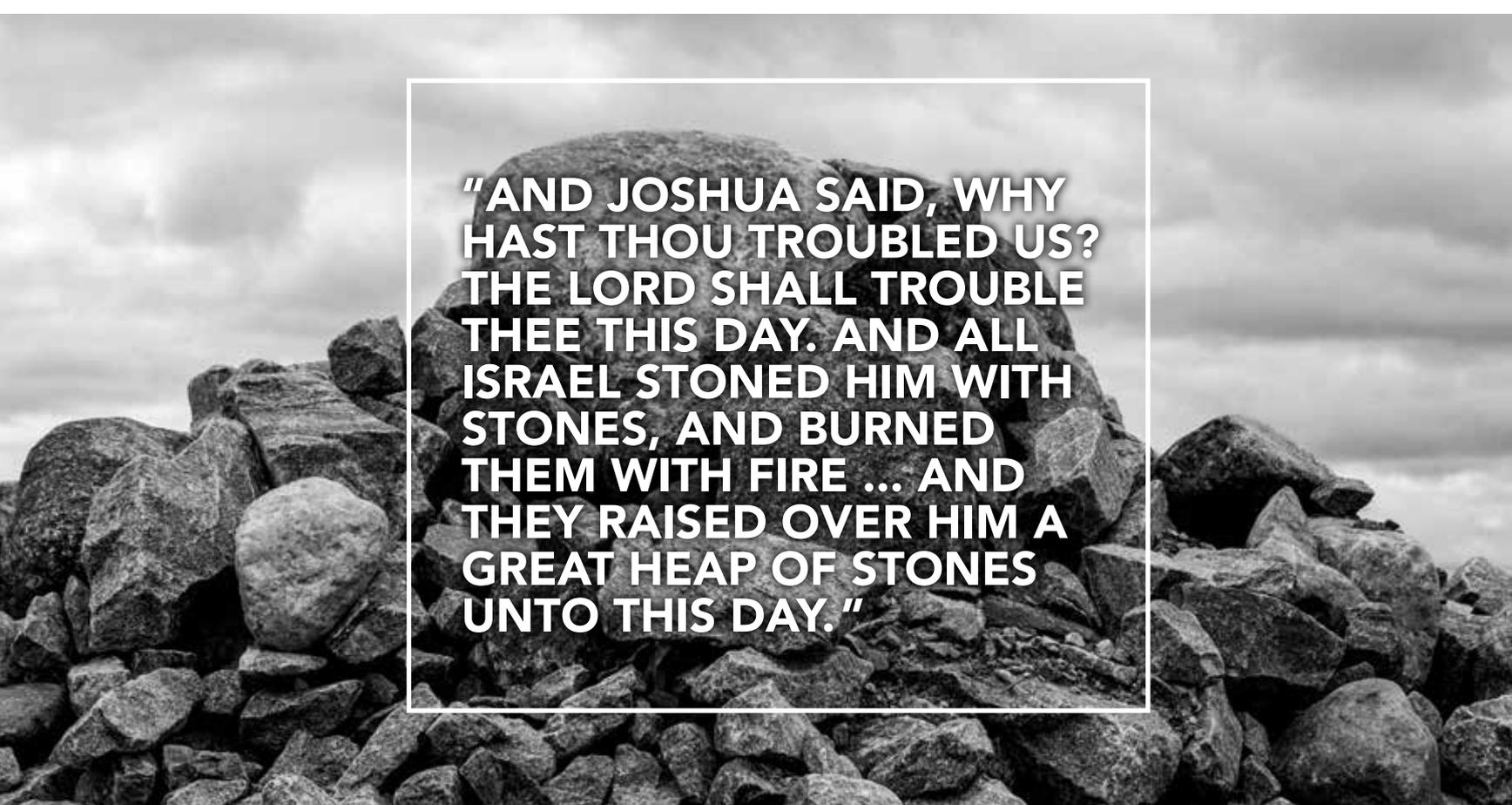
The second trial ended with a jury verdict in four hours — guilty of first-degree murder. He was sentenced to life in prison with no chance for parole.

Dylan and Jackie's incident started when a husband, a dad, played with the truth. It ended with a dad in prison for life, a mom who was dead, and two kids being raised by grandparents.

LESSON #8: **YOUR ACTIONS LEAVE A LEGACY**

Sin has a penalty and Achan and his family suffered the weight of that penalty. Joshua did as God commanded. The name of the place where Achan and his family were buried was called the Valley of Achor, or the Valley of Trouble (Joshua 7:26). Achan's legacy was that of trouble.

Dylan and Jackie seemed the picture-perfect, sharp young Christian family. Yet, sin allowed to go unchecked, destroyed their lives and left a reputation of dishonor and trouble. What kind of legacy will your actions leave?



"AND JOSHUA SAID, WHY HAST THOU TROUBLED US? THE LORD SHALL TROUBLE THEE THIS DAY. AND ALL ISRAEL STONED HIM WITH STONES, AND BURNED THEM WITH FIRE ... AND THEY RAISED OVER HIM A GREAT HEAP OF STONES UNTO THIS DAY."



Officers

Chairman	John Reilly	Taylor	Beacon Baptist
Vice-Chairman	Walt Yeomans	Chesaning	Bible Baptist
Secretary	Dallas Berry	Marysville	Gateway Church
Treasurer	Richard Smith	Livonia	Bethel Baptist
State Representative	Greg Burdine	Adrian	Faith Baptist

The Michigan Baptist Bible Fellowship (MBBF) traces its history back to G. B. Vick, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Detroit. Temple Baptist Church was one of the largest and most influential churches in the country with 5,000 in weekly attendance and 10,000 members. Jimmy Allen, Community Baptist Church in Garden City, was the long-time chairman and great leader of the MBBF. Pastors during the 60s and 70s included Bill Dowell, Jr. and Truman Dollar at Ambassador Baptist in Allen Park, Leland Kennedy and Bernie Rogers at Wick Road Baptist in Taylor, Bruce Melton, Dick Freeman, and Ken Adrian at Ryan Road in Warren, Gerald Stokes at Northline Baptist in Taylor, Gerald Cheney at Grace Bible Baptist in Flint, and Ed Dinant at Twin Cities in Flint. Many other pastors were part of the MBBF in the early days.

Though he left state leadership roles to others, G. B. Vick was a great mentor and source of encouragement to younger preachers. Even with a busy schedule, he made attending state meetings a priority. Herb Gilbert of Beacon Baptist in Taylor has continued that role. Because Temple Baptist was a showcase for guest preachers, Vick regularly gave Michigan pastors opportunities to speak at the great church. Several men were sent from Temple Baptist to start churches in Michigan. For example, Louie Hanner was a layman who started Fundamental Baptist Temple in Detroit, assisted by Wayne Deverna in pivotal years. That church grew to over 600 in attendance.

Camp Chautauqua: In 1968, the MBBF bought Camp Chautauqua in Miamisburg, OH, for \$110,000. Churches throughout the midwest brought campers. Over the past 50 years, Camp Chautauqua has been the

location of over 8,800 salvation decisions and over 19,000 people rededicating or surrendering to ministry. Camp managers have included Humphrey Odor (1968-76) and Jerry Harmeyer (1976-2013). In 2013 the camp was sold to Camp Chautauqua, Inc., a foundation that continues the spiritual legacy. Current executive director Jason Harmeyer is raising \$200,000 in 200 days to advance the camp impact (www.thecampbytheriver.com).

Super Rally: During the late 70s, two Michigan youth pastors, Joe Schultz and Mike Boys, came up with an idea to have a summer evangelistic event at Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, OH. They simply called it “Super Rally.” For three decades this event drew young people from all over the midwest. Speakers included Jerry Thorpe and Mark Lowry among others. At its height, this two-day event had five rallies with over 1,000 attending each rally. Hundreds were saved.

Springfield and Boston: The MBBF and Temple Baptist Church have unique ties to two of our colleges. The first presidents for both colleges were from Michigan and pastored Temple Baptist Church: G. B. Vick at Baptist Bible College (Missouri) and A. V. Henderson at Boston Baptist Bible College (originally Baptist Bible Institute East).

Today's MBBF: The economic downturn in Michigan has put many churches in crisis. In spite of struggles, there is spirit of unity in the MBBF and efforts are being made to reach out to pastors and church planters to grow the network of fellowship.

Cities in need of churches

Ann Arbor

Population

120,000

67% claim no religious affiliation

Lansing

Population

120,000

60% claim no religious affiliation

Jackson

Population

33,000

69% claim no religious affiliation

3 STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Bible Baptist Church (Chesaning)

Pastor: Walt Yeomans

Averaging 45 in worship attendance. Giving \$250 a week to missions. Handed out 1,000 copies of John and Romans this summer.

The Hope Center (Detroit)

Lead Pastor: Jerel Bland

Website: www.thehopedetroit.com

Urban ministry that includes humanitarian efforts, recovery, mentorship, job and education readiness, recreation, artistry, and church-related programs.

Arabic Christian Ministries (Dearborn)

Director: Dwight Billingsley

Reaching Muslims in the heart of North America's greatest Arab population. Establishing churches, teaching English and citizenship classes, leading Bible studies, broadcasting Arabic-speaking preachers.

Thanks to David Stokes, John Reilly, and Jason Harmeyer for much of the information in this article.

Top 10 Giving Churches

1. Beacon Baptist Church: Taylor, MI.....\$50,400
Pastors Herb Gilbert and John Reilly
2. Family Fellowship Church: Greenville, TX.....\$36,000
Pastor Paul Blue
3. Antioch Bible Baptist Church: Gladstone, MO.....\$26,100
Pastor Bob Baier
4. Friendship Baptist Church: Owasso, OK.....\$21,200
Pastor Linzy Slayden
5. Park Crest Baptist Church: Springfield, MO.....\$19,450
Pastor Phil Housley
6. Midway Baptist Church: Aubrey, TX.....\$17,785
Pastor John Theisen
7. Castleberry Baptist Church: Fort Worth, TX.....\$14,616
Pastor Cris Powell
8. Seminole Baptist: Springfield, MO.....\$13,460
Pastor Don Baier
9. Calvary Baptist Church: Snyder, TX.....\$13,100
Pastor Larry McAden
10. Temple Baptist Church: Albuquerque, NM.....\$12,400
Pastor Fred Gurule

Gifts of \$10,000-12,000

- Ocean State Baptist Church: Smithfield, RI Michael Woodward
Texas Baptist Bible Fellowship

Gifts of \$7,000-9,999

1. Lighthouse Baptist Church: Saint Ann, MO Keith Gillming
2. Battlefield Baptist Church: Warrenton, VA Greg Corcoran
3. Hallmark Baptist Church: Fort Worth, TX Jon Haley
4. Cypress Creek Baptist Church: Cypress, TX Carl Hughes
5. Calvary Baptist Church: Taylorville, IL Steve Switzer
6. CrossPoint Church: Huntington Beach, CA Bruce Garner
7. Overland Park Baptist Temple: Overland Park, KS Tracy Roby
8. High Street Baptist Church: Springfield, MO Eddie Lyons
9. First Coast Baptist Church: Jacksonville, FL Richard Edwards
10. Oak Hill Baptist Church: Somerset, KY Gary Phelps

Gifts of \$5,000-6,999

1. Akron Baptist Temple: Akron, OH Ed Holland
2. Capitol City Baptist Church: Des Moines, IA Rick Melick
3. Temple Baptist Church: Springdale, AR Don Elmore
4. Stillwell Bible Baptist Church: Clarksville, AR Jim Goodman
5. Kelview Heights Baptist Church: Midland, TX Jeff Franklin
6. Ventura Baptist Church: Ventura, CA Mike Craig
7. Heritage Baptist Church: Georgetown, TX, Steve Ledbetter
8. East Side Baptist Church: Independence, MO Pastor Fred Young

Gifts of \$3,000-\$4,999

1. First Baptist Church of Wright City: Arp, Texas Rohn Boone
2. Graceway Baptist Church: Springfield, Missouri Bob Stephenson
3. The Church at Newtown Road: Waterford, NY Matt Eachus
4. East Side Baptist Church: Topeka, KS Dean Hughes
5. Central Baptist Church: Tyler, TX Pastor Kim Beckham
6. Millington Street Baptist Church: Winfield, KS Jeff McCaskill
7. West Side Baptist Church: Emporia, KS Kenneth Armstrong
8. Crossroads Ministries: Finleyville, PA Kenneth Barner
9. Westwood Baptist Church: Zanesville, OH Mark Ballmer
10. Ocean View Church: San Diego, CA Steve Boschen
11. Lighthouse Baptist Church: Murfreesboro, TN Dan Sala
12. Lanakila Baptist Church: Waipahu, HI Steven Wygle

13. Cross Creek Church: Fountain, CO Mike Haley
14. Florence Baptist Temple: Florence, KY Wayne Cox
15. Grace Baptist Church: Salina, KS Matt Parnell
16. New Testament Baptist Church: Largo, FL Matthew Trill
17. Texas Avenue Baptist Church: College Station, TX Eric Doucet
18. Thomas Road Baptist Church: Phoenix, AZ Daniel Dennis
19. The Journey Baptist Church: Barrington, NH Rob Willis
20. Friendship Baptist Church: Clancy, MT David Klass
21. Memorial Baptist Church: New Haven, MO Joe Nogalski
22. Cherry Street Baptist Church: Springfield, MO Dennis Jennings
23. Baptist Temple: Springfield, MO Mark Rounsaville
24. Granbury Baptist Church: Granbury, TX Lonnie Lehrman
25. Broadway Baptist Church: Sweetwater, TX Chris Stephens
26. Central Baptist Church: Sulphur Springs, TX Bruce Stinson
27. Crossway Baptist Church: Springfield, MO Eddie Bumpers
28. McCauley Avenue Baptist Church: San Antonio, TX Scott Quidley
29. Heritage Baptist Church: Edmond, OK Steve Rains
30. Aurora Baptist Temple: Aurora, MO Nathan Burch
31. New Hope Baptist Church: Fort Wayne, IN Rob Bogle
32. Parkhill Baptist Church: Pueblo, CO Doug Cox
33. Expectation Church: Fairfax, VA David Stokes

Gifts of \$1,500-2,999

1. Sonrise Baptist Church: Ozark, MO Kevin Carson
2. Southwinds Baptist Church: Tomball, TX Andy Chute
3. CrossPointe Baptist Church: Lee's Summit, MO Bill Boren
4. Crossroads Fellowship: Odessa, TX Griffin Jones
5. Bible Baptist Church: Gulfport, MS Rick Carter
6. Hillside Baptist Church: Springfield, MO Cecil Tolbert
7. Bridgepoint Church: Boise, ID Jeff Love
8. Calvary Baptist Church: Republic, MO Mark Milioni
9. First Baptist Church: Medina, OH John McCaw
10. Messiah Baptist Church: Addison, IL David Aycock
11. North Park Baptist Church: Humble, TX Sandy Baird
12. Victory Baptist Church: Maryville, TN Steve Craft
13. Southside Baptist Church: Dover, DE Chris Kondracki
14. Liberty Baptist Church: Siloam Springs, AR Wes Flaugh
15. Tri-City Baptist Temple: Gladstone, OR Ken McCormick
16. Park Street Baptist Church: Saint Petersburg, FL Daniel Jeffers
17. Bible Baptist Church: Knox IN James Adcock
18. Beech Lake Baptist Church: Lexington, TN Jim Denison
19. Grace Baptist Church: Avon, MA Sean Sears
20. Northwest Baptist Church: Fort Worth, TX, Philip Hickman
21. Second Baptist Church: Midland TX Jon Slayden
22. Heartland Baptist Church: Ames, IA Randy Able
23. Grace Bible Baptist Church: Fruitland Park, FL George Mulford
24. Bethel Baptist Church: Monahans, TX Gordon Cox
25. Grace Baptist Church: Winchester, KY Pat Finley
26. Grace Baptist Church: Mason, OH Jerry Pelfrey
27. Lifepoint Baptist Church: San Angelo, TX Jay Clatworthy
28. Midlands Baptist Church: Omaha, NE Robert Inge
29. Fundamental Baptist Church: Palmer, TX Gary Miller

30. Grace Baptist Church: Saint Charles, MO Kevin Kolb
31. Victory Baptist Church: Paris, TX Curtis Blake
32. Victory Baptist Church: Nixa, MO Ray Brinson
33. Westside Baptist Church: Hutchinson, KS Tim Adrian
34. New Life Baptist Church: Wabash, IN Scott Johnston
35. Harvest Baptist Church: Claremore, OK Tim Lindsey
36. Victory Baptist Church: Fort Worth, TX Elmer Banks
37. Abundant Life Baptist Church: Lee's Summit, MO Phil Hopper
38. Berean Baptist Church: Albuquerque, NM Don Weakland
39. Glenwood Baptist Church: Kansas City, MO Bruce Adrian
40. Mid-Way Baptist Church: Raleigh, NC James Upchurch
41. New Testament Baptist Church: Trenton, NJ Allen Frisch
42. Suncoast Baptist Church: Port Charlotte, FL Chip Keller
43. Victory Baptist Church, Cedar Park, TX Rick Brann
44. Canon Community Baptist Church: Canon City, CO David Almanzar
45. Talley Road Baptist Church: San Antonio, TX Myres Drew
46. Bible Baptist Church: Savannah, GA Herb Hubbard
47. Louisville Baptist Temple: Louisville, OH Mike Harmon
48. Shiloh Hills Baptist Church: Kennesaw, GA Vic Bledsoe
49. Temple Baptist Church: Decatur, IL James Bosler
50. Heatherridge Baptist Church: Tulsa, OK Shane Peters
51. Bible Baptist Church: Saint Charles, MO Steve Parks
52. Canyon Creek Baptist Church: Richardson, TX Ed Trinkle
53. Connecting Point Church: Rensselaer, NY John Westfall
54. Cornerstone Baptist Church: Mesquite, TX Dan Brower
55. Crossbridge Church: Westbury, NY Terry Wiese
56. North Side Baptist Church: Abilene, TX Don Greenway

Gifts of \$1,000 - 1,499

1. Community Baptist Church: Garden City, MI Jonathan Allen
2. Mark Baptist Church: Bloomfield, IA Gary Axtell
3. Friendship Baptist Church: Wichita, KS Steve Day / Ray Melugin
4. The Bridge Church: Linwood, PA Aaron Harding
5. West Division Street Baptist Church: Springfield MO Rob Hoffman
6. Southside Baptist Church: Knoxville, TN Clarence Gresham
7. Grace Harbor Baptist Church: Grove, OK Marty Hughes
8. Serenity Baptist Church: West Chester, OH Don Hooker
9. Victory Baptist Church: Vergennes, VT Tim Taylor
10. Cook Road Baptist Church: Mansfield, OH Jack Hackworth
11. First Independent Baptist Church: Austin, TX Mike Marcellus
12. Legacy Baptist Church: Davenport, IA John Beeler
13. LifePoint Church: Chicopee, MA Kevin Whitacre
14. Bath Baptist Church: Bath, MI Nathan Gregory
15. Bethel Baptist Church: Yukon, OK Ray Rhoton
16. Bethel Baptist Church Fort Collins, CO Marc Leverett
17. Bethel Baptist Church: Livonia, MI Richard Smith
18. Bible Baptist Church: Alva, OK John Clapp
19. Central Baptist Church: Lindale, TX Byron Howard
20. Elkview Baptist Church: Elkview, WV David Keeney
21. Faith Baptist Church: Enfield, CT Gary Santino
22. Faith Baptist Church: Madison Heights, VA Brian Hudson
23. Fellowship Baptist Church: Nederland, TX Phil Webber

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24. Fellowship Baptist Church: Bozeman, MT Steve Van Winkle
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26. Heartland Independent Baptist Church: Norfolk, VA Rick Bradley
27. Marshall Baptist Church: Marshall, MO Claude Fields
28. Midlothian Baptist Church: Midlothian, VA Ken Cornett
29. North Ridge Baptist Church, Friedens, PA Dan Zediker
30. Northside Baptist Church: Arkansas City, KS Ryan Whitley
31. Northside Baptist Church: Carrollton, TX Mark Dallalio
32. Northwest Baptist Church: Peoria, IL Richard Springsteen
33. Pilgrim Baptist Church: Milwaukee, WI George Ware
34. Second Baptist Church: Huntsville, TX Gary Garrison
35. Topeka Baptist Church: Topeka, KS Mark Doss
36. United Baptist Church: Garden City, MI
37. Victory Fellowship: Holiday, FL Jerry Brown
38. Heritage Baptist Church: Springfield, MA Curtis Rowe
39. South Drive Baptist Church: Channelview, TX Kenneth Plunk
40. New Site Baptist Church: Monett, MO Aaron Weibel
41. Orland Baptist Temple: Orlando, FL Dustin Janney
42. Temple Baptist Church: Hobbs, NM LaVoid Ford
43. West Side Baptist Church: San Angelo, TX Joe Bourgeois
44. Lifepoint Baptist Church: Centerton, AR Michael Brinson
45. Alliance Baptist Church: Fort Worth, TX Terry Kizer
46. Cape Cod Church: East Falmouth, MA Ben Feldott
47. Fundamental Baptist Church: Irving, TX Dale Parkhill
48. Gilead Baptist Church: Allen Park, MI Jim Hopkins
49. Oak Lake Baptist Church: Sugar Land, TX Jim Mayfield
50. Temple Baptist Church: Lubbock, TX Steve Miller

Gifts of \$600-999

1. Harbor Baptist Church: Ormond Beach, FL Ronald Todd
2. Calvary Baptist Church: Cleburne, TX Brooks Monk
3. First Baptist Church of Vilonia: Vilonia, AR John Hamby
4. NorthPointe Baptist Church: Sandusky, OH Wally Gilbert
5. First Baptist Church: Port Richey, FL Ellis Bond
6. Lima Baptist Temple: Lima, OH Al Elmore
7. Northline Baptist Church: Taylor, MI Ryan Bettinger
8. Victory Baptist Church: Rockingham, NC Russell Edwards
9. Fairfield West Baptist Church: Fairfield, OH Rob Rosenbalm
10. Full Gospel Fellowship, Bolivar, MO
11. Grace Pointe, Apopka, FL Jason Henderson
12. Bethel Baptist Church: Emporia, KS Joe Tuttle
13. Bible Baptist Church: Wrangell, AK Doug Shoultz
14. First Baptist Church of Meadowview: Mesquite TX Jack Alambaugh
15. Liberty Baptist Church: Columbia, MO Bruce Caldwell
16. Temple Baptist Church: West Bridgewater, MA Bill Smith
17. Liberty Baptist Church: Kansas City, KS Bob Adrian
18. Temple Baptist Church: Glasgow, KY Dennis Hibbard
19. Lumpkin Road Baptist Church: Augusta GA, Don Stone
20. Open Door Baptist Church: Harrison, AR Howard Braymer
21. Ambassador Baptist Church: Byron Center, MI Tom Koon
22. Bible Baptist Church: Ottumwa, IA Ed Matthews
23. Burlleson Boulevard Baptist Church: Burlleson, TX Terry Williams

24. Christ Bible: Belton, TX Mike Dailey
25. Faith Journey: Lawton, OK Greg Baxter
26. Freeway: Pearland, TX Mark Butcher
27. Gateway: Alamogordo, NM Chuck King
28. Grace: Bluffton, IN Douglas McClure
29. Hillsboro Bible Baptist Church: Hillsboro, OH Dan Lamb
30. Immanuel Baptist Church: Riverside, CA Josh Pettit
31. LifeSource Church: Cherry Valley, MA Walt Grayum
32. Maranatha Baptist Church: Killeen, TX Martin Holland
33. Metropolitan Baptist Church: Des Moines, IA Tim Monroe
34. Mount Calvary Baptist Church: Bloomington, IN Richard Borden
35. New Testament Baptist Church: Greensboro, NC Brett Seawell
36. Southland Baptist Church: Paducah, KY Jimmy Franks
37. Southwood Baptist Church: Crowley, TX Dan Williford
38. Tabernacle Baptist Church: Crane, TX Tim King
39. Trinity Baptist Church: Berryville, AR Gaylord Finch
40. Victory Baptist Church: Nokesville, VA Clinton Owens
41. West Hill Baptist Church: Hillsborough NC Dwayne Piper
42. West Main Baptist Church: Henderson, TX Eldon Warren
43. Westfair Baptist Church, Jacksonville, IL Larry Balthis

Gifts of \$500-599

1. Cornerstone Baptist Church: Decatur, TX Ron Fox
2. Meadowview Baptist Church: Republic, MO Joshua Matthews
3. Somis Community Church: Somis, CA Gary Jane
4. Bethel Baptist Church: Warrensburg, MO Richard Ricard
5. Bible Baptist Church: Plattsburgh, NY Robert Fry
6. Grace Baptist Church: Akron, OH Robert Stephens
7. Noble Hill Baptist Church: Willard, MO Brennan Bagwell
8. Northeast Freeway Baptist Church: Crosby, TX Sam Purkhiser
9. Victory Baptist Church: Indianapolis, IN Don Whitecotten
10. Woodcliff Baptist Church: Austin, TX Tu Tran
11. Lighthouse Baptist Church : Albuquerque, NM Richard Legg
12. Central West Texas Independent Baptist Fellowship
13. First Baptist Church: Ruskin, FL Barry Rumsey
14. Seacoast Church of Redondo Beach: Redondo Beach, CA Lee Huddleston
15. Sunrise Church of Clovis: Clovis, CA Otis Ledbetter
16. Temple Baptist Church: Green, OH Glenn Rogers
17. Temple Baptist Church: Marshfield, MO Tim Auten
18. Truth Baptist Church: Houston, TX Harold Payne
19. West Hill Baptist Church : Wooster, OH Dan Wingate
20. Western Hills Baptist Church : Kennesaw, GA Jack Baskin
21. Weymouth Community Church: Medina, OH Greg Whiting

Gifts Less than \$500

1. Bible Baptist Church: Neodesha, KS Harold Stacy
2. Bible Baptist Church: Crane, MO Timothy Sweeney
3. West Republic Baptist Church : Republic, MO Chris Beck
4. Bible Baptist Church: Hughes Springs, TX Mark Randolph
5. Central Baptist Church: Canadian, TX Rick Timmons
6. Grace Baptist Church : Bloomington, IN Courtney Merchant
7. Bethel Baptist Church : Howe, TX Weldon Hutson

8. Tabernacle Baptist Church : Universal City, TX
9. Cornerstone Baptist Church : Richmond, KY Anthony Christian
10. Faith Baptist Church : Dayton, OH Paul Norton
11. Great Lakes Baptist Temple : Flint, MI David Chittenden
12. Calvary Baptist Church: Bowie, TX Ron Abbott
13. Temple Baptist Church : Monett, MO Greg Willoughby
14. Trinity Baptist Church : Louisville, KY James Strocen
15. Christ Community Church: Bartlesville, OK Jason Petermann
16. Lawrence Baptist Temple: Lawrence, KS Gary Myer
17. Riverbend Baptist Church : St. Louis, MI Rodolfo Diaz-Pons
18. Bible Baptist Church: Ada, OK Robert Eberle
19. Blue Springs Baptist Temple: Blue Springs, MO James Russell
20. Buford Road Baptist Church: Richmond, VA Tony Kohout
21. Central Baptist Church: Whitesboro, TX Joe Patterson
22. Community Baptist Church : The Woodlands, TX Danny Greer
23. Faith Church: Valley Center, KS Danny Crawford
24. Guide Church Baptist: Hilliard, OH Ben York
25. Liberty Baptist Church : Spokane, WA Jim Zeik
26. Louisville Baptist Temple: Louisville, KY Steve Maddux
27. Rejoice Church: Owasso, OK Casey Cariker
28. River Valley Baptist Church: Sacramento, CA Michael Lamb
29. SouthPointe Baptist Church : Arlington, TX Richard Koons
30. Courageous Church, Springfield, MO Tyler Padgitt
31. Keysville Baptist Church: Keysville, VA Clyde Senger
32. Bible Baptist Church: Metamora, IN Ronald McCulloch
33. Crosspointe Baptist Church: Cincinnati, OH Scott Land
34. East Texas BBF
35. First Baptist: Brookline Station, MO Dan Swadley
36. Timberhill Baptist Church: Hamilton, OH Scott Miller
37. Grace Baptist Church : Wichita, KS Michael O'Donnell
38. Bethel Baptist Church: Tulsa, OK Charles Smith
39. Craig County Baptist Church: Vinita, OK Don Carden
40. First Baptist Church: Williamston, MI Danny Cavin
41. Puente Hills Baptist Church: Covina, CA Ted Trisler
42. New Testament Baptist Church: Rialto, CA Armando Roldan
43. Bible Baptist Church: Osborne, KS Billy Neumann
44. Bethel Baptist Church: Knoxville, AR Terry Kennedy
45. Calvary Baptist Church: Odessa, TX James Bishop
46. Newton Baptist Church: Newton, IA Clayton Pickering
47. Quenemo Baptist Church: Quenemo , KS Donald Brannan
48. Faith Baptist Church: Adrian, MI Greg Burdine
49. First Baptist Church, Robinson, IL
50. Grant Avenue Baptist Church: Springfield, MO Ray Roach
51. Restoring Hope Community Church: Indianapolis, IN Daniel Wilhite
52. Crossview Baptist Church: Highland Home, AL Jack Zimmer
53. Grace Baptist Church: Kilgore, TX Scott Brown
54. Harvest Baptist Church: Salem, OH Ronald Laughlin
55. Messiah Baptist Church: Bangor, ME Herman Frankland
56. Bible Baptist Church: Fort Wayne, IN Ed Groover
57. Impact Baptist Church: Springfield, MO Michael Duff
58. Tripoint Baptist Church: Tulsa, OK Keith Kaufman

Spiritual warfare in an urbanized world

Outside, the broad boulevard fronting our church building was blocked, creating a two-block space for the Red Moon Theatre's Halloween extravaganza "All Hallows Eve Ritual Celebration."

In the unseasonably warm dusk, people heading into our evening service walked through a smoky haze of ceremonial fires. The sounds of chants set to native drumming helped create a haunting atmosphere. The event flier referenced "guiding the souls of the dead into the next world."

Inside, I was preaching through Revelation. I had not foreseen Halloween falling on the Sunday we came to the text "... you dwell, where Satan's throne is" (Revelation 2:12-17).

No church drama team could have set the stage for this message more powerfully.

After Jesus, the apostle Paul must be considered the world's foremost authority on spiritual warfare. Though he references the battle with darkness often and in different ways, he never writes a whole book or even an entire chapter on the subject.

Demon preoccupation is not something Paul indulged in. Rather, he gave attention and writing space to the power of God, the glories of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit.

Paul, the urban evangelist/church planter, knew what it was to do hand-to-hand combat with the powers opposing God. From Acts 19 we know Paul was experiencing the power of God in significant ways while founding the Ephesian church. Here, he encounters evil spirits working through the seven sons of Sceva. Here, the Word of God prevails and "a number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them"

Later he writes to this church, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but ... against the spiritual forces in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Two Pauline passages could be called significant on the subject. "For though we walk

in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh ..." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) and, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil ... (Ephesians 6:10-20).

This is my line of thinking. "God so loved the world." God loves people. He sent Jesus to save people. All of His efforts through the Gospel are aimed at people. God's Spirit centered his work on people, sending Paul to the cities.

Where is Satan, God's opponent, going to focus his work? Is it unreasonable or far-fetched to believe Satan centers his attention and efforts on people?

The description in Ephesians seems to indicate the forces of spiritual darkness are organized. Then surely there is an objective and a strategy. The objective is to oppose God's primary work on earth, the evangelization of humanity.

Is it far-fetched then, unreasonable, or eisegetic to think Satan and his forces are amassed and hardest at work where the masses are, the cities? Cities run the world. The powers, forces, and influences that dominate our world emanate from cities. Satan's work in the city follows the logic of God. God's work in the city is leveraged for greater impact and influence. Satan's work in the city gets more bang for the buck through the urban influence that impacts the rest of the world.

We live in an urbanized world. The forces at work in the cities now touch, color, if not dominate the rest of the world. Wherever we live, we breathe urbanized air. Urban winds create currents that rustle the leaves everywhere. The Satanic work that takes place in and around cities affects the whole culture.

Along with a host of other subjects foreign to American evangelicals, having distanced themselves from cities over the last 100 years, spiritual warfare has not received much time or attention, never mind been studied and taught.

Americans, in our slick, sophisticated,

westernized, anglicized, homogenized Christianity, have virtually ignored the reality of Satan and the power of demonic forces. We have relegated them to distant jungles and foreign subcultures ignoring the they are a reality in our everyday lives.

Across the country it seems our urbanized culture is eating the believer's lunch.

Is not Satan's chief weapon deception? Is not his chief deception to keep us from even knowing or recognizing he is present and working?

How, then, shall we prepare for spiritual warfare in an urbanized world?

1. Satan is no less real now than when he tempted Jesus.
2. Satan is no less active now than he was in opposing Paul.
3. Satan is no less deceptive now than he was in the Garden of Eden.
4. We are to be sober and alert (1 Peter 5:8-9).
5. We are not to give place to Satan in any way, shape, or form (Ephesians 4:27).
6. We are only to fight with spiritual weaponry (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 6:11).
7. We are to understand and operate specifically in the power of the blood of Christ (Revelation 12:11).
8. None of this is to be done alone. New Testament Christianity is in community. The authority of Jesus has been placed in the local church (Matthew 16:19, 1 Corinthians 5:4). We are to be spiritually connected and accountable so we can function in the authority of Jesus over the power of Satan (Luke 10:17).



by Charles Lyons, Pastor
Armitage Baptist Church,
Chicago, Illinois
charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org

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ST. CHARLES, MO

GRACE BAPTIST TO HOST PASTORS' FELLOWSHIP APRIL 3-4

Pastor Kevin Kolb of Grace Baptist Church, St. Charles, MO, announces the Missouri Baptist Bible Fellowship and Illinois Baptist Bible Fellowship will meet together at Grace Baptist April 3 and 4 to discuss "Hard Ministry." Special guests Kempton Turner (City of Joy Fellowship, East St. Louis) and Randy Patten (president of TEAM Focus Ministry) will cover the theme When Ministry is Tough: Tough Places, Tough Problems, and Tough People. "Because we live in a fallen world and minister to fallen people, we all know ministry can be hard, especially for pastors," says Kolb. "But hard times in ministry are not bad, they are just hard. Come and be refreshed in the Word, find hope for the next struggle, and leave with a new perspective on the hard times in ministry. It is true real fellowship among God's servants strengthens mutual resolve." For information on the schedule, area hotels, and Cardinal vs. Cubs tickets visit www.gracebaptistchurch.info.

SPRINGFIELD, MO

HIGH STREET HOSTS SPECIAL NEEDS COMMUNITY EVENT

High Street Baptist Church and Pastor Eddie Lyons served the special needs community in Springfield, MO, by hosting Night to Shine February 10. Sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, which provides a grant to help offset the cost, Night to Shine is a prom night for students and adults with special needs. Guests are also given makeovers, shoeshines, and a catered dinner. "As a parent of a special needs child, I was overwhelmed by the spirit of all the volunteers who made this the best night of James's life. The highlight was 400 volunteers coming from all over the community to love on our guests," said Lyons. High Street was one of 375 churches internationally hosting Night to Shine this year.

Brianna Propst, coordinator of the event, reports 105 guests and 100 parents in attendance, with nearly 400 volunteers. "Many of the guests indicated they had no church background but everyone left having seen a picture of Christ's love. Pastor Eddie gave a Gospel presentation to everyone that night," says Propst. "From the Drury baseball team who came as dates to our ladies with special needs, to our Grandmother's Club who pinned corsages and boutonnieres for our guests, we are in awe of the group God called to be part of this night. We can't wait for next year."



OWASSO, OK

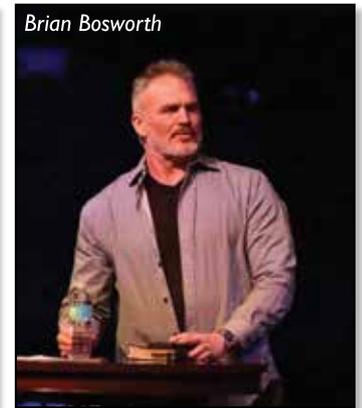
MORE THAN 1,000 MEN FROM 45 CHURCHES ATTEND FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST BEAST FEAST AND LIFE SKILLS EVENT

Pastor Linzy Slayden reports this year's Men's Beast Feast and Life Skills Event held February 3-4 at Friendship Baptist Church was a great success. The theme was "Gumption — Character to Commit and Complete." Friday night 1,100 men from 45 churches participated in the wild beast feast that included 14 different kinds of meat. After dinner, former Oklahoma

University and NFL player Brian Bosworth gave his testimony. Pastor Kim Hayes, Bible Baptist Church, Chickasha, OK, who led Bosworth to Christ, followed with preaching. Six men trusted Christ as Savior and many made decisions to be more faithful in their walk with the Lord.

Saturday morning included breakout

sessions by Jim Goodman, Randy Harp, Gerardo Gaona, Brent Fulton, Lewis McClendon, Rob Hoffman, Marty Hughes, Dean Hughes, Jon Slayden, Kyle Melton, Ray Rhoton, Kim Hayes, and Brian Bosworth. The event culminated with a sermon by Pastor Ray Rhoton of Bethel Baptist Church, Yukon, OK.



Brian Bosworth

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DEARBORN, MI

ARABIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES TO OFFER ARABIC LANGUAGE AND CULTURE MINISTRY TRAINING

Dwight and Jeanne Billingsley and Arabic Christian Ministries (ACM) opened a new branch of their ministry training students, potential missionaries, and dedicated laypeople in Arabic language and culture. "As media news centers on Arabs in America, God is touching the hearts of men and women who feel called to work with Arab-speaking Muslims. This requires certain linguistic skills and an understanding of unique customs," says

Billingsley. "Up until now, there was no place in America to become specifically prepared for this task." A test semester is underway with plans to start the concentrated courses in June. ACM is working on agreements with several colleges and two universities for their students to receive academic credit.

ACM is located in Dearborn, MI, with a population 90 percent Arab. "A visit to Dearborn makes one feel he or she is in the Middle East. It is easy to immerse oneself in Arabic here and learn the language quickly and proficiently," states Billingsley. For more information, contact Dwight and Jeanne Billingsley at arabiccm@gmail.com or (314) 239-9959.



HOUSTON, TX

GRITTS PART OF TWO MISSION CONFERENCES IN HOUSTON AREA



BBFI missionaries T. J. and Kimberly Gritts continued their career missionary deputation by participating in two mission conferences in the Houston, TX, area February 1-5. Central Baptist Church (Houston, TX) and Pastor Larry Maddox hosted the Gritts in their conference and voted to partner with them. The Gritts also reported on their time as TEAM missionaries in England and their vision to go to Valencia, Spain, as career missionaries to Pastor Carl Hughes and Cypress Creek Baptist Church in Cypress, TX,

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OWASSO, OK

MORE THAN 750 STUDENTS ATTEND EVENT AT FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST

Friendship Baptist Church, Owasso, OK, held their yearly Fun On the Run January 27-28. "It was another great year as we welcomed over 750 students to our campus," said Student Pastor Rueben Herrin. Special guests included Baptist Bible College's worship band Breakaway and Pastor Jon Slayden who spoke to the teens from 2 Timothy 2:22. He challenged students to run from some things, to run toward Jesus, and to run with people who help them grow in their relationship with Jesus. Herrin reports seven students gave their lives to Christ and many others decided to walk closer with Jesus. After the service, the teens and volunteers visited four venues throughout the Tulsa area. "I am so thankful for the city of Owasso and the people of Friendship Baptist Church who make this event possible," says Herrin. "I am also thankful to be a part of an event where lives are truly being changed by Jesus."



SPRINGFIELD, MO

SPECIAL CHAPEL SERVICES HELD AT BBC

Baptist Bible College recently welcomed BBC graduates Ed Trinkle and Shelley Switzer to special chapel services. Both Ed and Kim Trinkle and Steve and Shelley Switzer have daughters at BBC, and the couples are



passionate about encouraging young men and women to live lives of holiness and purity.

Ed pastors Canyon Creek Baptist Church in Richardson, TX, and leads and speaks at youth camps across the U.S. He challenged the men at BBC to live a life that pleases God and warned them of the sexual dangers they



face as Christian men. He gave them practical advice on ways to avoid and escape temptation.

Shelley serves with her husband at Calvary Baptist Church in Taylorville, IL. She taught the BBC girls how to recognize the way Satan uses over exaggeration, deceit, and doubt to lead them away from following God. She also

PRINCE GEORGE, VA

GEORGE DEMBECK STEPS DOWN

After 30 years of ministry at Faith Baptist Church, Pastor George Dembeck resigned as pastor but will continue, along with his wife, Juanita, to help the church's new pastor and the congregation. The resignation was effective December 31, 2016. Dembeck and Juanita are both graduates of Baptist Bible College, Springfield, MO. During his ministry at the church, a new \$2.65 million facility was constructed.



offered practical ways to avoid and flee sexual temptation.

"Even though we are at Bible college," stated one student, "we are not immune to sexual temptation. We still needed to hear what our speakers had to say. It was a great reminder and challenge to be a person God can use."

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SPRINGFIELD, MO

BAPTIST TEMPLE HOLDS 8TH ANNUAL BEAST FEAST

Baptist Temple and Pastor Mark Rounsaville hosted their 8th Annual Men's Beast Feast February 3 with 325 in attendance. Guest speaker for the event was John Decker, director of admissions at Baptist Bible College, who challenged the crowd to think about their legacy

and encouraged each man to set his hope in God. Baptist Temple's Associate Pastor Ike Porter and director of the event reports three salvations and several men recommitting their lives to Christ. In addition to the message, those in attendance indulged in food catered by Rib Crib and several wild game dishes. The giveaways by local sponsorships included an AR-15, a couple of chainsaws, a Parker bow, and ten metal shooting targets. This year several local churches also brought men to the event.



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Since 2009, when Baptist Temple began this once-a-year event, over 50 men have either been saved or rededicated their lives to Christ. "Our men's ministry has thrived through the Men's Beast Feast!" says Porter. "This ministry is for men who typically won't come to church. Fun

and encouragement is our focus but sharing the Gospel is the highlight." Rounsaville encourages each man in the church to buy a ticket for themselves and one for a guest, but this year several men purchased ten or more tickets. Of future Beast Feasts Porter says, "I hope we will grow out of our church and have to rent a larger venue to fit all the men who come. With God's leading, and I believe with prayer and hard work, hundreds of men will come to Christ through this ministry."

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As Third Culture Kids (TCKs), BBFI Missionary Kids face varying degrees of emotional, educational and relational challenges of frequent transitions between the United States and their field of ministry.

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WITH THE LORD

SPRINGFIELD, MO

NANCY MANTONYA

Nancy Evelyn Mantonya, 74, went home to be with her Lord February 2, 2017. She was born June 19, 1942, in Kansas City, KS. Henry and Nancy were BBFI missionaries to Brazil for nearly 46 years. Nancy was also a housewife, a mother, and a member of Cherry Street Baptist Church.

Nancy is survived by her husband, Henry, four children, 15 grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren. Funeral services were held February 9 at Cherry Street Baptist Church, Springfield, MO.

SPRINGFIELD, MO

JERI MARQUIS-COMBS

Geraldine (Jeri) Marquis-Combs, wife of the late James O. Combs, passed away February 14, 2017. She was born March 26, 1925. Services were held February 18 at the Greenlawn Funeral Home in Springfield, MO.

Mrs. Combs's passing happened right as we were going to press for this issue. A full obituary will be available in next month's *Tribune*.

- SAVE THE DATE -

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He is there

By Rebekah Wright | BBFI Missionary | United Kingdom

At the beginning of 2016, Brian printed a paper titled “Answered Prayers of 2016” full of blank lines. The third thing we wrote on that list was “We’re having a baby!” We learned we were pregnant with our third child January 11, 2016. On January 4, 2017, we laid our sweet three-and-a-half-month-old baby boy, Beckett, down for a nap and he passed away in his sleep. We went through a lifetime in one year. But it wasn’t just a birth and death that happened in that year, it was a deeper change in our family.

Around March of last year I began a Bible study about motherhood with a friend. Through that study and her influence, I fell more in love with my ministry of being a mom. I began to love and interact with my kids in a different way. I knew going into Beckett’s birth, I wanted to take a long period off from all other responsibilities and just focus on being his mom. And for the first six weeks of his life I did that. I focused on Brooklyn, Boston, and Beckett, and I loved it. It was hard. Babies are hard work. But I knew what I was doing was important. And I cherished it.

It wasn’t just me making changes to prioritize our family. Brian bonded with Beckett quicker than our other two babies. They were a great team from the start. As Beckett entered the smiling stage, it was his Daddy that made his eyes light up and his smile shine.

Brooklyn loved her brother. She read to him from the time I was 20 weeks pregnant. Brooklyn’s heart and attitude have changed this

past year and she has become sweeter, gentler, and more mature. She’s still a wild six-year-old — I don’t want to paint any untrue pictures here — but she loved her baby brother with a gentle, genuine love.

And then there is Boston! He had no idea the baby in mommy’s tummy was going to be real until he saw him at the hospital and immediately fell in love. His exact question was, “Where’d this *Bucket* come from?” From that point on his brother was called “Bucket.”



To say all of these things in the past tense seems unnatural. It seems unreal. I feel numb. I feel intense emotion and hurt. No one knows what to say to us. We don’t know what to say to them. I want him back. I know the road ahead is long. I know we will have many different emotions and reactions along the way. I don’t know how I will handle every step of the journey, but right now I am choosing to be thankful.

We had close to four wonderful months with our little guy. We held him, loved him,

and create memories that will always be there. We are choosing to be thankful for those four months. We are choosing to believe Beckett was a gift to our family. We cherished him for the time we had him. I want my little boy back. I want him back so much. But I don’t want him back to do things differently. I want him back because I miss him.

I’m not saying I didn’t complain about the late nights or the lack of showers. I fell behind on housework, on recipe planning, on record keeping, on countless things, and I felt I was failing at times. I’m not saying we did everything right with Beckett at all. But I am saying we enjoyed him. I am saying we loved him well. And when I look back at his short time here, I am thankful for the priorities we chose.

I know our situation has brought out a lot of fear in other new moms and families. I understand and I think it’s natural. But if I could choose for you, I would say don’t let this bring you to fear. Let it bring you to love. Love the moments you have, don’t fear the ones that are unknown.

We went on to write 138 items on that answered prayer list Brian printed at the beginning of the year. It was a good year — because we looked for the good. We looked for God at work and we saw Him. And 2017 is going to be a good year as well. I know this because I know my God. In the midst of my darkness, in the midst of my pain, He is there.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46:1-3,7)

Daily Feed

31 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

Focus this month on understanding the realities of sin and take at least ten days to fast in various ways asking for God's protection against sin.

1

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

2

"If we have need to lament our sin, how much more to rejoice at our pardon!"

- Charles Spurgeon

3

Fast from social media

4

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5

"The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from your Bible."

- Dwight L. Moody

6

Fast from caffeine.

7

James 4:17

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

8

"I would rather die than do something which I know to be a sin, or to be against God's will."

- Joan of Arc

9

Fast from television.

10

Proverbs 28:13

He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

11

"The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them."

- George Bernard Shaw

12

Fast from all food.

13

John 1:8

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

14

"The most dangerous thing in the world is the sin of self-reliance and the stupor of worldliness."

- John Piper

15

Fast from your mobile phone.

16

I John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

17

"... the scars of sin can lead us to restoration and a renewed intimacy with God."

- Charles Stanley

18

Fast during lunch.

19

I Cor. 15:57

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

20

"... none of us in our generation feels as guilty about sin as we should or as our forefathers did."

- Francis Schaeffer

21

Fast from a hot shower.

22

James 1:15

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

23

"One leak will sink a ship: and one sin will destroy a sinner."

- John Bunyan

24

Fast from all meat.

25

Romans 5:8

... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

26

"... time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of sin."

- C.S. Lewis

27

Fast from snacks.

28

Isaiah 1:18

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

29

"Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay."

- Ravi Zaccarias

30

Fast during dinner.

31

Numbers 32:33

But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.

MISSIONARY PRAYER CALENDAR

1. John & Pearl Mikulsi – Alaska
2. First Lt. Joseph & Magen Isip – Chaplain, U.S. Army Reserves
3. Christian & Shawna Hendrick – Dem. Rep. of the Congo
4. Michael Cox – Mexico (TEAM)
5. Bill & Dorothy Merritt – SMORS
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7. Mark & Susan Schladenhauffen – South Africa
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13. Workers in Creative Access Countries
14. Sever & Cathy Gonciulea – Romania
15. BBFI Mission Office – Assoc. Mission Directors
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17. Joshua & Teah Lane – Dominican Republic (TEAM)
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19. Carol Elkins – Nicaragua
20. Lance & Amy Auterson – France
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27. Dan & Rachel Smith – Portugal
28. Missionary Kids
29. Bill & Debbie Crawford – Germany
30. Greg & Michelle Windell – Kenya
31. Brent & Sheila Moeller – South Africa

Colossians 4:2

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.

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