

TBAPTIST BIBLE **TRIBUNE**

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WILT THOU SET THINE EYES UPON THAT WHICH IS NOT?
**FOR RICHES CERTAINLY
MAKE THEMSELVES WINGS;**
THEY FLY AWAY AS AN EAGLE TOWARD HEAVEN.
PROVERBS 23:5

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On the Table

By Keith Bassham



Hope sure and steadfast

At the confluence of several need-based streams, I have settled on the subject of hope for thought and study for the next several days. With the current economic stresses, needs in my own life, and a pressing preaching date with our Fellowship in Houston in a few days, hope has become my favorite topic.

Like Conwell's *Acres of Diamonds*, once you begin looking for hope in your Bible reading, you find an embarrassment of riches. The inherent hopefulness of the opening lines of the creation story, and those selfsame hopes dashed a mere page or two later — yet rising again, and then again falling — hope and despair is woven into each part of the Bible story.

After some time, you begin to ask, "Is it right, after all we have brought upon ourselves, to go to the source of hope yet another time? Can hope still be there?" And the answer comes back, "Yes, there is — a hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19).

The so-called New Atheists (who really aren't all that new after all, for the *Wall Street Journal* named them The New New Atheists in an article last fall), would find us either lunatics or criminals or both. In the minds of Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*), Sam Harris (*Letter to a Christian Nation*), and others lesser known, faith in all forms is an enemy that must not only be discouraged but wiped out.

And the field between these warring camps — that is, we the hopeful, and those without hope (which is how the Apostle Paul designates those

without God in Ephesians chapter two) — has these past hundred years or so been held by what we knew as religious liberals. The God they held up was partly supernatural, more conceived in man's image than the other way round. But at least the God of the liberals was more than His creation and creature. That close interaction between those who were without God and those who held to an almost-God led to the inevitable. Now that middle ground is occupied by those who consider belief in God at all to be a problem.

That is the title of a book, in fact, *The God Problem*, written by Nigel Leaves. According to Mr. Leaves, "the major factor in the waning of Christian faith is its insistence on a supernatural God — the Almighty, the lawgiver and judge who convicts the world of sin." Did you get that? Christianity is waning because we insist on a supernatural God, he says. His alternatives are predictable — different forms of pantheism and naturalism — which I find ironic, because according to Romans 1:18-20, the created world reveals those very aspects of God's nature Leaves rejects: the Almighty, the lawgiver and judge who convicts the world of sin. What does that say for those who want to appeal to reason alone?

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a British preacher well known in the last century, was once asked to debate the existence of God in a network broadcast in Britain. His response was documented in his book, *Preaching and Preachers*. He said,

God is not a subject for debate. We are told that the unbeliever does not agree with that; and that is perfectly true; but that makes no difference. We believe it, and it is a part of

our very case to assert it. Holding the view that we do, believing what we do about God, we cannot in any circumstances allow Him to become a subject for discussion or of debate or investigation. I base my argument at this point on the word addressed by God Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:1-6). Moses had suddenly seen this remarkable phenomenon of the burning bush, and was proposing to turn aside and to examine this astonishing phenomenon. But, immediately, he is rebuked by the voice which came to him saying, 'Draw no nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' That seems to be the governing principle in this whole matter. ...To me this is a very vital matter. To discuss the being of God in a casual manner, lounging in an armchair...is something we should never allow, because God, as I say, is not a kind of philosophic X or concept. We believe in the almighty, the glorious, the living God; and whatever may be true of others we must never put ourselves, or allow ourselves to be put, into a position in which we are debating about God as if He were but a philosophical proposition.

Charles Darwin did not become an atheist because of his evolution studies. He had come to believe that the doctrines of Christianity were unsustainable, that the God of Christianity was unjust, or at the very least, amoral, and these thoughts were compounded by personal tragedy, not the least of which was his daughter's death. The problem for Mr. Leaves and others is not therefore an intellectual exercise. Arguments against the existence of God often begin as an experience of hope lost and usually end with God in the hands of angry sinners.



A heart to give

This is my first opportunity to thank you for the chance to serve the Baptist Bible Fellowship International as treasurer. I am humbled by your confidence. One thing has happened, though. My attention has been turned toward our giving. We have four unique areas in which pastors and churches can participate: foreign missions, home missions (NCPO), our owned and approved colleges, and of course, our *Tribune*.

Every BBFI pastor is convinced that giving is a biblical mandate. So why is it so hard to give, and even increase our pledges, if we are convinced? Why can't we get 100 percent involvement? I believe the answer is simple: most believe giving is about the wallet, when it's really about the heart.

"But this I say, He which soweth

that there are three blessings attached to their giving:

Something good will happen to the giver.

Something good will happen to the receiver.

Something good will happen to God.

He says giving is like sowing seed and then reaping a harvest. One must sow seed with the thought of how one wants to reap. That's the biblical principle of sowing and reaping: "...he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." That means, if we give a little, we'll reap a little. If we don't give at all, we won't reap at all. If we aren't reaping, it's

toward others. But that's not the end of it. God is also more than able to take what's left over and make it sufficient to meet our needs. Not only that, but God will take the generosity of our heart and translate that joy into every other avenue of our Christian service. In other words, we'll not only abound in what we give financially, but we'll also abound in our time, talent, and service! Every facet of our Christian life will be bountiful — all because of our cheerful and bountiful attitude in giving!

This isn't a new teaching from Paul. He got it from Jesus himself. Jesus said: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured unto you again" (Luke 6:38). If we will take what God gives to us and use it to minister to both our local church needs and our Fellowship ministries, then He will increase the fruits of our service. That's what 2 Corinthians 9:10 is all about. We give seed and then all of our ministries receive the increase. Multiplied seed results in multiplied fruit.

Giving does something to us: it brings cheerfulness to our heart, fulfillment to our service, and it develops a trust in God's provision. Giving does something to others: it meets the needs of missionaries, church planters, BBC faculty and students, and our *Tribune*. It brings cheerfulness and fulfillment to their hearts. Giving also does something to God. According to 2 Corinthians 9:11-14, our giving glorifies God. Can you see why God loves cheerful giving? It honors and glorifies Him, and it all starts with our hearts!

...God will take the generosity of our heart and translate that joy into every other avenue of our Christian service.

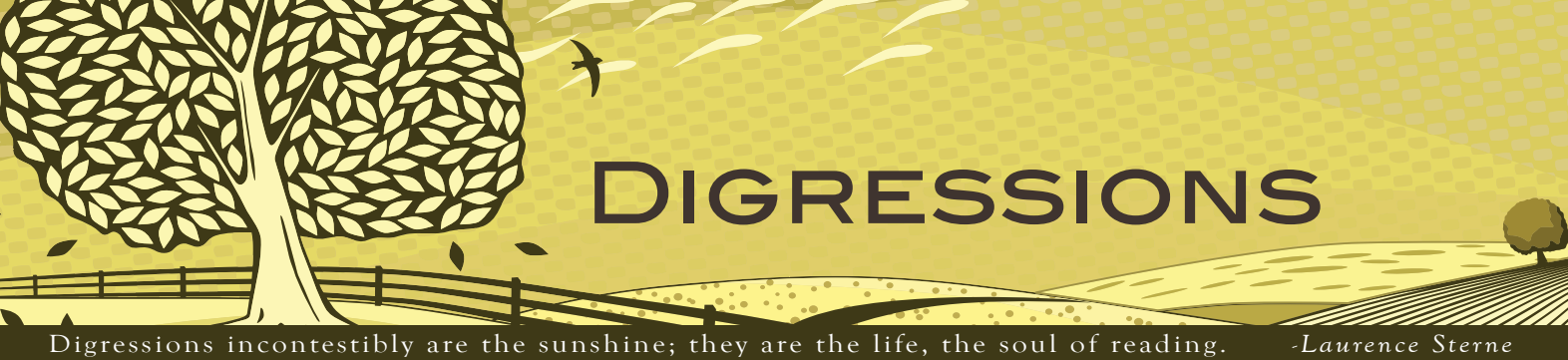
sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever" (2 Corinthians 9:6-9).

Paul reminded the Corinthians

because we aren't sowing. This is true for churches as well as individuals.

According to 2 Corinthians 9:7, there are two things God doesn't want: God doesn't want us to give with a grudge, nor does He want us to give because we feel we have to. God wants cheerful givers — several cheerful givers if He can find them! God wants believers to have a good time giving. I would love to see our Fellowship laugh out loud and jump for joy over what God has allowed us to give to Him.

The Apostle Paul also tells us God is able to make our giving abound



Starbucks denies sending money to Israeli army

To combat persistent rumors that the company provides funds to the Israeli army, Starbucks Coffee has a page on its website that states: "Our more than 160,000 partners and business associates around the globe have diverse views about a wide range of topics. Regardless of that spectrum of belief, Starbucks Coffee Company remains a non-political organization. We do not support any political or religious cause. Further, allegations that Starbucks provides financial support to the Israeli government and/or the Israeli Army in any way are unequivocally false. Unfortunately, these rumors persist despite our best efforts to refute them."



Although there are more than 230 Starbucks stores in the Middle East, there are no stores in Israel.

Source: www.starbucks.com, January 16, 2009.

Library fine waived for heroic US Airways pilot

In the days following his heroic water landing of US Airways Flight 1549 in New York's Hudson river, Captain Chesley Sullenberger realized that one of his personal items still aboard the wrecked plane was a library book he had checked out from a Danville, California, library. When he contacted the library to request an extension on the then overdue book on Professional Ethics (an interlibrary loan from Fresno State), he was informed that all fees would be waived and that he would not have to pay to have the book replaced. Fresno State will be replacing the book and will include a special dedication to the pilot whose professionalism has made him a hero to more than just the 155 people aboard Flight 1549.

Source: Kitte Felde, Southern California Public Radio by way of www.publicradio.com, Feb. 2, 2009.

Demographics of American children

73.7 million
Children ages 0-17 (2006)

73.9 million
Children ages 0-17 (2007)

24.6%
of the US population (2006)

24.5%
of the US population (2007)

Children ages 0-17 by race and ethnic group (2007)

White
76.2%

White, non-Hispanic
57.0%

Black
15.4%

Asian
4.1%

All other races
4.3%

Hispanic (of any race)
20.9%

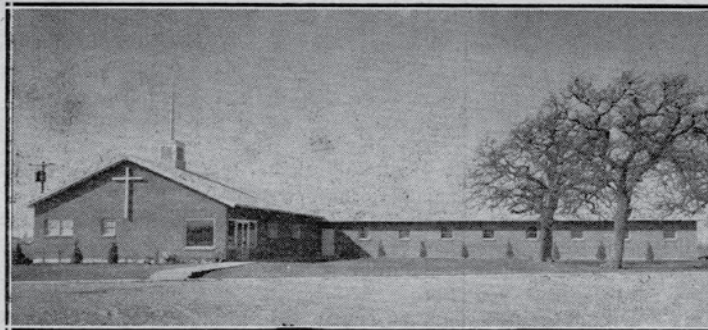
Source: America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2008 (available from www.childstats.gov)

Warren and Reader's Digest team up for magazine



Regardless of the economic struggles facing many magazines these days, Rick Warren (author of *The Purpose-Driven Life* and other books) is working with Reader's Digest to produce a quarterly publication geared toward believers. The \$30 subscription includes access to Christian networking websites and other multimedia tools, and is designed to appeal to "...a flat out segment of Americans who are unashamed followers of Jesus Christ," according to Warren.

Source: Russell Adams, *Wall Street Journal*, "Top-Selling Pastor Goes Quarterly", Jan. 27, 2009.



CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH, Denton, Texas. The new structure was recently dedicated. Rev. Lester J. Singleton is pastor.

BY F. S. DONNELSON

The Baptist Bible Fellowship had its beginning in the Central Baptist church of Denton, Tex., in June 1950. Loys Vess was pastor, and the church was known far and wide as a champion of the Fundamental Baptist cause.

For many years this fine church had been host to an annual Thanksgiving Missions Rally attended by hundreds of preachers interested in giving the Gospel to this lost world.

Loys Vess moved to Dallas, where he is today building a great church, Sunnyside Baptist church; and Central Baptist church called Lester Singleton from Paris to be its pastor.

The church has had an honorable history, pastored by such men as Dale Crowley, Rolfe Barnard, Tom Renfrow, Luther C. Peak, Fred Johnston, Luther R. Bradiey, Loys Vess, and Lester J. Singleton.

My visits to Denton have been frequent, and always there has been a welcome. I remember preaching there when the church met in a mule barn. It outgrew these modest beginnings and moved into a new auditorium near the square. It again packed out its accommodations and built a fine, large tabernacle type of auditorium.

Lester Singleton has been well-beloved and honored in his ministry. In recent years, the church has felt the necessity of moving into an outlying neighborhood. It purchased property in a section of the city that promises a future for the enlargement of the church, with homes all around, prospects of a large shopping center nearby, and

new school facilities. Lester Singleton and his people have stepped out on faith in the construction of a beautiful new church and Sunday school equipment. Three acres were purchased, the buildings were constructed, and on a recent Sunday the new church was dedicated.

Dedication Day was preceded by a week of Bible and missionary conferences, with a number of pastors and missionaries assisting. The North Texas Baptist Bible Fellowship met on Friday in the new auditorium with about 30 preachers present.

BAILOUT Merriam-Webster's Word of 2008

The word *bailout* received the "highest intensity of lookups on Merriam-Webster Online in the shortest period of time" thereby earning the title of Word of the Year by Merriam-Webster. Defined in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition as "a rescue from financial distress," the word was in the spotlight during the election campaign season along with several of the runners-up:

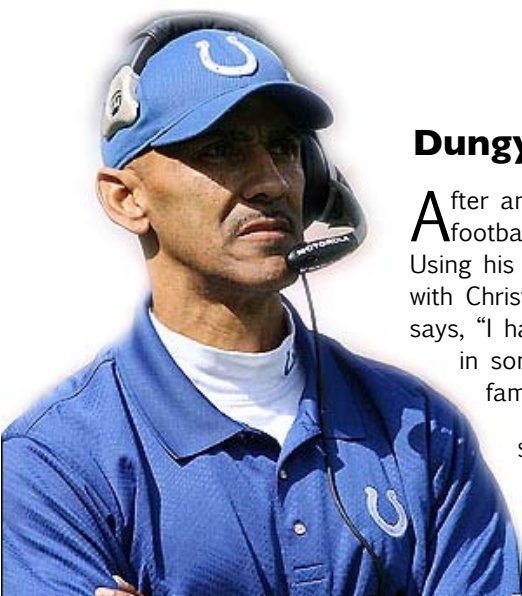
2. vet
3. socialism
4. maverick
5. bipartisan
6. trepidation
7. precipice
8. rogue
9. misogyny
10. turmoil



Source: www.merriam-webster.com/info/08words.htm

"There's a number of ministries I am looking at and trying to see where the Lord's directing... I'll be looking and trying to see where the Lord's gonna lead us."

-Tony Dungy



Dungy looking forward to ministry after football

After announcing his retirement as coach of the Indianapolis Colts in January, life after football will still have the same priorities for Tony Dungy: "faith, family, and football." Using his position and notoriety as a platform to share with others about his relationship with Christ was a great opportunity during his professional career, but the former coach says, "I have looked forward to being involved in church year around, being able to get in some full-time things..." As he settles into retirement in Tampa, Florida, with his family, it doesn't sound like he'll be sitting on the sidelines anytime soon.

Source: Joni B. Hannigan, Florida Baptist Witness, story at Baptist Press Sports www.bpsports.net, Feb. 6, 2009.

BEING CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF FORECLOSURE

LISTEN TO THE FINANCIAL ADVISER IN THE PROVERBS *By Keith Bassham*



Until the *Oxford English Dictionary* was first published from the late 1800s into the early 1900s, for the previous 150 years there was really only one English dictionary, compiled by Samuel Johnson, usually known simply as Dr. Johnson. He was unique — literate, highly intelligent, devout, and quick-witted. Hear him speak on focus during a crisis: “Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.”

Crises do that. They force us to determine what we really believe. They cause us to act upon core principles. In a crisis, a sane, thinking person will become a reductionist. What was important when the bank account was full to overflowing will seem a superfluous luxury in the lean times, and matters that were far from our thoughts yesterday will come to the forefront, or as Dr. Johnson says, our minds will be concentrated wonderfully.

I thought about that quote while reading an article on Christians and money the other day. Philip Yancey was recalling the words of an inner-city pastor in Chicago, Bill Leslie, whom he said used to say, “The Bible asks three main questions about money: How did you get it? What are you doing with it?

And what is it doing to you?”

How simple those questions are, and yet how they concentrate our thinking, especially in these times. It seems a good time to review what the Bible says about our finances, our attitudes, and our actions.



HOW DO YOU GET MONEY?

When Israel was taken from Egypt to the Promised Land, God did not intend that His people move into an unfurnished house. The land had

been inhabited, and it was therefore not an empty wilderness where they would have to scratch out a living. The land was “full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not” (Deuteronomy 6:11). He warned them:

Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy

God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

To forget, or to deny, that the Lord is the source of wealth is not mere forgetfulness — it is sin. This makes the issue of money a heart issue, and since the book of Proverbs deals with heart issues (“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life,” 4:23) and those secret things connected with the heart, we should expect to find something in the documents to guide us. And as expected, the Proverbs confirm the Deuteronomy sermons: “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich” (Proverbs 10:22), and several lessons can be drawn from the basic truth.

First, there are legitimate ways to gain wealth, and conversely illegitimate ways to do the same. Not coincidentally, the legitimate ways are connected with wisdom: “Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Proverbs 24:3,4). In other words, luck has nothing to do with gaining wealth in the right way. It has to do with the blessing of God as the source.

Second, gaining wealth through the blessing of God is not a passive activity. God promises to bless certain actions. Giving to God is blessed: “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (3:9-10). Giving to others is another way to gain the blessing of God:

He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor (22:9).

He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack (28:27).

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again (19:17).



...LUCK HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GAINING WEALTH IN THE RIGHT WAY. IT HAS TO DO WITH THE BLESSING OF GOD AS THE SOURCE.

All that said, I believe it is still important that we keep our eyes on the blessing portion of these passages rather than the wealth itself. It is entirely possible that a person blessed by God may appear poor — “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all” (22:2) — and the Proverbs are at pains to point out that appearances may fool us: “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (13:7).

In fact, given the choice between poverty and riches, choosing the poverty route may be a better choice under some circumstances: “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith” (15:16), and “Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right” (16:8).

One Bible teacher puts it this way:

There is wealth under the blessing of God.

There is wealth under the curses of God.

There is poverty under the blessing of God.

There is poverty under the curses of God.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR MONEY?

Securing the blessing of God is one legitimate way of acquiring money. Another is work: “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase” (13:11), and the Lord will bless “he that tilleth his land” (12:11). One should be

careful, though, not to make acquisition the goal (“Labour not to be rich” — 23:4), for “riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (23:5).

Rex Rogers is the president of Cornerstone University of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the author of *Seducing America: Is Gambling a Good Bet?* (Baker Book House, 1997). According to Rogers, there are three legitimate ways of acquiring property: as a gift, as payment for labor, or as fair exchange. Any other method is “ill-gotten,” which is the implication of Proverbs 10:2, “Treasures of wickedness profit nothing,” and 1:19, which speaks of one “greedy of gain.” The word gain in that passage has an immoral tone, such as plunder or something gained through covetousness.

Aside from the gambling issue, we have seen just this past year examples of criminal greed writ large. Large investment houses thought unshakable are now memories. Corporate and government figures are being prosecuted. But according to W. Michael Hoffman, executive director of the Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, you don’t have to go so far as to be a crook in

order to go wrong where money is concerned. Selfishness or obsession with wealth may be all that is necessary. He says, “When I hear how much money some people have, I can’t imagine how

afterwards (“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children,” 13:22), not all people can handle all levels of wealth. In fact, those who “hasteth to be rich” (28:20, 22) may feel

What happens when we place excessive emphasis on the material? Gauge first of all the cost to society. In the Las Vegas, Nevada, telephone directory business section a few years

ago, you could find 12 pages of check-cashing services, 14 pages of plastic surgeons, 22 pages of pawn and loan shops, 26 pages of quickie wedding chapels, and 135 pages of attorneys. On the other hand, there were eight pages of churches, one page of mental health services, and a half page of ba-



IN SOME WAYS, MONEY IS LIKE NUCLEAR POWER. IT DOES HAVE ITS USES, BUT... MOST OF US COULD NOT HANDLE WEALTH WITHOUT CONTAMINATING OURSELVES AND OTHERS WITH ITS CONSUMING POWER.

they can possibly spend it, and they want more, it seems. That’s a point at which it seems to me that we begin to look at others as well as ourselves as King Midas counting his golden coins” (Michael S. James, ABCNEWS.com Moneyscope, August 22, 2002).

Beware of the one who misrepresents the value of the thing he wants to buy, but later brags on what a bargain he got (20:14). There is the one with the ready bribe (17:23), the rigged scale (11:1; 16:11; 20:23), and the friends who only come around when you have money (19:4). Adjust the language a bit and you can see the subprime mortgage mess shine through in these Proverbs passages.

WHAT DOES MONEY DO TO YOU?

First of all, we should get a perspective on the power of wealth, for both good and bad. Although money can go a long way toward relieving certain stresses in this life (“The rich man’s wealth is his strong city,” 10:15), and it’s a nice thing to leave to the kids

a sting at the end: “An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed” (20:21).

See these wise words from Proverbs 30:7-9:

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Do you see that? Agur’s prayer is for equilibrium rather than for an excessive amount of wealth. He knows the danger of trusting in what Paul calls “uncertain riches” (1 Timothy 6:17), and how such riches can wreck faith and make one do the unthinkable — deny God. On the other hand, he does not want to be reduced to criminality. Instead, he trusts that God knows what he can handle, and that He will give to him accordingly.

by-sitting services. Is this a picture of the good life wealth is to represent? Or is it more a sign of sickness, as depicted in Proverbs 25:16: “Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.”

Sickness and sin — here they are the same! Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, wrote, “[Greed is] a basic sin that is the father of many other evils. Scripture repeatedly addresses greed, covetousness, and avarice as a sin against God, and often with graphic warning of the destruction that is greed’s result. The burning desire for earthly riches leads to frustration and spiritual death.”

In some ways, money is like nuclear power. It does have its uses, and who can argue with the good of having lots and lots of electricity at your disposal. But nuclear power only works well when you surround the reactor with thick concrete walls and a complex system of coolant tubes and

valves and electronic monitoring and tight regulation. Most of us could not handle wealth without contaminating ourselves and others with its consuming power. Previously trustworthy people become connivers under its spell. Formerly good friends become manipulative. Folks once satisfied with just enough find themselves filled with a fear of lack.

WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

I have joked with friends that there have been times when I have had money, and there have been times when I didn't. Over all, I'd say it's better to have money. As I said before, money has legitimate uses — providing for your needs and those of your family, giving to the poor, building the work of God — and there are others, of course. But money is not the most important thing.

Wisdom is more important than money. Wisdom is personified (speaking as a person) in Proverbs 8. In one passage, Wisdom has this to say about wealth:

Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures (8:18-21).

The rationale for this is clear — having money without wisdom to use it properly is of little value: "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to

get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" (17:16). James 1:5 says to ask God for wisdom, and certainly this is good counsel where money is concerned.

Fearing God is more important than money. One does not necessarily have to make a choice between making money and fearing God, but if the choice arises, "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith" (15:16). In fact, God often blesses a right attitude and reverence in such a way that it can lead to acquiring money: "By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life" (22:4).

Righteousness is more important than money. Proverbs 16:8 tells us, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right," and 28:6, "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is per-

cal. It is practical. We are stewards, and the Christian calling means everything we are, everything we do, and everything we own truly belongs to God and is to be at the disposal of His purposes. We are to do all, invest all, own all, purchase all to the glory of God.

Brothers and sisters in a congregation may need financial help and counsel. The times present opportunities for Christians "to spend and be spent" on behalf of the Lord and His people (2 Corinthians 12:15). And while I sympathize with retirees who have lost so much in the market's recent plunge, for some this could mean redeployment back into a world in need of witness. We are taught to be ready to give an answer to every one who asks about our hope (1 Peter 3:15). We earn that privilege when we have a real hope to offer, the true treasure of Jesus Christ.

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verse in his ways, though he be rich." The Lord can provide for His children so that they avoid the trouble that the wicked may undergo: "In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble" (15:6).

That righteousness is not theoreti-

Much of this article is taken from or adapted from my book, Choosing Wisely, a series of studies from the book of Proverbs, available from the Tribune for \$12.95.



Soli Deo

Go God alone,

Johann Sebastian Bach: *A Musician for God*

By Bryan Wise

At the age of 48, he had just acquired a copy of Luther's three-volume translation of the Bible. Poring over it as one who had just found a buried treasure, he made notes in the margins and underlined one passage after another; spending a particularly great amount of time on passages containing a musical reference. The year was 1733 and this was not an individual who had a passing interest in the scripture, but rather an individual who would become the greatest church musician of the Baroque era. His name: Johann Sebastian Bach.

When most people are questioned about their knowledge of classical music and its composers, the majority of them will mention names such as Ludwig von Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, George Frédéric Handel, or even Johannes Brahms, and maybe even Franz Joseph Haydn. But the one name that will most commonly be mentioned is Johann Sebastian Bach. During this month, the birth of Bach will be remembered by musicians and musicologists alike. The reason is not because Bach enjoyed the fame and popularity during his lifetime such as his contemporary, George Frédéric Handel, or that he displayed the prodigy genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, but it is because Bach, with his life and the music he composed, inspired and influenced all other composers who came after him.¹

Born March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany, during what is called the Baroque period of music (1600-1750), Bach came from a long line of musicians and composers. By the time of his birth, the Bach name had already become synonymous with the musical trade. More than 50 musicians bearing the Bach name are remembered by musicologists today.² Indeed, when a vacancy occurred in 1693 at the Arnstadt court capelle, the court urgently called for a Bach to fill the position.³ Because of his family background, Bach's parents' natural expectation was that their son be a musician. However, the journey to achieving this was long and filled with adversity.

By the age of nine, both of Bach's parents had died, and the family was forced to break up. Bach and his younger

Gloria

the glory

brother, Jacob, were taken in by their older brother, Johann Christoph, organist at Ohrdruf.⁴ While living with his older brother, Bach discovered some musical manuscripts and began copying the music at night in his bedroom even though it was against his brother's wishes. The copied music was discovered by Bach's brother and was promptly destroyed. However, through this experience and his unsatisfied interest in the organ, Bach began to display the undeniable musical talent that would surpass all others in the Bach family.

Throughout his life, Bach was known much more as an organist than a composer. He demonstrated unusual ability in playing the organ, and it would be this talent, not musical composing, that would be the main interest of his employers. He also became very proficient in repairing organs; making him an individual of much demand. Bach's passion for the organ knew no limits. He once walked over 250 miles to hear the great organist of his day, Dietrich Buxtehude. Bach had acquired permission from his employer to be gone for a month to attend the concert, but Bach was so enthralled by the music that it was 16 weeks before he returned.⁵ As his ability and mastery of the organ developed, Bach also kept humility about his talent. Once, when an acquaintance praised Bach's wonderful skill as an organist, he replied with characteristic humility and wit, "There is nothing very wonderful about it. You have only to hit the right notes at the right moment and the instrument does the rest."⁶

Bach knew the source of his talent and he was not secretive about giving the proper credit for his gifts. His family background was greatly influenced by the Lutheran Reformation and the Moravians. This influence was more than a passing fancy or a popular fad in 17th century Germany. It was a lifestyle he practiced. Bach knew that his musical abilities came from God and God alone. To him "music is a mixed mathematical science that concerns the origins, attributes, and distinctions of sound, out of which a cultivated and lovely melody and harmony are made, so that God is honored and praised but mankind is moved to devotion, virtue, joy, and sorrow."⁷ Therefore, he would frequently initial his blank manuscript pages with the marking, "J. J." (*Jesu, Juva* – "Help me Jesus"), or "I. N. J." (*In Nomine Jesu* – "In the name of Jesus"). At the end of the manuscript, Bach routinely wrote the letters "S. D. G." (*Soli Deo Gloria* – "To God alone, the glory").⁸ To Bach, these were not simple religious



slogans, but rather a true outward expression of an inward devotion to his Savior.

Interestingly enough, these markings were not limited only to his sacred work (i.e., chorales, cantatas, and masses) but are found on most all of his musical manuscripts. For instance, at the beginning of his “secular” *Little Organ Book*, he wrote as a dedication, “To God alone the praise be given for what’s herein to man’s use written.”⁹ In his *Little Clavier Book*, as it was in so many other of his compositions, was written, “In the Name of Jesus.”¹⁰ His belief was that God had given him the talent and ability and therefore God should also be given the credit.

With the gift of the talent, Bach knew there came the responsibility of using it. Oddly enough, Bach never considered himself as a composer but assumed, with good reason, that the titles “capellmeister” and “music director” themselves implied the function of composer. Therefore, he took to the task of being the best with the talent that God had given him.

And the best he was! Just in cantatas alone, Bach wrote approximately 340 of which only 200 survived. A cantata during the Baroque period was based on a particular scripture passage for the Sunday service and would be 20 to 30 minutes in length. These cantatas were grouped into cycles; one cantata specifically for each Sunday of the year. Most would end with a chorale, the forerunner to the hymn, with the music at all time closely bound to the biblical text. A more-noted chorale found in most hymnals is *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*. Although Bach did not compose the original melody, he harmonized it into what is now used in modern-day hymnals.

Not many of his cantatas are performed in their entirety. However, portions of these cantatas have become popular and recognizable to most who hear them today. An example of this is *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring*. He wrote numerous chorales and motets; add to this the oratorios, masses, chamber music, and a myriad of instrumental music. It is staggering the amount of music that he composed!

Unfortunately, a great deal of his work has been lost. Stories relate how his music was used as wallpaper or as wrapping paper for garbage. His genius as a composer was never recognized by the populace of his day. Many thought he held stubbornly onto obsolete forms of music, and consequently never considered his compositions worthy of notice.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Bach was not swayed by what would sell musically but rather chose to compose what he felt would honor God. He never thought highly of himself but reportedly said that, “What I have achieved by industry and practice, anyone else with tolerable natural gift and ability can also achieve.”¹¹ Yet, it was through the combination of using his talent, hard work, and with the most indefatigable study that Johann Sebastian Bach was able, whichever he turned, to extend so greatly the bounds of his art that his successors have not even been able to maintain this enlarged domain to its full extent; and this

alone enabled him to produce such numerous and perfect works, all of which are, and ever will remain, true ideals and imperishable models of art.¹²

Bach was an avid reader of the scriptures. Some have said Bach lived with his Bible. He wrote many notes in the margin of his Bible expressing his own commentary on certain passages, especially those that dealt with music. A passage in 1 Chronicles 25 relates how King David set apart musicians for the temple worship. In response to this passage Bach wrote, “This chapter is the true foundation for all God-pleasing music.”¹³ Yet 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 seemed to have special meaning to Bach relating to the purpose of music in the church.



“It came to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in the praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice, with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever — that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD. So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.”

Bach understood that these verses related the message that God was pleased with the music and with the unity that the music brought. God’s glory filled the temple before any message or any prayer was given. In his Bible, he wrote these words: “Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with His gracious presence.”¹⁴

This personal understanding of the scripture influenced his compositions. Bach was a master at “word painting.” He had the ability to use voices and musical instruments to en-

...music is a mixed mathematical science that concerns the origins, attributes, and distinctions of sound, out of which a cultivated and lovely melody and harmony are made, so that God is honored and praised but mankind is moved to devotion, virtue, joy, and sorrow. -J.S. Bach

hance or create an audible picture to enhance the meaning of the text. One of the most notable examples of this is found in his *Mass in B Minor*. Toward the end of the dramatic crucifixion movement, the voices and the instruments quietly sing and play in lower tones to depict the burial of Jesus. This is immediately followed by an explosion of voices and instruments on higher notes announcing the resurrection of our Lord. This style of word painting has been copied by many composers and is especially seen in the hymn *Christ Arose*.

In the later years of his life, Bach's eyes began to fail him. He endured two unsuccessful eye surgeries without any anesthesia; eventually leading to his blindness. This, however, did not dampen his spirit or his desire to compose. Before total blindness had engulfed him, he wrote what has been considered his greatest works. *The Art of the Fugue* and *The Goldberg Variations* displayed the artistry and mastery of Bach like no other of his compositions.

On July 28, 1750, Bach was finally united with his Savior and with the One to whom he served and dedicated his music. Two days before his death, he dictated a chorale from his bed entitled, "Before Thy Throne I Come." (BWV 668)

*Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit
O Gott, und dich demütig bitt
Wend dein genädig Angesicht
Von mir, dem armem Sünder nicht.*

Before your throne I now appear,
O God, and bid you humbly,
Turn not your gracious face
From me, a poor sinner.

*Ein selig end emir bescher,
am jüngsten Tag etwecke mich,
Herr, daß ich dich schau ewiglich;
Amen, amen, erhöre mich.*

Confer on me a blessed end,
On the last day awaken me,
Lord, that I may see you eternally;
Amen, amen, hear me.

After his death, Bach's work went into obscurity; fading out of the minds of people, and his music was not performed. Not until the 19th century with the performance of his *Mass in B Minor* would the name of Johann Sebastian Bach

be known again. Composers who followed Bach, such as Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Wagner considered the wealth of music and the way it was composed to be a great gift from God. But popularity was not Bach's highest goal. His idea of music was that its ultimate goal was to honor God and refresh the soul. *Soli Deo Gloria*, to God alone, the glory.

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BATTLEGROUND AMERICA:

'GAY MARRIAGE' SUPPORTERS CLOSING IN ON LANDMARK VICTORY

By Michael Foust

NASHVILLE, TN (BP) — Last year's passage of California Proposition 8 may have been a historic moment for opponents of "gay marriage," but supporters believe they are on the verge of notching their own significant victory — seeing a state voluntarily legalize such unions.

At least five states — New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont — could debate bills this year that would legalize "gay marriage," as could the Washington, D.C., city council. Additionally, at least three states — Hawaii, Washington and New Mexico — may pass legislation granting same-sex couples all the legal benefits of marriage minus the name. Unlike California, none of the eight states has a law allowing citizens to gather signatures to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot.

After years of both sides fighting in state courts, the landscape may be shifting to state legislatures, even with court cases remaining in Iowa (where that state's highest court could legalize "gay marriage") and California (where that state's highest court will hear a case March 5 considering the validity of Prop 8) still pending.

The current outlook isn't very sunny for social conservatives, especially in the Northeast. Governors in two states (New Jersey and New York) have pledged to sign "gay marriage" bills, and the governor in a third state (Maine) who has opposed a "gay marriage" bill in the past suddenly has turned noncommittal. Democrats control both chambers in all three states.

The legal group GLAD (Gay

& Lesbian Advocates & Defenders) announced days after the November election its "Six by Twelve" campaign with the goal of seeing all six New England states recognize "gay marriage" by 2012. GLAD, which says it will partner with various state organizations to reach the goal, is the same legal group that successfully sued in two of those New England states — Connecticut and Massachusetts — to legalize "gay marriage." Those two states remain the only U.S. states to recognize "marriage" between homosexuals.

Following is a summary of the status of "gay marriage," civil union and domestic partnership bills in states (as well as the District of Columbia) where they are most likely to pass.

Michael Foust is an assistant editor of Baptist Press. Copyright 2009 Baptist Press, www.bpnews.net

STATES CURRENTLY DEBATING CIVIL UNIONS/DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS BILLS ▼

HAWAII

A majority of state House members are sponsors of a bill that would legalize civil unions, meaning that the bill's fate apparently will be decided in the Senate, perhaps in the six-member Senate Judiciary and Government Operations Committee, the Honolulu Advertiser reported. The committee chairman hasn't taken a position; three committee members back it and two are opposed. Democrats control both chambers. Gov. Linda Lingle, a Republican, would have to sign it for it to become law. In 2006 she filled out a candidate survey for the Hawaii Family Forum and the Hawaii Catholic Conference and said she was undecided on the issue.

NEW MEXICO

A bill that would legalize domestic partnerships for same-sex couples failed in the state Senate Judiciary Committee when it received a tie vote Feb. 2. Further hurting the bill's chances, one member who missed the vote said she would have voted against it, the Associated Press reported. Democrats control both chambers, and Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson supports the bill, which would grant same-sex couples all the state legal benefits of marriage. A spokesperson for Richardson told AP the governor still hopes the bill will pass.

WASHINGTON

State Sen. Ed Murray and Rep. Jamie Pedersen, both Democrats, are sponsoring an expansion of the state's domestic partnership law that would, in Pedersen's words, give same-sex couples "everything but marriage," *The Seattle Times* reported. Democrats control both chambers. Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire, a Democrat, signed the bill in 2007 that created domestic partnerships. Pedersen and Murray say they hope the law serves as a stepping stone to "gay marriage."

VERMONT

State Sen. John Campbell, a Democrat, says he will introduce a bill this session that would legalize "gay marriage." Democrats control both chambers. Gov. Jim Douglas, a Republican, opposes "gay marriage." The question may be whether the legislature would have the votes to override a possible veto. Vermont was the first state to legalize civil unions, although a commission created by the legislature issued a one-sided report last year calling the current law flawed. The report's conclusion wasn't surprising: Most if not all of the members of the commission supported "gay marriage."

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Four New Hampshire Democratic representatives introduced a bill in early January that would legalize "gay marriage" in the state. New Hampshire already recognizes same-sex civil unions. Democrats control both chambers. Gov. John Lynch, a Democrat, has said in the past he opposes "gay marriage."

MAINE

State Sen. Dennis S. Damon, a Democrat, stood alongside same-sex couples and introduced a bill at a news conference in late January that would legalize "gay marriage." Democrats control both chambers. Maine Gov. John Baldacci, a Democrat, issued a statement after the press conference saying: "In the past, I have opposed gay marriage while supporting the idea of civil unions.... Unfortunately, there is no question that gay and lesbian people and their families still face discrimination. This debate is extremely personal for many people, and it's an issue that I struggle with trying to find the best path forward."

THE CURRENT OUTLOOK ISN'T VERY SUNNY FOR SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES, ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTHEAST.

NEW YORK

After winning the state Senate from Republicans, Democrats now hold both chambers, and a "gay marriage" bill is expected to be debated. Such a bill passed the Assembly in 2007 but was blocked in the Republican-controlled Senate. Complicating matters is the fact that Democrats hold a narrow 32-30 Senate advantage, and a handful of Democrats oppose the bill. Gov. David A. Paterson, a Democrat, has said he would sign the bill. Democratic leaders pledged during the campaign to pass the bill if they won Senate control.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

A majority of Washington's city council supports a bill that would legalize "gay marriage," as does the city's mayor. Congress has the power to overturn the bill, but with Democrats in power, such a bill -- which was opposed when Republicans were in power -- has a friendlier audience. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi backs "gay marriage."

NEW JERSEY

Although the governor, Senate president and Assembly speaker all favor voting on a "gay marriage" bill, its consideration may be delayed this year because the state is facing an election. Democrats control both chambers, while the governor's office is held by Jon S. Corzine who is facing re-election. The election, in fact, may decide the bill's future -- if it doesn't pass prior to Election Day. Corzine has said he would sign it. The state recognizes civil unions, although a state commission issued a report in December urging the state to legalize "gay marriage."

Elmer Deal recalls early days in the Congo

By Elmer Deal with Mike Randall

When Mary and I first went to the Congo in 1959, we decided to make a survey trip of the country to encounter the people firsthand, to see what other gospel-preaching missions had done and discover the location where God

search described them as large, biting flies that feed on the blood of vertebrate animals. They carried deadly diseases that may cause sleeping sickness in people. They are distinguished from the common large housefly, being longer and thinner. When resting, they fold

along the road, "Around ten o'clock one morning, we came over a hill and just at the crest was a big tree that evidently had blown across the road the night before. This was a good time to use all the survival equipment we had been so careful to bring with us. Elmer, with

axe in hand, began the tedious job of chopping it out of the way.

I had just begun to unpack in preparation for lunch when from out of nowhere about ten little Pygmy men appeared on the road. They watched with great interest how these funny white people did things. It wasn't long until friendly smiles were exchanged. Then Elmer, being the practical man he is, dug out all the extra tools he had and invited his new friends to help. The work went in record time and they were all a few coins richer. We bid them goodbye and were again on our way. The men shouted with laughter and ran with their coins in hand to their village. That evening they related around the fires the strange day they spent with two

white people that seemed very friendly, but couldn't speak their language.



Elmer and Mary Deal on safari surveying the Congo

would have us begin. The trip of over 4,000 miles took more than two months and we learned more than any textbook could teach. Here are some examples.

Flat tires, tsetse flies and other road hazards

Mary and I were driving through a forest area in our Volkswagen bus when we noticed it was riding a little rougher than usual. I stopped and discovered a flat tire right under the driver's seat. Then I noticed something else, swarms of flies circling around our vehicle. We had driven into the midst of tsetse flies. I was aware of areas in the Congo inhabited by the tsetse fly, especially areas where wild animals live. Re-

one wing directly on top of the other above their abdomen.

When I recognized the tsetse swarming around the bus, I knew we must be on guard to not be bitten. I closed all the windows on the vehicle to protect Mary. Now how do I protect myself? I had to change the flat and put on the spare tire. While doing so, I was constantly dancing, slinging my arms and keeping my body moving so the tsetse flies couldn't find a still place to land. I suspect if someone had taken a movie of my ordeal and showed it to our Mission Director, I would have been asked to return to the states immediately for a mental evaluation.

Mary recounts another challenge

Visiting the Pygmies

There is more to our experience with the Pygmies. We visited and I had the privilege of preaching in a Pygmy Church. It was almost full. We commended the missionaries for taking the gospel to these needy and deserving people. I told the missionaries that this was the smallest church where I had ever spoken. At the end of the service I asked them to stand, but lo and behold, they were already standing.

Our visit taught us much about this unusual people group. The Pygmies are very good hunters, as they

depend on the wild animals for meat. When they get their prey, the whole village has a feast. They use miniature bows and arrows. They told us they get fluid that looks like black tar from the root of a vine. Put on their arrows, it is a paralyzing poison that attacks the respiratory system of their prey. If struck by the arrow, the animal walks a short distance down the trail and falls over dead. When hunting an elephant, they shoot it between the front legs. Sometimes the elephant will walk a long distance before the poison takes effect. I asked them if sometime I could go hunting with them. They said, "No, the animals would smell you and they would run away."

We saw one Pygmy man with a long vine in his hand. When we looked at the other end, the vine was tied right behind a big snake's head. He was walking it along, like we do a dog. Naturally, we kept our distance from him. We understood at one time the Belgians sent the Pygmies notice that they would have to pay taxes. When they went to collect, they couldn't find them. They had hidden away back in the jungle. I don't think they were ever able to get them to pay taxes.

Exposure to missionary sacrifice

Our trip also exposed us to sacrifices made by missionaries who preceded us. Here is Mary's account. "Some of the dearest people we know are those we met at these faraway mission stations. While showing us the work and life around the station, many times they would lead us to a small clearing with a few white markers, representing the great price they paid. One mother led us to a clearing and related to us the reason for the little white cross.

"These missionaries were living in the forest among the Pygmies, when one evening their baby girl became ill with a fever. Immediately they realized it was serious. They knew it was a long trip to the nearest mission hospital, but they had to try to get there before it was too late. It was just getting dark when they started out over the long

dusty road. Far into the night a father and mother drove in desperation to save their most precious child. Sometime around midnight there was no cry, no warning, only the knowledge to that dear mother, that the baby she had carried next to her heart and now carried in her arms had gone home to be with Jesus. Here was the great burden and suffering of pioneering work. No written record can describe these sacrifices, but these missionaries can be assured that God will reward the price they paid.

Giving food away

"After seeing a people with so little and we with seemingly so much, Elmer and I agreed that we would never throw away any leftover food. I might add,

lakeshore and had one lone wiener left in the can. I carried it in hope of giving it to someone along the way. Just as we rounded a hill, a young man came walking down the road to meet us. Elmer stopped the car and handed him his gift with both hands, as is their custom. He received it in like manner, taking the can between his hands. He looked intently down at the wiener, stared for a moment, dropped the can in terror and ran away as if chased by some wild beast. We were dumbfounded. The only thing we could figure was that he had never seen a wiener in a can before. Evidently, when Elmer gave him the can, the wiener must have moved and he thought we had given him something that was alive."

The Pygmies are very good hunters...I asked them if sometime I could go hunting with them. They said, **"No, the animals would smell you and they would run away."**

while this has its wonderful compensations, it also has its problems. It doesn't take long to learn the impossibility of merely holding out a small amount of food to a group of hungry, eager children. One of the most disturbing sights I saw in the Congo was when well-meaning people would throw food to a group of children and were entertained by the scramble for their prize. Many of the customs and ways of the people were not taught in the culture course, or in the little phrase book obtained at the consulate or handed you at the port of entry. One custom we learned has to do with giving and receiving. If you are sincere about a gift, you give it with both hands. To show genuine appreciation, you also receive it with both hands. To use just one hand is to diminish the gift.

"One day we had finished our lunch on a lonely bush trail along the

Our survey trip helped us experience a primitive culture and people. It enabled us to see many of the challenges and make necessary adjustments to give this wonderful people the gospel.

This excerpt is from Out of the Mouth of the Lion, Volume one (1925-1964), by Elmer Deal with Mike Randall. Over 200 pages, it tells the history of the early years of Elmer and Mary Deal's ministry in the Congo. It contains the dramatic stories of their survival when weapons fire by opposing armies penetrated the home they occupied, several evacuations, including their escape from tribal warriors via the last flight out, Mary's recovery from a near fatal illness, and the martyrdom of Pastor Gregoire and Deacon Constantine, two key leaders in their ministry. Volume one will be available later this spring.

Baptist History

BY THOMAS RAY



Johann Gerhard Oncken

Every Baptist a missionary

Charles Spurgeon described Johann Oncken as “The Apostle Paul of Germany.” Baptist historian Irwin Barnes states, “Oncken was the father not only of the German Baptists, but of the entire modern Baptist movement on the Continent.” Johann Oncken was born January 26, 1800, at Varel, Germany. His father died when he was only two, and his grandmother attempted to provide not only for his physical but spiritual needs.

Johann was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran Church and was confirmed when he was 13 years of age. That same year, John Anderson, a Scottish merchant, arrived in Varel. While visiting with Johann’s grandmother, the Scotchman took an interest in the fatherless youth and invited him to return with him to Scotland. With his grandmother’s approv-

tures caused him to question the validity of infant baptism. After much study and consultation, Oncken embraced believer’s baptism by immersion. (This was in spite of his pastor’s objections. It is worth noting that his pastor, T. W. Matthews, would eventually also embrace Baptist principles.) There were no Baptists in Germany who could baptize Oncken, therefore he sought advice first from Scotland and then London, but the only advice he received was to baptize himself or make the journey to England and be baptized there. Neither of these alternatives seemed to Oncken a feasible course of action.

Eventually, news reached America of the young German evangelist who had embraced Baptist principles and who desired to be scripturally baptized. In 1834, Barnas Sears, an American Baptist visiting on the continent, contacted Oncken

There were no Baptists in Germany who could baptize Oncken...the only advice he received was to baptize himself or make the journey to England and be baptized there.

al, Oncken began a spiritual journey that would change the course of his life and turn him into one of the continent’s most effective evangelists and church builders.

While residing in Scotland, Oncken, for the first time in his life, was exposed to the gospel. Nine years after his arrival he left Scotland and moved to London. In London, Oncken began to seriously think about his eternal destiny. His conversion occurred one Sunday morning when he attended a Methodist chapel and heard a sermon on Romans 8:1. His surrender to Christ was complete and from that day he resolved to devote his life to propagating the gospel.

His first act of service was the distribution of gospel tracts, a ministry he would continue throughout his long and useful life. Although Oncken had no formal theological training, the Continental Society appointed him as a missionary to Germany. He arrived in Hamburg in December 1823.

A month later he preached his first sermon to a congregation of 18 people. In less than two months, the meeting place could not hold the crowds. His ministry, although plagued by civil and religious persecution, prospered beyond his wildest expectations.

Although Oncken was not a Baptist, his study of the scrip-

tures caused him to question the validity of infant baptism. and on April 22 at midnight he baptized Oncken and his wife, along with five other believers, in the Elbe River. The following day he organized them into a Baptist church with Oncken as their pastor.

When Oncken’s baptism became known, his former friends and associates treated him as a traitor. The opposition to his Baptist principles was great, but God’s blessings overcame and defeated his enemies. Using Hamburg as a center for his ministry, he took the gospel into Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, and Russia.

His personal ministry came to an end in 1879 when he suffered a stroke. He lingered an additional five years and entered into his well-earned rest January 2, 1884.

Oncken’s life was truly remarkable. During his ministry as a Baptist, he and his associates constituted over 280 churches, 1,222 preaching stations, and they formed 771 Sunday schools in Germany. They also founded over 170 churches in Scandinavia and the Slavic States. It is estimated that he was responsible for distributing over two million Bibles and untold millions of gospel tracts. His motto, “Every Baptist a missionary” should be indelibly written upon the heart of every Baptist.

2009 May Fellowship and Homecoming Baptist Bible College

Walk in the Light

May 11-14



Please make plans today to join us on the campus of Baptist Bible College as we are challenged to Walk in the Light during this year's May Fellowship Meeting. Our time together will culminate with the 59th Annual Commencement Exercises.

I'm praying as we spend time with one another that God will strengthen us spiritually, and through mutual fellowship we will be encouraged to keep on reaching our world with the light of the glorious Gospel!

Please visit our website at www.gobbcc.edu often in order to obtain the latest news including featured speakers, ministry break-out sessions, alumni reunions, special BBC hotel rates, the annual golf tournament, and much more concerning this year's events.

Again, I urge each reader to do your part individually by praying for and attending this year's Fellowship Meeting and then, by allowing our Great God to do His part by working in our hearts and lives collectively!

I look forward to seeing you with great anticipation!

Greg Corcoran
Lead Event Coordinator

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Monday – May 11

7:00 p.m. W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse Opening Service

Tuesday – May 12

9:00 a.m. W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse Morning Service
Missions Day – Jon Konnerup, BBFI Mission Director
12:00 p.m. R.O. Woodworth Dining Hall Alumni Luncheons
7:00 p.m. W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse Evening Service

Wednesday – May 13

9:00 a.m. Baptist Bible College Break-out Sessions
11:00 a.m. W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse BBFI Business Meeting
11:00 a.m. R.O. Woodworth Dining Hall Ladies Reception
7:00 p.m. Texas Auditorium Local Area Youth Rally
7:00 p.m. W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse Evening Service

Thursday – May 14

9:30 a.m. W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse Commencement
1:30 p.m. Branson Creek Golf Club Golf Tournament

WWW.GOBBC.COM



World Scope

Jon Konnerup | BBFI Mission Director



Missions is serious business

Missions, reaching around the corner and around the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the biggest and most important business we could ever be about. But why?

First, because of the size of the task. There are over 6.7 billion people on this planet. The population has increased faster in the last 60 years than during all the previous centuries put together. At present, it is increasing at the rate of one million people a week. From approximately 70 people groups at the tower of Babel we now have 24,000 people groups. During the last few minutes, 62 babies were born in the U.S., 274 in China, and 395 in India. The simple fact is there are more people to be reached than ever before in history. However, all of this is more than mere statistics to God. They are precious souls that Jesus died for.

Second, because it deals with the deepest need of the human race. When Jesus saw the multitudes He saw them wandering aimlessly as sheep having no shepherd. We all know what the basic needs are: food, shelter, medicine, and education. However, there is a need that is deeper still — the need for salvation. One can meet all the basic needs, yet still there is a profound emptiness within the heart. It is not enough for us to give bread to eat; we must also give the Bread of Life. It is not enough for us to teach others how to write their names; we must also teach them how to trust in the Savior's name. It is not enough for us to introduce them to a better way of life; we must introduce them to the One who gives everlasting life.

Third, because of the opposition

we face. Satan has blinded people into following false religions and gods of all kinds of imaginations. These religions use the same technology and methods we use to reach people. They have adopted some of our songs and have Sunday school for their children. For many of them America is the biggest mission field. False cults, too many varieties to count, work very hard to reach people. These religions and cults are sending out more missionaries than we are — including other independent Baptists and Southern Baptists combined.

In Matthew 9:37, Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." This is still true today. We have fewer going to tell the good news. Many sources are reporting the trend of declining interest in missions among North American Christians. Ironically, this trend appears at the same time that we have the greatest opportunity for missions. So, why don't we go?

- Raising support
- Economic situation and cost of living
- Parental opposition
- Decreased emphasis given to our youth
- Priority given to social needs
- Pluralism among the youth of America
- Safety issues due to the political climate in countries abroad
- Financial debt — school loans, etc.
- Smaller pool of students

I believe the biggest reason fewer are going is because fewer people are praying as Jesus told his disciples to: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the har-

vest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

The BBFI currently has 848 career missionaries, 35 TEAM missionaries, and 19 chaplains. We had 54 resign in 2008 and four passed away. However, we had 46 newly approved missionaries in 2008 and we processed over \$41 million. Even through the difficult economic situation in 2008, more was given to missions than in 2007.

It's true we are facing the largest task, the deepest need, and the strongest opposition. But, consider this...

1. We still have the greatest message the world has ever heard. It's the only message that turns people from darkness to light, from despair to hope, from bondage to freedom, from death to life, from sin to righteousness. Jesus is alive and Jesus saves! This is our message.

2. We now have the greatest evangelistic opportunity of this age. Unbelievable opportunities abound on so many fields. People are searching for the Truth.

3. We also have the greatest means to proclaim this message. There is satellite, TV, internet, high-speed presses, computers, rapid transportation, and so many other resources.

4. We have the greatest power to proclaim this glorious truth. This marks the difference between the missionary endeavor of false religions and that of the churches of the BBFI. Theirs is manmade; ours is Spirit-led. The Holy Spirit is the Originator, Director, and the One who empowers our endeavors.

Credit freeze?

Maybe in the secular economy, but not in God's economy. We've had a wonderful start to the new year here at the NCPO. We have closed on three new loans, one in Texas, one in Georgia, and one in Michigan. My agenda today is not only to write this report but to conduct a teleconference with our loan committee to appraise a loan for a church in Florida. We also will be considering three additional loans for approval at the national meeting in Houston. It's thrilling to see these church plants move from a rental facility to their own land and buildings. This is made possible by those of you who faithfully support the NCPO and by those church members who are involved with our church bank campaign.

SPRING NCPO CHURCH PLANTER'S CANDIDATE SCHOOL

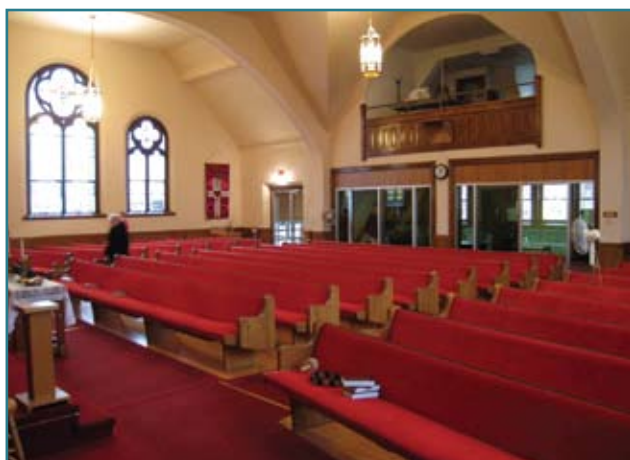
Our next major event will be our Spring Candidate School. The dates

are April 27-May 1, 2009. The school will be hosted by Winter Haven Baptist Temple in Winter Haven, Florida, and Pastor Mark Hodges. The event will begin Monday, April 27, at 1:00 pm and conclude Friday, May 1. The schedule will include sessions on assessments, pre-launch and launch strategies, outreach strategies, assimilation strategies, leadership development, team building, growth strategies, stewardship development, church financial management, raising personal support and pre-launch costs, work and philosophies of the BBFI, and many more. Our lecturers include John Arnold, Mark Milioni, Bruce Humbert, Wayne Guinn, Jason Todd, Keith Bassham, Monty Maple, Joe Murray, and Mark Hodges. Our Spring School will also include Elmer Towns, co-founder of Liberty University and dean of the university's School of Religion, and Allan Taylor, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia, where Johnny Hunt is pastor.

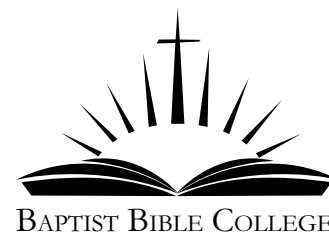
Allan is the founder of Ember to Blaze Ministries, an organization created to help churches revitalize and grow their congregations. For more information email bbfncpo@aol.com or call (417) 889-1017. Register now! The cost is \$395.

S3 CONFERENCE IN FLORIDA

The Spring Candidate School will also feature a second track called the S3 Conference. S3 is short for Stretch, Surge, and Serve. We will stretch our knowledge and skill, work toward a growth surge, and learn how to better serve our communities as we serve God. Keynote presenters for S3 are Allan Taylor and Elmer Towns. BBFI leaders will also address the conference and lead roundtable discussions. S3 is co-sponsored by NCPO and *Baptist Bible Tribune*. Space for the conference is limited. For more information email bbfncpo@aol.com or call (417) 889-1017.



The NCPO loan for the Guiding Light Bible Baptist Church in Saginaw, Michigan, closed in January to kick off 2009



Introduce students to the Fellowship

The opportunity to educate tomorrow's leaders involves classroom time and also events beyond the classroom. There are many aspects of the ministry that we try to share with our students. One of the important habits we are emphasizing is developing the habit of attending a local Fellowship meeting and sharing in church planting.

Just a week ago, about 15 young men, all students at BBC, joined some BBC faculty members and myself as we attended the Missouri BBF meeting hosted by Pastor Eddie Lyons and High Street Baptist Church. The exposure those young men gained is valuable in developing future participants in our Fellowship.

On the afternoon they attended, they heard Fred Young, pastor of East Side Baptist Church in Independence, Missouri, deliver a powerful message on the importance of prayer. Young is leading a growing, successful, and progressive church in the Kansas City area. It was a great lesson to our students that one of the greatest needs of today's minister is still one of the basic themes of Christian life.

I graduated from BBC in May of 1973. In October of the same year, my wife and I moved to the Boston area to start a church. At that time, there wasn't a Massachusetts Baptist Bible Fellowship. There was only a New England BBF which included preachers from six New England states. My first BBF meeting was in November of 1973 in Hudson, New Hampshire. At that meeting, a vote was taken to split the New England BBF into a Northern New England BBF (Maine,

New Hampshire, and Vermont) and a Southern New England BBF (Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts). In December, the first Southern New England BBF meeting was held at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Chicopee, Massachusetts. It was an exciting time. Then two years later, we felt the need to divide even further and we formed Massachusetts Baptist Bible Fellowship at Twin City Baptist Temple in Lunenburg where Erven Burke has pastored 35 years.

During the early days of my own ministry, I eagerly anticipated the second Tuesday of each month because of the desperate need in my life for fellowship. To share our trials and share our victories was an encouragement to me and the meetings became a needed experience helping to keep me going

reason given was, there were no "big boys" and "little boys" in the ministry. We were all the same. The size of a man's church was not an issue. It was a common ground we fellowshiped on. We needed to be together at the foot of the cross. We still need that common ground.

Sometimes it seemed like we were trading money just to help keep each other fed and warmed. We needed one another and depended upon one another. Today we still need one another. Today we need those we can depend upon too. BBC exists today and will flourish tomorrow as we grow the number of churches, pastors, missionaries, alumni, and friends we depend upon. Twenty years ago, the group we depended upon was larger than today's group. Many factors have contributed

I desperately want to show today's students the advantages of participating in our Fellowship.

in the work. I had never been exposed to the BBF in a meaningful way, and I didn't understand the need of fellowship and participation until those days. I learned the hard way. I was in desperate need of fellowship and didn't understand that need.

Several years ago when Bob Perryman was BBFI President, he attended a Massachusetts BBF meeting. He remarked about the vibrancy and positive nature of the meeting and asked if we knew the reason for the purported success of the Massachusetts BBF. The

to the smaller number. My thoughts are not to dwell upon those that are no longer supporting, I simply want to see today's number expanded.

I desperately want to show today's students the advantages of participating in our Fellowship. When it's time for them to leave these halls and begin their own ministries, they will come to realize that the Fellowship will provide lifelong friendships and mentors that they will rely upon to keep fighting the fight to win souls to Christ.



Investment and dividends

I don't know many happy investors right now. The stock market has basically been something of a sink-hole recently. Hard-earned investments have not panned out — at least for now. There are lots of sad and worried faces out there. Hard times. Not much good news.

But I've got some really good news.

The BBF has made some great investments that have proven to be blue chips! I look at one of those as I write this article — the campus of Boston Baptist College. More than 30 years ago, men like John Rawlings and A.V. Henderson made an initial deposit — a deposit on a noble dream. They and their colleagues dreamed to plant a ministry college in the Northeast that would channel leaders into Baptist churches and multiply those churches where the need is desperate. Men like Harry Boyle, Jack Henry, Jim Edge, Loren McAlister, and Paul Herson kept on building a product.

Churches all across the world — many of your churches — have sacrificed, month by month, continued to invest. I've seen the investment up close for 12 years now. I have great news. This is not another Madoff calamity. We are not victimized by sub-prime lending or wild speculation. God has kept track of the investments, and the news is good.

Consider my article this month as a statement of benefits!

I live here in the Boston area. I know the answer to the following question: What other movement in all of Christianity has dared to challenge the status quo in New England like we have? This is almost laughable — an

unashamedly Biblical college — accredited, innovative, challenging, credible, in Boston, of all places! Who has done that? God has used us to do that. Look, lots of Christian movements have compassion on the unreached Northeast. But God used our forebears to take action. You probably saw the recent Gallop poll that shows all six New England states in the top ten of least religious states in the whole country! Who would dare to try to stake out ground here, in academic-rich, darkest-blue Boston? Boston Baptist College's founders did. If you doubt me, do your own research. The BBF began investing in the Northeast three decades ago and the investment has been successful...amazing...vibrant...eternal!

And we are far from over! Now, because of their investments and yours, there are dividends. Dividends, I tell you — benefits, real value!

This fall, all statistical studies suggest that college will be a greater challenge than ever for American families. Many, many families are having a hard time. Our church families are not exempt. And neither are their college-aged children exempt. I just found out this morning that another friend in our church has lost his job — a top job, a white-collar job, a no-longer-existent job.

So here is the dividend. At Boston, we're ready to make it happen. Thanks to years of very careful stewardship and minimal debt — and thanks to the offerings of our churches — we have a tuition plan and scholarships to help our young people. Pastors, some of your best church families are probably struggling to send or to keep students

in college. Don't forget that Boston is an alternative they should consider! Many of you and many of your church families will be pleasantly shocked to see the quality education their students can get here — at an amazing value! At Boston, we even have a new Business Minor. Our students and alumni think and breathe ministry, but they work all kinds of professions. For your church families, Boston Baptist College is your investment. Now, it is also your dividend.

If you know young people with a heart for God, who could see themselves as either paid or lay church leaders, we can help them get a top-flight accredited degree here. Please help us spread the word in your churches. At Boston, tuition is frozen and scholarships are up! Many families cannot continue to fund expensive private college tuition. Students may even think they have to put college on hold. Others may feel like they may be relegated to cash-strapped, humanistic state college and community college programs. They don't have to go to a college that violates their values. It's time to get them acquainted with Boston. We have the room, the means, the will, and the heart to take care of the young people in our churches. If you move quickly, we even have scholarship money! We'll pay for the phone call, 1-888-235-2014. If you prefer, email me personally, dmelton@boston.edu, and I'll make sure you start talking to the right people.

Listen up — you won't hear this everywhere. Your investments have done very, very well. Smile. There are dividends waiting in Boston.

LIFT launches AirLIFT for overseas students

Somerset, KY

At the conclusion of this past summer, nine students, two LIFT Student Ministries (LSM) staff members, Dale Peterson, and Dan Brown, executive director of LSM, developed and directed the first LSM overseas youth camp in Great Britain. This new mission ministry is called: AirLIFT. The LSM camp in Great Britain resulted in 56 campers attending and 32 accepting Christ as Savior. Many of these students are now attending and growing in a church plant started out of Temple Baptist Church, Wolverhampton, England, where BBFI missionary Tom Gritts pastors. The vast majority of the campers who attended LIFT Great Britain had no church background of any kind. Much of the expense provided for these students to attend is the result of the generosity of the Rawlings Foundation and Dale Peterson's

fundraising efforts.

Brown has also announced AWANA International is LSM's newest partner in their efforts to fulfill the great commission by utilizing the energy, emotions, and efforts of students. At present, AirLIFT (LSM/AWANA) trips are scheduled for Jamaica, Brazil, Fiji, Great Britain, and Botswana. Anyone or group(s) interested in more information, questions, or suggestions may refer to www.liftstudentministries.com.

Brown says, "During this time of great transition in our nation's history, LIFT Student Ministries is encountering a time of unprecedented growth and transition in her ministry history also. Since its inception, LSM has ministered to over 40,000 students, resulting in 6,000 accepting Christ as Savior. This past summer, over 3,500 students attended one of

the eight weeks of youth camp, resulting in more than 400 accepting Christ as Savior and over 600 surrendering their lives to God for His direction with their futures."

Brown also recalled a tragedy from one of last season's camps. "One of our students, Curtis Geesaman, went home to be with the Lord," he said. "And the outcome of his premature death is still being felt throughout the nation. While many have come to know the Lord as Savior or have had their faith strengthened when the story is shared, Curtis's parents and two sisters still need our continued prayers."

Brown believes that the more American students experience missions before graduation, the greater the impact on the Kingdom, the more will surrender as future workforce, and the retention of their faith is more likely to last throughout their lives.

Boston Baptist saturates weekend with scripture

Boston, MA

Boston Baptist College students, faculty, and staff read the Bible through in one continuous reading starting Friday afternoon, February 6. The reading continued nonstop 24 hours a day, only taking a break during Sunday church services. The theme was "Saturate with Scripture." Almost 150 different timeslots were filled by those who participated and the reading took over 70 hours. Alyssa Bailey, student body president, said, "Our students have been in various types of activities like Trunk or Treat, adopting families for Christmas, and a Christmas banquet; but this is an activ-

ity that totally focuses on God's Word which is what our college is all about. To saturate our campus with scripture opens the door for our students to experience God's Word individually and as a whole to accomplish something many Christians aspire to do. Many think

that reading the Bible cover to cover is such a daunting task, and it is, but to actually do it means that it is important and it can be done." The Bible reading was held in the Orelia Rawling's hall, a building on the Boston campus with a fireplace, couches, chairs, and ottomans to make listening to the Bible an enjoyable experience.

This would be a powerful and worthwhile activity for a church or youth ministry. For details on how to organize the activity and the impact it could make on your church, call Boston Baptist College at 617-364-3510. Let's saturate our Fellowship with the scriptures!



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BOLIVIA

Dennis & Jan Horn



Divina came home one afternoon and found her 15-year-old daughter had hanged herself. It seems her daughter had seen her boyfriend with some other girl and the loss was more than she could handle. Divina began to seriously consider taking the same road her daughter had taken, and if it had not been for the three remaining children she probably would have passed into eternity by now without ever hear-

ing the blessed hope of faith in Jesus Christ. A short time after her daughter's suicide, Divina heard about our church and came to a meeting. That day she was given a hope that can never fail, trusting Christ for forgiveness of her sins and then making Him Lord of her life. She has since been baptized.



Phil & Melody Stephens

ZAMBIA

In December, at the Highway Baptist Church in Sinamanjolo, a young mother, Guinness, came to visit her sister-in-law because she heard our church could help her be delivered from the torment of evil spirits. She came forward in the invitation and asked for help. After a time of prayer and call-

ing on God to honor her plea for deliverance and salvation, the torment from the dark kingdom of Satan was broken as she received Christ. She is staying with her sister-in-law, Unity, who, with Agatha, the pastor's wife, will disciple her every day for two weeks to love Christ, study the Bible, and pray without ceasing.

Not just theory. At Boston Baptist College, what we learn in the classroom does not stay in the classroom. These students are a part of the team that is planting Discovery Baptist Church. In fact, the pastor is a 2008 alumnus! **Giving to the SURGE** will help our college make sure these students and others can keep on making an impact for Christ around the world.

ThinkDiscoverImpact
Boston Baptist College
www.bostonsurge.com

ECUADOR

Zonia Marriott accepted the Lord as a young girl when missionaries came to her small town. The Lord used her to bring her whole family to Him. Later, in her teen years, she rebelled against the Lord and married a man that wasn't a Christian. Almost immediately she realized her mistake and she has paid the consequences all these years. Zonia was told she would never have children, but she prayed and asked the Lord for daughters. The Lord granted her request and gave her two beautiful girls. Zonia remained faithful to the Lord and raised her daughters to be strong Christian women. She wept and prayed for them many times, and

Tony & Joy Anzalone



instilled in both of them the importance of marrying Christian young men. Both of her daughters followed her counsel. Luis and Melanea live here in Manta and are working with our teens. They are expecting their first baby. Zonia is dying of cancer. The doctors don't know why she is still living. I think I do. She has asked God to let her see this first grandchild, and I believe God is granting her request. Zonia has been an incredible blessing to our ministry.

Dan & Patty Peters



Antal, the husband of one of our faithful members, had always been willing to help with any projects around the church, but had only come to church a few times thinking he was "too bad"

to attend. However, when his mother passed away recently,

his heart was softened and Zoltan was able to lead Antal to the Lord. The first words out of his mouth were, "Why didn't I do this sooner?" Not only was Antal rejoicing, but Zoltan was as well since this was his first soul that he has personally led to the Lord.

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Mark & Michele Hale

group and occasionally preaching in services. In spite of our

Nadab, a young man in our church, is a promising future preacher who is being hunted by a devious and lost young woman. Just six months ago, he was effectively leading the youth

warnings, he now rarely attends services and is engaged to marry this immoral and evil woman. If this happens, Satan will have destroyed this young preacher's ministry before it really got started. He agrees that he has made a grave mistake, yet doesn't see any way out.

ROMANIA

Jeremy & Holly Gaudette



We met Maria about seven years ago. She always thought she was good enough to get to heaven because she was a very moral person. For seven years we kept witnessing to her, but she would not give up on her belief that she was good enough. When my grandmother passed away, Maria called us and gave her condolences. She listened to Holly and me speak of the uncanny (for the world) certainty that we would see my grandmother again one day in heaven. It was that hope that kept her thinking. She called back and Holly answered the phone. Maria could not get over our

100 percent certainty that we would see my grandmother again in heaven. Holly witnessed to her again and Maria said that she knew all of this. Holly responded, "Yes, but do you believe it with all of your heart? Do you know for certain you will go to heaven when you die?" "No," was her feeble reply. Holly led Maria to the Lord in a personal heart relationship over the phone. God is good.

Now is the time

in 2009

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II CORINTHIANS 6:2

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Grace Baptist Temple dedicates building

San Antonio, TX

Grace Baptist Temple, pastored by Dennis Isbell, dedicated their new building on January 4. The service consisted of special singing, recognition of guests, showing a DVD of the building process, and a message by Isbell out of 1 Kings 8 entitled "A Great Prayer to a Great God on a Great Day." Following the service, a brisket lunch was provided with all of the trimmings.

The new facilities has a sanctuary that can seat more than 600, classrooms, offices, a half gym, and warming kitchen. There is over 20,000 square feet of usable space, with property to expand as God allows. The driveway and entrance from Wurzbach Road, which will be the main entrance, is not yet completed. The church facilities and property are valued at almost two and a half million dollars, with the church owing less than half. Since the dedication, the church has had four people saved, three join the church, and visitors every week.

The building project started back in April of 2004, when Grace Baptist Temple purchased eight acres for eventual relocation. After they chose a contractor and agreed upon plans, the existing building at 1928 Basse was put on the market with a three-year selling estimate. However, God's plans were different, and in August of 2005, the church



held its last service at Basse and began a three-and-a-half-year interim ministry. City and construction delays, cost increases, several robberies, and a loss of a third of their congregation cost the church dearly. During those three and

a half years, the offices were operated from the construction trailer and the church met in four different locations until they moved to the new building. Yet, through everything, God met their needs and allowed them to stay faithful to their missionaries and home mission works (over 100) as well as have new people added to the church.

"Grace Baptist Temple looks forward to God's blessings with growth numerically, financially, and most of all spiritually. Our goal is to 'Declare His Glory', our theme for the year, in this newly-dedicated building," says Isbell.



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Iglesia Bautista PACER organized in Webster, TX

Webster, TX

The Iglesia Bautista PACER was organized with 28 charter members. The organization service took place in the main auditorium of the mother church, First Baptist Church of Webster, Texas, where Tommy Turnbow is the pastor. The church's first act was to call Elías Salazar as pastor.

Elías Salazar, his wife Amada, and their children, Josue and Keren, went to the Houston area from Mexico in January 2003 at the invitation of the East Texas Baptist Bible Fellowship. The Fellowship wished the Salazars to be their missionaries to the

Hispanic population of Southeast Texas. Under the leadership of then chairman, Kim Beckham, the pastors of East Texas had a vision of doing something substantial to reach the burgeoning Hispanic population. They determined the most effective way of seeing the vision realized would be to find a man with a call



The Salazar family

of God for that purpose. The Salazar family was the perfect fit, having a long history of participation with the Baptist Bible Fellowship of Mexico and a specific burden to reach their people in the

United States. Pastor Salazar's father had been a leader in the Mexican BBF while he was a pastor in Mante, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

The original plan, developed by Salazar and the pastors of East Texas, was to plant a strong local church that would serve as a hub from which other churches could be planted, leaders trained, and participation with the BBF on state and national levels could be promoted.

At the organization service, the church's charter members were joined by many Spanish-speaking friends from other Hispanic churches from the United States and Mexico present as witnesses. The church voted to be named PACER which is an acronym for the words "*perfeccionar, adorar, compañerismo, evangelizar, and repartir*," which in English means roughly, "perfecting, worshipping, fellowship, evangelism, and ministry."

Serving on the commissioning council were several Mexican pastors, including almost the entire executive committee of the Mexican Baptist Bible Fellowship. Some of those who sat on the council were Francisco Sanchez (president of the Mexican BBF), Moises Salazar (vice president), Manuel Vargas (treasurer), as well as preachers Abel Delgado, Mario Rodriguez, Juan Roque, Benito Perez, and Tommy Turnbow. Turnbow preached the charge as the pastor of the mother church.

Turnbow is optimistic about the work. He says, "The PACER church has already been instrumental in planting a mission work on the north side of Houston. They have also begun a building fund in order to move into their own facility in the not too distant future. Pastor Salazar is an active participant in the East Texas BBF and is the chairman of the Hispanic BBF in the U.S. The prayers and participation of God's people are making the reaching of this large segment of our population a reality."



Pastor Salazar leading music



Tommy Turnbow preaching the charge

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Men's retreat at Friendship Baptist a big win

Owasso, OK

Pastor Linzy Slayden reports that Friendship Baptist Church's 2009 edition of the Men's Wild Beast Feast and Life Skills Retreat was the best ever.

The church began hosting this men's activity nine years ago with 25 men. This year's report states nearly 300 men were in attendance from 25 different churches in four states enjoying 15 different kinds of meat at the Wild Beast Feast on Friday. The keynote speaker for the event was Archie Emerson from Ocean State Baptist Church in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

The theme for the Saturday Life Skills Retreat was "Get in the Game!" All the teaching sessions were geared

around the theme of football and the men were encouraged to wear their favorite college or pro-football team jerseys, shirts, or sweatshirts. The speakers were asked to speak on topics



Retreat speakers with Friendship Baptist Pastor Linzy Slayden (right, front)

relating football to the spiritual journey. The speakers and topics were Greg Baxter on "Training Camp — Spiritual Development," Bob Weger on "The Locker

Room — Keeping the Home Strong," Bill Boren on "Touchdown — The Joy and Challenge of Soul Winning," Marty Hughes on "Time Out — Personal Devotional Life Strategy," Jon Slayden, Tim

Lindsey and Paul Foster on "Great Players — Biographies on Faith," Steve Rains on "The What and How of Spiritual Gifts," Jim Goodman on "Fourth Down — Go for It or Punt? The Life and Building of Faith in Our Lives," and Loran McAlister on "The Fourth Quarter — Finishing Strong in Life." Youth Pastor Jeff Smith had breakout times and activities for the 40 junior and senior high guys attending.

CD sets of all sessions will be available soon.

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Cool Kids Kollege planned for March 13-14

Miamisburg, OH

This year's Cool Kids Kollege, hosted by Steve Harney and Cool Kids Ministries, will be March 13 and 14 at Camp Chautauqua. The Kids Kollege, focusing on children's ministry, will have 15 speakers from across the nation share their expertise on how to be better prepared, equipped, and excited to reach this generation for Christ. A special guest for the event will be Scott Phillips, head of the children's ministry department at Liberty University. The weekend's theme is "Out of the Box" — how to take children's ministry out of the box (the church) and into the community.

Class topics range from having a successful after-school program and getting into the public school to minister, to being an effective storyteller and using technology in the classroom. Other topics include creating videos and graphics, reaching parents, disciplining children effectively, organizing records, creating an E-Team (children evangelizing other children), and training children how to minister.

Last year, Cool Kids Ministries hosted its first Kollege. There were 118 attendees from 30 churches representing nine states and one foreign country. "This year we are expecting many more attendees," says Harney. "You will not want to miss any of the classes, so plan now to come and bring someone with you."

For more information, registration, schedule, speakers, and hotel information, go to www.coolkidskollege.com or contact Steve Harney at 606.305.4218 or steve@coolkidsministries.com.

Texas BBF winter meeting

San Antonio, TX



Texas pastors, their wives, and staff members gathered in one of the large banquet meeting rooms of the Hilton Palacio del Rio in San Antonio January 19 and 20 for the winter meeting of the Texas Baptist Bible Fellowship. Guest preachers for the meeting were Bill Monroe and BBF Mission Director Jon Konnerup. Baptist Bible College Student Chaplain Jon Slayden addressed the youth pastors, and Debbie Thompson spoke to the women attending. Texas BBF Chairman Rick Carter was pleased with the turnout and the encouraging response to the meeting.

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Midwest Regional BBFI meeting March 9, 10

Springfield, MO

The Fellowships of Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, and Nebraska will host the Midwest Regional Meeting of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International on March 9 and 10 on the campus of Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri. The theme is "Ministering in a Corinthian World" with emphasis on living and working for Christ in a post-modern culture through the local church in the 21st century. Ed Walls, newly-elected Missouri National Director, says "Our purpose is threefold: We want to promote fellowship among pastors and other ministry laborers, provide information and share ideas, and provide a vital meeting in a regional format for those who may not be able to travel to the national meetings of the BBFI." Organizers also intend to showcase the work of the Baptist Bible Fellowship and Baptist Bible College.

The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. with keynote speaker Randy Ables, senior pastor of Heartland Baptist Church in Ames, Iowa. A graduate of Baptist Bible College and the Graduate School, Ables has led his church to grow to an average of over 400 in Sunday school and is a leader in the Iowa BBF. Also speaking will be Phil Housley of Eastside Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, Bob Baker of Bible Baptist Church in Buffalo, Missouri, and Jim Edge,

president of Baptist Bible College.

On Monday evening, everyone is invited to a banquet in the newly-remodeled BBC cafeteria at 6:00 p.m. and a concert by the Ascension Quartet. Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, two sessions of workshops will be offered for pastors, associates, youth pastors, and ladies. Confirmed workshop speakers include Fred Young of Independence, Missouri, Daniel Garcia of Lebanon, Missouri, Joey Candillo of Kansas City,

Missouri, and Donna Baker of Buffalo, Missouri. Mike Bersuch will lead the music for the meeting.

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Ruth DeHaven

Clearwater, FL

Ruth DeHaven, 86, went home to be with her Savior on Friday, October 10, 2008. She was born June 18, 1922, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Ruth served alongside her husband as he pastored Fellowship Baptist Church in Columbus, Indiana, from 1958 to 1980.



She was preceded in death by her husband, Charles DeHaven. Survivors include sons C. Richard DeHaven of Anderson, Indiana, David DeHaven of Winter Springs, Florida, and Dan DeHaven of Midland, Michigan; daughters, Donna Jezowski of Midland, Michigan, Sharon Drury of Springfield, Missouri, and Debra Bentley of West Melbourne, Florida; 15 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and two sisters.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America are encouraged.

George L. Baker

New Port Richey, FL

George L. Baker, missionary to Haiti, passed from this life into eternity December 30, 2008. Born June 21, 1920, in Iola, Kansas, Mr. Baker was converted to Christ under the ministry of Art Wilson in Wichita, Kansas.



He graduated from Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, in the class of 1957. Relatively late in his ministry he surrendered to become a missionary while attending Custer Baptist Church in Custer, Michigan.

Mr. Baker served 33 years in Haiti, spending 20 years in the mountainous regions. He planted about 100 churches and mission stations, winning thousands of Haitians to Christ. He began a Bible school and trained pastors, some of whom traveled to Florida for his memorial service. One of the men, Orange Joseph (also known as TiLange) will succeed the missionary in his church-planting and preacher-training work.

Memorial services for George Baker were held January 5 at Bible Baptist Church in New Port Richey, Florida, with Mr. Baker's sending pastor, John Reinholt, officiating.

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Mailbox Blessing

By Marc Leverett

*pastor of Bethel Baptist Church
Fort Collins, CO*

This morning I received the following note in a card, *"Marc, I have been meaning to send you this card for so long, but wanted to write you a note to explain my sincere gratitude for your gentle and thoughtful way. I want to thank you for meeting with me and helping me to accept Christ as my personal Savior. Our meeting, combined with your sermons, have transformed my life and I thank you. P.S. I hope this lifts your spirits as you have lifted mine!"* She also included a longer letter detailing some of her favorite scriptures and examples of how Christ is working in her life.

Now, the longer story — This card came from a woman who started attending this church two years ago with her husband. Her husband's mother (a regular attendee at Bethel) had prayed for some time that her daughter-in-law, who was raised in a strong Irish Catholic family, would be saved. Well, the time came that she (the mom) became too frail to live on her own and was placed in assisted living. Her son has, since that time, lovingly and consistently accompanied his fragile mother to church

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each Sunday morning. His wife, the Irish Catholic, started attending with them. Apparently she also acquired some Sunday night tapes as I taught about the various denominations, including a message on the errors of Catholicism. God used this to bring her to re-examine her beliefs in light of scripture.

She made an appointment with me to discuss spiritual matters. She had a list of questions from listening to my sermons. With an open Bible, I showed her the difference between man-made religion and what Jesus came to provide for us. Two years of listening had created a hunger in her heart for the kind of genuine faith and joy-filled peace that she saw in others. I asked her if she would like to settle the matter once and for all by trusting in Christ

and Christ alone for her soul's salvation and, with tears, she said "yes." She prayed the most sincere and genuine prayer admitting she was a sinner and that she needed salvation through Christ. Afterwards, I encouraged her to tell someone about what Jesus had done for her. Within five minutes she told my wife that she had just accepted Christ. She is now growing and showing. Her relationships, her job, and her grasp of scriptural truth are all giving credit to the new life she has found by turning from dead religion to a personal faith in Christ.

Brethren, this is what it is all about. Now, this week I may get some bad news or have to face something discouraging. However, on my desk there is a card, and a letter, as well as a restaurant gift card from someone whose life has been eternally saved from hell, and who now has the deep sense of joy from a steadily growing assurance of salvation because God, in His miraculous way, used someone like me to bring another to salvation. This is why I am where I am, and why I do what I do. I am so very encouraged, not only that this woman came to Christ, but that the love of God compelled her to express thanks to the one who led her to Christ.

Lessons for me include:

1. *Praying for another's salvation may result in circumstances you didn't plan but God knows will be effective.*

2. *Some people may take years to come to Christ. Don't give up or run them off by being obnoxiously pushy.*

3. *Having a church atmosphere that reflects what we claim to believe really helps the Word take root.*

4. *God amazingly does His quiet, behind-the-scenes work to bring sinners to Himself.*

5. *I would rather have one sincere conversion like this one than any number of shallow, short-lived "professions" such as we often see.*

6. *The devil fights hardest where his kingdom is most threatened.*

7. *God amazingly uses undeserving, unworthy servants to do the most important work in the universe!*

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