

Baptist Progress

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The Church at Valley Ranch ministers to the community, welcomes 250 to outreach event

By **JERRY FULTON**
Baptist Progress Editor

Gary Southard, a BMA of Texas church planter, is fulfilling a vision to lead those who attend The Church at Valley Ranch in Porter to increase their faith through spiritual knowledge, build stronger families with a biblical foundation, develop deep friendships through serving others and train their partners to pass on a preferred future.

The new church plant hosted a three-day community outreach campaign Dec. 12-14. The group rented the Recreational Center of Valley Ranch and decorated it for a Santa photo booth. The Porter Fire Department brought their fire truck to deliver Santa. Later, they boarded a decorated trailer for a hayride throughout their subdivision, escorted by two police cars made available by the local constable. Approximately 250 people came to the event.

The church collected Christmas items for a single mother and her daughter and delivered it to the counselor at Valley Ranch Elementary. Sunday, Dec. 14, a Christmas lunch and time of worship took place at the Recreational Center. About 30 people attended.

For now, the group averages 15 to 20 people in attendance when it gathers on a rotating basis in two different homes on Sunday evenings. In the meantime, Kent Davis is developing a worship team.

A 27 week discipleship training will begin Jan. 4. An Enhancing Couples Workshop will be provided Jan. 10. Then, a DISC Kids parenting workshop will be presented Jan. 24. Southard noted, "These workshops are vital to connecting with young couples with little children."

The church planter and his wife, Rhonda, will also attend the local Annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet to expose people in the area to the new church plant Jan. 10.

A youth night is planned for Jan. 17, and a Ladies' Night Out will take place Jan. 23. The ladies are going to see Kay Robertson of Duck Dynasty in Houston.

On this page are a few photos of recent events.



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10 New Year's commitments for healthy church growth leaders

By **CHUCK LAWLESS**

I understand that “church growth” has been associated with pragmatism and a watered-down gospel, but properly understood historical church growth is rooted in Bible-based, strategic evangelism and discipleship. It is, in Thom Rainer’s definition, “effective evangelism that results in fruit-bearing disciples in the local church.”

As a new year approaches, I encourage church leaders desiring to see healthy church growth to make these commitments:

I will pray every day with my spouse and family. Growing churches are praying churches, and praying churches are led by praying pastors, staff and lay leaders. Church leaders who *really* pray begin by praying with those that matter most—their family. If even for only a few moments each day, make family prayer a priority.

I will read through the Bible this year. Church leaders who want to make a difference *long* to hear from God each day, and they hold themselves accountable to reading the Word. They thus lead churches with conviction and certitude—two traits that research indicates attract the unchurched. Start this next year by following a workable Bible reading plan, perhaps one found under “Bible Study Tools” at crosswalk.com.

I will memorize at least one scripture verse each week. Healthy church growth involves a spiritual battle, and we can rest assured the enemy will strike churches that want to reach people and make disciples. Only the best armed spiritual leaders are ready for that battle. Memorize the Word, and have the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) ready when the enemy seeks to discourage and defeat you.

I will walk in holiness. Let’s be honest: even leaders struggle

with sin. Many leaders, in fact, wrestle in secret areas of their lives. The strongest spiritual leaders, though, bring sin out of the darkness through confession, turn from it, and follow Christ. It’s a basic Christian commitment—but it’s a non-negotiable one for leaders who desire God’s blessing.

I will speak about God to someone each day. Most of us will be better witnesses for God if we simply speak about Him *more often to anyone*—including other believers. Rejoice with others when God answers prayer. Steer conversations to God’s goodness. Simply talk of his righteousness all day long (Psalm 71:24), and witnessing to non-believers will come much more naturally.

I will seek opportunities to share my faith weekly. One word—*intentionality*—characterizes evangelistically growing churches. If you want your church to grow in the new year, lead intentionally by sharing the gospel at least once a week. Pray and watch for God-given opportunities, and don’t miss open doors (Colossians 4:2-4).

I will personally disciple at least four believers this year. God often blesses churches with new growth when they are most prepared to disciple new believers. Effective discipling begins with leaders who intentionally mentor other believers. Commit next year to mentor at least four believers, perhaps working with two for six months at a time.

I will increase my commitment to global missions this year. With two billion people having little or no access to the gospel, Christian leaders cannot ignore this global need. You may give more, pray more, send more, or go more—but plan to do *something* more next year than you have this year.

I will honestly evaluate the church’s growth throughout the year. Too often, growing churches become comfortable with only “swapping sheep” with other congregations. This next year, lead your church to ask recurrently, “Is God using our church to reach non-believers and make disciples?” If not, pray the Word of the Lord would spread rapidly through the ministry of your church (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

I will hold myself accountable to someone for these commitments. Healthy church growth does ask questions about techniques and strategies, but it does not start there. It begins with God and His called leaders who walk with Him, love His Word, share the gospel, and invest themselves in new believers. In many ways, healthy church growth in this next year will be about doing old things well – and so deeply committing to them that you hold yourself accountable.

What other commitments do you intend to make in the new year? Let us know, and take time to pray for each person who responds.

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Chuck Lawless currently serves as Professor of Evangelism and Missions and Dean of Graduate Studies at Southeastern Seminary. You can connect with Dr. Lawless on both Twitter and Facebook.



Spreading the story of life change online

By **BRANDON COX**

Spiritual growth campaigns have always been a powerful way to move a church forward, and with the rapid adoption of social media by the people in the pews, there has never been a greater opportunity to create, stimulate, and propagate a conversation among your people about what God is doing in their midst. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and a myriad of other online social networks are merely examples of how technology is helping our culture catch back up with God's original plan for his Good News to be carried via interpersonal communication.

God's Good News spreads furthest and fastest through personal connections and conversations.

Growth happens with intentional focus, so whether you are simply beginning a new message series or launching a full-blown campaign on the scale of "What on Earth Am I Here For?" You will need a strategy for empowering people to further the conversation with their friends.

Here are some things to consider:

Evaluate and expand your library of content. Content is currency. The people writing the books, blogs and tweets that offer the most valuable information are ultimately purchasing trust and influence, and no one has better content on hand than the church. Your church has volumes of potentially powerful content in the forms of sermons, devotionals and lessons. Size up what you have on hand, and expand it, then make it public on the Web.

Empower creative people to frame your story beautifully. There are more graphic and web designers producing content now than ever, and even in the smallest of churches, you probably have someone just waiting for a new Kingdom assignment in the area of designing beautiful messaging. From nicely edited video promos to posts on YouTube to pretty pictures of puppies and cookies to post on Pinterest, almost a third of your people will have a penchant for the creative process. Within parameters that make sense, set them free!

Initiate conversations that connect people to each other. As you move from broadcasting the message to distributing the message via social media, you need to be thinking about how to build a community by connecting participants to one another. Realize that listening and asking the right questions is often far more valuable than doing all the talking.

Make your message easy to "like". I've told hundreds of church leaders that Facebook's "like" button is the simplest and most powerful innovation that has happened online since Google got started. With a single click, one person has instantly recommended something to all of their overlapping circles of friends. So take your challenge, your sermons, and the stories of life change happening around you and break them up into bite-size, tweetable pieces. Then spread those pieces all over your website, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. The goal is to offer something truly valuable and make it shareable in as few clicks as possible.

Remind everyone how easy it is to spread the conversation. Tell your Sunday crowd to turn their cell phones ON and "check in." Give them a tweetable quote to send halfway through the message. Put sharing buttons on all of your Web content. And respond to what is being said about you online in a way that demonstrates that you genuinely care.

Be intentionally unintentional. As church leaders, our instinct is to start a new program or ministry for every good idea. Stop! The more structure and rules you create, the more you will slow your message down. This is an age in which everyone is a publisher. Your task isn't to control how people spread the story of life change. Your role is to cast the vision and empower people with the message — then set them free.

Gutenberg helped you print Sunday's bulletin. Alexander Graham Bell made it possible for your phone tree and prayer chain to be in business. Now you can thank Mark Zuckerberg, the inventors of Twitter, and the brains behind Instagram for the tools with which you can now empower your church to tell the old, old story to more people in less time than ever before.



Brandon Cox has been a pastor for 15 years and is currently planting a church in northwest Arkansas. He also serves as editor of Pastors.com and Rick Warren's Pastors' Toolbox, and authors a top 100 blog for church leaders. He's also the author of Rewired: Using Technology to Share God's Love.



An expression of everlasting love

Many of our friends choose to honor or remember a family member, a friend or an associate with a gift for the children of the Baptist Home. Texas Baptist Home, in turn, notifies the appropriate person. Listed in capital letters are those honored or remembered from November 1, 2014 – November 30, 2014.

ENDOWMENTS

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THE CHILDREN: Peggy Lewis

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MICHAEL & ROXANNE O'CONNOR: Leora C Johnson; L & P Kearby

MAWMAW & PAWPAW: Holly Lagrone

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JAMES "BUDDY" MABLE BRAGG: Jerry West

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FLO LANGFORD: Fifth Street Baptist WMA; 5th St Baptist Church Willing Worker's Sunday School Class; Janice R Jackson

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DORIS WALKER: Raymond & Opal Anders

PATSY WINSTON: Travis & Audrey Shipp

BRYAN SCOTT WOLFF: Charles & Charlotte Johnson; Rosewood Baptist Church

KENNETH YORK: Big C Builders, INC.



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From the Editor

Focused living in 2015

A new year has arrived. It is at the beginning of new calendar year that people resolve to do things they have never done before, or at the very least do better the things they have done. God wants His people live abundant lives, but an abundant life can only be realized when one is focused on what really matters. Remembering that life is to be lived for the glory of God, may the acrostic of the word focus below, help you to live abundantly in 2015.

F-aithfulness. When a man and woman unite in marriage, they pledge their faithfulness to one another come what may in life. When a person enters a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus, it is now different. He or she repents of his or her sin and asks to be led by the Holy Spirit in order to live faithfully before God. The Christian should seek to wisely use every moment that God gives to help accomplish His redemptive purposes in some way. Whether it be worship, evangelism, ministry to others, or fellowship with fellow saints, faithfulness is key. Whatever is done by the child of God should be done with excellence. A “good enough is good enough” mentality is not of God. The Christian should make it his or her goal to be able to truthfully say with the apostle Paul at the end of his or her life, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7).

O-rganization. There is an order to God’s creation. Nothing came about haphazardly. The heavens and the earth are not the result of cosmic chaos. In the same way, with guidance from the Holy Spirit, the Christian should organize his or her life. A cluttered life is not a God-honoring life. Hoarding items in one’s home, over scheduling one’s life with work and recreation and leaving things in one’s workspace out of place only complicates one’s life. When an item is used, it should be immediately returned to its place. Check lists are helpful to accomplishing tasks. And, taking inventory of each day to determine one’s productivity is a good practice. When writing to the church at Corinth concerning their times of worship, the apostle Paul made this appeal: “*Let all things be done decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14:40). If the Lord would have times of corporate worship to be orderly, why would He not have everything one does in life to be done in an orderly fashion? Being organized helps one to be more productive, less forgetful and manage his or her time wisely.

C-are. Too often, the child of God is weighted down with the cares of this life, when the thing he or she should be considering most is his or her relationship with the Lord. Oswald Chambers said, “The great word of Jesus to His disciples is *abandon*. Immediately we look at these words of Jesus, we find them the most revolutionary statement human ears ever listened to. ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God.’ We argue in exactly the opposite way, even the most spiritually-minded of

us—‘But I must live; I must make so much money; I must be clothed; I must be fed.’ The great concern of our lives is not the kingdom of God, but how we are to fit ourselves to live. Jesus reverses the order: Get rightly related to God first, maintain that as the great care of your life, and never put the concern of your care on the other things.” Jesus said, according to Matthew 6:31-33, “*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

U-nity. God’s children are individually unique. Christians are not clones of one another or clones of Christ. True, every man is made in the image of God, but each person is one of a kind. There are special gifts the Holy Spirit imparts to believers when they are saved. The spiritual gifts one receives are to be used to further the Lord’s Kingdom work. Nowhere in Scripture is instruction given that God’s people must be uniform. Instead, God’s Word instructs His children to be unified. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “*Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*” (Philippians 2:2). The Christian should always seek unity, especially in the church, but at the same time, remain faithful to the cause of Christ.

S-ervice. Jesus said, “*And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:27-28). The Lord also said, “*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*” (John 9:4). Compared to eternity, each person is given only a few years to live on the earth. It is then imperative to serve the Lord by serving others. The Master set the example by which we are to live. There are souls to rescue and souls to save in this world, so may every child of God heed the words of the apostle Paul, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*”

May you stay focused and live abundantly in 2015 is my prayer.



▲ Jerry Fulton

EVENTS

JANUARY 15, 2015

Liberty Association
State Missions Rally
@ Cherokee, Gilmer

JANUARY 17-22, 2015

The Great Escape
Youth & Children's Leaders
Conference Cruise
Go to discipleguide.org/thegreatescape

MARCH 12, 2015

Liberty Association
Texas Baptist Home Rally
@ Coffeerville, Ore City

MARCH 20-21, 2015

Texas GMA Houseparty
@ Daniel Springs Camp, Gary

APRIL 20-22, 2015

BMA of America Annual Session
@ University Plaza Hotel
and Convention Center
Springfield, Missouri
Headquarters Hotel: University Plaza Hotel

MAY 14, 2015

Liberty Association BMMI Rally
@ Concord, Gilmer

AUGUST 13, 2015

Liberty Association Lifeword Rally
@ Cross Roads, Pittsburg

OCTOBER 11, 2015

Liberty Association Annual Meeting
@ First, Judson
Begin at 3 p.m.
First Session Speaker—Charles Johnson
Dismiss for Supper at 5 p.m.
Begin second session at 6 p.m.
Second Session Speaker—Randy Stracener

APRIL 25-27, 2016

BMA of America Annual Session
@ Gatlinburg Convention Center
Gatlinburg, Tennessee
Headquarters Hotel: Glenstone Hotel

PERSONNEL & POSITIONS

AVAILABLE POSITIONS

PASTOR—Grace Missionary, Tacoma, Washington, about 35 miles south of Seattle, seeks a bi-vocational pastor. The church pays a housing allowance that covers housing and utilities. Attendance on Sunday mornings is about 60 and there are excellent volunteer staff who lead a youth group of about 20. The music program consists of hymns and praise music lead by a band with guitars, keyboard, piano, bass violin and drums. Tacoma is a large city with opportunities to expand. Please contact Terry Holcombe at atjacquelyn13@comcast.net.

YOUTH—Sardis, Henderson is seeking a bivocational youth pastor. Send resume to jaccalmom@yahoo.com or to the church at 13174 CR 4187 South, Henderson, Texas 75654, or call 903-854-4521. 1/21/15

PASTOR—First Missionary, Morton is seeking a pastor. Send resume to the church at P.O. Box 981, Morton, Texas 79346 or to jimmysealy@aol.com. TFN

YOUTH—South Park, Fort Worth is seeking a director of youth ministry. For information about the position and to submit a resume visit fortworthbaptistchurch.org/YouthDirectorSearch/. TFN

YOUTH—Farley Street, Waxahachie is receiving resumes for the position of student ministry pastor. Send resume to resume@farleystreet.com.

OBITUARY

KENNETH RAY MONTGOMERY

A memorial service for Bro. Kenneth Ray Montgomery, of Gilmer was at 2 p.m., Dec. 31, 2014, at First, Gilmer, with Bro. Randy Stracener officiating. Bro. Montgomery passed away Dec. 28, 2014, in Gilmer.



He was born on July 5, 1950, in Gilmer to Milton and Mary Marie Monroe Montgomery. Bro. Kenneth was a self-employed electrician and the pastor of Pine Acres Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife, Virginia Montgomery of Gilmer; sons and daughters-in-law, Doug and Cody Montgomery of Gilmer, T.A. Montgomery of Mineola, Ryan and Parvati Montgomery of Gilmer; daughter and son-in-law, Angelia and Tracy Briggs of Longview; brothers, Neal, Buddy and Ronnie Montgomery of Gilmer; sisters, Helen DeCuir of Louisville, Kentucky, Shirley Hunt, Becky Mayfield and Peggy Arnold all of Gilmer; five grandchildren, Garrett Briggs, Cutter Montgomery, Ashley Beckham, Alex Montgomery, Taylor Montgomery; three great grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews.

Bro. Kenneth Montgomery was preceded in death by his brothers, Howard and Troy Montgomery; sister, Carolyn Chandler and one granddaughter, Eva Montgomery.

The family requests donations to the Pine Acres Baptist Church Building Fund, 189 FM 555, Gilmer, Texas 75645.

CHURCHES IN REVIEW

DECEMBER 21, 2014

Church	SS	Worship	Additions
Anthony Drive, Ennis	63	121	
Cedar Creek, Teague	18	21	
Farley Street, Waxahachie	481	587	2 By Letter
First, Omen	46	75	2 By Baptism
First, Palmer	41	61	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	18	37	
Harvest, Lufkin	20	25	
Jackson, Joaquin	80	146	
Little Flock, Lufkin		19	
New Harmony, Tyler	275	329	
New Hope, Mineola	47	123	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	53	81	1 By Profession
Rosewood, Gilmer		285	
Security Calvary, Cleveland	18	57	
Temple, Mexia	42	62	
Woodland, Splendora	36	48	
Yellowpine Macedonia, Hemphill	16	17	

DECEMBER 28, 2014

Church	SS	Worship	Additions
Anthony Drive, Ennis	54	87	
Cedar Creek, Teague	10	13	
First, Palmer	39	50	
First, Omen	49	60	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	16	32	
Harvest, Lufkin	20	30	
Jackson, Joaquin	45	89	
Little Flock, Lufkin	7	7	
Long Creek, Sunnyvale	89	99	
New Harmony, Tyler	250	327	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	33	42	
Pine Acres, Gilmer	32	36	
Pine Brook, Tyler	28	59	
Rosewood, Gilmer	90	185	
Security Calvary, Cleveland	18	42	
Temple, Mexia	45	53	

For publication, statistics for Churches in Review must be received by Monday at 5 p.m. on Monday.

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Eye on Culture

At the movies: A schizophrenic Moses?

By PHIL BOATWRIGHT

KANSAS CITY, Kansas (Baptist Press)—According to the Hollywood Reporter, actor Christian Bale has said of Moses, “I think the man was likely schizophrenic and was one of the most barbaric individuals that I ever read about in my life.” This on the completion of his new film, “Exodus: Gods and Kings,” wherein Oscar winner Bale played the man who led the Jews out of bondage and into the Promised Land.

Having seen the epic and special effects-laden story of Moses, I can assure you that what you see in the theatrical trailer is what you get in the film—one enormous computer-generated imagery (CGI) spectacle after another.

Defiance, battles, and slow-motion splattering of blood are also plenteous in the film opening Friday (Dec. 12). What there is little of is the true nature of the biblical story and the man Bale calls schizophrenic.

In the 20th Century Fox production, Moses is equal parts Streetcar Named Desire’s Stanley Kowalski and General Patton. Bale portrays Moses more as a military figure than humble messenger of God. And God is played by a little boy in a silly artistic choice done possibly to take from the Almighty His majesty.

This rather jaundiced view of Bible heroes may be a trend in upcoming screen versions of biblical stories. There just doesn’t seem to be a shortage of men in Hollywood who like to borrow from the Bible, yet don’t believe a word of it.

In “The Red Tent,” a contemporary made-for-Lifetime-TV miniseries that examined the story of Jacob and Joseph from the perspectives of the men’s wives and their maidservants, Hollywood finally discovered how to produce a biblical story that has nothing to do with God. God isn’t a supporting character in The Red Tent, or even an extra. He’s only mentioned in passing, and mostly with a negative connotation.

Top heavy with scream-fueled childbirths and more family turmoil than a TV soap opera, the production gives writers plenty of latitude concerning the biblical accounts of Jacob and Joseph. Indeed, one senses that the filmmakers had no conception of the relationship between God and the characters portrayed.

Much the same can be said of Exodus: Gods and Kings. Rather than the reverential appeal that has caused biblical epics such as “The Ten Commandments”

and “Ben Hur” to remain popular on DVD, Exodus: Gods and Kings seems more in the mold of trendy comic book superheroes. The filmmaker chooses not to have a meek Moses approach Pharaoh with God’s warnings, but just lumps all the plagues together. This is a shortcoming, because without the warnings, you belittle the fact that the leader of Egypt kept hardening his heart (a symbolic characteristic that indicates man’s nature).

Several religious organizations have become concerned with the secularization of Old Testament accounts after the 2013 “Noah.” Director Darren Aronofsky, a professing atheist, incorporated CGI tools to create giant rock people designed much like Transformers to represent fallen angels who help Noah build the ark. But Aronofsky failed to connect the intimacy between God and those He used to build the nation of Israel.

This same comic-book mentality has also been rendered by action director Ridley Scott (“Alien,” “Blade Runner,” “Robin Hood,” “Gladiator”) in his reinterpretation of Scripture. And from viewing any commercial for Exodus: Gods and Kings, one gets the distinct and sadly correct impression that this screen version is mainly about battle and spectacle. It’s not about the power of God, nor one man’s faith in his Creator. It’s about power-mad men and CGI.

Justin Chang of Variety Magazine said, “What’s remarkable about Scott’s genuinely imposing Old Testament psychodrama is the degree to which he succeeds in conjuring a mighty and momentous spectacle.”

To be sure, audiences looking mainly for spectacle will get their money’s worth in the \$140 million production. Unfortunately, when the film gives pause for narrative, those in charge seem bent more on questioning faith in God than reaffirming it.

This is a film determined not to emphasize the majesty and authority of God, but merely to paint Him as a petulant schoolyard bully.

Scott has previously declared his disdain for organized religion, and while he has used biblical themes in several movies, often he seems to be preaching from a myopic mindset bent on discrediting biblical teachings. Now Bale has in one sentence belittled God, Moses and the faithful. For what purpose?



Too often there comes a point in an artist’s career when he feels invincible and unthreatened by the Creator. He shows not even the slightest politically correct sensitivities for those who embrace religious convictions. And certainly, there is no reverence shown with his rather draconian statement in his assessment of the Creator.

It’s difficult enough to bring spiritual matters to the motion picture screen, but much more difficult when the filmmakers lack a spiritual connection.

When a filmmaker takes on a biblical story allowing such skepticism to become the thrust of his movie, he does so with an agenda. What audiences are left with is a vibrant but shallow screen adaptation that’s more Marvel magazine than Old Testament Scripture.

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BMA of America News

Seminary offers free online course

JACKSONVILLE—BMA Seminary will offer a free online course in Baptist Doctrine during the spring 2015 semester. The eight week study will conduct a theological-historical survey of Baptist teachings as found in historical Baptist confessions of faith and doctrinal statements. In addition to the Bible, the course will use a textbook entitled *Baptist Confessions of Faith* by William L. Lumpkin. The course also serves as a good introduction to the online education process. Interested individuals should contact the dean's office on the seminary's main campus to register or go to <http://bmat.edu/other-educational-opportunities/free-courses/>. The course begins Jan. 26, 2015.

New standard mileage rates now available; business rate to rise in 2015

WASHINGTON—The Internal Revenue Service today issued the 2015 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2015, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car, van, pickup or panel truck will be:

- 57.5 cents per mile for business miles driven, up from 56 cents in 2014
- 23 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes, down half a cent from 2014
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

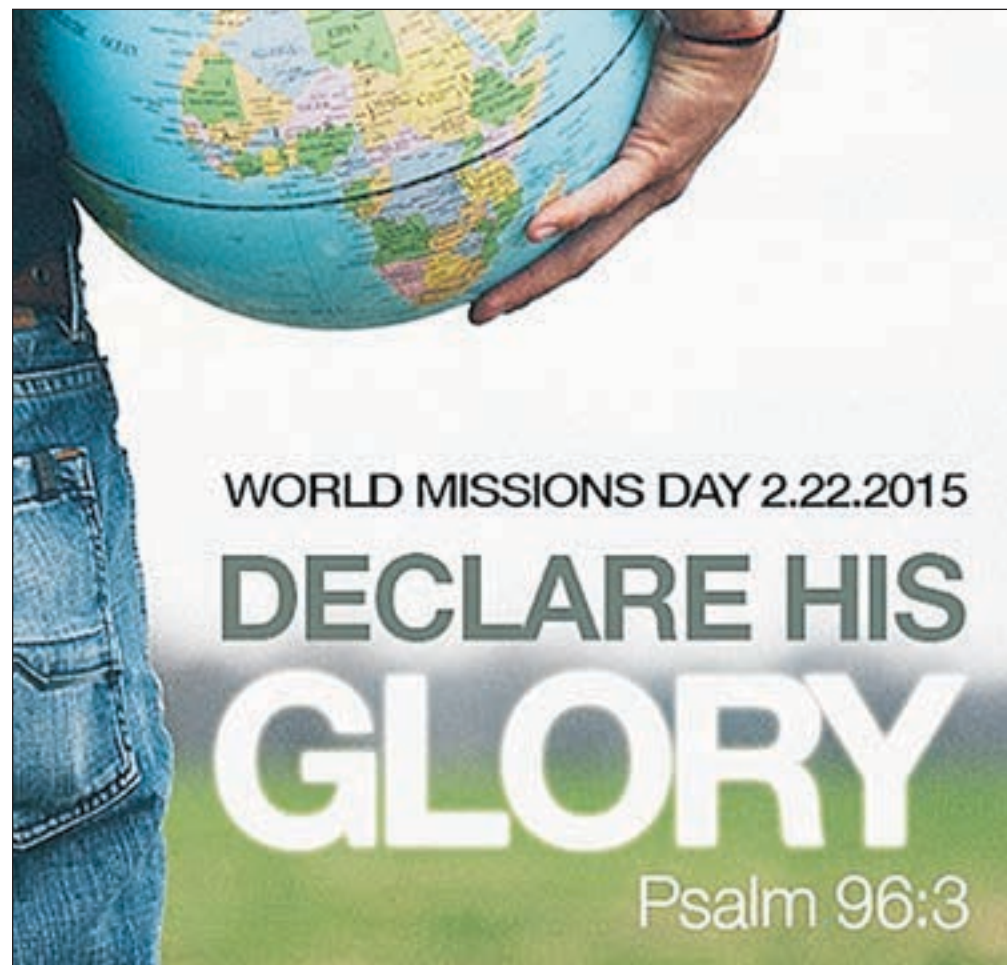
The standard mileage rate for business is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile, including depreciation, insurance, repairs, tires, maintenance, gas and oil. The rate for medical and moving purposes is based on the variable costs, such as gas and oil. The charitable rate is set by law.

Taxpayers always have the option of claiming deductions based on the actual costs of using a vehicle rather than the standard mileage rates.

A taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle after claiming accelerated depreciation, including the Section 179 expense deduction, on that vehicle. Likewise, the standard rate is not available to fleet owners (more than four vehicles used simultaneously).

World Missions Day, February 22, 2015

CONWAY, Arkansas—Sunday, Feb. 22 should be a special day of prayer for BMA World Missions in your church. Plan to receive a special World Missions Offering that day. You can also make a special individual offering for BMA World Missions by visiting www.bmamissions.org/worldmissions.



National meeting, time for change

BMALife.com—Dr. Jason Aultman, president of the BMA of America, is working with national department directors to change the format of the Annual BMA of America Meeting. This year's BMA of America Meeting will be at the University Plaza and Convention Center in Springfield, Missouri April 20-22.

In addressing the changes, Aultman said, "We are seeking for ways to make our meeting more inviting, appealing and beneficial to our attendees." He continued, "Attendance to meetings such as our BMA National Meeting are on the decline across all denominations and the BMA is no exception. I, along with our department leaders, have been listening to suggestions from our pastors on how to make our meeting more meaningful to

our people. We're hoping to hear from even more of them in next few weeks."

The president spoke to the pastors of the BMA on Tuesday Talks to discuss various ideas Dec. 16, 2014. Workshops and focused training opportunities are among the proposals made. He stressed that all of these ideas have come at the urging of the national directors and pastors across the BMA.

"It has become apparent to many that the time to look at some new options for our meeting has come. I'm hoping to get as much input from our pastors as possible."

To view *Tuesday Talks*, visit www.bmalife/tv. *Tuesday Talks* broadcast is produced monthly by DiscipleGuide Church Resources.



▲ Dr. Jason Aultman

Church Health

Strong pastoral leadership

By LARRY BARKER

The title of this article scares many! Some will say, yeah, but what about holding them accountable? Let me go on record to say that I am 100 percent for biblical accountability. The problem is, what does that accountability look like in the local church? Does that mean it has to be a monthly business meeting to primarily discuss the details of policies, the budget and the facilities? In *The Autopsy of a Deceased Church* Thom Rainer says, “Becoming obsessed with any one item to the neglect of His mission is idolatry.” A healthy church would rather meet to discuss how they are personally fulfilling the Great Commission!

My friend and church planter, Brandon Cox, and I were talking about the dynamics of church leadership. What structures and systems of leadership facilitate healthy churches? Have many churches organized themselves in ways that stifle growth and creativity? Why do we hear so many sad stories of pastorates ending abruptly and on such bad terms? Brandon remembered an article he had read about a study done several years ago and forwarded this to me:

“In the late 1970’s, Adrian Rogers and Ed Young, Sr., unbeknownst to each other, surveyed America’s fastest growing churches to locate the common denominators. They each arrived at five basic commonalities that all of the churches had in common. They are well-worth noting as part of this sermon series on “essentials for a growing church”...

- The growing churches had strong pastoral leadership.

- The growing churches had a very high view of the Bible.
- The growing churches were “good-time” churches that were emotionally excited.
- The growing churches were churches in unity.
- The growing churches had an indomitable spirit of conquest.

Two of the characteristics noted pertain to the attitude of a growing church—it was a holy optimism!”

These two men discovered that one of the essentials of growing churches is strong pastoral leadership. Today much is said about leadership and there seems to be a lot of debate and difference of opinion about what that looks like. There are horror stories on both sides of church leadership and many of the policies churches and pastors have implemented are based more on fear and control than the word of God. Some suggest the church cannot be run like an organization because it is an organism while others scream for more organization. Actually, every church is a living organism that needs some organization that is based on love and trust!

There is a definite balance given in the scriptures on strong pastoral leadership. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” 1 Peter 5:2-3 says, “Shepherd God’s

flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God’s will; not for the money but eagerly; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” Paul said it this way, “Follow me as I follow Christ!”

The reality of the study mentioned is that the churches surveyed had many different types of church government but the one common factor of growing healthy churches was a strong leader! Once again from *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* Thom Rainer says, “The problem is that many good leaders are leaving churches before they reach their prime leadership years at a church.” He goes on to explain that year one is the honeymoon, years two and three are where they experience conflicts and challenges, and years four and five provide a critical time where the pastor decides to leave or not and unfortunately, most leave!

Years six through ten are the years of fruit and harvest for the church when the pastor stays. Here is what Rainer says, “My research is not complete, but it’s more than anecdotal. A church is likely to experience some of its best years by almost any metrics, during this period of a pastor’s tenure.” The reality is that they now trust and love one another very deeply and unity abounds. A healthy church trusts its pastor and that is something a healthy pastor would never abuse! The pastor and the church must foster a spirit of confidence and cooperation that is biblically based and personally reinforced!

Here are some questions that should be asked in this area:

- Is the heart of the church more about biblical accountability or control?
- Is the present structure focusing first on the fulfillment of the Great Commission?
- Does there need to be a healthy discussion about leadership fears and past hurts?
- Are there people who need to practice biblical forgiveness and reconciliation?
- Is the pastor and church experiencing freedom and liberty or is the present structure stifling it?

A healthy church desires to have and follow strong biblical leadership!

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Larry Barker is the operations director for North American Missions. For more information or to contact him, visit www.bmalife.com.



Mission Life

No turning back

By **JERRY BURNAMAN**

Many of us grew up singing a little chorus of commitment that said, "I have decided to follow Jesus." The hymn reportedly came from the nation of India and has its roots in an incident that occurred in the mid-1800s. A Welsh missionary had witnessed to a man in the state of Assam. This man was saved along with his family. Persecution quickly ensued, and the village chief demanded the convert renounce his faith. But the man replied, "I have decided to follow Jesus." Amid continuing threats, he said, "Though no one joins me, still I will follow."

The man and his wife were executed, but their witness later led to the conversion of many in their town. Some years later, the Indian evangelist Sadhu Sundar Singh put the words to music.

As pressure mounts on Christians in the West and around the world, we need to remind ourselves of the simple song. For believers, it's essential that we continue living in righteousness for God even if we're the only ones we know doing so. As we follow Christ, we say: "The cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back, no turning back."

Jesus said to His disciples: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).

Look at the calendar of the New Year, 2015, and basically the pages are empty. How will you fill them? Will it be mostly job related schedules, kid's school activities and a few personal outings? Think about the New Year very carefully

and consider how God may be working in your life. When we consider God first, all the other responsibilities seem to fall in place and we can deal with them wisely.

For my part, I have the responsibility to care for part of the BMA of Texas churches' ministry: helping you start new churches. In our last State Missions Trustee meeting, we elected Dewey Davidson to start a new work in Tyler. He already has commitments for six leaders to be on his team. Later I will write a letter to our churches introducing him and his work to you. Right now, I ask you and your church to pray for the new work.

It is also my prayer and vision to start at least two more new projects during 2015. If it's in God's plan to start more than two, then we praise God for allowing us to be part of His great work. There are several questions that come to mind when we think about starting a new work:

- Who will be the leader?
- Where will we start a new mission project?
- Is there enough funding, or where will the funding come from?
- Will the pastors in the area be on board?

These are just some necessary questions that have to be addressed. Pastor, this is where you and your church can be a great help. With the New Year approaching, have prayer for these needs. Ask the WMA to have special prayer for missions. Establish prayer groups to seek God for revival that will infuse a great mission work. Have corporate prayer

on Wednesday evenings and during the Sunday worship services. I ask you to pray with me and let's listen to God; He has a great work for us to part of.

It would be a joy for me, or for a church planter, to share missions with your church or auxiliary groups. Remember, this is part of your mission as we work together to bring reality to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, give us a call and we will set an agreeable date to share with your congregation what God is doing through BMA of Texas State Missions. There is no turning back. We must be faithful to God's call and work.

OUR VISION

To have an aggressive Missions Movement among the BMA churches of Texas by:
Healthy pastors
Leading healthy churches
To plant new healthy churches

Jerry Burnaman is the executive director of State Missions and the Baptist Missionary Loan Association. Contact him at jerryburnaman@yahoo.com or 972-923-0757.



Central Baptist College invites applications for Vice President for Finance

Central Baptist College in Conway seeks an innovative and experienced financial administrator and leader with a proven track record in the management of financial systems to serve as vice president for finance.

Reporting directly to the president, the vice president for finance serves as chief financial officer of the college. The vice president for finance will provide strategic leadership and oversight of the college's finance and accounting functions, business services and auxiliary enterprises,

human resources and facilities and physical plant operations. As a member of the president's executive management team, the vice president will support the president and will contribute to the strategic objectives and direction of the college by providing sound and ethical fiscal planning and financial management to ensure the long-term financial stability and growth of the college.

The successful candidate will have an MBA or Master's degree in business management, accounting or related

field and a minimum of five years accounting/finance related experience in a supervisory or managerial role.

The vice president for finance is a 12-month full-time position with remuneration and benefits commensurate with experience. The Search Committee will begin reviewing applications immediately. The search will continue until the position is filled.

Send letter of application, resume, and the names, addresses and phone numbers of three references to:

Vice President for Finance Search Committee, c/o Terry Kimbrow, President, Central Baptist College, 1501 College Avenue, Conway, Arkansas 72034 or email tkimbrow@cbc.edu. Electronic submissions are encouraged.

Candidates must support the Christian identity of the college and demonstrate mature faith, Christian lifestyle, and a strong belief in Baptist doctrine. CBC will conduct a criminal background investigation as part of the hiring process.



Auxiliaries

Happy New Year from your State WMA Officers

By SHARON COLE

Can you believe another year has come and gone? It has been 15 years since the turn of the century. Many of us probably thought we would never live to see that. It was strange in the beginning to write 2000, when all our life we had written the year beginning with 19. Life goes on and things change right before our eyes. What has happened in your life this year that has been a drastic change--A new job, a new house, the loss of a spouse or other loved one, or maybe a new spouse that you once declared that would never be? We must remember that whatever the situation, our lives are in the hands of God. He is in control whether or not we recognize it and give Him credit. He should be at the top of our priority list. We are so busy doing things for our families and others that we sometimes forget that God wants and deserves first place. It's that time of year when we want to do better at keeping our bodies healthy, repairing broken relationships, stopping an unhealthy habit, and being nicer to our neighbors; but what about our spiritual life? We all make excuses why we don't study our Bible, attend church faithfully, accept positions of responsibility, or witness for Christ. They are all excuses hatched in our minds by Satan to keep us from being all we can be for God. All the things listed are biblical principles that you can find in God's Word. The words of our WMA song, "Reaching Out In Service," gives us several ways we can resolve, if you will, to make some changes in our life. From this song you can ask yourself these questions:

How can I reach out in service to another WMA?

How can I help someone along life's way?

How can I reach out in benevolence to those who are in need?

How can I reach out to witness and sow precious seed?

How can I reach out in service to someone in Sunbeams and GMA?

How can I point them in the straight and narrow way?

How can I teach them to read and pray and witness in His power?

How can I teach them to depend on His precious love to keep them every hour?

How can I reach out to a world that's lost in sin?

How can I reach out to bring the wanderers in?

How can I reach out to those at home and then across the sea?

How can I tell them that the Savior came to save and set them free?

There are twelve questions here, one for each month of the year. Concentrate on one each month and put it into action. Keep a journal of how you have prayed and let the Lord lead you to accomplish each one. By the end of the year, you will be amazed how your attitude and activities have changed. Remember, Christ has no hands but our hands to do his work today. He has no feet but our feet to lead others in His way. He has no tongue but our tongue to tell them how He died and arose again to be their Savior. If you are in the habit of making resolutions, let it be more than losing weight or getting a grip on your anger management. Resolve to wake up each morning to feast upon the Word of God. Resolve to share that Word with someone who is sick or shut-in or the elderly whose eyes have dimmed too much to read. Resolve to help someone who has their "plate" filled and needs a break to reflect on their priorities. Resolve to turn your worries over to God. Resolve to keep a New Testament in your pocket or bag to read while standing in line in a store or bank. As we move forward into a new year in WMA, GMA and Sunbeams, we must resolve to be interested in every person in our churches and communities from babies to the oldest. There is a place in God's service for everyone who is willing to be used. As we reflect over the past year, some days were filled with mistakes and failures. We must put the past behind us and go forward. Look at each new day with anticipation remembering that God is faithful. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22,23. We all have 365 days a year, or so we think and hope for. For some, it will not be that

long. What will we fill our time with? Only God knows the number of our days on earth. We need to make the coming year count in the development of our spiritual lives.

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

It is the desire of the new Reporter of Houston-Anderson District WMA that the reports for 2014 be announced that were inadvertently not reported.

Jan. 11, 2014 their meeting was hosted by Sheridan Terrace, Palestine. Guest speaker was Bro. John Curry, youth leader at O'Quinn, Pollok. His sister, Angie Clarke, presented a mini concert of vocal music.

The April 12, 2014 meeting was hosted by Antioch, Palestine. Siripong and Jessie Yaebeang, missionaries from Thailand were guest speakers.

The July 12, 2014 meeting was hosted by Ephesus, Latexo. Bro. Mike Cross, missionary to France was speaker.

The Sept. 13, 2014 meeting was hosted by Piney Creek, Kennard. Mrs. Jackie Ricks, a pastor's wife and author, brought a lesson from one of her books. Mrs. Ricks has been a Texas WMA officer and now is the National WMA Editor. She also installed our officers for 2015-2016.

Jan. 10, 2015 will be hosted by Ephesus, Latexo. A representative from the BMAA Theological Seminary will be our special guest.

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



Less than two months left

By PAT SPRIGGS

National Brotherhood Project Promoter

We have less than two months left to raise funds for the 2014-15 National Brotherhood Project—65 percent, Bolivian Riverboat; 25 percent National Galileans; and 10 percent General Fund. Treasurer Robert Bynum reports

that \$1,495 has been collected for Bolivia's "River of Blessings;" and another on-going project, the Arthur Smith Scholarship Fund, has received \$1,636.88.

The books will close the end of February, so we don't

have any time to lose! Offerings may be sent to Robert Bynum, 43 Bear Pen Creek Road, Laurel, Mississippi 39440.

Let's get behind our project, men!

Sunday School Lessons

The omniscience of God

By GARY HOUSE

DATE: January 11, 2015

TEXT: James 3:1-12; others as noted

LESSON IN BRIEF: God has perfect knowledge. Every word, every thought and every deed is known to God. He knows all things—past, present and future. He knows all about us, but He loves us anyway.

Omniscience is a word that is made up of two Latin words: “*omni*,” which means “all” and “*science*,” which means “knowledge”. To put it plainly, the omniscience of God is God’s all-knowledge, the attribute whereby He knows all things. He knows all actualities and all possibilities—not only things that are, but things past, present and future.

God knows everything. He is remarkable, and what a wonderful thing to know that there is nothing that is going on in this universe, that our God does not know about. It means there has never been a time when anything was unknown to God. It means there will never ever be a time when He will not possess full, perfect and absolute knowledge. It means that God cannot learn. Isn’t that an amazing thought? God knows all things and He cannot learn anything about anyone or anything.

Just imagine the opposite. Imagine if God could receive some information into His mind, a knowledge that He hadn’t possessed from all eternity, that He could learn something. Imagine God sitting at the feet of another, a teacher, learning something that the Most High mind never ever knew. It’s impossible, isn’t it?

Tony Evans writes, “All the information in all the libraries of the world; all the data on all the computer chips in the world, including all the chips that have not yet been made; all of this data, God knows completely right now.

Paul said: “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out,*” he goes on, “*Who hath known the mind of the Lord?*” Romans 11:33. See also Isaiah 40:28.

Four things about God’s omniscience. If we understand these four things, we will have a greater sense of confidence as we live.

God’s omniscience is unlearned. It’s intuitive. Isaiah 40:13-14 says, “*Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?*” Where did God go to school? Nowhere! God never had to read, study and analyze. God never had to learn what He knows. God’s omniscience is unlearned.

God’s omniscience is comprehensive. Hebrews 4:13 says, “*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*”

Paul writes to the Corinthians, “*But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

God knows every detail. One man put it well when he said: “Anyone can count the seeds in one apple, but only God can count the apples in one seed.” Matthew 10:30 says, “*And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*” For some people, that’s an easy count but think about it—

Gary House is the writer of the Sunday school lessons for Baptist Progress. Most recently, Bro. House served as pastor of Tundra Baptist Church in Canton for 13 years. Contact him at Tundraparson@aol.com.



God knows something as trivial as your hair count, he also knows your feelings, desires and personality. He knows everything about you comprehensively. Proverbs 15:3 says, “*The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.*” God knows everything. Psalm 90:8 reminds us that our secret sins—those sins we try to keep hidden from others—are known to God. Nothing is hidden from his presence or knowledge. Psalms 139:2 says, “*You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*”

God examines our hearts. He knows everything about us: our true personalities, our secret fantasies and our hidden motives. Here’s something that really amazes me. God knows what could have been!

For example, Jesus said in Matthew 11:21 that Tyre and Sidon would have repented if Jesus’ own miracles had been done there. God knows what could have been. That God is all knowing is a great comfort since we know that what did happen, out of all that could have happened, took place according to His will.

God’s omniscience is instantaneous. God is always fully aware of everything. God’s infinite knowledge is never taxed by all that’s going on. His knowledge is not like ours. He is forever aware of all things. He doesn’t have to access information, like a computer retrieves a file. All knowledge is directly before God.

God’s omniscience is personal. He knows your personality, and everything there is to know about you. “*You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely*” (Psalms 139:3-4).

God knows your motives; he knows your heart.

For the unbeliever, what a terror! People can’t hide from God because their sins are exposed. There’s no act that we can commit, no thought we can think, in any corner of the universe that God won’t know about. God is the perfect judge, because he knows all the facts. God knows all the evidence. You think God can’t see what you’re dabbling in but God sees your heart, your sin, and looks where man looks least.

For the believer, what a joy to know that God knows all your sin, yet has chosen to forgive you. There’s nothing that will surprise God in the future. He knows everything.

You can have that forgiveness.

God’s knowledge is personal in another way. You were created by a God whose knowledge is infinite, and who had an infinite number of options to choose from. He knew exactly what He was doing when He created you. You’re no accident! Nothing about you is an afterthought as David says, “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain*” (Psalms 139:6).

God knows everything about you—mind, body, soul and spirit—yet He loves you.

God knows you He knows everything about you. Does that give you confidence? “*Great is our Lord, and of great power. His understanding is infinite*” (Psalms 147:5).

The omnipresence of God

By GARY HOUSE

DATE: January 18, 2015

TEXT: Deuteronomy 4:32-40

LESSON IN BRIEF: God is everywhere, and God is always here. We can never avoid God.

The doctrine of God’s omnipresence is one of the more difficult doctrines of the Bible. “Where is God?” This is a very important question. The seeker, skeptic and guilty sinner want to know. So does every hurting person who feels abandoned by the Almighty. “Where is God when I need Him?”

Definition of omnipresence. To be omnipresent means, the Lord our God is everywhere at once. He is everywhere present all the time. Proverbs 15:3 says, “*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*” Many other Scriptures support the truth of the ever-present God. Please refer to Jeremiah 23:23-24; 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7-12; Isaiah 41:10, 43:12; Matthew 28:18-20.

There are three attributes of God that should always be kept together in our minds. They naturally go together since each begins with the four-letter prefix, “omni”—omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresent. The first means that God is all-knowing, the second that He is all-powerful, the third that He is present everywhere.

- He knows what needs to be done—that’s omniscience.
- He has the power to do it—that’s omnipotence.
- He’s always where He needs to be to do whatever needs to be done—that’s omnipresence.

God is present universally and personally all the time. All of God is with us, all of the time, in every single place. He is close to everything, next to everyone and always at hand. God is never at a distance watching us. God is here!

The omnipresence of God is a lot more real than most people think. How many times do we hear people talk about the fact that God is present with us, and we go right on about our business as if God were nowhere around?

The Reality of God’s Omnipresence. God transcends time, space and has no bounds or limits.

Only God is omnipresent. Satan is not omnipresent. Satan is limited. That thought is apparently new to many people. Some have thought of Satan as being like a “junior God” who can do anything God can do, only at a lower level. Because Satan is a created being, he is limited and localized in the spirit realm, as are all the angels and demons. This should give comfort to those who feel overwhelmed by attacks they believe to be satanic in nature. While we would surely agree that Satan works today through a vast array of spirit beings who work his infernal will, he himself is no more omnipresent than you or I.

God is always present whether we believe it or realize it. God sees and knows and keeps account of all we say, do, and think. God promises to walk with us when we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He will not leave us at the end of our journey. He’ll go with us all the way. David said in Psalm 139:7-12 that we cannot escape the presence of God. If we ascend to heaven, He is there. If we make our bed in hell, He is there. What does that mean? In Heaven, God is there in blessing. In Hell, God is there in wrath.

Acts 17:27-28 says, “*He is not far from each of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.*”

Someone has well said, “God is too big to be avoided, too close to be ignored and too caring to ignore us.” Wherever God is calling, and whatever He is asking you to do, remember this: He is already there before you get there. And, He’ll be with you even before you arrive.

We can only be one place at a time, though we often wish we could be two places at the same time. However, God is everywhere at the same time.

You and I cannot run from God. Ask Jonah! He tried to run from God, but he couldn’t. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and to preach to them. Instead Jonah finds a ship going the opposite way to Tarshish. Note that Jonah “paid the fare” himself because he was trying to run from God. When we run with God, He pays the fare. But when we try to run from God, we always pay.

Our Great God is near to us. “*He is not far from each of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17:27-28). God promises to draw near to anyone who will draw near to him (James 4:8). All of God is with us, all of the time, in every single place. He is close to everything, next to everyone and always at hand. God is never at a distance watching us. God is here! There is no place beyond God for Him to be, because there is nothing that exists beyond God.

The effects of God’s omnipresence. Omnipresence brings conviction. The truth of God’s omnipresence can be soothing or unsettling. To some, it brings comfort. Others find it very convicting. The reason He convicts is so that He can get our attention. He loves us too much to let us keep hiding or running from Him.

Are you trying to run from God? Like Jonah, is God calling you to do something right now that you want nothing to do with? Don’t wait until God sends a storm into your life, or you end up with a whole of a problem. Stop running right now. Wave the white flag. Do what He’s calling you to do. Hebrews 4:13 puts it all in perspective: “*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*”

Are you doing something right now in secret? Maybe you think that no one else will find out. Perhaps you’ve arranged everything so that you can get away with things. There is no way you can avoid the presence of God. He sees what you’re doing because He’s with you, no matter what you think you’re getting away with. Jeremiah 23:24 says, “*Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?*” declares the Lord.” It’s foolish to try to hide from God, isn’t it?

God’s presence also brings comfort (Isaiah 41:10). God promises to walk with us when we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of death. He will not leave us at the end of our journey. He’ll go with us all the way God is always near to His people. Hebrews 13:5, says, “*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*”

God is especially close when we go through tough times. Some of you have experienced this recently from Psalm 34:18, “*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*”

God comes even closer when we get close to Him. James 4:8 gives us a challenge, “*Come near to God and He will come near to you.*” Allow His presence to motivate you to be sold-out in your service and worship of Him.

J Homecoming 2015



JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE HOMECOMING 2015 FEBRUARY 6-7 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FAMILY LIFE CENTER 210 PHILIP ST., JACKSONVILLE, TX FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6 5:00 P.M.

Reuniting and reminiscing with former classmates and friends. Refreshments provided.

7:00 P.M.

Program with special recognitions for the 1954-55, 1964-65, 1974-75, 1984-85, 1994-95, and 2004-05 alumni. Singers, Quartets, and Trios of these years, please contact one another and have the time of your lives singing one of your favorites. We are counting on you to be "The Program." Athletes and cheerleaders, contact your team and squad members, and if the majority of you will be present, we will recognize you at the Homecoming game. Email ncagle@jacksonville-college.edu when you know that your group, team, or squad will be present.

9:00 P.M. Dismissal

9:30 P.M.

Joe Wright campus Bonfire and pep rally
For safety reasons the bonfire won't be as large as it was in the "good ole days," but our presence will show current students that we still have the Fighting, Mighty Jaguar Spirit!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

8:30 A.M.

Little Cafeteria
Purple and Gold Club Breakfast
Anyone may attend for a donation.

9:00 A.M.

The Jag Bookstore opens. This is a great opportunity to buy gifts and JC items.
Checks, credit cards, and cash are accepted.

9:45 A.M.

Buckner Chapel
Band and ensembles

10:00 A.M.

Welcome by Jacksonville College President, Dr. Mike Smith
JC Choir
Alumni
Coming Home Royalty
Business meeting
Former and current choir members singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" under the direction of Gerald Orr

12:00 P.M.

Chapter Lunches (See details below)

2:00 P.M.

Curtis Carroll Field House
Lady Jags vs. Blinn College Lady Buccaneers

4:00 P.M.

Jaguars vs. Blinn College Buccaneers

CHAPTER LUNCHES

KELLAR-LAIRD-CARROLL CHAPTER
Family Life Center of First Baptist Church
210 Philip Street in Jacksonville

BONNER-GAYLOR CHAPTER
Family Life Center of Craft Baptist Church
County Road 1616 in Jacksonville

ANDERSON-ORR-SMALL CHAPTER
Beverly's Café
1712-D South Jackson in Jacksonville

CRANK-ROSS CHAPTER
Family Life Center
Afton Grove Baptist Church
360 County Road 4208 in Jacksonville

Visit the college website for Homecoming schedule updates at <http://www.jacksonville-college.edu/homecoming-schedule.htm>. For more information, please contact Alumni Liaison Neatha Cagle by email at ncagle@jacksonville-college.edu or by phone at 903-589-7143.

Dr. Mike Smith is the president of Jacksonville College. Contact him at msmith@jacksonville-college.edu or 903-589-7106. You may also visit the Jacksonville College website, www.jacksonville-college.edu

