

What's on my heart for SBC

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) – For 11 months, I have had one of the greatest privileges ever given to me by the Lord. Serving as president of the Southern Baptist Convention is one of the most humbling and overwhelming experiences in life and leadership.

With each day, while my burden deepens, my hope exceedingly rises. What an incredible moment God has given to each of us to live at this time in human history. In light of that, I want to share a few things on my heart about our upcoming SBC annual meeting.

COMING TOGETHER

Yes, coming together is on my heart. I pray we will come together in Columbus, Ohio, on June 16-17.



RONNIE FLOYD
President
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I pray we will come together in unity. While our uniqueness and various perspectives express themselves at times, we do need to resolve: We will come together, stay together, and leave together as followers of our Lord in our Southern Baptist family.

I pray we will come together in Columbus with great expectation. This expectation does not need to be in men or programs, but in the Lord Himself. He is doing some mighty things among us and I pray when we are together, He will do some mighty things in us. Come expecting God to meet with us powerfully and send us out extraordinarily.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

Loving one another is on my heart. As a people who love the Bible so much, we also need to love one another. I have attended at least 31 of our last 35 national Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings. At times, loving one another did not always seem to exist.

Now in the day of endless blogs, articles, emails and interviews, the tendency is to criticize more than love and to create suspicion more than trust.

We need to fall in love with Jesus again. When we do, we will love one another.

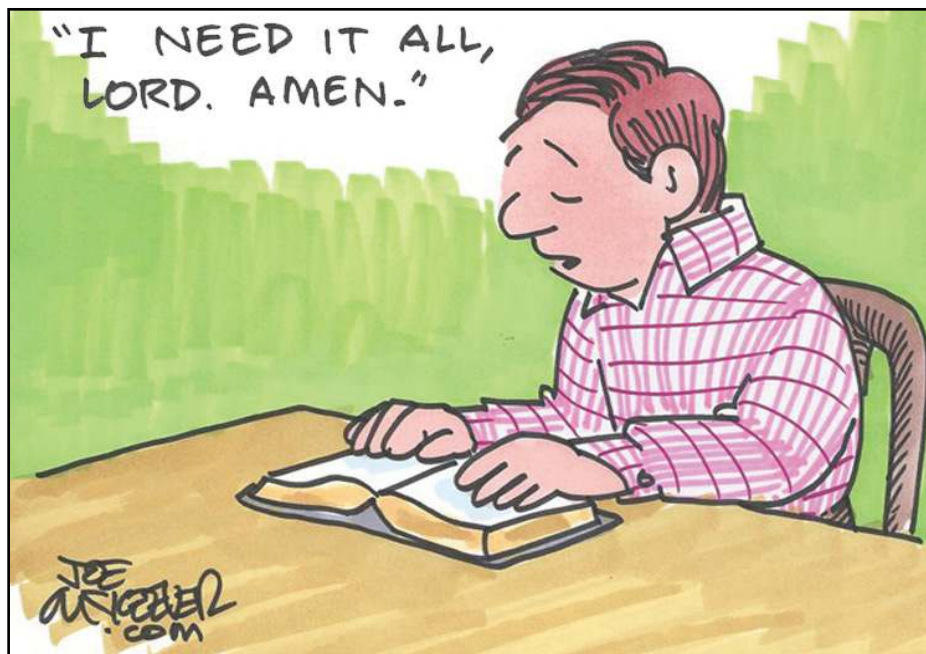
Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35) Jesus said it is love that sets us apart from others. May this be said about us.

CELEBRATING TOGETHER

God is doing some wonderful things through our churches in the work we do together as Southern Baptists. We need to celebrate together what the Lord is doing.

Even in this critical time in our nation, more than ever, we need the joy of the Lord to be our strength. While sin is abounding in our nation, grace abounds even more. Yes, we need to celebrate together the great grace of our Lord.

Our sessions will be filled with some defining moments. Yet, God alone will create these moments we will never forget. These are moments that deserve our highest celebration together, offered to our Lord Jesus Christ.



Is any problem too big for God?

EL CAJON, Calif. (BP) – "Houston, we have a problem."

When NASA flight directors heard those words from Apollo 13, it was like an invitation: "You are hereby invited to solve a life-or-death problem" – and they did. Flight director Gene Kranz sprang into action: "Okay ... stay cool. Work the problem, people.... Failure is not an option!" (Excerpt from the movie, "Apollo 13.")

Work the problem! With no heat, no light and little communication with the ground, the astronauts drifted back toward earth in darkness – helpless.

Work the problem! Ground engineers had to conserve enough power to fire the engines and direct them safely into the earth's atmosphere. And they did!

LOST IN SPACE

Ever felt lost in space, drifting along, helpless, wondering if even God is stumped by your situation? We know God can solve problems, but in your darkest moments you wonder if He is even working on it.

Friend, He is!

Look at the Apollo 13 situation in a split-screen format: three astronauts on the left screen huddled in their freezing spacecraft, speaking little to conserve energy, fighting to stay awake, with only a flashlight – dark, cold, silent. On the right side of the screen, just the opposite, a beehive of brightly-lit problem-solving is taking place.

Given instructions that a plan was in the works, the astronauts had to be patient. They couldn't work the problem, so they had to believe someone else could.

That's exactly what we as Christians have to do when we have a problem with no solution in sight.

We can't work it but we have to believe that God can – and He is working on our behalf.

PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Sometimes, using the gifts and abilities God gives us, we can solve serious problems, as in the Apollo 13 mission.

But other times, we have to call upon

God. When we are stretched beyond our human limits, we find ourselves in His limitless domain. He welcomes our cries and loves to provide solutions.

When asking God to help us solve problems, we have to remember that His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). God provided "surprise solutions" to people facing problems in the Bible:



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■ Big problem, small solution. The Israelite army had a giant problem named Goliath. God's solution was a teenager about 3 feet shorter. No armor or sword, but David had giant faith: "The Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:47). Sometimes God's solutions are smaller than our problems in order to create faith in us.

■ Physical problem, spiritual solution. Hindered in ministry by a physical problem, the apostle Paul called out to God three times for healing. Instead of bringing a physical one, God brought a spiritual one: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). God may allow a problem to be its own solution when it forces us to rely more on God for grace to endure.

■ Personal problem, corporate solution. When Paul was journeying toward Jerusalem to deliver relief monies to the church, he was well aware of the danger from opponents of the Gospel. He shared his personal problem with the church at Rome, asking them to pray for his safety: "I beg you, brethren ... that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe" (Romans 15:30-31). God may want to use others to be a partial or total solution to your problem – but you have to ask.

The Bible, church history and hopefully your life are filled with examples of how God has solved problems His way, in His time, according to His purposes.

There is no problem too big for God. Be encouraged as you trust Him to get involved in whatever problem you are facing today.

Moral conviction and not popular opinion essential in democracy

A very successful political consultant in the Bay Area, who has helped elect a number of local officials, was recently arrested and charged with multiple counts of child pornography. At his arraignment, the evidence presented reportedly included some particularly heinous depictions of sexual acts involving children.

The political fallout has been dramatic and immediate. Former clients, particularly those now in office, have rushed to outdo themselves with denials of any and all relationship with their confidant. He is radioactive – political death to anyone associated with him.

While his purported actions are deplorable, watching politicians scramble to find the moral high ground on this issue has been frustrating at best, comical at worst. They are applying a double standard to his behavior which reveals the convoluted reasoning prevalent in making and enforcing laws these days.

In light of current reasoning, what legal defense should this alleged pedophile mount? How about these familiar arguments: "My sexual orientation makes me a protected class citizen; therefore, expressing it is my civil right. My sexual orientation is an inborn trait; therefore expressing it is my natural right. My sexual orientation cannot be regulated by the state. What happens in private is my business, not anyone else's."

Most people would scoff at these facetious arguments. They would cite children's lack of maturity enabling them to consent to sexual activity, their need to be protected from exploitive adults, the physical harm of sexual activity to children, and the illegality of such behavior in our culture. They would be right on all counts. These cultural mores and laws, however, have been based on the foundation of Judeo-Christian moral authority, upon which so much of our legal system rests (or at least rested in the past).

This moral foundation has been rejected in our culture. The new moral standard is what is culturally popular – and then made legal by legislative action or court decisions. We now define morality by what is legal and legality by what is popular. Polling has replaced principled discernment in national decision-making.

The conviction sexual activity involving children is wrong is not based on cultural disdain for it, but on timeless moral standards. Political leaders can't have it both ways. They should not change some laws to reflect current cultural mores and then claim some kind of moral authority to uphold others when it's expedient.

Governing by principle based on unchanging moral convictions – not popular opinion – is essential for democracy to survive. Let's hope we figure this out again before it's too late.



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