

“So he went and
did according unto
the word of the
Lord . . . ”

– 1 Kings 17:5 (NIV)

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March 8, 2018

Billy Graham's lasting Louisiana legacy

By Will Hall • *Message Editor*

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) — Billy Graham touched the world with the Gospel message for nearly 67 years after he was ordained in 1939. But he left a special imprint on Louisiana from almost the very start of his Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950 through the first decade of the 21st century: leading crusades in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and, at Louisiana College in Pineville; comforting victims after Hurricane Katrina; and, paying for the construction of two chapels at Angola prison.

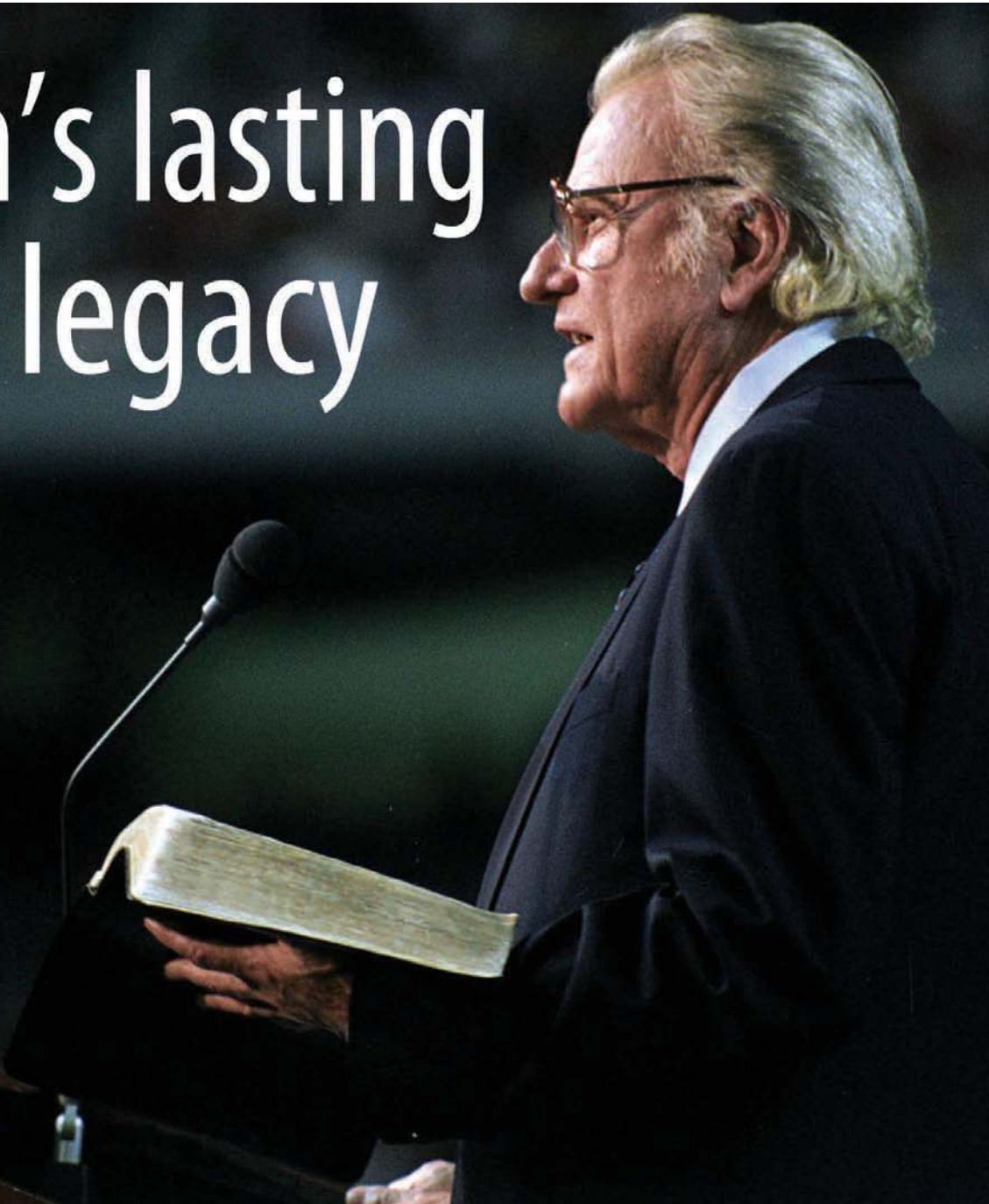
Meanwhile, Louisiana Baptists are engaging with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in a project to extend his impact in the state for years to come.

EARLY DAYS IN LOUISIANA

In 1951, Graham conducted two evangelistic events in the state: April 8-29 in Shreveport, taking one day, April 25, to speak in Pineville at Louisiana College.

In anticipation of the Shreveport campaign, M.E. Dodd, pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church in Shreveport and a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, wrote in

See **LEGACY** on 8



Submitted photo

Hope Chapel Pastor Michael Brakefield baptizes Timothy Runyon outside a home in Jonesboro Sept. 26, 2017.

Jonesboro man celebrates being new Christian, Louisiana Baptist

By BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

JONESBORO (LBM) — Paul Wilkerson was enjoying high times from his worldly living until early 2016 when he lost nearly everything he valued.

Burdened with heartache, he began seeking hope, which he found in Jesus Christ shortly after.

Wilkerson celebrated his transformed heart and life a

year later by being baptized by Michael Brakefield, pastor of the Hope Chapel in Jonesboro.

Brakefield spent the year teaching Wilkerson, but Wilkerson's delay in being baptized wasn't a factor of discipleship, but to wait until the church became an official member of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in early 2017.

"I grew up in the presence of the Lord as a kid in church but I

See **CELEBRATES** on 5

Children's Home trustees celebrate ministry successes

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

MONROE (LBM) — Trustees of the Louisiana Baptist Convention board for the Children's Home and Family Ministries recently celebrated great news about ministry initiatives at home and abroad.

Overseas, 100 new believers came to know Christ in Haiti during two mission trips coordinated by CHFM in 2017.

At home, construction soon will begin on a second cottage designed to provide transitional living for women and their children as they prepare to live independently.

"Our trustees have a great passion for the work," CHFM president and CEO Perry Hancock told the Baptist Message after the Feb. 23 meeting at the ministry's Monroe cam-

pus. "In our recent meeting, we celebrated the fact that over 3,600 children and others experienced God's love and care through the ministries of the Children's Home in 2017."

HAITI PARTNERSHIP

Through its Reach Haiti Partnership with the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Haiti Baptist Convention and 30 LBC churches, the Children's Home has taken mission teams on multiple trips to Haiti since 2012, moving toward fulfillment of the vision to build a children's village, provide clean drinking water to residents of the community and establish a pastor training center for planting churches.

Hancock said more than 100 professions of faith were recorded in 2017 during two separate mission trips to Haiti.



LBCH photo

Louisiana Baptist Children's Home trustees Clovis Sturdivant and Lana Rhinehart were part of a team that participated in a mission trip to Haiti in October. The team conducted Vacation Bible Schools, medical and dental clinics, constructed desks and tables for a church school, and visited the site of the new children's village.

Two trips are planned in 2018: June 2-8; October 13-19.

"The need in Haiti is significant which means that opportunities for ministry abound," Hancock said. "The goal of our work in Haiti is to raise a generation of young people who will reach their country for Christ."

Haiti was devastated by

the 2010 earthquake that killed more than 250,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless. Louisiana Baptists were among the first to provide disaster relief, and since then have maintained a ministry presence through mission trips that includes construction projects, pastor training, medical clinics, food, water and clothing

distributions, evangelism, children's Bible clubs and Vacation Bible School.

In the intervening years, a vision developed for a permanent presence there through a "Louisiana Reach Haiti" initiative.

Louisiana Baptists acquired land in September

See LBCH on 12

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Richard Blackaby heads LC's God in the Workplace conference

BY NORM MILLER

LCNews

PINEVILLE (LCNews) – Louisiana College will host a “God in the Workplace” conference March 19-20 led by Richard Blackaby. The March 19 session will be in the Martin Performing Arts Center at 6 p.m., and is free and open to the public.

Additional keynoters include Doug Hunter of Doug Hunter, LLC, and two local businessmen: Dallas Hixson of Hixson Automotive Group and Jeff Draughon of Draughon and Bollinger, LLC.

Son of Henry Blackaby - author of “Experiencing God” - Richard is noted internationally for his books, blog, and conferences on several facets of the Christian life that include the intersection of a Christian's faith and occupation.

“When Jesus called the 12 disciples, many of them owned and operated businesses as tradesmen and commercial fishermen,” said Rick Brewer, president of Louisiana College. “And Jesus is still calling business people to follow him as disciples regardless of their occupation.”

Brewer said the conference will “help everyone from the receptionist to the CEO learn how best to accomplish God's will at work. No matter how qualified for their jobs, those attending this conference will better understand what the Bible says about integrating their Christian faith and their occupation, and will be equipped to answer questions often posed to Christians on the job.”

“For me, God in the work-

place is just an extension of my relationship with Jesus. It's not necessarily forced or intentional, it's just being who I am in Him and it flows over to what I do,” Draughon said.

“With God removed from our society in so many ways, it is with great pleasure I get to speak about what God has done in my life and in our business. Christ is a part of every meeting, every decision, and I am convinced Christ has blessed us,” Hixson said. “I am looking forward to sharing my experiences with others in hopes they will invite Christ into their business.”

“Remembering that while Billy Graham was with us, he foresaw that the next great move of God would be in the marketplace. Now is the best time to move ahead and fulfill that vision,” Hunter said. The “largest unreached people group” are at work from 9 to 5, Hunter added, and that's where “God's ambassadors are already well-placed to introduce others to Jesus Christ.”

Concepts highlighting the conference will acknowledge that God is the owner of everything, including a Christian's business, and that “Christians are called to be stewards of what is entrusted to them by God,” Brewer said. “Other emphases for business leaders will include the non-negotiable of integrity, a commitment to excellence, the importance of community, and the understanding that the most essential endeavor for Christians is to help build the Kingdom of God wherever they find themselves.”

GOD IN THE WORKPLACE

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Dr. Richard Blackaby is president of Blackaby Ministries. He travels internationally, speaking on spiritual leadership in the home, church, and marketplace, as well as on spiritual awakening, experiencing God, and the Christian life. He also ministers to Christian CEOs as well as church and family leaders. richardblackaby.com



Mr. Dallas Hixson is a deacon at Calvary Baptist Church and member for 23 years. He is owner-partner of The Hixson Automotive Group, Board Chairman for Christus Health Louisiana, was Chair of the Alexandria Christus Board, on the board of the Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce the past 11 years, and is a 10-year member of Rotary Alexandria Downtown.



Mr. Jeff Draughon is partner/co-founder of Upton, Draughon & Bollinger, LLC.; a member/deacon at Calvary Baptist Church; member, Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce; volunteer, Baptist Medical & Dental Mission Int'l; and earned Honorable Mention for philanthropic excellence from Invest in Others Community Leadership Awards.



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Louisiana College recaps spring chapel speakers

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

PINEVILLE – The lineup of speakers for the first half of Louisiana College's 2018 spring chapel services has been outstanding to say the least, school officials say, having featured top pastors, leaders and laypersons from around the state. But, the remaining lineup is as good, and may be even better.

"We are elated to have so many top-notch leaders, pastors and laypersons who ably encourage and challenge our Louisiana College family," said the school's

President Rick Brewer, noting the "common denominators among these speakers is a love for God, a love for the Bible, and a love for college students."

Held at the Martin Performing Arts Center, chapel services minister to and encourage freshmen and transfer students each Tuesday and sophomores, juniors and seniors on Thursdays.

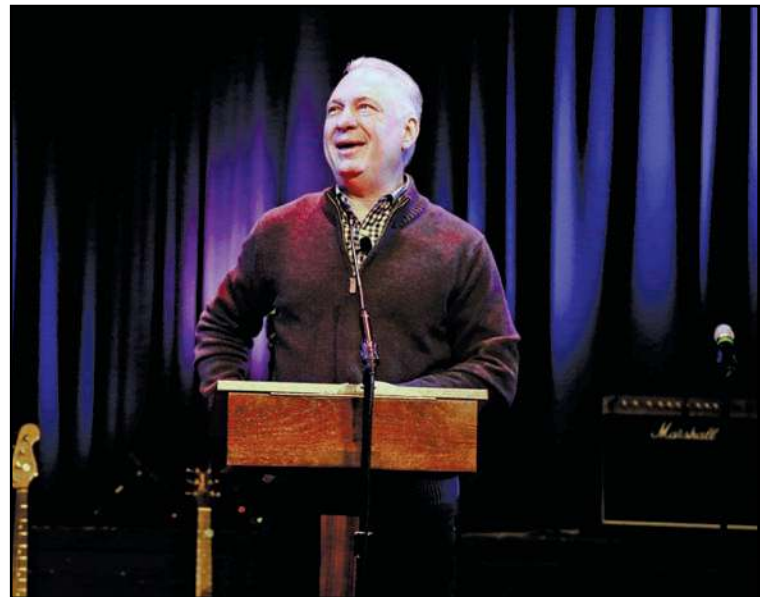
Students already have heard Jeff Ginn, pastor, Istrouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge; Michael Wood, pastor, FBC West Monroe; Jerry Pipes, president of Jerry Pipes Productions; former Southern

Baptist Convention President Fred Luter, pastor, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans; and, former Louisiana Baptist Convention President Steve Horn, pastor, FBC Lafayette.

D.A. Horton, pastor of the Reach Fellowship church plant in North Long Beach, California, and Chief Evangelist for the Urban Youth Workers Institute led Louisiana College's recent campus revival.

The second half of the schedule features a number of well-known Louisiana pastors but also a bevy of gifted men of faith including: Brent Crowe, vice president, Student Leadership University, Orlando; Richard Blackaby, president, Blackaby Ministries International; Dave Edwards, self-described as an "itinerant postmodern pastor"; and, Wayne Jenkins, former Director, Evangelism – Church Growth Team, Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Chapel schedule for the remaining spring semester:



LC News photo

Jeff Ginn, pastor of Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, spoke at Louisiana College's January 23 chapel service, urging students to "love one another" as Romans 12:9-10 instructs. That love must be true, tough and tender, he said.

Tuesday March 13, 2018

Kirk Jones, pastor, Fellowship Baptist Church, Prairieville, and president, 2018 LBC Pastors Conference

Thursday, March 15, 2018

Brent Crowe, vice president, Student Leadership University, Orlando, Florida

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Richard Blackaby, president, Blackaby Ministries International, and, author of more than thirty books

Thursday, March 22, 2018

Joshua Eubanks, pastor, First Baptist Church, DeRidder

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Student Chapel

Thursday, March 29, 2018

Brad Jurkovich, pastor, First Baptist Church, Bossier City

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Jason McGuffie, pastor, First Baptist Church, Tallulah, and, former president, 2017 LBC Pastors Conference

Thursday, April 12, 2018

Dave Edwards, a self-described "itinerant postmodern pastor, and, author of 13 books

See CHAPEL on 12

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Celebrates from page one

had never received it," Wilkerson said. "I had heard the calling from the time I was little but ran from it. I was trying to fill this big massive void. I was the success story, thinking I was better than I was."

"Over a matter of six months I lost everything," he said. "I was homeless and in a position where I had no other place to turn. I was in the desert. Because I had nowhere else to turn I found the truth."

Wilkerson is one of 13 new believers baptized in 2017 at Hope Chapel.

The church has grown rapidly from just the two persons who got together in January 2016 for a Bible study in Brakefield's home to an average of 20-30 for Sunday morning services, and another 30-40 for Tuesday evening prayer meetings.

"Growth is a result of the Holy Spirit using spirit-filled, devoted followers of Jesus," Brakefield said. "Faithfulness to Jesus produces fruit in

ministry and creates excitement and an expectation for more to come."

NOT ALONE

Hope Chapel is among the 210 Louisiana Baptist church plants that collectively celebrated a record 512 baptisms in 2017. These new congregations are poised to experience another year of healthy growth, Louisiana Baptist church planting strategists contend.

"I am encouraged in our task, because each day I get to work with two of the best church planting strategists in America – Lane Corley and Carlos Schmidt," said James Jenkins, director of church planting for Louisiana Baptists. "Our church plants are an amazing preview of the book of Revelation."

"Louisiana Baptists are starting churches to reach every nation, tribe, people and language," Jenkins explained. "LBC church plants enable Louisiana Baptists to pro-

claim the Gospel every week among 14 people groups and 12 languages. It is exciting to live in a time when the ends of the earth are coming to America and Louisiana."

According to the latest report by the Louisiana Baptists' missions and ministry team, the 512 baptisms performed by church plants in 2017 were an increase of 152 from the previous year. They also recorded 34,465 evangelistic contacts and 1,419 decisions to follow Christ.

With 27 churches planted in 2017, Louisiana Baptists are now just 90 away from reaching the 300th church planted since 2010. If that number is reached, it would meet a goal of planting 300 churches by 2020 as part of one of the 10 action steps identified in the President's 2020 Commission Final Report.

PLANTS, RE-PLANTS, REVITALIZATIONS

Planting healthy, biblically sound, multiplying churches is identified in that document as a key compo-

nent to a strategy which seeks to engage two audiences – the next generation and every people group – in reaching Louisiana with the Gospel.

Corley is confident Louisiana Baptists can plant their 300th church by the end of 2020, but says continued support from existing congregations is critical.

"We're seeing the product of healthy partnerships that have created a great culture for multiplication across Louisiana," Corley said. "Starting with the strategy laid out by the President's 2020 Commission, associations have set local goals for new churches."

"We also have seen growth in multi-site churches and revitalization strategies have led to churches being re-planted," he continued. "More existing churches are saying yes to sponsorship and partnership with church plants in various ways. In New Orleans, the partnership with the North American Mission Board has brought needed focus to the needs of New Orleans as well as partners from across the country to help plant churches in our

largest population center."

The strategy places a special emphasis on planting churches where most Louisianans live, concentrating on the I-10 corridor and southward where 3 million Louisianans reside.

So far, 160 of the 210 new church plants are located in southern Louisiana. There also is a mix of ethnic identities among these church plants: 83 are predominately Anglo, 62 African-American, 28 Hispanic, nine Asian and 17 of various other ethnicities (a stark contrast to 2010, when eight churches were started — seven Anglo and one Asian, with no African-American or Hispanic congregations in the mix).



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Billy Graham shaped inmate's heart who built his casket

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – David Bacon was one of two inmates who built the casket for Billy Graham and another for his son, Franklin, who is president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Four other Angola inmates built a casket for Graham's wife, Ruth, who died June 14, 2007.

Bacon, who was paroled in December 2016 after serving 29 years in the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, is the only one of the six who still is living.

In an exclusive interview with the *Baptist Message*, Bacon said the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was instrumental in helping

him seek forgiveness for a chaotic past life that included an absentee father and a life sentence for a 1988 murder.

Bacon said that during a 1993 BGEA-led chapel service conducted on the



BGEA photo

Six inmates, including David Bacon, built caskets (pictured above) for Billy, Ruth and Franklin Graham, and three other dignitaries, while at Louisiana State Penitentiary, at Angola. Paroled in December 2016 after serving 29 years, he is the only one of the six still living.

prison grounds he repented of his sins and put his trust in Jesus.

“While incarcerated, with help from ministries like Billy Graham’s, I got to know God, and developed a relationship with God, and, received Jesus as Lord and found love, guidance, acceptance and approval that I didn’t find with my biological father, my earthly father,” Bacon said. “I found it with THE Father.”

Bacon was working in the prison carpentry shop as a trustee in 2006 when he was chosen to make the plywood casket for Graham. He said he was humbled and overcome with joy to be given the honor.

“He was a simple man who preached a simple message and wanted to be [buried] in a simple casket,” Bacon said.

“He was very humble. He exhibited the love of God towards people in prison and people in general,” Bacon said. “He

treated us no different from any other individual that walked the face of the earth. He said that nobody was beyond redemption and that God loved us and he loved us. It was a great honor to have a part in building that casket for him. He touched my life and many other lives at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and abroad. He was an awesome man of God.”

As Bacon watched with millions of others around the world the live footage of the very same casket he built in 2006, a feeling of gratefulness filled his heart for the unique connection with the famed evangelist.

“It’s very special,” Bacon said. “I know that the

Reverend Graham is with God now. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. I know that he is present with the Lord as we speak and I’ll see him again.”

Bacon later worked on caskets for such high-profile individuals as George Beverly Shea, a long-time soloist for Graham’s crusades, “Bum” Phillips, head coach of the New Orleans Saints from 1981 to 1985, and Chuck Colson, who founded Prison Fellowship International after serving a seven-month prison sentence on obstruction of justice charges stemming from his role in the Watergate scandal that led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon in



Photo courtesy of Angola State Penitentiary

Angola master coffin maker Richard Liggett puts the final touches on a handmade casket for the Reverend Billy Graham.

Fred Lowery

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The greatest legacy of Billy Graham: "The Bible Says"

BY KEITH MANUEL

Evangelism/Church Growth
Team Director

The death of Billy Graham is grabbing the headlines in print, on a variety of screens, and over radio waves – avenues he used extensively to spread the gospel.

Many are reminiscing on the spiritual counsel he provided Presidents of the United States. Others are remembering his impeccable character, especially during the eighties when ministry failures seemed all too common.

While these and many other aspects of his ministry will be discussed, Graham's use of a simple authoritative phrase, may be his greatest legacy – "The Bible says."

If one reads or listens to the sermons of Billy Graham, a consistent pattern will emerge. He reads the Scripture. He shares what some call "The Big Idea of the Sermon."

Next, he addresses what famous people say or how people live relative to the subject. Finally, he makes an appeal, not based on the authority of Billy Graham nor based on the ideas of great men and women. He makes his appeal on the only authority any preacher ever has. Graham cries out with a clear, resonate voice, "The Bible says..."

The phrase flowed so freely from Graham that even a secular newspaper, the Chicago Tribune, used it to describe his pulpit presence. The article stated, "A tall figure with swept-back hair, blue eyes and a strong jaw, Graham was a commanding presence in the pulpit with a powerful baritone voice. His catchphrase: 'The Bible says ...'"

Graham's message was never his message. He was only a herald, declaring the powerful message of the King of kings, no matter if he was addressing a president or a pauper. The final appeal was always similar, "Come. If you are with family or a delegation, they will wait on you. You come and receive Jesus."

There is an example in the preaching of Graham for those in the pulpit or the pew. Our words should point people to the saving work of Jesus found in the Word of God.

In his sermons, Graham consistently pointed out the problem of sin. Men and women seek pleasure, wealth, wisdom, and other worldly things because of their sinful nature.

In his sermon on the Value of a Soul during the sixteen-week, New York crusade in 1957, he said, "The Bible says, you can have pleasure temporarily. You can have pleasure in sin for a season, for a short time; but true happiness and true peace are found when the soul comes back to the Maker."

Graham also directed his hearers to the Bible for the answers to life's tough questions. During a sermon in Washington, D.C. in 1970, he said, "The Bible is the only book that fully answers the ultimate questions that youth are asking: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is the purpose and meaning of my existence?"

Most importantly, he pointed his hearers to the work of the cross. He declared Jesus as our substitute. God loving us enough to allow His Son to die in our place. To an audience in Japan in 1980, Graham stated, "The Bible says, 'Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.'"

Usually, after explaining the work of the cross, Graham called urgently for a response from his hearers to repent, believe in the Gospel, and to receive the new birth through complete surrender to Jesus.

In May of 2006, Billy Graham came to the hurricane devastated city of New Orleans. The city was still reeling in destruction and despair. He declared to a hurting people what God requires of a man or woman. The first requirement is to repent. He proclaimed, "In his first sermon 'Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Next, he mentioned that, "The Bible says, 'Without faith, it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.'" On that night, he concluded with an appeal that spoke to the hearts of a broken people in a burdened city, "You can start over again, right here and now."

Then came Graham's characteristic appeal to respond to the gospel invitation. "I want to ask you to get up out of your seat tonight and come forward. From the top of the stands, it will take you a few minutes, so get started now. Just step out into the aisle and ushers will direct you. ... You may say, 'I am here with friends.' They'll wait on you; they won't leave without you."

Though frail and preaching

from a raised chair, hundreds responded, not to Graham, but to the powerful Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." A message of salvation. Plain. Simple. Direct. Inviting.

You can declare the same message as Billy Graham. You probably won't be in a major sports arena, but your local coffee shop will do. Intentionally visit with a lost friend and share what the Bible says. First, the Bible says everyone is a sinner. Next, the Bible answers life's tough questions, especially how sinners can receive forgiveness through Jesus. Finally, share what the Bible says about salvation being available to all who will receive this gift by repentance and belief. Don't forget to give your friend the opportunity to respond, right then, to the gospel.

There is no greater legacy that someone can pass down than the legacy of faith in Jesus. Urgently appeal to your friends and family. Call them to respond in faith to Jesus. It was the message of Billy Graham. It can be your message too.



BGEA photo

Billy Graham's use of one, simple authoritative phrase, may be his greatest legacy – "The Bible says" (shown preaching during a 1962 crusade).

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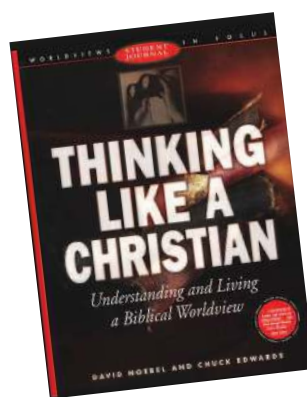
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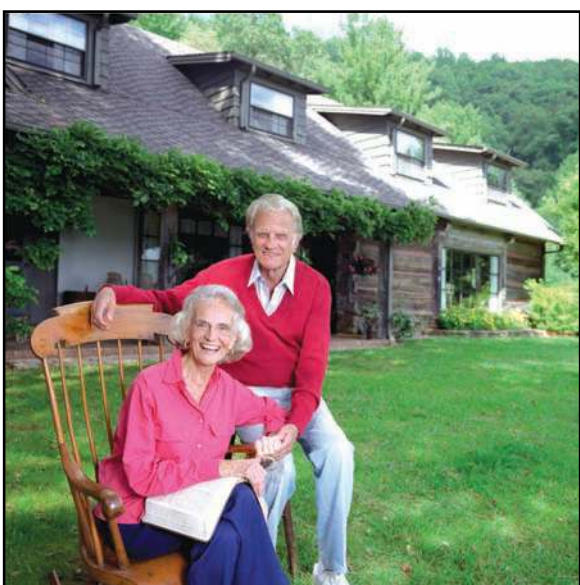


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Louis Zamperini, at far right, accepted Jesus Christ at a 1949 Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles. Pictured with him, from left, are Harvey Fritts, Cliff Barrows, Jim Vaus, Graham, and Stuart Hamblen. Vaus and Hamblen also accepted Christ at the event.

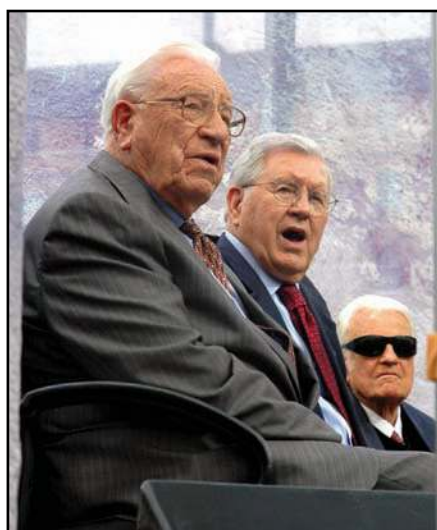


Ruth and Billy at their Montreat, N.C., home.



After visiting President Harry Truman in 1950, Billy and his aides—Jerry Beavan, Cliff Barrows, and Grady Wilson—knelt on the White House lawn to pray.

BGEA photo



Three of the world's best-known ambassadors for the Gospel — George Beverly Shea, Cliff Barrows and Billy Graham — reunited in Baltimore for the Maryland Metro Festival.



In 1957, Billy Graham met with President Eisenhower about working to end segregation in the South. BGEA photo



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Billy Graham are pictured in Chicago in 1962. They discussed racial equality at key moments in the civil rights struggle. BGEA photo



At 27, Billy Graham resigned his pulpit to go on the road for Youth for Christ. Little did he know that he would soon be preaching in front of hundreds of thousands of people of all ages. BGEA photo



Billy and Franklin Graham make a stop, March 8, 2006, to visit with displaced residents and view the destruction of the lower Ninth Ward. "Now I know a little bit about what I've read and heard, and I thought I read it all" concerning the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, Billy Graham said, "but it doesn't compare to what you see in a few minutes of the tour of this area they have taken me through today."



David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church in New Orleans, prepares to introduce Billy Graham and his son Franklin during a March 9 pastors' meeting. At right is Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church.



The 1949 Los Angeles Crusade was Billy Graham's most ambitious effort to date. Advance press coverage was minimal, but that changed as the weeks passed and the extraordinary conversion stories captured the public's attention. BGEA photo



Legacy from page one

the *Baptist Message* that 20,000 Louisianans had been gathering in special meetings to bathe the outreach in prayer.

He described Graham as "a God intoxicated man" who was calling on Louisiana Baptists to continue "to pray, and pray more, and pray more earnestly."

The *Shreveport Times* reported the 22-day soul-winning push netted an estimated 200,000 in attendance and the *Baptist Message* documented there were 3,000 spiritual decisions.

While at Louisiana College he spoke to a "spellbound" crowd of 9,000 - 10,000 "that overflowed Louisiana College stadium with

its 8,000 capacity and spilled over into the playing field and even beyond."

The *Baptist Message* described Graham as "a Jonah sounding God's warning that Nineveh would be destroyed," but also reported that "Graham made an effort to avoid sensationalism in the service" and yet "an estimated 300 persons

assembled at one end of the field after the sermon, definitely committing themselves to Jesus."

At the time, Graham was considered a top candidate to be president of Louisiana College, according to historical records.

In 1954, Graham again led two evangelistic events in Louisiana. He hosted "four weeks of near-daily sessions" in New Orleans, according to the *Times-Picayune*, only interrupting that great harvest to travel to Baton Rouge for a one-night revival according to the *Baptist Message*.

Starting Oct. 3 in Pelican Stadium with a crowd of 10,000, he finished his evangelistic effort in the "Big Easy" on Halloween in front of 61,500 in Tulane Stadium, the *Times-Picayune* reported.

"I have fallen in love with this city and its people," Graham said, adding that he hoped to return some day. "A total of 4,411 people committed their lives to Christ during the

crusade," the report stated.

In the midst of the New Orleans outreach, Graham took time on Oct. 25 to go to Baton Rouge to preach to 25,000 gathered in the horseshoe shaped stadium "within the shadow of the towering State Capitol Building."

"His message contained nothing especially new," the *Baptist Message* article recorded. "The entire service was so void of the spectacular ... that a painful thought came to mind — 'What if only a handful come [forward] tonight?'"

Bu the aisles overflowed and in the end, "500 people stood before the platform to hear the Preacher exhort them to pray, read their Bibles and witness daily."

LATER YEARS IN THE STATE

Graham returned to Baton Rouge in 1970, but this time for five services conducted at the then-67,000-seat stadium at Louisiana State University.

The *Baptist Message* reported that more than 196,000 persons attended despite inclement weather, with many LSU students among the crowds of young people who were there.

In all, 9,076 total decisions were made "as a result of Graham's preaching."

But guests also heard from LSU football standout Andy Hamilton, who was the leading scorer at the time, as well as from the 1970 Miss America Phyllis George.

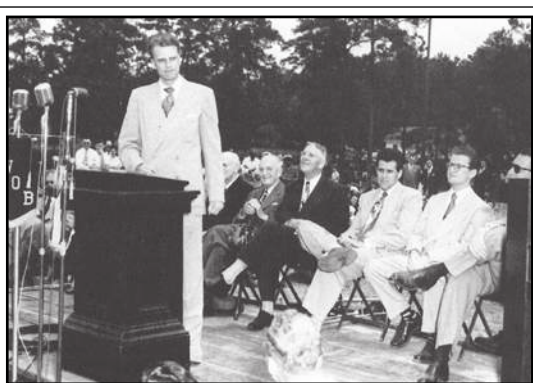
Hamilton said he had found something in the Bible that he "couldn't find if I ran up and down this field for the next thousand years — the power of Jesus Christ!"

For her part, George told the crowd she loved the Lord and proclaimed, "Jesus can help us to [make] right decisions in everything. I plead with you to turn to God."

In June 1982 Graham also made it back to New Orleans to hold a rally in the Superdome in connection with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

He was joined by then-Vice President George H. W. Bush as well as Johnny and June Cash with their son, John Carter Cash, and 42,000 other guests.

Described in a *Baptist Message* report as "a mixture of an 'ole fashioned political rally, a country fair and a revival meeting," an estimated 2,000 persons came forward during the meeting that night "to accept Christ or make some other religious decision."



Evangelist Billy Graham preaches on the Louisiana College campus during a 1951 revival. Among those seated behind him were Dr. Edgar Godbold, college president, (looking at Graham) and next to him is Cliff Barrows. At the time, Graham was considered to be a top candidate to become president of Louisiana College upon Godbold's retirement the following year.

Student recalls Graham's visit to Louisiana College

By STAFF

Baptist Message

Jackie Tucker was a student when Graham came to Louisiana College for the 1951 revival. Even though she doesn't remember the particulars of his message, Tucker recalls the campus was abuzz with excitement about the fact the popular evangelist was preaching at the school.

"We knew that this was a very, very special man," Tucker recalled. "I can still picture him coming down that hill, with everyone thrilled he was there. Billy Graham's main theme then was as it was right up to his death — that he wanted people to know Jesus loved them and wanted them to trust in Him so they could join Him in Heaven one day."

Tucker said she is thankful for the legacy Graham left behind and the lessons of integrity he taught during his ministry.

"He's one person that they haven't found anything that is scandalous," Tucker said. "When so many celebrities have fallen because of mistakes, you couldn't find anything to mar his reputation. He was a real gentleman and we were very proud he took the time to come to LC."

MOST RECENT VISIT

After his June 17, 2005 sermon before a crowd of 90,000 in New York City, Graham retired from conducting stadium crusades. But that did not hinder him from coming to New Orleans in March 2006 to console Katrina-battered communities and take part in a two-day Celebration of Hope, originally scheduled to feature just his son, Franklin.

While in the city the older Graham surveyed the damage in the Ninth Ward, commenting that with Katrina's aftereffects and the ongoing war in Iraq, "... if ever the country needs to turn to God it is now."

He also visited the First Baptist Church in New Orleans where he spoke to 1,000 church leaders, pastors and their wives. Standing behind the pulpit he had used during the 1954 New Orleans Crusade, he encouraged them to trust God who restored Job's losses, giving Job "many more times ... he had ever had in the beginning."

Yet, two of Graham's spiritual contributions to Louisiana took place without him coming to the state:

-- In 2008, prisoners in the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola took part in the dedication of the Camp F chapel inside the barbed wire fences surrounding the prison.

-- A year later, employees at the former deadliest prison in America, celebrated the completion of the B Line chapel for the "free" community that lives at Angola.

Burl Cain, warden of the Angola prison, 1995 - 2016, told the *Baptist Message* that Graham, his son, the BGEA, Samaritan's Purse and the rest of the Graham family, combined, likely contributed on the order of \$800,000 to construct both structures.

GRAHAM'S INFLUENCE TO CONTINUE

Despite Graham's declining health during the last decade, the BGEA has extended his evangelistic ministry by developing a thriving outreach presence at PeacewithGod.net.

Through this social media platform, people from all walks of life see and hear a clear Gospel message through videos and Scripture. Trained volunteers are ready to answer their spiritual questions, point them to Christ and help them grow in their faith.

Since launching April 2011 through February 2018, PeacewithGod.net has recorded 11.5 million indicated decisions for Christ with

more than 1.6 million requests for follow-up materials. Now, Louisiana Baptists are about to contribute to continuing Graham's soul-winning legacy, by partnering with the BGEA "to increase their online outreach in Louisiana," said John Kyle, Director of Communications for Louisiana Baptists. "In 2017, more than 14,000 people in Louisiana indicated they prayed to receive Christ via the BGEA's internet outreach," Kyle said. "This is up from the approximately 9,300 indicated decisions in 2016."

In both years, roughly one third of the responders requested follow-up materials and contact, Kyle added, making Louisiana one of the more responsive states for this effort. However, BGEA officials have informed Louisiana Baptists there are only 2 trained counselors in the state.

Kyle said his Communications Team is working the the Louisiana Baptist Evangelism Team to collaborate with the BGEA.

Eventually, they hope to enlist hundreds of Louisiana Baptists to train to be a Chat Coach, Discipleship Coach or Email Coach for the thousands of Louisianans who are seeking Christ each year on PeacewithGod.net.

"This is an exciting opportunity to be a part of Billy Graham's legacy and get in on what God is doing across the state," noted Kyle. "Make yourself available, make your church available, to follow up on these commitments."

Persons interested in volunteering to be a Chat Coach, Discipleship Coach or Email Coach are encouraged to visit www.searchforJesus.net (sister site of PeacewithGod.net) and click on the "Get Involved" link at the top of the screen.

Also, real-time decisions from around the world can be viewed at www.searchforJesus.net/pray so individuals can support these live evangelism contacts in prayer.



A packed New Orleans Arena -- nearly 18,000 people -- listened as Billy Graham headlined the "Celebration of Hope" March 12. He delivered what he described as "probably the last evangelistic sermon I'll ever preach."



Billy Graham is assisted by his son Franklin and Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans at a meeting for local pastors and spouses.



After he prayed with Billy Graham at the 1963 National Prayer Breakfast, President John F. Kennedy listened attentively to his sermon. BGEA photo

Tullos pastor recalls encounters with Billy Graham

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

HOUMA – Scott Smith was a 13-year-old boy when he sat down with his mother, Penny, to watch a Billy Graham crusade on TV from inside the family's living room in suburban New Orleans in August 1976.

When the famous evangelist invited those inside the

stadium in San Diego, Calif., and for TV viewers to accept Jesus -- with the iconic song "Just As I Am" playing in the background -- Smith knew he needed to say, "Yes," to Jesus.

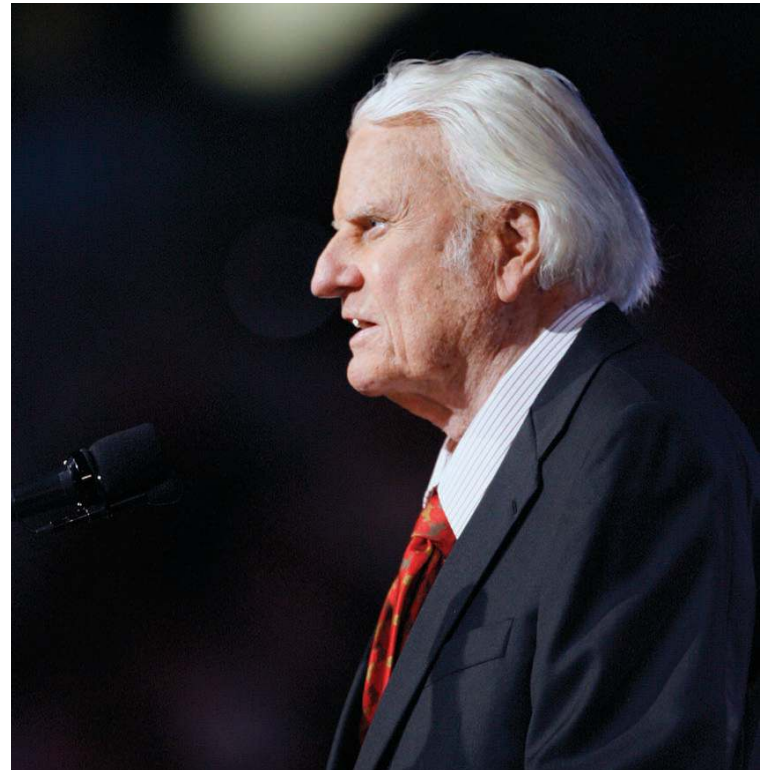
"The Holy Spirit spoke to me and I realized I was lost," said Smith, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Tullos since 2007. "When they were showing the invitation at the end asking people to give

their life to Christ, I did."

The following Sunday, Smith walked across the street to the First Baptist Church in Houma for his baptism. Eight years later, while attending the First Baptist Church in Oloh, Mississippi, Smith accepted the Holy Spirit's call to vocational ministry, subsequently serving as youth minister and pastor of several churches in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Smith never forgot the day he watched Graham on TV and hoped one day he would have the chance to meet the evangelist in person.

That encounter came just months after Hurricane Katrina devastated the New Orleans area, where he was serving as pastor of the Highland Baptist Church in Metairie. During a meeting with pastors before a March 2006 Celebration of Hope event in the New Orleans Arena, Smith visited with Graham and his entire team as they prepared to reach the city in need of healing.



Thirty years after accepting Christ while watching a Billy Graham crusade on TV, Scott Smith was among nearly 18,000 people in the New Orleans Arena for a "Celebration of Hope." Smith is pastor of First Baptist, Tullos.

"It was one of the highlights of my time in New Orleans as pastor, and of my entire life," Smith said. "I could remember vividly sitting there watching Billy

Graham and that moment the Lord saved me. To meet him and be a part of that crusade after all we had gone through was just an awesome experience."

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M-JAM seeks to give youngsters 'an edge'

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – What is living on the edge like for a Christian youngster?

Several hundred GAS, RAs, Children in Action and other children's ministry groups will explore that question when they come together at the annual Mission Jambo-ree next month.

At the event they will be encouraged and challenged to make God-honoring choices – regardless of the impossibilities – because God will give the strength to do it.

M-JAM will take place March 10 at the First Baptist Church in Lafayette, and May 5 at the Tall Timbers Conference Center in Woodworth, giving youngsters in first through sixth grades, and their leaders, a choice of two dates to attend, and two different locales.

The theme for both events

is "Life on the Edge," based on Philippians 4:13.

"I am very excited about this year's M-JAM," said Jess Archer, children/youth missions strategist for Louisiana Baptists. "This is a one day event where children can hear testimonies of how God is using believers for His Kingdom, understand the Plan of Salvation, learn about life on the mission field and have fun with other students their age in the four rotations."

Brad Bennett and other highly-skilled motocross racers from Real Encounter Outreach (as seen on America's Got Talent) will lead M-JAM at both locations. This outreach ministry partners with local churches and various organizations to connect with those who do not yet know Christ and share the life-changing message of Jesus. Bennett is executive

See **EDGE** on 12

Louisiana Baptist women seek obedience to God

BY HOLLY JO LINZAY

Regional Reporter

"To obey is better than sacrifice..." 1 Samuel 15:22

PINEVILLE (LBM) – Christians are called by God to obedient living, but it is not all about rules, duty or behavior management.

"Obedience is the right response to the grace of God," Katie Orr, the keynote speaker from Harrodsburg, Kentucky, explained to the women gathered at the Kaleidoscope conference.

Orr, author of "Everyday Obedience" and creator of the FOCUSED 15 Bible study method, detailed how "obedience is a heart issue" that can be fulfilled only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Our job in obedience as Christ followers is not to focus on the 'do's and don'ts,' but first to remember all that God has done for us and to respond to that grace," Orr said, teaching from the book of Colossians.

About 190 women at the two-day Kaleidoscope conference Feb. 23-24 at the First Baptist Church in Pineville heard Orr share how her understanding of obedient living in Christ was redefined, as she challenged them to become more obedient in their walk with Christ.

"Obedience is a call to worship God. Obedience is meant to be Christ-centered," added Orr.

When Christians enter a relationship with Christ,



Brian Blackwell photo

Speaker and author Katie Orr of Harrodsburg, Kentucky tells ladies at Kaleidoscope 'obedience is the right response to God's Grace.' In a first for the conference, it was expanded to two days.

His perfect righteousness is "gifted to you," Orr said.

"The natural response for the true believer becomes a 'want to obey' instead of a 'have to,'" Orr said, adding that when our eyes are fixed on grace "through the Spirit of God" instead of our actions, we can fulfill the calling

of living an obedient life.

"Without Christ, we cannot fight our flesh."

When Christians fully grasp who "they are because of Christ" and are dependent on the grace of God, it is possible to live in everyday obedience, Orr said.

During the opening Friday

service, Casey and Heather Boone, worship leaders at Pine Ridge Baptist Church in Melder, led worship by song. On Saturday, Heather led.

After this time together, participants were able to select from 20 different breakout sessions to engage topics in the areas of spiritual growth, discipleship, personal development, leadership methods and family.

Kaleidoscope, which is a Cooperative Program-supported event, was sponsored by the Louisiana Baptist Convention Women's Missions & Ministry team.

In the "Too Busy for Bible Study" breakout session, Orr taught a study method she created that helps break through surface-level Bible study in order to experience a deep and transformational time in God's word in just 15 minutes a day.

Kaitlyn Nessmith, a member of Pine Ridge Baptist Church, Melder said this was her first time to attend.

"I loved learning about the FOCUSED 15 Bible Study Method. She really showed us how to do a Bible study effectively. Quality over quantity—that spoke volumes to me. Fifteen minutes a day is better than nothing at all," enthused Nessmith.

Ali Merchant, also from Pine Ridge Baptist, echoed Nessmith's sentiments. "With her plan, you can really dig into the Scripture with just 15 minutes a day. Katie Orr also told us how we can find out what each word means in the Scripture. She gave us some valuable tools."

Debbie Boykin, who teaches Sunday School at St. Clair Baptist Church, Boyce said each time she attends Kaleidoscope she garners new information to help her in her work with various church ministries.

"The conference has made me a stronger woman in my walk in Christ. It gives me courage," Boykin said.

Pam Strohm, who works with the youth and WMU at St. Clair Baptist, said the event has inspired her. "I

See KALEIDOSCOPE on 13

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Louisiana's Pourciau to lead search for new IMB president

RICHMOND, Va. – During the Feb. 28-March 1 trustee meeting of the International Mission Board, trustee chairman Rick Dunbar named a 16-person president search committee to name a replacement for David Platt who announced Feb. 12 his intention to resign but to stay on board during the search for his successor.

The president search committee will be led by Chuck Pourciau, pastor, Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, committee chair; and Andy Davis, pastor, First Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina, committee vice-chair.

Other members include David Sills, professor, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, president, Reaching & Teaching International Ministries, and, member, Ninth & O Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.; Lisa Lovell, physical therapist, and, member, First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.; Ken McLemore, missions pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Va.; Nancy Patrick, licensed school psychologist, professor of special education, and, member,

Living Legacy Church, Hershey, Penn.; Will Payne, FCA campus director, Syracuse University, and, member, Central Baptist Church, Syracuse, N.Y. and, Seth Polk, pastor, Cross Lanes Baptist Church, Cross Lanes, W.V.

The committee also includes Bill Ricketts, retired, and, member, Prince Avenue Baptist Church, Athens, Ga.; Tim Simpson, pastor, Greenridge Baptist Church, Clarksburg, Mary.; Cindy Snead, clinical laboratory scientist, and, member, North Phoenix Baptist Church, Phoenix, Ariz.; Derek Spain, executive pastor, Hebron Baptist Church, Dacula, Ga.; Susan Bryant, Kentucky WMU president, and, member, Graefenburg Baptist Church, Waddy, Ken.; Rick Dunbar, a physician, and, member, First Baptist Church, Madison, Miss.; and Robert Welch, pastor, Rock Hill Baptist Church, Brownsboro, Texas. Duane Ostrem, an IMB field leader, will serve as a non-voting member to provide perspective from the mission field.

The search committee is receiving names for consideration at imbsearch@broadmoor.tv.



Construction will begin this year on a second HomePlace Cottage at Martin Village to provide a place for homeless women and their children to stay at no cost for up to a year. The first cottage was dedicated in April 2016.

LBCH from page 2

2016, and shortly afterward volunteers completed a 200-foot-deep well that provides a reliable source of clean water for the community. The well will support the planned children's village and pastor training center as well.

Church planting also will be a pivotal part of Louisiana Baptists work in the country, and the ministry center will serve as a base from which Louisiana Baptists will partner with Haitian believers to reach all of Haiti by starting churches.

The hope is to build additional housing in the complex, followed with the development of micro businesses and trade schools. As the project expands, there is a vision for

constructing a hotel operated by Haitians, and, building a school.

COTTAGE CONSTRUCTION

During the meeting, trustees also learned that construction should begin later this year on a second HomePlace Cottage at Martin Village to provide a place for homeless women and their children to stay at no cost for up to one year. In this environment, the women will receive a high school equivalency degree, life and employment skills training through the Christian Women's Job Corps.

Financing to build cottages is generated by proceeds from the Annual Roy O. Martin/Brenda Hall Abney Golf Classic.

The tournament was created by Roy O. Martin, chairman,

and CEO Jonathan E. Martin and his wife, Maggie, in memory of Abney, who passed away in 2005 from a rare form of breast cancer. The new cottage will be Irma's Place, named in honor of Irma Howard. Irma and Gene Howard (grandson of Roy O. Martin Sr.) have been generous contributors though the golf tournament.

Abney grew up at the Children's Home in Monroe and attended Louisiana College, where she was figuratively adopted by the Martins in 1983.

Over the years, more than \$2.3 million has been raised from the golf tournament to support the Children's Home.

"I simply cannot say enough about the incredible support of the Martin family," Hancock said. "Their investment is changing lives every day at the Children's Home."

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Edge from page 10

director and president of Real Encounter Outreach, based in Branson, Mo.

Breakout sessions will center on the conference theme with topics that explore salvation, compassion ministry, BMX stunt tricks

and church planting – with one session led by an IMB missionary.

Check-in is from 9 - 9:45 a.m. with the conference starting at 10 a.m. and ending at 3 p.m.

The cost to attend is \$28 and includes a snack and lunch. T-shirts are \$10.

To register, visit <http://louisianabaptists.org/mjam> or call the Women's Missions and Ministry team at 1.800.622.6549 or 318.448.3402 or email WMM@LouisianaBaptists.org.

Chapel from page 4

Tuesday, April 17

Ted Davis, SBC International Mission Board personnel consultant, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Thursday, April 19

Honors Convocation

Tuesday, April 24

Missions Chapel: Wayne Jenkins, former director, LBC Evangelism and Church Growth Team

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Kaleidoscope from page 11

always leave Kaleidoscope on such a high. All the sessions are so uplifting. The whole thing renews my energy every year."

Laughter rang out during the "Do You Want to be Happy" breakout with Gwen Williams, also known as "Ms. Chocolate." She shared personal stories and offered Scripture references about how anyone can experience the joys of living an abundant life.

Kacie Woodward, along with five other women from Ethel Baptist Church, said Ms. Chocolate made her smile. "I love her down-to-earth message about how God sees your heart. I felt like everyone was family here today."

It was the first women's conference for attendee Jeanette Brady from Harmony Baptist Church in Glenmora, "Learning to be obedient is a hard thing, but I got a lot of encouragement from this conference. I learned new ways of approaching people and I went to the breakout on how to study the Bible. It was definitely worth coming to."

Anne Armstrong of Standard Baptist Church in Olla agreed. "Kaleidoscope has been refreshing and rejuvenating. I felt really connected with the other women."

LeNora Bryant, a member of His House Christian



Heather Boone was one of the worship leaders for this year's Kaleidoscope conference.

Church in Gardner, said God knew she needed to be at the conference. "This is my first time at Kaleidoscope. All the speakers have been great. I needed a revival, and I'm so happy I came. The conference has given me spiritual enrichment."

While leading the "Emotions and Spirituality" breakout session, Judy Patrick, of New Life Baptist Church in

DeRidder, discussed biblical concepts for how emotions interact with spirituality.

"If Jesus is our model, we must be dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide our emotions," Patrick said, adding that a person's perception, beliefs, community influence, environment and physical traits all affect emotional development.

Patrick said she had a "fearful mother" while growing up and that she developed emotional fear. Patrick told the group how, with Jesus, they can master their emotions and to begin to turn "fleshly emotions" into "holy emotions."

Hope Johnson, a member of the First Baptist Church in Pineville, returned to the women's conference again this year to be inspired.

"All the breakout sessions are so wonderful, I wish I could go to everyone of them. Kaleidoscope is a time when I can refocus and recharge," Johnson said, "And I look forward to next year."



Dramatist, speaker and author Gwen "Ms. Chocolate" Williams speaks during the breakout session 'Do You Want to be Happy' at the 2018 Kaleidoscope held at First Baptist Church, Pineville.

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PASTOR NEEDED

Woodlawn Baptist Church, Raville is seeking a pastor.



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HOMEcoming

■ Cotile Baptist Church, Boyce: 36th Homecoming, March 11, 11 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds. Paul's Journey will be in concert at 1:30 p.m. A love offering will be taken only. For more information, contact the church at 318.793.8847 or 318.729.0317. Pastor: Johnny Miller.

REVIVAL

■ Open Door Baptist Church, Moss Bluff: Revival, March 11-14, Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Sonny Simpson.
 ■ Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Ringgold: Revival, March 11-14. Evangelist: Joe Aulds. Worship: Price Harris. Pastor: Danny Slack.
 ■ First Baptist Church, Ruston: One Day Revival, March 11, Sunday, 8:45 & 11 a.m. Evangelist: Reggie Thomas. Pastor: Chris Craig.
 ■ Beaugard Memorial Baptist Church, Longville: Revival, March 11-14. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell, chalk artist. Pastor: Jimmy Clark.
 ■ New Hope Baptist Church, Monroe: Revival, March 11-14, Evangelist: Bill Robertson. Pastor: Scottie Gray.
 ■ Welcome Home Baptist Church, Hebert: Revival, March 11-16. Evangelist: Lyndon Longoria. Special music: Kerry Longoria. Pastor: Jim McKeithen.
 ■ Bethel Baptist Church Cut Off: Revival, March 12-15. Evangelist: Jerry Spencer. Pastor: Jimmy Autin.
 ■ First Baptist Church, Boyce: Revival, March 15-17, 6 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: Charles Rodgers. Pastor: Thomas Walker.
 ■ Bonita Road Baptist Church, Bastrop: Revival, March 18-21, Sunday 11 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. Pastor: Casey Johnson.
 ■ Trinity Baptist Church, Oakdale: Revival, March 18-21. Evangelist Lyndon: Longoria. Special Music: Kerry Longoria. Pastor: Dennis LeFleur.
 ■ The New Beginnings BC, Walker: Revival, March 18-21, Evangelist: Scotty McDowell, chalk artist. Pastor: Charles Smith.
 ■ Freedom Baptist Church, Logansport: Revival, March 18-21, Evangelist: Bill Britt.

Pastor: Wayne Jones.

■ Freedom Baptist Church, Pitkin: Family Crusade, March 18-21. Evangelist: 2TALK42 Ministries. Pastor: Jeff James.

LAGNIAPPE

■ The three Baptist associations of Central Louisiana are searching for a Director of Missions.

Please send recommendations to: Don F. Mabry, President of the Baptist Mission Center Trustees, for Big Creek, North Rapides and Central Louisiana Baptist Associations, 2201 Melrose St, Pineville LA 71360 or bmcpineville@gmail.com.

■ Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport: Kacy Benson Ministries, March 8-9, Thursday, 7 p.m.; Friday 8 a.m. Pastor: Chuck Pourciau.

■ First Baptist Church, Winnfield: Wild Game and Seafood Banquet, March 10, 6 p.m. in the Family Life Center. There will be a "surprise" guest speaker to share some hunting and fishing tales, so bring your favorite "road kill" and come join us. Pastor: Steven Smithson.

■ First Baptist Church, Covington: "Our Story" — A night of praise and worship for Women. March 15. Benji and Jenna Cowart, Worship Arts Pastors at FBC Covington, will share their own personal story of their life journey, as well as the story behind some of the songs they have written, i.e., Redeemed, Rise, The Only Name, and others. Cost is free and childcare is available with reservation. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.

■ Crossroads Church, Hammond: Marriage simulcast led by Paul Tripp, March 16-17, Friday, 6-9 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon. Cost: \$20/couple (covers conference costs and two meals). Crossroads is now located in the Baptist Collegiate Ministry building at SLU. For more information, go to www.crossroadshammond.com or call 985.429.1299. Pastor: Asah Hudgins.

■ First Baptist Church, Calvin: Youth Rally, March 17. Speaker: Scott Sullivan, former Youth Minister at FBC-Winnfield, and now on staff at FBC Houghton. For more information, contact Youth Minister Dusty

Johnson (318.548.1431) or Pastor Billy VerHoef (318.332.9665). Pastor: Bill VerHoef.

■ Gateway Baptist Church, Ball: March Madness Outdoor Festival, March 17, 9 a.m. — 5 p.m. There will be a car, truck and bike show, a vendor market, live music and food. Bring one non-perishable item (per person) for a discount on game tickets. Pastor: Jason Dubea.

■ First Baptist Church, Boyce: Community Shamrock Festival, March 17, 2-5 p.m. There will be games, booths, petting zoos, popcorn & snacks and vendors. There is no cost. Pastor: Thomas Walker.

■ Cook Baptist Church, Ruston: Easter Eggstravaganza, March 17, 4:30-7 p.m. at Elli's Pumpkin Patch in Dubach. Pastor: Jeff Smart.

■ First Baptist Church, Ruston: Marriage Conference with Gary Chapman, March 17, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Cost: \$29 for a single; \$59 for a couple. Register for the conference at fmarriedpeople.org. For more information contact Brittany Jackson at Brittany@FBCruston.org or call the church office at

318.255.4628. Pastor: Chris Craig.

■ First Baptist Church, Bossier: FB Sportsman's Event 2018, March 18, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Featuring a BBQ Cookoff, wild game, archery demonstration, boats, fishing, motorcycles and ATVs. If you are interested in competing in the BBQ Rib Cookoff portion of the event, you can register at www.firstbossier.com/bbqcookoff.

■ HIS Church, Pineville: Easter Egg Hunt and Egg Knocking Contest, March 21 at 5 p.m. Students need to dye a dozen eggs for the egg knocking contest. Pastor: Steve Speer.

■ First Baptist Church, Covington: The Collingsworth Family in concert, March 23, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 at www.fbccov.org. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.

■ First Baptist Church, Calhoun: Annual Run to the Cross, March 24. The 5k and 10k runs start at 8:15 a.m. The fun run will start once the walkers and runners have completed the course. Cost: \$30 for walking or running 5K; \$35 for 10K; no charges for 1 mile fun run. Late registration for 5k is

\$35 and 10k is \$40. This a community-wide outreach that is a fun, carnival-type event. Food and fellowship are abundant. Pastor: Neil Everett.

■ Trinity Baptist Church, Turkey Creek: 5th Annual Ladies Conference — "Reclaimed, Repurposed & Renewed," March 24, 9 a.m.-noon. Cost: \$12 per person (lunch included following the event). Speaker: Kathy Nelson. Special Music: Michelle Tolar. Registration prior to March 9 is appreciated but there will be event morning registration 8-8:45 a.m. No child care provided. For more information, contact Jodie Nugent jarnugent2010@gmail.com or call the church at 337.461.2300. Pastor: Eddie Douglas Jr.

■ First Baptist Church, Haynesville: Easter Egg Hunt, March 24. Pastor: Jeff Tinsley.

■ Live Oak Baptist Church, Watson: Retirement reception for Howard Turner, March 24, 2-5 p.m. There will be a walk-through style reception in the fellowship hall at Live Oak. Food and refreshments will be provided. Everyone is invited to attend.

Scripture Crypto

The Scripture Crypto is a Bible verse in which one letter has been substituted for another, thus encoding the verse. To find out what the verse is, you must determine what each letter is a substitute for. An "a," for example, may stand for a "t" in this week's issue of the ScriptureCrypto. Next week, "a" could stand for a "d." Each week, each letter is different. Solve by trial and error. The answer will be given next week. Note: All numerals, such as those in the scripture reference after the verse, are spelled out.

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xqluu rtmob vqoo, lgh vqtp xqluv eo rpv tcc ctb omob.

telhwlg vog

Clues:
V = T; L = A

Answer to February 22 Scripture Crypto:
Deuteronomy one:forty-three

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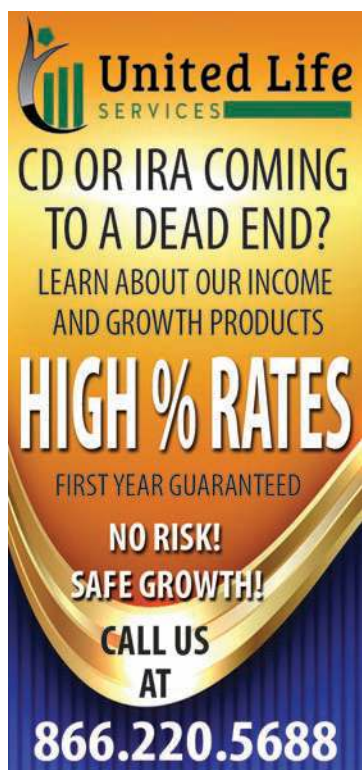
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Review: Samson was first superhero

By PHIL BOATWRIGHT
Baptist Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (BP) — “Samson,” a new film about an iconic Old Testament figure, reminds us that while man judges our deeds, God judges the heart.

The creators of “God’s Not Dead” (the leading faith film of 2014) are premiering the action-packed drama Samson, which opened in theaters nationwide Feb. 16.

Starring Taylor James as Samson in a cast with Lindsay Wagner, Billy Zane, Rutger Hauer and Jackson Rathbone, the biblically themed tale contains a redemptive message that suggests our failures need not define our character.

“Most people know that Samson had long hair, Delilah cut it off, and that he lost his strength,” director Bruce MacDonald has said. “But there’s so much more. Samson was an unwilling hero, and his journey to regain his faith — the whole story — is relevant today.”

The story of Samson illustrates a champion chosen by

God to deliver Israel from her tormentors, despite his failings. And the film reminds us that there is a time for peace, but also a time for war.

Using his God-given supernatural strength, Samson pits himself against the oppressive Philistine empire. Alas, the seduction of a beautiful temptress brings his downfall. Captured and blinded by his enemies, he is left to die, forgotten in a dungeon. But while Samson had made impulsive, often self-centered decisions, he ultimately realized that God was merciful and finally called out to Him, praying for one final victory.

“For anyone who ever wondered if they really could do what God called them to do, this film is for them,” said Pure Flix CEO Michael Scott.

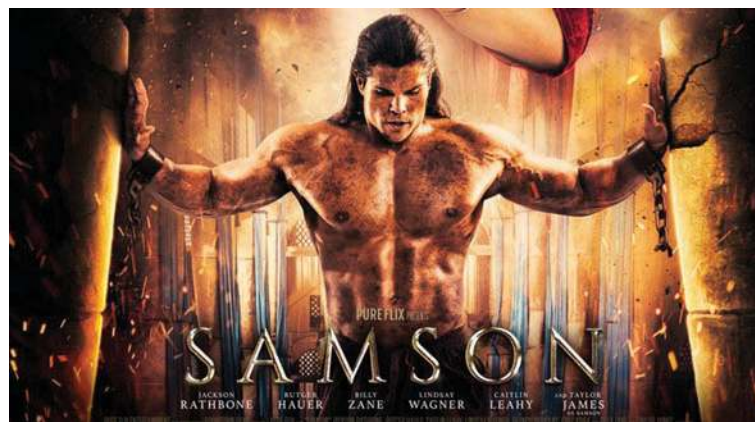
As we learn from examples throughout the Scriptures, God uses us, great and meek, in spite of our weaknesses and failings. Along with their accomplishments, the shortcomings of Abraham, Jacob, Jonah, Paul, Peter and, of course, Samson are recounted in the

books of the Bible. What’s more, it is evident throughout God’s Word that the true greatness found in these men is their faith. Each eventually displayed a declarative trust that revealed their compliance to God’s will over their own.

Nowadays, a man’s past wrongdoings topple him no matter his accomplishments. Can you imagine how today’s social media would vivisection King David after learning he had seduced a married woman and had her husband killed so he could possess her? Would any of his victories stand up against his lust-charged crime?

The new Samson film, however, reminds us that our heavenly Father assesses more judiciously than man. Upon reflection of our relationship with the Creator, in both the Old and New Testaments it is apparent that God judges the intent of the heart.

Though missing the glamour and polish of Cecil B. DeMille’s 1949 “Samson and Delilah,” this new rendering features a lead actor who looks as if he could bench-



The action-packed movie “Samson,” a new film about an iconic Old Testament figure, opened in theaters nationwide Feb. 16. The movie reminds us that while man judges our deeds, God judges the heart.

press Conan the Barbarian. But moreover, the film caused me to consider: Will God reject my service to Him because I have been, and still am, a faulty man?

Thankfully, despite the occasional detour from my spiritual path, the film and steady Scripture study remind me that I’m still one of His kids, loved and used for His glory. I believe the movie will help fellow worriers come to the same conclusion. After all, does a father turn his back on a repentant prodigal son? No. Nor does our heavenly Father. Chastisement and consequences — these cannot be escaped.

But then, neither can our God’s merciful tenderness.

Samson was brought down by ego and an ill-placed passion for a deceitful woman. But the story does not end there. The warrior of the book of Judges saw the error of his ways, eventually asking for forgiveness and seeking redemption. In his physical blindness, he saw clearly the nature of his Creator.

I’d say that’s a potent cinematic message for all of us.

Produced by Pure Flix Entertainment and filmed on location in South Africa, Samson is rated PG-13 for violent imagery and some sensuality.

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