

Trees FIRMLY PLANTED



SPIRITUAL VITALITY EMPHASIS
NOBTS focuses on Bible Reading
and Scripture Memorization

Bang for the Buck: Southern Baptists and the Problem of World Missions

BY DR. CHUCK KELLEY

My message in this issue of the Vision is both presentation and sermon. The presentation is for those of us who are passionate about taking the gospel and the glory of God to the ends of the earth. The sermon, which will conclude the presentation, is for us all.

To hear the last words of Jesus before He ascended to return to the Father is something that moves me to this day. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

These words are simple, clear, inspiring and overwhelming. The gospel, which has so transformed our lives, must be spread. It must be spread everywhere. The message is simple. We must bear witness to Jesus. Where we must bear witness is clearly described: from our nearest neighbor to the stranger far away and everyone in between. No weakness or inability in ourselves will lessen our responsibility, for the Holy Spirit Himself will empower us. These words of Jesus send chill bumps down my spine, but did you notice how completely overwhelming this assignment is?



Kelley

An Overwhelming Task

Pumped up and thrilled though I am, I find myself feeling like a hiker with a walking stick standing at the base of Mount Everest. What makes me uneasy is not a question about the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit's power. What intimidates me is the scope of what must be done to obey. The unavoidable problem can be summed up in one word: Logistics. To put it bluntly: It's a big world!

Consider the landmass of our five continents! If point A is where I am and point B is the ends of the earth, the journey alone is immense. And to be truthful the travel, in whatever form it takes, is the easiest part. For the world is not only a huge world. It is a world of almost infinite complexity. The physical world map is a piece of cake compared to the social world map. Humanity has taken the immensity of the world and divided it into 194 different nations. Each of these nations is intentionally seeking to differentiate itself from all of its neighbors. But it is more complicated than that, for most of these nations can be further divided into distinct people groups.

Researchers estimate that there are at least 11,601 distinct people groups within the 194 nations. Each of these people groups have a history, a culture, and a particular way of seeing the world, including an amazing variety of religious beliefs. But it is even more complicated than that. Researchers also tell us there are 6,909 known

languages spoken by all those people groups. A surprising number of those spoken languages have no written language. For many no one on earth outside of that group can speak the language.

Although the church has been working on this assignment for two thousand years, we can still identify people groups that are yet to hear about Jesus. As of January 2009, the Joshua project tells us there are still 6,426 unreached people groups scattered across the world.

Do you have in mind now how vast and complex our world is? With that big picture firmly in front of you, consider the logistics of Acts 1:8 and the task of spreading the gospel through Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, and the remotest part of the earth. Each one of those 11,601 people groups requires personnel. Some person or persons must go. Each one of those who go must have some form of training and preparation. A strategy on how to spread the gospel within that people group or nation must be developed. Resources necessary to carry out the strategy must be provided. Once underway, there must be the inevitable continuous adjustments to personnel, training, strategy and resources as the work unfolds.

To better understand how vast and complex these logistical issues are, focus on two examples. Consider India. The estimated population of India is 1,166,079,217 and growing. It is now the largest nation in the world. There are 4,635 distinct people groups in India alone, and those people speak 438 languages. What will it take to reach India? But let's make it simple. Consider our own nation, the United States of America. The North American Mission Board estimates that within the United States at least 255,000,000 people are lost and do not have a relationship with Christ. We are one of the largest nations of unconverted people in the world! Perhaps you think you are surrounded by Bubbas like you. In point of fact at least 304 people groups currently living in the USA have been identified. What will it take to reach this nation?

You begin to get an idea of why the logistics of the Great Commission are so overwhelming. I hate to do this to you, but actually it is more complicated than simply making Jesus and the gospel known to the ends of the earth. In other places Jesus elaborated on what He kept simple in Acts 1:8. Hear his voice afresh in Matthew 28:19-20. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Making Disciples

Our assignment is more than making Jesus known. An advertising campaign put together by a secular PR company could do that. The outcome Jesus expects is disciples. What is a disciple? According to this text, a disciple is at least someone who has been baptized and who is so well and thoroughly taught that they live out His commandments.

We should not call this the Great Commission. We should call it the "Overwhelming, Mind-boggling, This Is Going To Take Awhile, Roll Up Your Sleeves, Get Ready To Carry A Cross, We Are Going To Have To Give it Everything We Have, People Will Die Along the Way" Commission. But take courage my friends. Remember the promise of 1 Thessalonians 5:24: "Faithful is He who called you who will also do it." God does not give assignments He will not enable us to complete. The question on the table is not "Can we do this?" The question is "How do we proceed?"

Faced with such awesome demands, the necessity of using our resources efficiently and effectively is clearly of paramount importance. Perhaps this is why I have been drawn to the Great Commission strategy developed by Southern Baptists. To be

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passionate about the Great Commission requires asking how to get the most mileage out of every dollar spent. Like a child in a fireworks store, we want to know how to get the biggest bang for our bucks!

I can say without apology or qualification that Southern Baptist make dollars given to a typical SBC church cover more of the Great Commission than any group in history. They are able to do this because of a strategic decision made many years ago. It was a bold, out of the box decision. Today other groups have envied that decision because they have not been able to match or exceed its results. The choice we made flew in the face of how everyone else in the evangelical world was funding the Great commission. The risks were great, but the results have been astounding. The strategy is called the Cooperative Program. It is a strategy based on four simple principles.

Cooperative Program Principles

The first principle is that churches can do more together than any one church can do independently. Every Southern Baptist church is asked to set aside a portion of its undesignated tithes and offerings each week for the Cooperative Program of the Convention. This requires each church to limit what it spends on its own programs in order to support the common strategy of all Southern Baptists. The amount set aside is determined by each church.

The second principle is that we work broadly to address the whole Great Commission. It is about missions and discipleship, ministry and evangelism, at home and abroad, including both the training and the deployment of ministers and missionaries. Nurturing the churches and members we have as well as starting new churches and winning new people to Christ are all a part of the program. This may be the most radical element of the strategy. Other groups focused on missions only and found that their results could not keep up with those of Southern Baptists.

Third, we work steadily, knowing it is a marathon, not a sprint. Because the task is too large to be accomplished in any one lifetime, Southern Baptists seek to continually enlarge our efforts so that every generation is closer to fulfilling the Lord's assignment than the previous generation. Continually doing more is a better description of our goal than finishing the job. Jesus alone will tell us when we are through. There is no visible finish line, nor goal that will tell us when we complete the task. The return of Christ will mark the end of our mission.

Perhaps most important is the local church principle. The Cooperative Program is designed to expand the ministry of the local church, not replace it. It always at every level remains accountable to and under the control of our local churches through their representatives. The local church, not a convention hierarchy, is the final authority for Cooperative Program ministries.

The Journey Each Dollar Given

The Cooperative Program makes it possible for the offering of a typical Southern Baptist church to start where it is given and make

its way to the remotest part of the earth, accomplishing a great deal along the way. To see this remarkable process in action, let's follow the journey of a dollar given to a Southern Baptist church.

The journey of an SBC dollar begins when I take a dollar out of my wallet and put it in the offering plate of my local church. Southern Baptists believe the Bible commands every follower of Jesus to give to the work of God's Kingdom through his or her local church. The Bible teaches us that all are to tithe and all are to give offerings above that tithe as God provides and directs. How much I give is determined by my conscience before God. More on that later.

The whole congregation determines what to do with that dollar after I give it to the Lord. This is why Southern Baptists vote on budgets. Much of it will go to the local ministries of my church, including worship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism and whatever else my congregation decides to do. A portion of that dollar will be given to the Cooperative Program of the SBC. How much? Each congregation makes that decision as a part of their budget process. The Cooperative Program portion is sent from the local church to the state Baptist Convention, making the state convention the second stop on the journey of an SBC dollar. Typically the state convention is comprised of all the SBC churches in a given state. Two states have more than one convention. Some churches form a convention of more than one state to have a bigger fellowship. There are SBC churches now working together in all fifty states.

The portion of the SBC dollar sent to the state convention is used in two ways. The first is to fund the ministries shared by all the Southern Baptist congregations in the state. This varies from state to state. For example, some of the ministries shared by Louisiana Baptist churches include support services for churches in the state (particularly those that are smaller); supplemental pay for pastors and church staff members, often in the form of annuity contributions or insurance; collegiate ministry to all the college and university students in the state; a children's home for orphans and foster children, coordinating mission trips at home and abroad to match up churches in the state with needs outside the state; disaster relief, church planting and much more. Decisions on which ministries to undertake and how to fund those ministries are made by the messengers (representatives) sent to state convention business meetings by the local churches of the state.

A second way the Cooperative Program dollar sent to state conventions is used, is for the funding of the national and international ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention. How much of the state convention dollar sent on to the Southern Baptist Convention is determined each year by messengers (representatives) who go to the business meetings of the state convention. The lowest percentage of the dollar sent on to the SBC is 11.41 percent by the Minnesota-Wisconsin Convention. The highest percentage is 55.98 percent by the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. The average amount forwarded on to the SBC is 38.62 percent. This leads us to the next stop of the Southern Baptist dollar.

The next stop of an SBC dollar is the Southern Baptist Convention. Dollars sent to the SBC through state conventions from local churches all over the nation are pooled together to fund four Great Commission ministries carried out by ten entities.

Fifty percent of all those CP dollars goes to the International Mission Board, funding more than 5,000 missionaries serving around the world with and on behalf of SBC churches. 22.79 percent of the SBC dollars goes to the work of the North American Mission Board. Another 5,000 missionaries are working with



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NAMB all across the North American continent as a result of this funding. This means 72.79 percent of all Cooperative Program dollars going to the SBC are being directly spent on missions!

Another 22.16 percent of SBC funds are used for theological education and the maintenance of the historical archives of the Convention. Southern Baptists have six seminaries in various regions of the country. In any given year these six seminaries will train more than 10,000 God-called men and women for ministry and missions. At New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the Cooperative Program provides almost 50 percent of our operating budget.

To act as the Southern Baptist voice in national discussions on matters of morals, ethics and religious liberty and to provide resources for these areas to Southern Baptist churches, 1.65 percent of the national Cooperative Program funds are used to support the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. The final 3.32 percent of dollars going to the Southern Baptist Convention is used by the Executive Committee for Convention operating expenses. The decisions on how to allocate the dollars that come to the Southern Baptist Convention are made by the messengers (representatives) sent by local Southern Baptist churches to the business meeting of the SBC. But there is more! Added to the awesome journey of the SBC dollar is what we in New Orleans call Lagnippe, a little something extra.

The community of churches created by the momentum of working together to fund the Great Commission makes possible two other amazing ministries that do not require a dime of support from the Cooperative Program. The first of these is LifeWay Christian Resources. LifeWay provides all the materials, resources, and services necessary for SBC churches to do their ministries. Churches are not required to use them, but they are always available for every aspect of church life. Nearly all of our churches use at least some of their products and services.

Guidestone Financial Services exists to provide retirement services and insurance for Southern Baptist and other evangelical ministers. It is now the largest Christian-based registered mutual fund company in America. The size of the Southern Baptist community of churches, created by working together on missions, makes it possible for these entities to provide their products and services without any funds from the Cooperative Program. Our missions giving has created resources and services that do not need mission funds for support!

Bang for Your Buck

We have now followed a Southern Baptist dollar on its Great Commission journey from a church collection plate to the ends of the earth. Here comes the crucial question: How much bang are we getting for our buck? **First Bang: We are getting a systematic approach to the whole Great Commission.** At every point of the journey a comprehensive strategy for making the gospel known and teaching those who respond to be disciples is being developed and constantly tweaked. All strategies outside the church are designed with multiple connecting points for local churches to plug in and participate to the level of their interest and resources. From the training of missionaries and ministers to starting churches, nurturing existing churches, and engaging in ministry, the whole

challenge we face is addressed. A part of every dollar given addresses every part of the task.

Second Bang: This strategy makes it possible for every SBC church, big or small, wealthy or poor, to participate in the whole Great Commission. When a church participates in the Cooperative Program, it is participating in every phase of the SBC Great Commission strategy. No church has a reason to stay on the sideline. Our smallest church is supporting a larger missionary endeavor than the largest church in the world could sustain.

Third Bang: This strategy clearly and intentionally preserves the authority and autonomy of the local church while immersing every church in working with thousands and thousands of other churches. Each church determines how much it wants to give to the Cooperative Program. There are no assessments, and a very minimal gift is considered enough for participation in SBC programs, ministries, and business meetings. Gifts to the total process are called Cooperative Program gifts, but every church is free to give in other ways to any part of the process if it so chooses. Again, only a very minimal gift is necessary to qualify for participation as a Southern Baptist. Churches are also free to participate directly in any part of the strategy at every level. All final decisions on strategy and spending are made by the churches or their representatives.

Bottom line: this is a bigger bang than any one church's buck can deliver, no matter how big that church might be.

When you look at how much of the Great Commission this strategy addresses with each Southern Baptist dollar, one Hebrew word leaps into my mind. . .WOW!

This truly is the most amazing strategy for systematically funding the Great Commission any family of churches has ever conceived. It is an unparalleled stroke of genius. The results are phenomenal. A study by empty tomb identified just the overseas mission giving of the major denominations in America. In 2003 Southern Baptists gave \$279,663,000 to International missions. The second largest contribution to overseas missions was \$56,700,000 by United Methodists. What a difference CP makes. You may be wondering: the system itself is so impressive, but with the dollar making that many stops, how long does it take each portion of the dollar to be delivered to its destination? The answer may be the most amazing feature of the strategy. When dollars are given, dollars are delivered. Our seminary, which is one of the last stops of a Southern Baptist dollar, receives Cooperative Program dollars from SBC churches all over the nation every week! Not once a month. Not once a year. Every week! When Southern Baptists give a dollar, that dollar is distributed. Even when controversies rage at any level of SBC life, the SBC dollar makes its Great Commission journey. There is that Hebrew word again: WOW!

A Conviction

This is why I have come to a settled conviction. The greatest challenge facing the Southern Baptist Convention today is not creating a strategy to mobilize SBC resources to obey the Great Commission. The greatest challenge we face is whether or not Southern Baptists will give enough dollars to continue enlarging our Great Commission impact as have the generations who have preceded us. While any strategy can be tweaked, the far greater need of Southern Baptists is putting more dollars into the strategy we have.

With all that we have to celebrate, I would be less than honest if I did not also say there are some storm clouds on the horizon. There are signs our Great Commission momentum is slowing.

With all that we have to celebrate, I would be less than honest if I did not also say there are some storm clouds on the horizon. There are signs our Great Commission momentum is slowing.

One sign is the steady weakening of our statistical measures of growth. I have addressed this in an earlier presentation entitled "The New Methodists" and will not comment further at this time. Another troubling sign of the gathering storm is the trend developing in our funding of the Great Commission. Here is the simple version. Southern Baptists are giving less per capita to their churches. Southern Baptist churches are giving less per church to the Cooperative Program. As a result, funding for the Great Commission is not keeping up with funding growth in the past. Where are these trends coming from? I hear the crashing of thunder. I see the flashes of lightning. I hear the pounding of rain in the way you and I are living our lives.

Materialism and Debt

The thunder in this storm is the growing effect of materialism on all of us. We have the privilege of living in the most affluent nation in the history of humanity. More of us have more stuff than any people who have ever lived. Throughout the current economic crisis we have been told our nation's economy is now based on shopping: what consumers spend. Stores are open seven days a week. The internet is open 24 hours a day. You may live in an urban center or a tiny country community. The goods and services once reserved for the wealthy are available to all and seem to get cheaper every year. What we want has a far bigger impact on our spending than what we need. And I, along with most Southern Baptists, am right there in the pack of shoppers, shoulder to shoulder with our non-Christian neighbors.

The lightning flashes in this storm are steadily increasing debt. Our nation of shoppers has become a nation of debtors, living off the minimum payments on our multiple credit cards. As we spend more and more to maintain the lifestyle we think we deserve and that we see our neighbors have, accumulating debt becomes more and more necessary. Debt is like a gorilla. Once it gets in the room it cannot be ignored. The greater the load of debt we carry, the less choice we have in our spending. The less choice we have in our spending, the less we are likely to give to the work of God's kingdom.

Here in New Orleans we know that when you get thunder and lightning, you usually get rain. The siren song of materialism is drawing more and more of us onto the coral reefs of debt, creating lives of stress and anxiety. When stress and anxiety are dogging my footsteps, what I begin to long for is being comfortable. Isn't that our natural response to rain? Rainy afternoons make for good naps. Rainy days are wonderful times to read a book or catch up on work around the house. One thing I am not looking for when I long to be comfortable is a passionate vision. Our showers of blessings have become puddles of comfort tugging us inside where the challenges won't be a bother. I suspect more of the people who know us best, know what makes us comfortable than know what our favorite Bible verse is.

This is where we are as Southern Baptists. We are blending more and more into our culture and becoming less and less recognizable as the people of God. We are getting more and more settled into

our ways and thinking less and less about our particular role in the Lord's agenda. We feel less and less compelled to sacrifice in order to fulfill the Great Commission. As we make our nests, our homes, and the churches we attend more and more comfortable, the lost peoples of our communities, our nation, and the world will be less and less bothered by Southern Baptists wanting to tell them about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the glory of the God who loves them and wants to redeem them. Those who do happen to hear about Jesus and respond to Him will not have to worry much about being encouraged to learn the teachings of Jesus and live them. We who do believe will just have a happy time together in worship.

Trusting Your Finances to God

I leave you with the question that gets to the heart of where we are in funding the Great Commission and being the kind of people who stay serious about wanting to fulfill it. That question is: How much of my financial life am I willing to live before God? Please pay attention here! I have no interest in or intent to tell any of you what to buy or not buy, eat or not eat. We would all do well to heed the warning of Jesus about how easy it is to see a speck in someone else's eye and not notice the log in our own. I offer no criticism or critique of the lifestyle of any in this place. My only question is: Are you seeking the counsel of God in ALL of your financial decisions?

Discipleship must embrace our whole lives, not parts of our lives. This matters because any part of our lives left outside of our walk with God becomes a path for the influence of our culture, worldliness if you will, to enter our minds and begin shaping our behavior and values. This is how godly men and women become neutralized in their witness. If we consistently bring our wallets and purses into our conversations with God, we are likely to make wise decisions. My fear is that too many of us leave our wallets on the dresser when we have our quiet times with Jesus. We spend without realizing our spending is on the list of discipleship issues God wants to address in us. We easily get into the habit of giving to God's work what we happen to have left over. We neglect asking God consistently, daily how He wants us to use what He has provided for us. Foolish it would be to make a pledge before God that you will stop shopping. But that man or woman serious about following Jesus is even more of a fool if he thinks God does not notice or care about what he does with his money. I ask again: How much of my financial life am I willing to live before God?

An Invitation

I close this article by extending an invitation to you.

The invitation is: Can you give one dollar more to fulfill the Great Commission? My wife and I are adding one dollar a day more to our normal tithe and offering for our church. Perhaps you could do more. Perhaps you should do less. Imagine what would happen if all of us would do at least a little more. A larger gift to your church would result in more funding for the whole Great Commission strategy of Southern Baptists. Perhaps you would like to do something else. My wife and I are giving \$1,000 more than our normal annual gift to the Seminary. It is a time of great need and great opportunity for NOBTS. I know a gift in these times would be a great sacrifice, but I also know what a great impact any gift from you to the Seminary could make. Thank you for your prayers. May all of us renew our commitment to be Great Commission Christians and our support of the SBC Great Commission strategy.

Charles S. Kelley, Jr.

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TO THE LEAST

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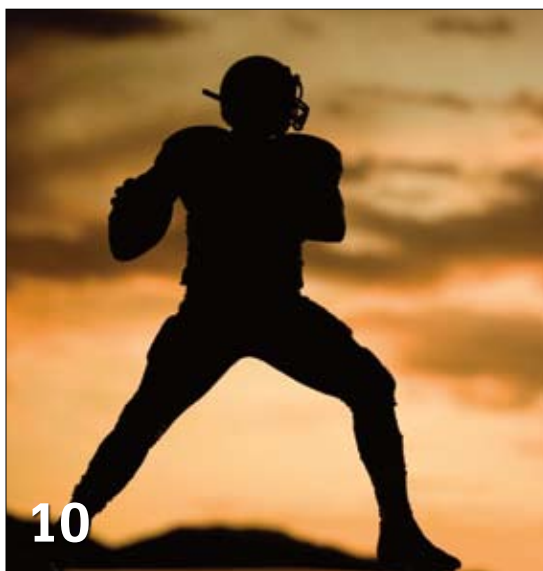


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Trees

FIRMLY PLANTED

by Gary D. Myers

Psalm 1:1-3

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Psalm 1 paints a vivid picture of those who immerse themselves in God's Word. They are like deeply rooted trees on the banks of a river. **Healthy. Fruitful. Strong.**

When New Orleans Seminary President Chuck Kelley introduced this year's school-wide emphasis on reading through the Bible and memorizing Scripture, he did so by pointing the seminary family to the first Psalm. The goal: To build a seminary of men and women who are like trees firmly planted by the "waters" of God's Word – ministers who are prepared for many years of fruitful service.

Kelley's plan calls for students, professors and staff members to read through the Bible between Sept. 1, 2009 and Aug. 31, 2010 and to memorize 52 verses – one verse for every week of the year. This is part of a larger focus on the Seminary's Core Value of Spiritual Vitality which reads: "We are a worshiping community emphasizing both personal spirituality and gathering together as a Seminary family for the praise and adoration of God and instruction in His Word."

Reading through the Bible, is an assignment in every New Orleans Seminary course this academic year. In addition to personal reading, the seminary is emphasizing corporate Bible reading. Students, staff members and professors are reading brief portions of the day's text during each main campus chapel service. During the academic year, the text will be read in numerous different languages in addition to English. At a recent chapel, a staff member read the Bible in French while the text was displayed in English on the chapel screens.

Alumni have also been encouraged to participate in the focus on scripture reading. All this is designed to emphasize the importance of the Bible in the life of New Orleans Seminary family – students, staff members, professors and alumni.

"The Bible is that book whose authority, guidance and power is necessary for any act of ministry to be effectual. It always has and always will form the heart of the curriculum of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," Kelley said. "This School of Providence and Prayer exists in large part to teach its students to know thoroughly, interpret accurately and proclaim clearly God's divinely inspired Word."

Kelley went on to say that the formal study of Scripture is not enough. Personal, daily engagement with God's Word is needed in the life of every believer. That is the message of Psalm 1. The writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, warns about unfinished lives.

"Our seminary family is a collection of unfinished lives," Kelley said. "We come [to NOBTS] to be equipped and made ready for a mission given to us by God. But the reality is, even after you have completed your preparation and moved on into the field of service of ministry you are still going to have an unfinished life."

The passage, Kelley said, presents believers with a "fork" in the road.

"The Psalmist tells us quite clearly that one road will take you further and further away for the Lord and produce in you a life that is more and more like the world," Kelley said. "The other road will take you into a life that is more and more like God, a life that will in itself become the fruit of what God expects in every life devoted to Him."

"On the one hand, we have the image of a tree planted banks of a river bearing fruit in due season. Its leaves never wither; that tree is secure, healthy, prosperous as it grows," he said.

The other image used in Psalm 1 is that of the dry grain husks left behind after the harvest. Farmers in the ancient world would separate the husks from the grain by tossing the crops into the air. The heavier grain would fall to the threshing floor, but the husks would blow away in



Photo by Boyd Guy

Ashley Williamson, a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry student from Rosenberg, Texas, reads in Martin Chapel.

the wind. The husk is a picture of the unfinished life that rejects God, Kelley said.

“What makes the difference between the tree and the husk? God says it’s quite simple. There is one thing and one thing alone that determines the difference in becoming a ‘tree’ and being a ‘dried up husk’ for the wind to blow away,” Kelley said. “That one difference is immersion in the Word of God.”

“This is why we are reading the whole Bible though, every page of it,” Kelley said. He said even through students will be held accountable for the reading by their professors, the true tests will come later on in life.

“When the real tests come, you never have advanced notice and you don’t get to study,” Kelley said.

For Kelley, that test came with Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Immediately passages from God’s Word began bubbling up providing hope and strength, he said.

A satellite photograph of Egypt, aptly illustrates the message of Psalm 1, Kelley said. Egypt is dominated by the dusty, brown sand of the North African desert. However, snaking through the heart of the nation is a narrow ribbon of green – the mighty Nile River.

“The things planted by that river, in spite of the climate and the sand, they grow through all the centuries of time,” Kelley said. “This is the choice you can make. You can immerse your life in the Word of God and live rooted by the river or you can coast on what you already know, coast on what you’ve already done, coast on where you’ve already been and watch the drought eventually come.”

Meditating on God’s Word

When Dr. Kelley had the idea to launch a seminary-wide focus on Scripture Reading and Memorization this academic year, he enlisted the help of Dr. Jerry Pounds, Professor of Discipleship and Acting Chair of the Christian Education division at NOBTS. Kelley and Pounds wanted to help students renew their commitment to these spiritual disciplines.

Selecting a plan wasn’t an easy task. Pounds examined six to eight daily reading plans before he made his selection. Each plan took a different approach to reading through the Bible. Pounds chose a plan that offers a steady, balanced approach to daily reading. Each day the readings are similar in length – a mixture Old Testament passages with shorter readings from the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs.

At first Pounds questioned how some of the readings in the plan were handled. Often the readings stop in the middle of a story one day and continue the next. However, Pounds can see this as an advantage.

“It dawned on me ... if you are reading it daily, your mind is going through the activity of replaying part of that story that you’ve read and anticipating what you are going to read the next day,” Pounds said.

Now, Pounds sees a cognitive benefit in this way of reading. Anticipating and replaying from day to day – meditating on God’s Word – helps readers remember and internalize what they are reading.

“It really does force you to not read just for reading sake, but to really think through a particular story you have read or spiritual discipline to practice,” Pounds said. “There is a great sense of constant reinforcement and anticipation of what God is communicating to you on that day’s reading.”

Deeper, Stronger Roots

Reading through the Bible together is having a profound effect of students. The benefits have been immediate.

Kelley and Pounds knew that an increased emphasis on God’s Word would greatly enhance the ministry and academic pursuits of students. However, they did not expect just how quickly and how deeply the readings would permeate each student and each class discussion time

Students are interacting with the readings and applying what they learn to real-life situations, Pounds said. Professors note that students are responding to discussion questions by recalling scripture they have read earlier in the week or even that very day.

“It’s neat how God takes the relevancy of scripture and applies it to everyday experiences, even the academic part,” Pounds said.

Pounds see the immediate application benefit has been a work of God – one that he cannot fully explain. The fact that he cannot explain just how dynamic the focus on scripture has been among members of the seminary family confirms that results were not manufactured by the plan.

On the Web **The reading guide**

www.nobts.edu/Publications/BibleReadingPlan.html

The Office of Public Relations is happy to assist churches in adapting this plan for use in 2010. Contact Gary Myers at gmyers@nobts.edu for details.

"When the real tests come, you never have advanced notice and you don't get to study."

Dr. Chuck Kelley

Reading Testimonies

Thank you for this encouragement to grow more disciplined in my Bible reading and Scripture memorization.

Patti Robey
MACE '06

The Bible Reading Plan has been and continues to be a blessing to me. In addition to providing a method of self accountability for being obedient, having the structure in place allows me to keep track of my daily readings – encouraging and equipping me for my daily ministry duties. I have especially enjoyed my rereading of the early Psalms. I have even encouraged my orchestra members to use the plan and many have thanked me for the resource.

Steven H. Parker
M.Div. student

Associate Pastor, Pastoral Care/Instrumental Music,
Aloma Baptist Church, Winter Park, FL.

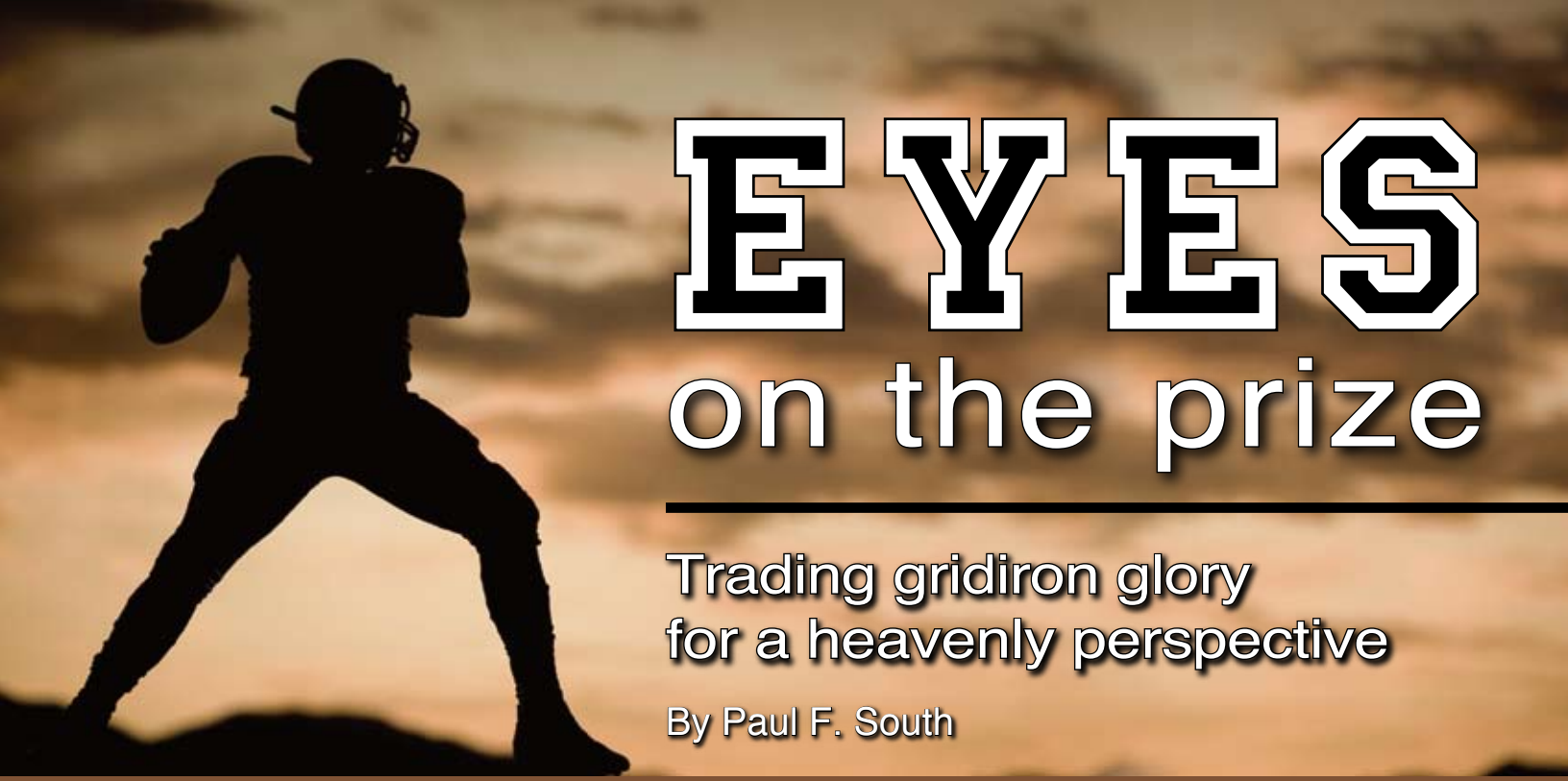
I have always had a very hard time being consistent with my Bible reading, and I was not looking forward to this assignment, but doing this assignment in this way has made a tremendous difference in my attitude, how I think throughout the day, and how my day goes overall, because it adds more peace, joy, and love for God in my daily life.

Preston Huffstutler
M.Div. student

on listening to audio Biblefeature
at www.biblegateway.com

The Bible reading plan with the seminary has been a tremendous encouragement to me. First, just knowing that I am reading the same passages as all of my fellow students in the seminary gives a distinct feeling of camaraderie and fellowship. Second, having a reading plan that covers several different sections of Scripture at one sitting has been a unique and enjoyable experience for me. I am thankful for our seminary, which places such a high value on the Word of God, and on having its people committed to that same Word.

Bill Horn
M.Div. student



EYES on the prize

Trading gridiron glory for a heavenly perspective

By Paul F. South

Dr. Charles Ray remembers the moment like it was yesterday. Back when pickup football was still allowed in the quadrangle near Leavell Chapel, a gaggle of kids was deep into a game of two-hand touch.

On one play, a pass sailed overhead, and rolled and bounced to the far end of the quad, some 60 yards away. Garry Harper (M.Div. '93), a seminary student at the time, was walking nearby.

"He picked up the ball, and threw it about 60 yards on a line," Ray said. "Those kids' eyes were as big as saucers."

In that moment they witnessed a flashback to Harper's pre-seminary life. A three-year starter at quarterback for the University of South Carolina, Harper led an efficient offense and helped running back George Rogers win the Heisman Trophy in 1980.

But football, like life, is a mist. The glory fades and withers like homecoming mums and gridiron grass. Harper understood that, as did his fellow NOBTS alumnus Dr. John Gibson and current student Terence Wells. They traded their temporal trophies of golden autumn afternoons for a higher calling.

DESIGNED FOR VICTORY

Until his freshman year at Hialeah-Miami Lakes High School, football was Harper's life. Then the 14-year-old's life began a downward spiral. He was failing classes, and was sixth on the football depth chart. And by his senior year, his parents divorced.

"I was raised in a Christian home," Harper said. "But I was desperate for answers. I discovered that Jesus was the only one true answer."

In 1978, he recommitted his life to Christ. For Harper, his journey of faith has been a "continual growing process," with his wife and several coaches who lived out Christ's example daily leading

him along the way. Harper earned the starting job as a senior, and earned second-team all-state and a football scholarship to South Carolina.

But for Harper, his walk with Christ, not his run to football glory, is the story.

After college, Harper spent a decade with IBM before surrendering to ministry. He was no longer a football hero, just another student juggling marriage, fatherhood, classes and work.

"I loved New Orleans seminary," Harper said. "I believe the Lord prepared me for ministry in a significant way."

After graduation from NOBTS, Harper spent 10 years in ministry before returning to the business world.

"The Lord gave my wife and me a peace about returning to the business world and to pursue life as a bi-vocational minister," Harper said. He now serves as a chaplain for the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office, the nationally-ranked Byrnes High School football team, and he serves on the county school board.

The Harpers have also built a legacy of faith. His oldest son Shane is preparing for life as a missionary, son Daniel is a student at the Berklee School of Music in Boston, and daughter Kara is a senior at Clemson.

What lessons did football teach that prepared him for seminary and ministry?

"Winning is important," Harper said. "Jesus designed us for victory and desires for us to have a legacy that points people to Him."

And if he could coach a seminary student, what counsel would he offer, based on his seasons at NOBTS?

"Don't lose your passion," Harper said. "Spend quality time with your family and not just on school. If you're single, immerse yourself about learning more about the life of Jesus and what His mission was, and live it out for yourself daily."

He added, "Be a winner! You were born to live and leave a legacy. What will it be?"



GIVING GOOD DEVOTIONALS

As a football player at Mississippi College in Clinton, John Gibson readily acknowledges that he was no superstar. More often than not, he was on the scout team, helping starters prepare for Saturday's opponent. That preparation meant servanthood, painful servanthood; getting blocked and tackled, ending every day battered, bruised and sore.

A Macon, Ga., native and the son of a pastor (NOBTS alumnus and former Wake Forest All-American John Gibson, Sr.), Gibson earned his way on to the Choctaw team, and a scholarship.

"Coach John Williams told me that if I would come and make the team, he'd give me a scholarship. I made the team, and thoroughly enjoyed my experience. It was providential that the Lord opened the door to Mississippi College"

Along with his father, both of Gibson's grandfathers were Baptist pastors. Gibson was part of a cadre of players strong in the faith. He became one of the team chaplains, leading devotionals and daily prayers at practice.

And, when Williams required players to lift weights on Sundays, Gibson and some Christian teammates took a stand for the faith.

"I told him I would lift weights six days a week as long as I didn't have to do it on Sunday, because it was interfering with Sunday worship," Gibson said. "He relented, and was gracious about it."

Gibson praised his Mississippi College experience, and his time as a student-athlete.

"Mississippi College was a wonderful experience," Gibson said. "I enjoyed being a student-athlete because it gave me an opportunity to witness to people who didn't know the Lord. It gave me a platform to witness to students if I wanted to. Evangelism was not hard."

The call to ministry was ever present in Gibson's life, even before college football.

"I cut my fingers off when I was 15 years old, trying to repair a lawn mower while it was running. They reattached the fingers, but I began to feel the Lord talking to me then

about ministry. When I was 17, I made it public."

But as Gibson began academic preparation for ministry, football stardom was not to be found. For most of his career, Gibson said, he was "the beat-up dummy," in games only when the Choctaws were far ahead or way behind. He did earn a varsity letter.

"Coach Williams came to me one time and said 'Gibson, the only reason I keep you on this team is because you give good devotionals,'" he recalled.

Gibson began to understand servanthood during those years on the scout team. Today, as a member of the faculty at Leavell College, Gibson teaches students about servanthood.

"The football experience gave me insights into leadership and how to play on a team and how to be willing to let the other guy shine as he goes into the end zone, and I'm just on the sideline getting to cheer him," Gibson said.

BREAKING THE ICE

Terry Wells is used to breaking the ice.

At East Central High School in Hurley, Miss., Terry Wells was one of the first African American players. It was the same story at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he was among the first African American scholarship athletes to suit up for the Golden Eagles.

Crowds weren't always welcoming to black players in those days. Wells and his teammates faced a number of challenging situations.

"There were times that I wondered why we went through what we did," he said. "But God wanted us to grow and mature spiritually."

Wells would later spend time in the NFL, playing at Green Bay and for the Houston Oilers. A torn hamstring cut short his NFL career.

Wells worked in the Litton Shipyards for eight months, then Mississippi Power for three decades. Then God called.



Wells, 1973

It was just a process of God bringing me through, and giving me a revelation of who He is," Wells said. "He has all power."

For athletes at high levels – physically powerful people – giving way to an omnipotent God is no small challenge, especially when his playing days ended, Wells said.

"I struggled. It was like having the thing you loved the most taken from you," Wells said.

"It caused some problems in my life, because I had trouble coming to grips with the fact that I wouldn't put on a uniform again."

It was not until he hit a low in his life, that he realized that God wanted him to share Christ with others.

Now, Wells is at peace. He serves as associate minister at Morning Star Baptist Church in Gulfport, Miss., and is in the Master of Divinity program at NOBTS. The triumphs, toils and snares of football have honed his heart for pastoral ministry.

"I always encourage others to have a personal relationship with the Lord," Wells said. "But to do that, you have to realize that God loves us unconditionally. We don't deserve the grace, the mercy, the love he shows us, that grace is the unmerited favor of God."

The pop of the pad and the roar of the crowd are faded memories for Terry Wells, just as for Garry Harper and John Gibson. But like them, Wells takes heart from a key verse in the Bible's best-loved chapter, Psalm 23.

"The Lord is my shepherd," Wells said. "All of us have been stuck in the mud at one time or another, but God is the great shepherd who pulls us out of the mud. I thank God for pulling me out of the mud, and putting me on a good, straight road."

He added, the "The joy I've experienced with Him is far greater than I experienced in the NFL. You can be the best of the best, if you have Christ as your focus."

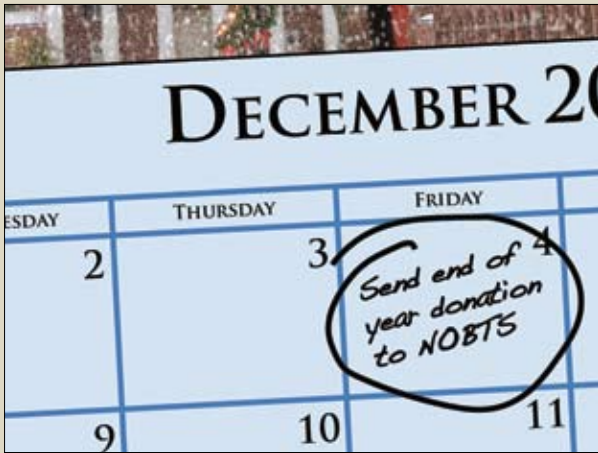
Wells' story can be summed up in three sentences.

"I love the Lord. He's real, man. I just want to go out of this life and enter into the next, knowing that I gave my best to Him."



MORE ONLINE

www.nobts.edu/Publications/football.html



Giving at Year's End

As you contemplate year-end giving options, please consider New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). Although the seminary receives Cooperative Program funding, it is not enough to cover the cost of seminary education for our students. To bridge the gap and keep theological education affordable, the Annual Fund was created.

All gifts given to our Annual Fund go directly to our operating budget, which in turn, help the seminary keep student tuition as affordable as possible. Annual Fund gifts are intended to hold tuition rates at a manageable level for our current students and affect the tuition that our future students will have to pay.

Your gifts are tax-deductible, whether they come through the mail or the Internet at www.nobts.edu. NOBTS qualifies for most matching gifts programs, too. Supporting theological education truly does make you a friend of the ministry.

For information about end-of-the-year giving, call (504) 282.4455, ext. 3252 or email development@nobts.edu.

Annual Fund giving update

BY BILL HUGHES

Our 2008-09 fiscal year ended July 31. We are grateful for the 707 friends and alumni who gave \$626,804 to the Annual Fund. The difficult economic situation caused us to fall short of our \$1,025,000 goal, but we rejoice for these gifts that kept tuition affordable for our students.

To explain briefly, the seminary has four primary income streams: 1) Cooperative Program, 2) gifts and grants, 3) endowments, and 4) student tuition. Cooperative Program income is determined from a complex funding formula based on how much churches give overall. Revenue in the gifts and grants category comes from friends and alumni who contribute to special funds (i.e. scholarships, special projects, etc.) and from foundations that respond to grant proposals that we submit. The third income type derives from earnings on the investment of corpus funds for purposes such as endowed academic chairs and scholarship funds. Finally, tuition is what students pay for their education.

Of the four streams, tuition is the only type over which the seminary has direct control to increase as needed to meet budgetary needs. When business expenses increase significantly as they have done since Hurricane Katrina, tuition must be raised accordingly. All gifts to the Annual Fund offset the need to substantially increase tuition by going to the seminary's operating budget. Without the Annual Fund, our students would have had to collectively pay an additional \$626,804, or about \$180 per student.

Donors have given \$57,167 to the Annual Fund in the first 10 weeks of the new fiscal year. Our 2009-10 goal remains the same at \$1,025,000.

Would you be willing to give a gift that will help all of our students at the same time? You may give by mailing your gift in the self-addressed envelope attached to this magazine or online by going to www.nobts.edu. Our convenient online option also provides a way to give a recurring gift, should you wish to do so. Our students who are on tight budgets appreciate your sacrifices on their behalf. **✪**

For information about giving to the Annual Fund, call (504) 282.4455, ext. 3252 or visit www.nobts.edu/Development/AnnualFund.html.

Given To Date
\$57,167

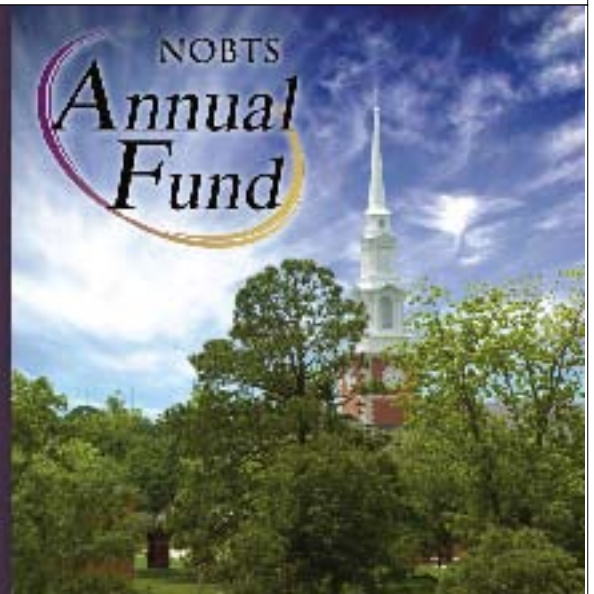
2009-10 Goal
\$1,025,000

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We could not make theological education affordable without you!

Thank you,

Dr. Chuck Kelley, President, NOBTS
 Dr. Jerry Garrard, VP, Institutional Advancement
 Bill Hughes, Director of the Annual Fund
www.nobtsfoundation.com



Gift provides year of tuition for NOBTS student

BY PAUL F. SOUTH

There is an old hymn which reads, “Blest be the ties that bind, our hearts in Christian love.”

One New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary student, who may be experiencing dark financial times, has been encouraged by the blessedness of those ties, thanks to Andy and Debbie Buckley of Lake Charles, La.

Even in the whirlwind of the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, the Buckleys felt led to give \$2,700. The gift is providing a year’s tuition for one NOBTS student.

The couple committed the matter of giving to prayer after learning about budget cuts at the seminary and reading cost comparisons of tuition past and present in the Vision magazine.

In a 30-year comparison, tuition has spiked from \$420 in 1978 to \$2,610 in 2008, a 600 percent jump.

But the seeds of faith that blossomed into the Buckleys’ gift, actually germinated long ago, in the hearts of Andy Buckley’s parents, Andrew J. and Lucille Buckley, who passed that heritage of faith on to their son.

“My parents were just middle-class people,” Buckley said. In the 1980s when they retired, they considered making a donation to their church. But Buckley urged his parents to prayerfully consider creating a scholarship at NOBTS. They did – the Andrew J. and Lucille Buckley Scholarship. The seminary was always on Andy Buckley’s heart.

Under the glass top of his small writing desk, Andy Buckley (M. Div. ‘75), keeps pictures of his heroes – his grandparents, the late NOBTS President Landrum Leavell, former NOBTS New Testament Professor David Perkins and a picture of Leavell Chapel, reminders of family and his seminary days. He called his time at NOBTS, “the greatest time of my life.”

“The pictures of the seminary remind me to pray for the seminary every day,” Buckley said. “Every day that I sit down at that desk, I’m reminded of what God did in my life when I was there ... It was wonderful. I had world-class teachers. I thank the Lord every day for my New Orleans experience.”

Buckley, who pastored four churches and served as the Baptist College Ministry Director at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette (where he also served as team chaplain for the Ragin’ Cajun football team) across nearly 30 years in ministry. Now he is involved in another form of ministry after retirement. He teaches history at a local high school and also as an adjunct instructor at McNeese State University.

The Buckleys were in prayer about the tuition gift in January, when Debbie, a cancer survivor, was stricken again with breast cancer. She is progressing, moving again toward recovery. But the recurrence of the cancer also gave Andy Buckley “clarity” that God had called them to give to the seminary. The couple has challenged others to do the same.

It’s important to note that this is not the couple’s first gift to NOBTS. After Hurricane Katrina devastated the campus, the

couple sold stock and gave to help in the recovery.

“There are alumni all across the country, who could do what we’re doing,” Buckley said. “I hope this testimony will be used by the Lord to raise up an army of people who have the means to do this. Even though we’re in a recession, God has blessed all of us. We are a blessed people.”

The heritage of faith and generosity sparked by God through his parents, Andrew and Lucille Buckley, deeply impact Andy Buckley to this day. Andrew Buckley lived until he was 95. In his father’s belongings, Andy discovered a folder of letters from NOBTS students – epistles of thanksgiving for the Buckley family’s generosity.

“He and my Mother lived for those letters from those students.

And they kept those letters. When he passed away four years ago, I found that file. He had written prayer notes, and he had written notes in the margins and kept a prayer list of those students. Every student that my wife and I can help, those students are going to go out and touch hundreds and hundreds, perhaps thousands of people for Christ. The gift that we give in supporting their developing ministry ... there’s no way to measure the eternal impact. It’s like throwing a little rock in a pond.”

Buckley saw the ripple effect of giving, as he read through the file of letters.

“After my Dad died, I told my wife, ‘we just need to pray that one day God will allow us to give like that.’ And now that day has arrived,” Buckley said. “We’re at a place

now where we can make these investments in eternity. This is more than just tuition. This is more than just matriculation. This is an investment in God’s men and God’s women. And in turn, they will invest in the Kingdom of God.”

Owen Nease, director of financial aid at NOBTS, said the couple’s gift, is “an example of the impact that donors can make when they see a need and take the initiative to do something about it. I get a feeling from what (the Buckleys) have done, is that they are trying to set an example for other alumni and other donors, of being proactive and trying to take care of students, however possible. What they understand is that in donating the money for a year, they are making a lifetime investment.”

Evidence of the ties that bind and the ripple effect of obedience came in a story Andrew told his son, his own story, written against the backdrop of the Great Depression. In 1935, three classes short of an accounting degree at Baylor University, Andrew was unable to come up with the \$150 he needed for those last credits leading to a diploma.

“When I asked him about giving a gift to the seminary, he said he remembered a commitment he made to the Lord when he was at Baylor, that if he ever had an opportunity to help pastors, he wanted to do that,” Andy said. “It took him 55 years, but he did it.”

And from Andrew Buckley prayer, uttered in the throes of bleak economic times, the ripple is now being felt through another generation in another financial downturn. The ties remain unbroken and a heritage of faith – and the work of God’s Kingdom – continues. **V**



Andy and Debbie Buckley

Trustees approve construction of 16 two-bedroom apartments

BY GARY D. MYERS

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees approved construction of two new student apartment buildings to address urgent campus housing needs. The unanimous vote came during the board's regular fall meeting Oct. 14.

The \$2.7 million construction initiative will result in 16 new two-bedroom student apartments – eight apartments in each building. Construction will begin in November with an anticipated completion date of June 1, 2010 – just in time for student families moving to New Orleans for the 2010-2011 academic year.

The need for more student housing is a direct result of Hurricane Katrina damage on the New Orleans campus. The seminary lost a total of 92 two-bedroom apartments when city levees failed in the wake of the 2005 storm.

During the past three years, a number of students have started each semester in temporary housing waiting for campus housing to become available. The 16 new units will ease the current strain on campus housing.

Fall 2009 Trustee Meeting

“This new housing project will allow us to have more apartments available for the men and women God is sending to our campus,” NOBTS President Chuck Kelley said. “It’s a great day for NOBTS.”

“We really do need the apartments,” Kelley continued. “God has sent us the students.”

According to Kelley, timing was an important factor in the decision to move forward with construction. With the current slow-down in construction in the New Orleans area, Kelley said, construction crews and resources are available to begin the project immediately. However, this window of opportunity could be short.

Many New Orleans-area contractors believe that skilled labor and materials will be harder to secure beginning in mid- to late 2010. Several large federally-funded Katrina recovery projects are scheduled to begin next year, including a large teaching hospital. With the increased demand for services and building material, construction costs could rise by 35 to 40 percent in the next year to year and a half.



Photo by Gary D. Myers

NOBTS President Chuck Kelley talks about the plan to build two new apartment buildings.

These factors, Kelley said, combined with the critical student housing needs, have increased the urgency of the project.

Construction will not add any new costs to the operating budget. The new apartments will be a joint project with Providence Housing Corporation and Providence Education Foundation.

The trustees also approved a motion concerning a proposed third, eight-apartment building. The full board authorized the trustee officers to approve the construction of a third building should the required funds become available within the next year. Kelley expects the costs for a third building to be between \$800,000 and \$1.4 million.

“This is an unusual step for us,” Kelley said about the contingency plan for an additional building. “I’m not expecting a check in the mail. We would have to have \$800,000 in cash to think about moving into a third building. I urge you to pray for us, to pray that God will provide that additional \$800,000 to \$1.4 million.”

New trustee challenges board to help raise funds for additional apartments

\$800,000 in cash needed to start third building

Illinois business man Thomas Clore, though new to the New Orleans Seminary board of trustees, is not new to post-Katrina New Orleans. Clore traveled to New Orleans in the early aftermath of Katrina with an Illinois disaster relief team.

Each year since 2005, Clore has led a mission team from his church to help with the rebuilding process in the New Orleans area.

During a trip to the seminary earlier in the fall, Clore was



Clore

moved by the critical need for student housing. After praying about the need, Clore felt led to challenge his fellow trustees to make others aware of the need for the proposed third building and to help the seminary find new donors for the project. He believes that God could use the trustees to raise the amount needed for the additional building.

The proposed third building would result in eight additional two-bedroom housing units. The projected cost is \$800,000 to \$1.4 million dollars. NOBTS President Chuck Kelley said that the seminary could begin the third building if \$800,000 in cash becomes available before contractors begin work on the large government-funded Katrina restoration projects in the city.

For more information about giving to help with this project, call (504) 282.4455, ext. 3252 or email development@nobts.edu.

Unlikely ministers graduate from NOBTS Parchman prison extension

BY GARY D. MYERS

In some ways New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's recent extension center graduation mirrored any other seminary graduation ceremony.

The service included singing, prayers, a sermon and the recognition of God-called ministers. Proud families and friends were in attendance to share in the joyous occasion. The 28 men receiving undergraduate degrees even wore traditional black graduation caps and gowns. But this was no ordinary graduation service. And these were not ordinary graduates.

This graduation – held at the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman – took place under the watchful eyes of prison guards. Instead of a beautiful chapel, the setting was the prison's stark visitor's center. Striped pants were visible below the hem of each robe.

Even though many of the graduates will never experience a life outside the walls of Parchman, they each expressed joy and hope. As trained ministers, the inmates are better equipped to reach their mission field – Parchman prison.

One smiling graduate, Tommy Smith, said he has found new purpose in helping others during his time as a student. In his ministry to others, Smith himself has been changed.

"Ministering to other people is something that brings out the best in me," Smith said. "That's something I didn't understand until God got a hold of me and changed my life."

In his charge to the graduates, NOBTS President Chuck Kelley noted that the ceremony did not signify an end or a completion, but a commencement, a beginning.

"It is not just what you have finished that we are recognizing, it's what you are about to do and what lies ahead that has such great significance," Kelley said.

Drawing from 1 Corinthians 1, Kelley noted that God often calls unlikely ministers. When God works through these unlikely people, He receives all the glory, Kelley said.

"The Bible tells us the ones God loves using most are the weak and the broken and the defeated," Kelley said. "Because when God does something through them, everybody knows it is God is doing it."

Kelley said the world has every reason to forget or even fear the graduating class at Parchman. But, he said, God is preparing do mighty things inside the prison through the graduates.

Using a glove, Kelley illustrated how God works through the weak and unlikely to accomplish His purposes. A glove can do nothing on its own, Kelley said. It is useless without a hand. On a hand, though, the glove can do many things

"It's not the glove, it is the hand inside," Kelley said. "What you are as a minister of the Lord

Jesus Christ is a glove on the hand of God."

Kelley said with their own hands they can break someone's life and smother hope, but as a glove on God's hand they can bring restoration and become bearers of hope.

"Today marks the day to celebrate what you have learned and how you have grown," Kelley said. "But more importantly, today marks the day God takes your glove off the shelf ... so that He might make a difference." **V**



Photo by Gary D. Myers

NOBTS President Chuck Kelley

MissionLab hosts 2,533 youth and youth leaders during the summer

Last summer, 2,533 students and youth leaders from around the country came to serve Christ through MissionLab – a ministry of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary that coordinates "faith-in-action" missions experiences for youth, college students, and adults alike. Throughout the summer, groups served the greater New Orleans area by working at over 50 different ministry sites. Groups assisted local homeowners with construction and yard work, ministered to the city's homeless, started backyard Bible clubs, prepared food at soup kitchens, prayer walked in neighborhoods, and much more – all in the name of Christ. Thanks to the obedience and servanthood of these students and leaders, countless individuals in New Orleans have encountered Jesus and thus had their lives impacted for eternity. **V**

For information about MissionLab, contact the Providence Learning Center at (504) 282-4455, ext. 8060 or visit www.missionlab.com.



Photo by Marilyn Stewart

Taylor Chandler, a 9th grader from Hartsville, S.C., installs new drywall in a New Orleans area home.

Baptist Center website hosts rare theological documents

BY CHRISTOPHER BLACK

Are you interested in the earliest documents of Baptist theology and history?

The Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is making some of these old documents available through new technology. The Baptist Center website (www.baptistcenter.com) recently launched a new exhibit with downloadable digital copies of a series of rare 16th and 17th century documents.

“We want to make these rare original documents accessible to scholars of Baptist history and theology, wherever they are,” said Dr. Steve Lemke, Director of the Baptist Center and NOBTS Provost. “In addition to the 20 manuscripts we currently have posted, we will be adding more documents in the next few months.”

The document collection includes both articles written by Baptists (or Anabaptists) and those who were against them. The earliest pamphlets currently available online include a critique of Anabaptists written by Philipp Melancthon dated 1528, and a sermon by Martin Luther from 1532. There are also negative critiques of Baptists by Eberhardus of Cologne in 1536, Robert Some in 1589, and Lucas Osiander the Younger in 1607.

Most of the pamphlets for and against Baptists in this collection were written in the 1640s, with authors such as John



Photo by Lloyd Harsch

Tombes, Andrew Ritor, John Etherington, Richard Barnard (Dwelfhintramis), Daniel Featley, Robert Fage, William Hussey, Jasper Mayne, Friedrich Spanheim, Stephen Marshall, Thomas Bakewell, and Thomas Blake.

Dr. Lloyd Harsch, Associate Professor of Church History, who specializes in Baptist heritage, has been digitizing the rarest and most important pamphlets from a collection recently rediscovered in the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary archives.

“John T. Christian, a church historian and the original librarian at the NOBTS, gathered these pamphlets during his travels, collecting documents relating to Baptist beliefs and origins,” Harsch said.

Christian assembled hundreds of rare publications from Europe and North

America. These works document the theological and ecclesiastical battles that waged during this era, including pamphlets that are both for and against the Baptist position. Although the documents were displayed in the library at one point, they were packed away and forgotten in some long-overlooked boxes. But an NOBTS library staff member rediscovered these rare works while cleaning a storage area a few years ago.

Wanting to preserve these rare pamphlets, Harsch applied digitization technology to these materials. The research and technology for this digitization effort and for a subsequent project related to Baptist confessions of faith were funded by three scholarly grants.

The funding for the digitization came through a Theological Scholars Grant from a Lilly Theological Research Program, entitled “Out of Many Fellowships, One Family of Faith: The Collection and Digitization of Baptist Confessions of Faith,” and from an Ola Farmer Lenaz grant (a faculty research grant from NOBTS) entitled “Digitizing Rare Baptist Historical Documents.”

“The digitization process,” Harsch said, “will preserve these rare pamphlets in a stable format, and make them widely available via the Internet.”

For more information about the Baptist Center or the digital documents, visit www.baptistcenter.com.

Richard Land voices theology of creation during NOBTS lecture

BY PAUL F. SOUTH

Dr. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, spelled out the biblical basis for a theology of the environment evident throughout the Bible – from the Creation account through the New Testament. It is a theology of God’s divine ownership and man’s stewardship and responsibility for the planet, grounded in the Judeo-Christian ethic.

“In part, [secularists] have misunderstood Christian theology concerning the creation and the environment because too many Christians, in too many places, in too many ways, have misunderstood and misapplied the biblical teachings on the subject,” Land said.

“The creation belongs to God,” he said. “As stewards of His property, human beings are responsible to Him for developing and protecting His



Land

creation.” Also, Land said, God clearly establishes man’s preeminence in the created order but also demands that all life be respected.

“If we believe that God the Creator designed everything for a purpose, then it is for the Christian as an act of faith, stewardship and worship to seek the perpetuation and viability of at least some of everything in the created order until we can discern and discover what purpose God has for every living creature and plant.”

As an example, Land cited the rosy periwinkle, an endangered pink flower used to develop successful cancer-fighting drugs.

Christians repent for past insensitivity and neglect of the environment, Land said. However, the “bad news” for secular environmentalists is that Christians approach the issue from a different perspective – one that affirms a distinctly Christian doctrine of creation and separates Christian environmentalism from the secularist view.

To read the complete article on Dr. Land’s presentation at NOBTS, visit www.nobts.edu/Publications/NewsIndex.html

Crossan, Witherington, other biblical scholars to discuss the message of Jesus at 2010 NOBTS Greer-Heard Forum

BY PAUL F. SOUTH

Two of the world's best-known religious scholars will dialog at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on a question that has sparked debate for some 2,000 years: What did Jesus really teach?

John Dominic Crossan and Ben Witherington III will be the featured speakers at the 2010 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum, Feb. 26 and 27, 2010 at Leavell Chapel.

The event marks the seminary's sixth Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum. The Forum is designed to provide a venue in which a respected evangelical scholar and a respected non-evangelical scholar discuss critical issues in religion, science, philosophy, or culture.

The Message of Jesus

2010 Greer-Heard Forum



"Too often, public discourse on the sort of issues that Greer-Heard deals with is shrill in tone and piecemeal in content," Dr. Robert Stewart, who occupies the Greer-Heard chair of Faith and Culture and of the seminary's Institute for Christian Apologetics, said. "Our goal therefore is to give these issues legitimate expression and to do so in a public forum on a level playing field."

Crossan, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at DePaul University in Chicago, is the former co-chairman of the Jesus Seminar. Regarded internationally as one of the most influential contemporary New Testament scholars, Crossan is the author of more than 20 books on the historical Jesus, early Christianity and the historical Paul.

He has lectured to lay and scholarly audiences on five continents and is a frequent radio and television guest in discussions of religious


issues, and appeared at the 2005 Greer-Heard Forum with Bishop N.T. Wright in a dialogue on the resurrection of Jesus..

Witherington is the Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., and is on the doctoral faculty of St. Andrews University in Scotland. A graduate of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Witherington went on to earn a Master of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a doctorate from the University of Durham in England.

Considered one of the world's top evangelical scholars, Witherington is an elected member of the prestigious Society for New Testament Studies (SNTS). He has written more than 30 books, as well as for a variety of church and scholarly publications.

On the forum's second day, leading scholars will present papers related to the message of Jesus. They include:

- **Darrell L. Bock**, Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Professor of Spiritual Development and Culture at Dallas Theological Seminary;
- **Craig A. Evans**, Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College of Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada;
- **Amy-Jill Levine**, Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Graduate Department of Religion and Program in Jewish Studies;
- **Alan F. Segal**, Professor of Religion and Ingeborg Rennert Professor of Jewish Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University in Manhattan.

Also during the weekend, Craig L. Blomberg, Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary will be the keynote speaker at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, hosted by NOBTS. 

For more on the 2010 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum, visit www.greer-heard.com

news *in brief*

Haitians earn NOBTS certificates

John Sullivan, Executive Director-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, recently traveled to Haiti to present Pastoral Ministry Certificates from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to 107 Haitian pastors during graduation exercises in Titian, Haiti. The names of the graduates were also read during the May commencement exercises at NOBTS. With this second graduation, 159 pastors have received NOBTS certificate training at two locations in Haiti – Port-de-Paix and Port-Au-Prince. Classes, made possible through a partnership with the Florida Baptist Convention and NOBTS, will be offered in three locations in 2010.



NOBTS launches Korean online courses and Korean language Internet page

NOBTS recently expanded the Korean Theological Institute (KTI), the Korean-language program based at the North Georgia Hub, to include graduate online courses. KTI offers both undergraduate and graduate courses in Atlanta. The new Internet option will make quality graduate-level theological education available to those who cannot attend the North Georgia Hub program.

The seminary also added a Korean language page to NOBTS website. The new page can be found at www.nobts.edu/kti.



Mission team encounters series of divine appointments

BY GARY D. MYERS

A small mission team from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary left for Peru July 2 with great expectations. They expected to see God work in a mighty way.

They were not disappointed.

What the team didn't anticipate was way God would work during their trip. Dr. Mark Tolbert, Associate Professor of Evangelism and Pastoral Ministry, and his team faced several "set backs" that turned into divine appointments long before they even reached Peru and well after they expected to be home. The lesson learned: mission trips begin when you walk out your front door, not when you reach your destination.

The divine appointments started with the providential makeup of the 19-member team.

"It was so neat how God in His sovereignty and providence, put together every team member," said Jason Waggoner, a Doctor of Musical Arts student who served as a Spanish translator during the trip. "Everybody had a purpose."

This fact was evident early in the trip.

The team planned fly from New Orleans to Miami and catch a flight to Lima, Peru. Storms delayed their arrival in Miami. When they finally made it, their connecting flight was long gone. The next available flight to Lima left in three days.

One team member, a former airline ticket agent, used her skills

to find a solution. She found seats on a flight to Mexico City and a connecting flight to Peru.

"We didn't know we needed her, but she was there with us," Tolbert said.

On the flight to Mexico City,

Tolbert experienced yet another divine

appointment. A flight attendant noticed the NOBTS logo on Tolbert's shirt and asked if he was going on a mission trip. Tolbert said that he was and shared the details of the missed flight in Miami. He told her, "I wasn't supposed to be on this plane."

The attendant replied, "I wasn't supposed to be on this plane either." Her schedule had also changed due to the weather in Miami.

She told Tolbert that her husband had recently been baptized as a believer, but that she was not a Christian. Tolbert had an opportunity to share the gospel with her for 45 minutes on the plane.

"Although she didn't make a decision with me, it was incredible how she wanted to know (about the gospel)," Tolbert said.

After they reached Lima, the team traveled six hours to the city of Huancayo to lead a training conference for church leaders. The city, with a population of 400,000, is located in the Monterro Valley, nestled high in the Andes Mountains at an elevation of 10,000 feet.

The Baptist church in Huancayo hosted 204 pastors, pastor's wives, children's workers and other church leaders from the Monterro Valley for the four-day conference. Tolbert's team led the sessions.

Sponsoring churches in the United States paid the way for church leaders to attend the conference. The accommodations were austere. Participants slept on the church floor and ate simple meals provided by the church.

Tolbert and his team taught with the second Masterlife workbook. Leadership training, Tolbert said, is one of the most critical needs facing the church in underdeveloped nations.

"We teach them the workbook and they go back into the



Photo by Mark Tolbert

Pete Charpentier, right, shares the gospel with children in Huancayo, Peru. Charpentier, pastor of Woodland Park Baptist Church in Hammond, La., is a Doctor of Ministry student at NOBTS.

villages and teach it all year long," Tolbert said. "It has been really well received. The people were eager to learn."

Waggoner agreed. He said the conference participants sat for hours and hours on hard benches "taking notes and hanging on every word."

The conference also included evangelism training and on the last afternoon the mission team and conference participants took to the streets to practice personal evangelism. In less than two hours, 100 people made professions of faith.

After days of travel and set-backs-turn-opportunities, a successful leadership conference and a phenomenal time of evangelism and "harvest," it was time for the mission team to return home.

As they prepared to leave, two team members realized they had made a mistake in booking their flight home. The airline was correct, the flight number was correct, but the date was wrong. They would be staying an extra day in Lima, Peru.

"We had to leave two of (our team members) behind," Tolbert said. "We didn't want to do that, but it was just too expensive to change the tickets. We prayed over them and made sure they had enough money and left."

This "mistake" turned into yet another divine appointment. The next day the two that were left behind had the opportunity to share the gospel with a maid at their hotel. She found and read a tract left by the team the day before. She asked the two team members to tell her more about God.

The group left New Orleans expecting to see God at work. They were not disappointed. Amazing things happened long before they reached their intended destination and continued all the way home.

Tolbert plans to return to Peru next summer with another seminary group. He hopes to develop a course to be taken in tandem with the trip so participants can earn seminary class credit. **▼**

Peru Mission Trip

Leavell College student releases praise/worship album

BY PAUL F. SOUTH

Jeremy Wilkerson is a minister's kid, born two months premature in the Piney Woods of East Texas.

For "preemies" at that time, the survival rate was about 1 percent. But Wilkerson's parents knew God had a plan for their little son.

"There's no doubt our God is a God of purpose," Wilkerson, a student at Leavell College of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary said.

For Wilkerson, who grew up in a musical family, the latest product of that purpose is Wilkerson's first album, "God of Creation." A self-described "acoustically-driven praise and worship" project, the album is making the rounds in online music sites and stores, including iTunes, Amazon and Napster.

"The idea behind the songs of this album is to display our God as a God who creates, sustains and is intimately involved in the lives of His people," Wilkerson said. "It's an idea that I've been challenged with as I've studied the Psalms. Originally (the album) was going to be 'This is my God; this is who my God is and these are some of the things He does.' But the songs seemed to hit more along the lines of 'God is doing something. Here is what He is doing throughout life.'"

At 12, growing up in Kilgore, Texas, Wilkerson started his musical journey playing drums in a musical family.

"There was a constant flow of music," Wilkerson said. "My Dad was a music minister. My mom played piano and gave piano lessons.



All of us – my sister and I – were in a band. By the time I was in sixth grade, there was always some type of music in the house."

From that foundation, there were other musical influences, as diverse as Keith Green, Rich Mullins, Michael Card, Lincoln Brewster and the Irish rock band U2.

Wilkerson said he longs to see people connect with the almighty, living God. When this happens, God is glorified.

"My heart is writing songs for the church that they can sing," Wilkerson said. "My prayer is that people will have this and maybe it will spark something in their lives that says, 'We do have a God of creation who is doing things in our lives and changing our lives. And that makes me happy. I want

to sing about it.' I want to write songs that people want to sing."

Wilkerson will receive his Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry degree from Leavell College in December. His academic work at the seminary has influenced his music.

"(The seminary) has impacted how I study scripture," Wilkerson said. "I believe some of the songs I have written would not have been written had I not had some of the foundations that I've gotten here, in terms of a better understanding of scripture and who God is. So that played a big role." **V**

For more information about Jeremy Wilkerson's new album, visit www.worshipconnex.com.



Jeremy and Kristin Wilkerson

Photo by Diana Bondurant



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- **DR. ALLEN JACKSON**, Professor of Youth Ministry; Director, Youth Ministry Institute
- **DR. FRANCIS KIMMITT**, Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew; Assistant Director, North Georgia Hub

10 years

- **DR. PHILIP PINCKARD**, Professor of Missions; Director, Global Missions Center

In Memory

Retia Dukes



Dukes

Retia Dukes was remembered as “a bright light, a gentle soul and a servant of the Lord” during a memorial service on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Aug. 5.

Dukes, the wife of longtime NOBTS professor Jimmy Dukes, died Aug. 3 in New Orleans, after a four-month battle with injuries suffered in an April 4 traffic accident. She was 68.

In what NOBTS President Chuck Kelley called a “celebration” of her life, Retia Dukes was remembered in words and images. Hers was a life, speakers said, lived from a heavenly perspective.

Preaching from Psalm 1, Kelley compared Retia Dukes and her family to the tree planted firmly by the waters of faith in Christ. Kelley and his wife, Rhonda, were the Dukes’ next-door neighbors for 13 years on the seminary campus.

“You just look at this family and see this fruitfulness; everything they do works. Everything they do touches people and brings results and has a great impact,” Kelley said. “And you understand, as you get to know this family, that the core of it all is Retia Dukes. Mom, wife, encourager, always there, always present, always loving, always praying always helping, always facilitating, always supporting one of the most fruitful families that I’ve ever known.”

Kelley remembered Retia Dukes, as “a wonderful, tender, powerful force of love.” And along with fruitfulness, the Retia Dukes and her family lived out grace and love, with Christ as the foundation of it all.

Dr. Paul Gericke



Gericke

Professor Emeritus Paul William Gericke, who served New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for nearly three decades and founded the seminary’s on-campus radio station, WBSN (Lifesongs 89.1), died unexpectedly July 13. He was 85.

A native of St. Louis, Gericke joined the seminary faculty in 1965 and was involved in a number of “firsts” at the school, establishing the Communication

Center and the Media Center. He was director of library services, then director of the John T. Christian Library for nearly 20 years.

NOBTS President Chuck Kelley praised Gericke’s forward-thinking approach to communication and technology.

“Dr. Paul Gericke was also a little known visionary who helped push New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary into the future,” Kelley said.

Despite having no money to start a radio station, Gericke launched and helped transform Lifesongs into one of the nation’s top Christian radio stations, Kelley said.

Gericke is survived by his wife Jean and a son, Michael. Jean Gericke helped establish the clinic on the NOBTS campus.

news *in brief*

Appointed: Deok Jae Lee becomes seminary's first Korean professor

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley announced the presidential appointment of Deok Jae Lee to the NOBTS faculty during the trustee meeting Oct. 14.



Lee

Lee, who will serve as Assistant Professor of Christian Ministry, also directs the Korean Theological Institute, a Korean language program based at seminary's North Georgia Hub in metro Atlanta.

Lee is the first Korean to serve on the New Orleans Seminary faculty.

"Deok Jae Lee has a greater passion for theological education than anyone I know," said NOBTS Provost Steve Lemke. "He has taught for us

for several years, and has done a magnificent job in building up our Korean program in Atlanta. With faculty status, he can become a more integral part of the institution."

Lee earned a Master of Divinity degree from Korean Baptist Theological Seminary. At New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Lee earned a Master of Theology degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Sherrer named to ministry-based faculty

Dr. Joe Sheerer was also appointed as a ministry-based faculty member. Sherrer, Associate Pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, is the former chairman of the Christian Education division and Director of the Doctor of Educational Ministry program at NOBTS. He was a fulltime faculty member at the seminary from 2000 to 2009.

NOBTS history professor takes a page from Charles Spurgeon – literally

A New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor's find at a London college's fundraiser needed only a one word description: Marvellous.

In fact, Dr. Lloyd Harsch's purchase from Spurgeon College – a page from one of legendary preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon's sermons – came from an 1883 message on Zechariah 8:6.

The sermon's title? "Marvellous! Marvellous!" (sic).

Harsch's unexpected find came during the Amsterdam 400 celebration, marking the 400th anniversary of the Baptist movement.

Representatives from Spurgeon College were selling the actual manuscripts of one of Spurgeon's sermons. Transcribed by stenographers peppered throughout his Metropolitan Tabernacle audience, Spurgeon had marked the pages in his own hand.

The page offers a glimpse, not only of the work of the "Prince of Preachers," but of his way of working, a 19th century method of recording.

"When Spurgeon would preach . . . just a brief outline was all he used," Harsch said. "He had secretaries and scribes in the audience who would transcribe what he said, and then they would collate that down into a manuscript. Then Spurgeon would go through it and add, delete, edit the manuscript to make it what he wanted it to say. Then he would review galley proofs and they would go to print." – Paul F. South

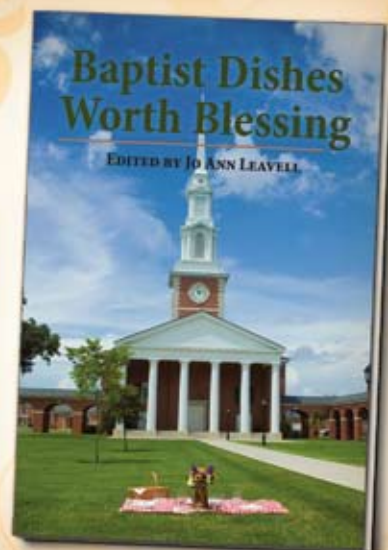
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Keith Fordham celebrates 35 years in evangelism

BY J. GERALD HARRIS, *The Christian Index*

Randy Ray, pastor of Douglas Chapel Baptist Church near Nicholls, was exuberant over the recent revival in his church. Evangelist Keith Fordham and Music Evangelists Ron and Claudia Henderson ministered in the church as a part of the Baptismal Assistance Project (BAP).

Keith Fordham celebrated 35 years in evangelism Sept. 5. In addition to preaching in smaller churches through the Baptismal Assistance Project, Fordham has for years served as a mentor through his leadership in the Conference of Georgia Baptist Evangelists (COGBE) and Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (COSBE).

The BAP is an evangelism plan provided by the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists to help churches that have had little success in reaching the lost.

Fordham indicated that the Baptismal Assistance Program is for churches that have averaged three baptisms or less for three consecutive years – and that 26,000 SBC churches qualify for COSBE/BAP help. Fordham, who was the first Southern Baptist evangelist to preach in a church through the BAP, also expressed his delight over the meeting in Douglas Chapel where six people were saved and the church added three others by letter during the four-day revival emphasis.

One of Southern Baptists' most effective evangelists, Fordham celebrated 35 years in full-time evangelism on Sept. 5.

Since his first revival the Fayetteville-based evangelist has preached in over 1,400 revivals and harvest days.

Fordham was saved as a child, but ran from God's call to ministry for several years. In 1963 as an adolescent he went to a Christian camp near Chattanooga where he sensed God was calling him into full-time ministry. He admitted, "I wrote on a blank page in the back of my Bible that God had called me to full-time service."

However, when he got home from the camp the luster of the experience began to wane. Fordham stated, "I tore the page out of the back of my Bible – the page upon which I had written my commitment to ministry. I threw it into the trashcan. I was as

active in church as anyone you have ever seen and yet a million miles out of the will of God."

Mononucleosis robbed him of playing football in the ninth grade and in the tenth grade Fordham suffered a broken leg. While many were praising him for his faith and Christian life, his pastor told him that the reason he was in a body cast instead of a shorter cast was because he was running away from God.

The pastor said, "God will keep you flat on your back until you get right."

Fordham explained, "I fought that call until the first Saturday in December of 1967. On that morning I told my mom and dad that God was calling me. On Sunday morning at age seventeen, I went forward and took Dr. F.J. Hendrix by the hand and told him God was calling me to full-time service, but I did not know that it was to preach.

"I was willing to dig ditches, crawl through the sewers in Atlanta, be a missionary to Africa, or to do whatever God called me to do."

Hendrix said, "God has called you to preach and we are going to license you today." The church affirmed Fordham's call to ministry and licensed him that very day.

"I preached my first sermon in January 1968," Fordham declared. "It was pathetic. I did such a poor job that I told the Lord I would never preach again, but God intervened and I was asked to preach at youth night service at First Baptist Church Mountain View. I told the Lord I would preach if He would give me a sermon. He did, and heaven came down."

Following high school Fordham prepared himself educationally for ministry by earning degrees from Samford University and NOBTS.

On Sept. 5, 1974 Fordham officially began the Keith Fordham Evangelistic Association. Since that time and long before the COSBE Baptismal Assistance Project, he has devoted one to four weeks every year to assist struggling churches that feel financially ill-equipped to have full-time evangelists for revivals. He is setting a standard of faithfulness that casts our Southern Baptist evangelists in a most favorable light. **V**



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alumni updates

1950s

Cliburn, Edwin L. (BDiv '54) celebrated over 60 years of active ministry in October 2008, serving churches in Georgia, including 24 years as Pastor of FBC Thomaston. During his 60+ years of ministry, he has served 25 interim pastorates. On Jan. 24, 2009 he married Dorothy Wilson Crowder of Barnesville, Ga. Cliburn continues to "supply" preach at churches in his area each month.

Luebbert, Richard (BDiv. '55) and Dorothy (BRE '55) of Shelbyville, Ky., celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Oct. 5, 2009. They are the parents of two children, Joy Bolton and R. Wesley Luebbert, and have two grandchildren.

1960s

Euler, Ronald (BDiv '65) and Jeanine of Pleasant Grove, Ala., celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 14, 2009.

Simoneaux, Michael (MCM '67; EdD '69) (Bonnie) was named Vice President for Advancement Services of Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga., on July 1.

1970s

Gibson, James (DPM '78) has accepted the call to serve as Senior Pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Meridian, Miss.

Giles, Jack (ThM '70) recently published his third book, entitled *Fascinating Miracles in the Life of a Country Preacher*. His books can be previewed at AuthorHouse.com.

Shaw, Mike (ThM '73) was recently honored by the First Baptist Church of Pelham upon the completion of 30 years of service in the ministry at Pelham. Dr. Shaw serves as pastor and his wife, Mary, serves as church pianist and "first lady."

1980s

Childers, Tim (MRE '87) was elected as a Trustee of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, Ala. He currently serves as pastor of FBC Sylacauga, Ala.

1990s

Church, Keith (MDiv '02) has accepted the call to pastor Union Baptist Church in Brookhaven, Miss.

Daniel, Robert A. (MDiv '97) has accepted the position of Director of Missions, serving Big Creek Association in central Louisiana and North Rapides Association. His office is located in the Baptist Mission Center in Pineville, La.

King, Bill (MDiv '80; DMin '95) is a Christian humorist and musician who performs the character Bro. Billy Bob "The Baptist" Bohannon. He has written a book of Christian humor entitled *No, Really, My Name is Brother Billy Bob Bohannon*. This book is available from Tate Publishers. Bro. Bill serves as Director of Missions for Tuskegee Lee Association in Opelika/Auburn, Ala.

Lorenzini, D. Massimo (APM '97; BA '98) (Kimberly) has been called to serve as Pastor of First Baptist Church of Espanola, N.M.

Phillips, Brenna (Boring) (MACE '94) has two articles published in Group Publishing's September/October 2009 Children's Ministry Magazine. The subject of the articles is "Ways Kids can minister to other Kids." Brenna is the children's minister at Mission Fellowship Church in Middletown, Del. Her husband, David (MDiv. '95), serves as pastor of the church.

Methvin, T. Gregory (MDiv '93) has been elected Vice-Rector at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Plano, Texas.

2000s

Satterwhite, Donald (MDiv '89; DMin '03) recently accepted the call to pastor Friendship Baptist Church in Litchfield, Conn.

White, Kevin (MDiv '00) is now serving on staff of North Park Baptist Church in Van Buren, Ark., as Family Connections Pastor.

Births

Boyles, Scott (MDiv '01) and Stephanie (Smith) (MACE '99) welcomed twin daughters Charlotte Lynn and Elizabeth Marie on May 8. The new babies were welcomed home by their sister Anna Caroline and brother Wilson.

Deaths

Allen, Ernest DeWitt (DCT '62) died Sunday, July 5, 2009 in Atmore, Ala. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy.

Beasley, James R., Sr. (BDiv '63) passed away June 30, 2009. He was preceded in death by his wife, Gertrude in 2008.

Belote, Martha (AX '40) passed away Sept. 21, 2005. She was preceded in death by her husband, **Dr. James Belote** (Th.D. '46) who died in 1975 and her son, **Theodore Clinton Belote** (MRE '68) who passed away Sept. 19, 1990.

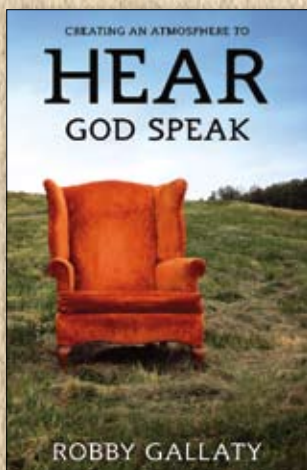
Alumnus authors discipleship book

■ Creating an Atmosphere to Hear God Speak

Robby Gallaty
Xulon Press, 2009

Creating an Atmosphere to Hear God Speak by Robby Gallaty (MDiv '07) is designed to help new and seasoned believers learn the importance of reading and memorizing God's Word, and the necessity of obeying their Biblical mandate to assist other believers in these spiritual disciplines in order to develop them into committed disciples of Jesus Christ. The book is coupled with a journal that aids believers in recording their prayer needs and how the Lord has spoken to them through His Word. The book is available at www.awordfromhisword.org – *Bill Halladay*

Robby Gallaty is the pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn. He is currently pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Expository Preaching at New Orleans Seminary.



Billings, B. I. (ThM '71) died July 22, 2009 in Lake Charles, La. Survivors include his wife, Margie Gray Billings.

Britton, Joseph D., Jr. (ADiv '88) died July 27, 2009 in Selma, Ala. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn Britton.

Bryan, Curtis (MX in Sacred Music '58) died June 5, 2009 in Bay City, Texas.

Calderwood, David (MRE '71) died July 11, 2009 in Pascoag, R.I. He is survived by two brothers and a sister.

Cook, John L. Jr. (BDiv '57) passed away May 5, 2009 in Corinth, Miss.

Cottingham, Watson O. "W.O." (BDiv '61) passed away June 8, 2009 in New Orleans, La.

Davis, John C. (ThM '72) passed away Aug. 16, 2009 at his home in Clanton, Ala. He is survived by his wife, Mattie and their children.

Durham, Stanley (BDiv '50) passed away June 2, 2009 in Medford, Ore. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Annice.

Fowler, Keith (MRE '57) passed away July 9, 2009 in Hendersonville, N.C. He is survived by his daughter Terry Casagrande of Hendersonville.

Granvel, Donny (AX '88) died Dec. 9, 2006 in Alexandria, La. He is survived by his wife, Kathie.

Hanson, Carl E. (BX '00) died May 18, 2009 in Gulfport, Miss.

Hebert, Leo A. (BDiv '81) passed away Sept. 22, 2008. He is survived by his wife, Ruth.

Hoglen, Wilburn C. (BDiv '57) died Aug. 8, 2009 at Asbury Place in Maryville, Tenn. He is survived by his wife, Betty Miller Hoglen; his children and grandchildren.

Johnson, Gwilyn ("Gil") C. (MDiv '82; MRE '84); died May 8, 2009 in Mobile, Ala.

Jones, Idelle (NX '48) passed away July 11 in Ruston, La. She was predeceased by her husband, **Marvin** (ThB '49) in 1997. She is survived by her children, grandchildren and other family members.

Lapczynski, John S. (DPM '79) passed away Nov. 17, 2008. He is survived by his wife, Gloria of Lexington, Ga.

Lightsey, James L. (MX '71) died Feb. 15, 2009 in High Springs, Fla. He is survived by his wife, Helen B. Lightsey.

Moak, J. E. (BDiv '52) died June 21, 2009 in Moultrie, Ga. He is survived by his wife, of 62 years, Roberta.

McClure, Harvie B. (MX '61) of Lucedale, Miss., passed away on July 22, 2009. He is survived by his wife, Paula C. Wall McClure, a son and a daughter.

Murfin, William (BDiv '54) passed away March 25, 2009 in Robertsdale, Ala.. He is survived by his wife, Wanda.

Nilon, Lamar H. (BDiv '54) passed away July 20, 2009 in Carmichael, Calif. He is survived by his wife, Lois of Porterville, Calif.

Northington, Carolyn M. (MRE '62) died Sept. 27, 2008 in Birmingham, Ala. She is survived by her mother, Irene Northington.

Remont, Roy J. (BDiv '55) died July 21, 2009 in Lafayette, La. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, **Betty Williams Remont** (BRE '55).

Sheehan, Margaret (DPCT '45) died May 24, 2009 in Macon, Ga.; Survived by her husband, **E. C. Sheehan** (ThM '45)

Sherrod, Benton Lee, Sr. (BDiv '53) died May 9, 2009 in Vidor, Texas.

Smith, Donald (BDiv '65) passed away Nov. 29, 2008 in Suwanee, Ga .

Stapp, John (ThM '72) died Feb. 19, 2002. He is survived by his wife, Betty.

Stephens, Paul A. (BX '51) died July 22, 2009 in Campobello, S.C. He is survived by his wife, Rubye Caldwell Stephens.

Stewart, Claude H., Jr. (BDiv '57) passed away July 25, 2009 in Fort Smith, Ark. He is survived by his wife, Fredda Allison Stewart.

Parson's Pantry designed to assist God's servants

Started in 2005 by Ron and Karen Jackson, Parson's Pantry is a ministry that provides financial assistance to needy pastors, retired pastors, widows of pastors, and married ministerial students. Based in Gaffney, S.C., Parson's Pantry has assisted 188 ministerial families with a total of \$122,000. Most of the assistance is given in the form of a one-time gift during times of crisis.

Ron Jackson, Chairman of the Board for Parson's Pantry, served 40 years as a pastor. He retired from the pastorate last year to focus more attention to Parson's Pantry. Karen serves as the Administrative Director for the ministry.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Parson's Pantry assisted eight seminary families affected by the storm. Ron Jackson, who studied at NOBTS in the 1970 and served 10 years as a seminary trustee, especially enjoys helping NOBTS families. The organization has distributed \$40,000 to married students at New Orleans Seminary.

Parson's Pantry is tax exempt organization and has a 16-member board of directors consisting of lay people and pastors. ▽

For more information about Parson's Pantry, call (864) 489.6709 or visit www.parsonspantry.org. The mailing address is: Parson's Pantry, P.O. Box 777, Gaffney, S.C.



Thomason, Herman V. (MX '56) died May 14, 2009 in Alexandria, Va.

Thrash, Carol L. (AX '78) passed away Feb. 22, 2006. She is survived by her husband, Jim.

Tomlinson, Gratten E. (MRE '57) passed away on July 26, 2009 in Columbia, S.C. He is survived by his wife, Pat.

Watkins, Janice (DipCM '77) passed away April 20, 2008 in Sweeny, Texas. She is survived by her husband, **Jerl** (MDiv. '77).

Welch, Aaron W. Sr. (MDiv '75) passed away Sept.23, 2005 in Ellisville, Miss. He is survived by his wife, Jeanette.

Womble, Freddie (MDiv '79) passed away on Jan. 12, 2009 in Mobile, Alabama. He passed away while on medical furlough from his career position with the International Mission Board in Paraguay. He is survived by his wife, Karen, and daughter, Marisa.

Woodworth, Rick Arthur (MRE '80) passed away July 21, 2009 in Columbus, Ga. He is survived by his wife, Donna Marie Watson Woodworth.

**Missionary Appointments
International Mission Board**

Lazenby, Mike (MDiv '08) and wife, Carrie, have been appointed by IMB to serve in the European Peoples Outreach affinity group.



Lazenby



Lazenby



Llorens

Llorens, Tony (MA '08) has been appointed by IMB to serve in South America.

looking back

Dr. Dan Holcomb, shown in these 1980s photographs, recently celebrated 30 years as a member of the NOBTS faculty.



Platto, Nate (MA '09) and wife, Lindsey, have been appointed by IMB to serve in the Central, Eastern and Southern Africa.



Platto



Platto

Taylor, Doug (MDiv '04) and wife, Kathryn, have been appointed by IMB to serve in Sub Saharan African Peoples affinity group.



Taylor



Taylor

*Happy Thanksgiving
& Christmas
from
New Orleans
Baptist Theological Seminary*

*We pray that you and your family have
wonderful holidays filled with peace and joy.*



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What did he really teach?



John Dominic Crossan

Professor Emeritus of Religion, DePaul University, and co-chair of the Jesus Seminar. He is the author of many books, including *The Historical Jesus*, *The Birth of Christianity*, and *Who Killed Jesus?*

Ben Witherington III

Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary and on the doctoral faculty, St. Andrews University in Scotland. Included among his many books are *Jesus the Sage* and *The Jesus Quest*.



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For more info and registration go to:
www.greer-heard.com