

# SOUTHERN SEMINARY

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PAY CAREFUL

ATTENTION

TO YOURSELVES AND TO

THE FLOCK

IN WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU

OVERSEERS

TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD,  
WHICH HE OBTAINED WITH HIS

OWN BLOOD

ACTS 20:28

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# PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION – Perennial and New Challenges for New Generation

What would it feel like to receive a command directly from an Apostle? Well, given the divine inspiration of the Bible, this is exactly what addresses us in the New Testament. In Acts 20: 28, Paul commanded the Ephesian elders:



**P**ay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

In every generation, that call requires the constant vigilance of the pastor. As the Apostle Paul understood, this is the very essence of true pastoral care for the church of God.

Most of the challenges we face are perennial, faced by every generation of faithful ministers. We must guard against the constant

temptation of compromise with the world and the perpetual lure of heresy. At the same time, each generation faces its own set of challenges.

This issue of *Southern Seminary Magazine* is devoted to this great challenge – what it means to care for the flock of God in our own context and time. The articles assist us all in thinking through some of the most crucial ministry challenges of our day.

Russell D. Moore rightly reminds us that theology is not merely a mental

exercise. It is “cleaning up after a suicide.” It is also about dealing with the church member struggling with gender identity. A gospel-response will require deep biblical knowledge and keen pastoral instincts.

Thomas R. Schreiner writes about the danger of the church becoming a man-centered culture rather than a God-centered culture. As he observes, “the authority resides in the Word instead of the person proclaiming it, and thus the glory belongs entirely to God instead of to us.”

Mark T. Coppenger describes the pastor’s preaching the Bible like a mine-sweeper walking through a mine field, “covering his ears and venturing out through the field.” He relates that calling to the contemporary challenge of marriage – oddly enough, one of the most explosive issues of our day.

Stuart Scott reminds us that the gospel is at the heart of all true Christian counsel. As today’s Christians deal with the unique questions of this generation, we must confront head-on the focus

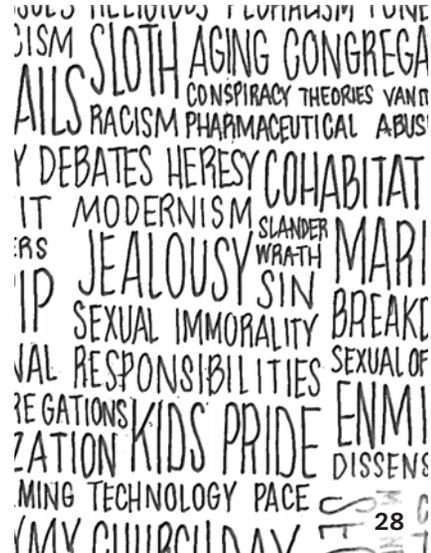
on the self that stands at the heart of our age. If we accommodate our message to the self-centeredness of the age, “we will not perpetuate the full intent of the gospel,” Scott warns, “that we live to the glory of God, glorying in him.”

Kevin L. Smith suggests that in the context of today’s incarceration culture every congregation will face the question of the ex-offender in our midst. He reminds us to face the reality that every one of us has a criminal record in the eyes of heaven.

I address the imperative to push against the age without despising our times. We are not facing these challenges by accident. God has brought this generation to ministry for the purpose of revealing his glory in this fallen world. Even more urgently, God desires to reveal his glory in Christ’s church – that church, Paul reminds us, which “he obtained with his own blood.”

We must note also that Paul commands us to keep watch over ourselves. That, too, is one of the greatest challenges we face. May God protect the church – and its ministers – from anything that robs him of glory.

*R. Albert Mohler Jr. is president of Southern Seminary.*



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## On the Cover



This cover presents the straightforward message of the apostle Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

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R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.



Following the death of prominent essayist, public intellectual and outspoken atheist Christopher Hitchens on Dec. 15, 2011, Religion News Service reporter Kevin Eckstrom published “Christopher Hitchens’ atheism was a gift to believers,” an article noting how Hitchens’ “acid-tongued arguments against God” helped to improve the thinking of theists. Eckstrom quotes R. Albert Mohler Jr., Southern Seminary president, who tweeted about Hitchens: “The point about Christopher Hitchens is not that he died of unbelief but that his unbelief is all that matters now. Unspeakably sad.”

Mohler offers his thoughts about the life and death of Hitchens in his article, “Learning from Christopher Hitchens: Lessons Evangelicals Must Not Miss,” available at [www.albertmohler.com](http://www.albertmohler.com)



## REPUBLICAN LEADER MCCONNELL READS MOHLER’S LETTER ON SENATE FLOOR

By Josh Hayes

During the Senate’s March 1, 2012, discussion of the proposed Respect for Rights of Conscience Act, Republican Leader Mitch McConnell read from the floor Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.’s letter concerning the Department of Health and Human Services’ recent policy that requires religious institutions to provide employees with contraceptive and abortifacient services.

The Senate Minority Leader from Kentucky appealed to Mohler’s letter among many other “religious leaders and concerned citizens” from his state in order to make his case for what has been shorthanded “the conscience amendment,” concluding his presentation by reading the entirety of Mohler’s letter. The amendment would have

allowed employers to opt out of providing health care coverage to which they might object on moral grounds.

According to CNN, the Senate killed the amendment with a 51-48 vote, the Democrats motioning to table the proposal. McConnell insisted on a floor vote regarding the amendment sponsored by Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri.

Mohler in his letter to McConnell argues that the contraceptive policy undermines religious liberty and forces Christians and many other Americans to violate conscience in order to comply with it. Referring to the Obama administration’s policy as a “gross and deliberate violation of religious liberty,” Mohler’s letter includes a request for Congress to provide an immediate remedy to the policy.

“This is a policy that will either require millions upon millions of Americans to accept a gross and deliberate violation of religious liberty, or to accept the total secularization of all education and social services,” Mohler writes in his letter to McConnell, noting the objections to the

## GREENWAY ANNOUNCED AS NEW KBC PRESIDENT

By Josh Hayes

**The Kentucky Baptist Convention** (KBC) announced the election of Adam Greenway as its new president; he received 73.1 percent of the vote, at the KBC annual meeting, Nov. 15, 2011.

An assistant professor of evangelism and applied apologetics, Greenway is also senior associate dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

“Adam Greenway is a gifted leader and a friend to all Kentucky Baptists,” said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary. “I congratulate him on his election and am proud of his leadership in our state convention. Under the leadership of Adam Greenway, I expect Kentucky to move into the future with conviction, passion, Great Commission fervor and vision.”

Russell D. Moore, dean of the School of Theology and senior vice president for academic administration at Southern, said of Greenway’s election: “Adam Greenway is a thoughtful, convictional leader. He will serve all

Kentucky Baptists well, and I am glad he is part of our Southern Seminary faculty training the next generation of pastors and missionaries.”

At 33 years of age, Greenway is the youngest KBC president in history. Furthermore, Greenway will be the first full-term president to serve alongside Paul Chitwood, the recently elected KBC executive director-treasurer, who served at Southern Seminary as associate professor of evangelism and church growth from 2007 until 2011.

Greenway served as the KBC’s first vice president in 2009-10, as a member of the Mission Board and, in 2009, as the chair of Mission Board Size Study Committee. Currently, he is the convention’s parliamentarian.

Greenway has held pastorates along with assistant and interim positions at churches in Florida, Texas, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. He is a member of First Baptist Church in Mount Washington, Ky. He holds an undergraduate degree from Samford University, a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of philosophy from Southern Seminary.

Additionally, Greenway co-edited the books *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent* and *The Great Commission Resurgence* (both B&H Academic). ➤



## SBTS VOICES WEIGH-IN ABOUT KOMEN, PLANNED PARENTHOOD CONTROVERSY

By Josh Hayes

**The Susan G. Komen Foundation** for the Cure board of directors announced they would continue to grant funds to Planned Parenthood, Friday, Feb. 3, 2012. To no one’s surprise, with the pro-life/pro-choice debate lurking in the background, the Komen Foundation’s announcement came with much controversy. Providing insight concerning the matter are Southern Seminary’s R. Albert Mohler Jr., Russell D. Moore and Denny Burk. The respective titles of their articles are as follows: “It Isn’t Easy Being Pink: There is No Neutral Ground When It Comes to Planned Parenthood” (Mohler, SBTS president); “The Pink Ribbon and the Dollar Sign” (Moore, dean of the School of Theology and vice president for academic administration); and “Komen’s Ties to Planned Parenthood Clearer Than Ever” (Burk, associate professor of biblical studies at Boyce College). ➤

Mohler’s and Moore’s articles are available at [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com). Burk’s article is available at his blog, [www.dennyburk.com](http://www.dennyburk.com), as well as at [www.bpnews.net](http://www.bpnews.net)





## CHRISTIANITY TODAY HONORS MOORE FOR TEMPTED AND TRIED

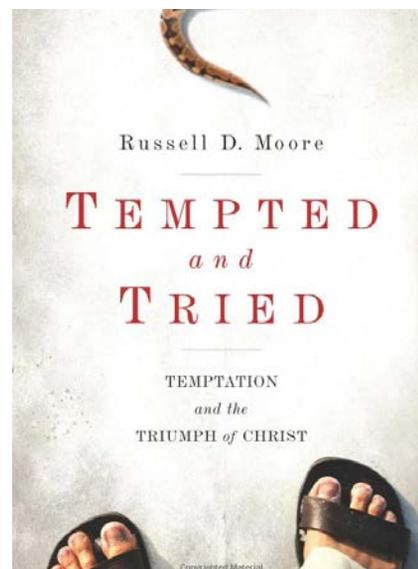
By Josh Hayes

**Southern Seminary's Russell D. Moore** received the award of merit for his book, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Crossway), from *Christianity Today* in the magazine's 2012 book awards. *Tempted and Tried* was nominated in the Christian living category.

Moore's book deals with the nature and place of temptation, seeking to help followers of Christ fight against it by looking to the one who was, as Moore writes, "tried in every way we are but who was never anything but triumphant."

Moore, SBTS dean of the School of Theology, senior vice president for academic administration and professor of Christian theology and ethics, discussed *Tempted and Tried*, among other things, in an interview published in the April 11, 2011, "Towers" issue (pages 8-9). The issue provides a brief review of the book as well (page 10). The April 11, 2011, "Towers" is available at [www.sbts.edu/resources](http://www.sbts.edu/resources) ➤

*Christianity Today's* Web site offers a list of the winners in all categories at [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)



## FOX NEWS FEATURES ALLISON ABOUT THE DATE OF JESUS' BIRTH

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

**Fox News** featured Southern Seminary's Gregg Allison in a segment about the date of Jesus' birth, which aired December 2011.

A few days before the Christmas holiday, Fox News ran "The Back Story: December the 25th," in which reporter Lauren Green poses

third or fourth centuries, was not at all receptive to pagan practices," said Allison, professor of Christian theology at Southern. "In fact, the early church in this time denounced any association with paganism and pagan festival. So I don't think that theory is very plausible."

He then explains how the church arrived at the date traditionally associated with Jesus' birth.

"Here is the move the early church made," Allison said. "It believed that Jesus was conceived on the same day

**The early church, certainly in the third or fourth centuries, was not at all receptive to pagan practices.**

a question about the date of the Christian celebration of Jesus' birth: "How did Christians settle on Dec. 25 as Jesus birthday?"

The story opens with David Silverman, president of American Atheists, suggesting that the early churches simply usurped pagan celebrations in the name of their newfound faith.

Gregg Allison disagrees.

"The early church, certainly in the

that he was crucified. So the belief was that he was conceived on the 14th or 15th of Nisan, according to the Hebrew calendar. Translated, [Jesus] was conceived on March 25 on the Roman calendar. Fast forward nine months and we have the date of December 25." ➤

**"The Back Story: December the 25th" is available at Fox News' Web site.**

## SBTS OFFERS NEW DEGREE EMPHASIS IN BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY

By Josh Hayes

**The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** now offers students the opportunity to pursue the study of biblical spirituality in the master of divinity, master of theology, doctor of ministry and doctor of philosophy degree programs.

Russell D. Moore, dean of the School of Theology and senior vice president for academic administration, spoke of the need for churches to learn about authentic Christian spirituality: "Our churches are facing a crisis when it comes to spirituality. Some congregations are captive to faddish and wisdom-deadening forms of pseudo-spirituality while others are in bondage to an arid rationalism. Churches and church leaders are longing for a healthy holistic Christian spirituality. Southern Seminary is ready, with such outstanding scholars as Don Whitney and Michael A.G. Haykin, to address this need."

According to Whitney, associate professor of biblical spirituality and senior associate dean of the School of Theology at SBTS, the addition of the program sets Southern apart in the world of theological education as the only North American institution that offers a degree emphasis in biblical spirituality in each of the four degree levels.

"Our students need to study spirituality because at the heart of their task as ministers is the cultivation of spirituality in the lives of the individuals under their ministry, as well as spirituality in the life of their congregation as a whole," said Whitney.

Biblical spirituality courses include historical studies about Patristic, Reformation, Puritan and Baptist spirituality, as well as biographical studies of various Christian figures. Along with the program's core course of Personal Spiritual Disciplines - which is required for M.Div. students - with its emphasis on the daily, practical aspects of private devotion to Christ, there are also courses emphasizing congregational spiritual disciplines. ➤

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More information about the biblical spirituality programs is available at [www.sbts.edu](http://www.sbts.edu)

## BGS LAUNCHES SOUTHERN BAPTIST JOURNAL OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

**The Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism** at Southern Seminary launched the *Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism (SBJME)*, March 2012.

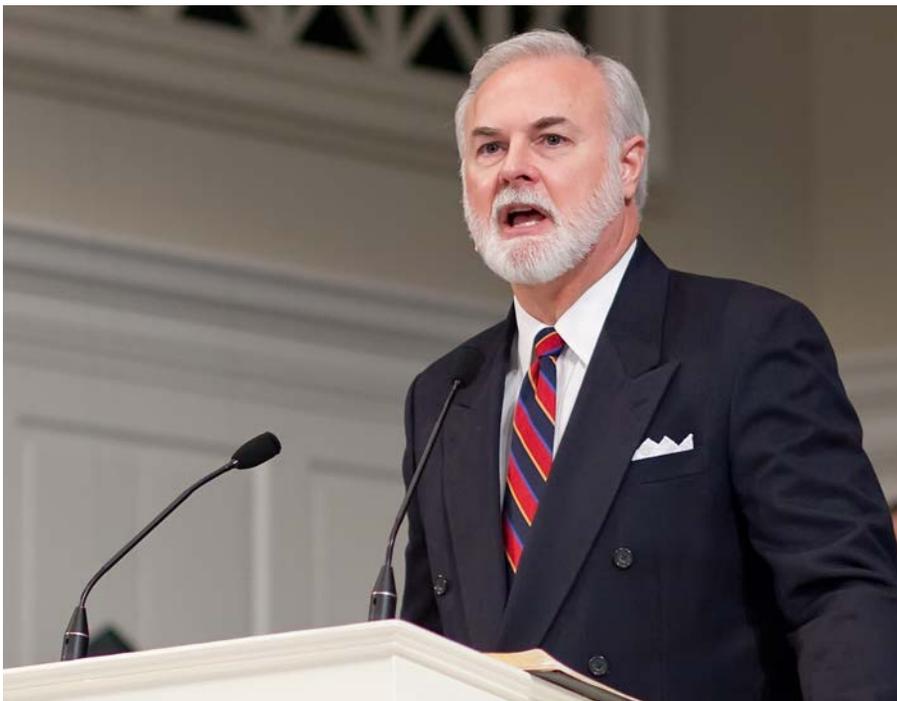
The *Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism* will offer a resource to help scholars and practitioners think biblically and theologically about the Great Commission. The faculty of the Graham School, having identified a need for a gospel-centered, theologically conservative journal concerning missions and evangelism, proposed the formation of the new publication.

"Whether one is engaging atheists in post-Christian Europe, Muslims in Central Asia or the suffering poor on the Indian sub-continent, missions in the 21st century requires methodologies solidly built on biblical truth," said Jeff Walters, assistant professor of Christian missions and urban ministry at Southern. "With the *Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism*, the faculty of the Graham School and Southern Seminary seek to provide a resource both biblical and practical for pastors, missionaries and scholars. We want to build on a long tradition of theological education and scholarship at Southern Seminary to supply a much needed voice in evangelical missions."

The Graham School will publish *SBJME* four times per year, the first issue of which will come out in March 2012. Walters will serve as editor of the journal under the executive editorship of Graham School Dean Zane Pratt. Will Brooks, assistant to the dean of BGS, will be the book review editor. ➤

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Those interested in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism* should visit [www.sbts.edu](http://www.sbts.edu) for subscription information.



## NETTLES HONORED WITH BOOK, MINISTRY BY HIS GRACE AND FOR HIS GLORY

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

**The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** hosted the presentation of a book published in honor of Thomas J. Nettles, Nov. 2011, for his influential 35-year teaching career. Nettles, whose writings helped change the trajectory of the Southern Baptist Convention during the 1980s, has been professor of historical theology at the seminary since 1997.

“Teaching is such a high calling and Tom Nettles embodies that calling,” SBTS President R. Albert Mohler Jr. said. “It was personally gratifying to see Professor Nettles honored in this way. It was a day he, and we, will not forget.”

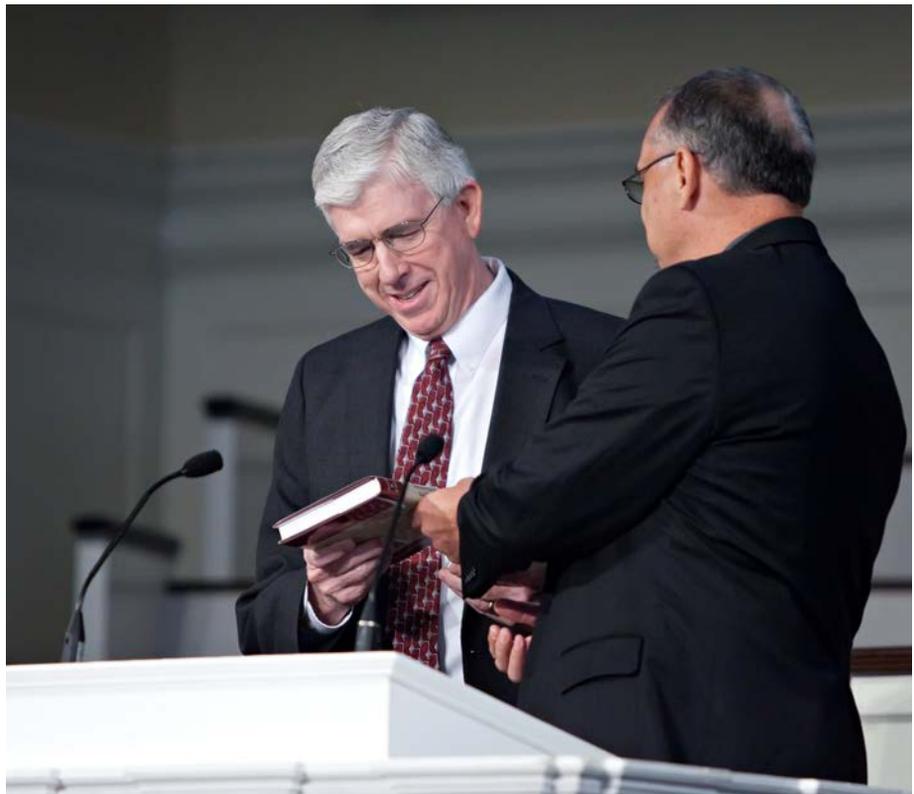
In the foreword of the book, *Ministry by His Grace and for His Glory*, Mohler writes:

“Tom Nettles was born to be a teacher, called to be a preacher, and trained to be a scholar. He has produced a library of scholarship and has shaped a generation of Baptist ministers and leaders. He has also done what few scholars ever have the opportunity or courage to do – he has reset the terms of debate for an entire denomination of churches.”

Tom Ascol, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Fla., presented Nettles with the book, *Ministry by His Grace and for His Glory*, in front of Southern’s student body, several of the book’s contributors and Nettles’ wife, son and daughter-in-law and granddaughter. Ascol, along with Southeastern Seminary professor Nathan A. Finn, edited the book project.

“The apostle Paul instructs us to give honor to those to whom honor is due,” Ascol said. “And it’s my distinct privilege today to obey that apostolic injunction by making a presentation to a man to whom honor is due.”

“He is due honor because of his faithfulness and usefulness in Christ’s



“Tom Nettles is one of the most Christ-like men I have ever known. He first influenced me in print when, as a young man in ministry, I was told that biblical inerrancy was foreign to the Baptist heritage. Reading *Baptists and the Bible* reassured me that my home church taught me what was not only Baptist, but apostolic about the authority of Scripture.”

kingdom during the last several decades,” Ascol said of Nettles. “This marks the 35th anniversary of Dr. Nettles’ teaching career. In honor and celebration of that, 22 of his friends, colleagues, associates and former students have joined together to compile a book of essays in his honor.”

Russell D. Moore, senior vice president for academic administration and dean of SBTS’ School of Theology, said of Nettles:

“Tom Nettles is one of the most Christ-like men I have ever known. He first influenced me in print when, as a young man in ministry, I was told that biblical inerrancy was foreign to the Baptist heritage. Reading *Baptists*

*and the Bible* reassured me that my home church taught me what was not only Baptist, but apostolic about the authority of Scripture.”

*Ministry by His Grace and for His Glory’s* 20 chapters present three sections expounding on historical, theological and practical ministry issues. Its contributors include two seminary presidents and seven members of Southern Seminary’s current faculty.

“Those of us who contributed to the book realize that we are but a small fraction representing the thousands of men and women who have been blessed by Dr. Nettles’ ministry,” Ascol said. ➤

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## SBTS HOSTS FIRST ALUMNI ACADEMY COURSE, SCHREINER'S NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

By Josh Hayes

**The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** held its inaugural Alumni Academy course taught by scholar and author Thomas R. Schreiner, Jan. 4-6, 2012.

An event hosted by Southern Seminary's alumni relations office, Alumni Academy offers ongoing theological learning to SBTS alumni free of charge. Schreiner, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and associate dean of Scripture and interpretation at Southern, taught four sessions about New Testament theology.

In his first lecture, Schreiner surveyed the Old Testament storyline, giving an overview of its theology, themes and events. Drawing from biblical theologian Graeme Goldsworthy, Schreiner prefaced his presentation of the Bible's unfolding

“ Schreiner prefaced his presentation of the Bible's unfolding narrative by telling an audience of pastors that “[their] people will learn biblical theology mainly from [them].”

narrative by telling the audience of pastors that “[their] people will learn biblical theology mainly from [them].” The life of the church, he said, is where the truth of Scripture is primarily communicated.

Beginning with creation and fall and concluding with exile and the Prophets, Schreiner elucidated biblical themes such as “sanctuary,” “sin,” “seed,” “covenant,” “blessing,” “curse,” “land” and “kingdom,” as the narrative unveils them across the Old Testament canon. This, in turn, gave rise to Schreiner's second lecture, in which he discussed the kingdom of God and dealt with “the-already-and-the-not-yet” dynamic of the kingdom presented in the New Testament.

For the third lecture, Schreiner discussed the “New Perspective on Paul” controversy, tracing the movement's development beginning with religion scholar E.P. Sanders. Sanders' position, known as “covenantal nomism,” suggests that Jews understood

themselves to enter the covenant by grace but stay in it by keeping the works of the law. Schreiner gave considerable attention to the doctrine of justification in Paul's letters, examining how Paul uses the word “righteousness” throughout Scripture.

In the final session, Schreiner discussed the topics of justification in the Book of James and the warning passages in the Book of Hebrews. In his lecture about James, Schreiner presented various positions regarding how a person should understand the relationship between Paul and James with respect to justification.

In addition to Schreiner's lectures, Alumni Academy held a question-and-answer panel, featuring Schreiner and Mark Dever, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Dan Dumas, the senior vice president for institutional administration at SBTS moderated the panel. The panel answered questions related to elders, church government and discipline, preaching preparation, the local church's mission and more.

The next scheduled Alumni Academy course is May 15-17, 2012. Bruce A. Ware, professor of Christian theology at Southern, will teach the course, “Beholding the Glory of Christ: ‘Eternal Word, Incarnate Son, Exalted Lord.’” The class will explore the person of Jesus Christ in a Trinitarian context, looking at him as the eternal Son of the Father who became incarnate and living in the power of the Spirit sought to fulfill the Father's will. ➤

Alumni Academy courses are free for Southern alumni, and for a nominal fee, attendees may bring members of their church staff with them. More information about Alumni Academy is available at [events.sbts.edu](http://events.sbts.edu)



# SBTS HOLDS OPEN HOUSE FOR NASHVILLE EXTENSION

By Josh Hayes

**The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** held an open house event for its new Nashville, Tenn., extension center, Feb. 22, 2012.

Located in the Cool Springs area of Franklin, Tenn., the Nashville campus is a strategic site for training gospel ministers in the American South. In terms of theological education, Nashville is one of the least served places in the country, and the extension site gives Southern Seminary a more permanent presence in the area.

“Coming to Nashville is fairly natural for Southern Seminary. We feel a strong kinship with the state of Tennessee and the city of Nashville,” said SBTS President R. Albert Mohler Jr. at the Feb. 22 open house, noting some of Southern’s historic and denominational ties to the city.

Attended by members of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee and other leaders of the denomination along with pastors from the Nashville area, the open house marked the formal opening of the extension center. During the previous semester, extension center classes met in a temporary space, but were able to meet in the completed classrooms for the spring semester.

“The Lord’s blessing on this particular project since the move to this address has exceeded all of our expectations,” said Mohler announcing that the Nashville extension met its annual goals for growth within its first 4-5 months of operation. Mohler credited the leadership of Mark T. Coppenger, who is vice president for extension education and director of the Nashville extension center.

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, gave the prayer of dedication at the open house lunch. Among guests was J. Matthew Pinson, president of Free Will Baptist Bible College in Nashville, Tenn.

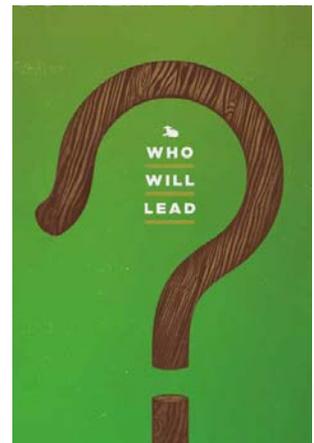
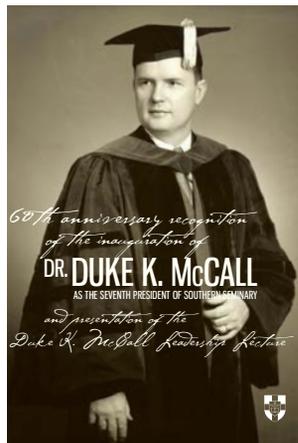
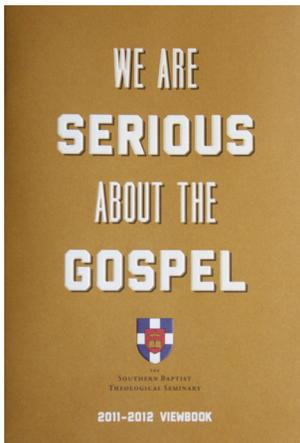
Students of SBTS Nashville are enrolled in classes taught by faculty members from Southern Seminary’s Louisville, Ky., campus. Along with Coppenger, who is professor of Christian apologetics in addition to administrative titles, George H. Martin, professor of biblical studies, also relocated to Nashville from the Louisville campus in order to help Southern establish a permanent presence in the city.

Coppenger noted some Louisville-based professors have taught at the Nashville extension site since August 2011, including Donald S. Whitney, Stephen J. Wellum, Stuart W. Scott, and Joseph R. Crider, in addition to Brian J. Vickers and Timothy Paul Jones teaching there this semester.

Already in operation, Coppenger said, the Nashville extension site doubled in its amount of courses offered during Fall 2011. The winter- and spring-term course offerings doubled as well. Next year, he said, the seminary plans to offer the entirety of core courses required for the M.Div. degree in one year. ➤

More information about SBTS Nashville is available at [nashville.sbts.edu](http://nashville.sbts.edu)





## SBTS COMM. TEAM WINS GRAPHIC DESIGN AWARDS

By Josh Hayes

**Southern Seminary's Office of Communications** received four awards at the 22nd-annual Louisville Graphic Design Association (LGDA) 100 Show, December 2011.

The design team received a gold award for the 2011 Southern Seminary Viewbook, a silver award for the "We Are Serious About the Gospel" book-typography graphic and a bronze award for two other entries, the Fall 2011 *Southern Seminary Magazine* and the Duke K. McCall 60th-anniversary program, respectively. The Southern team was one of the only two entrants to receive a gold award.

"I am so proud of our communications team's effort," said Dan Dumas, senior vice president for institutional administration. "In the design field, one is grateful for consistent singles and doubles and the occasional triple. However, these creatives step up to the plate and consistently hit home runs. Thinking outside the box is their game."

Southern's creative team, who received awards two years in a row, includes Creative Director Eric Jimenez, Lead Designer Tyler Deeb, Graphic Designer Andrea Stember and Manager of Photography and Social Media Jason Coobs. Steve Watters, vice president of

communications, leads the team.

Obtaining gold from the LGDA judges, the 2011 Southern Seminary Viewbook introduces prospective seminary students to materials about Southern. In addition to highlighting Southern's schools and degree programs, the viewbook features contributions from SBTS administration and faculty as well as profiles of faculty members, alumni and current students. Deeb oversaw art and design for the viewbook, and Jimenez was creative director. Coobs provided photographs for the viewbook, as well as former staff photographer Devin Maddox.

The typography graphic earned silver for its creative arrangement of rare books from the James P. Boyce Centennial Library archives collection spelling out the words "We Are Serious About the Gospel." Deeb was art director and designer for the graphic and Coobs was the photographer. The graphic was originally a prospective image for the cover of the Summer 2011 *Southern Seminary Magazine*.

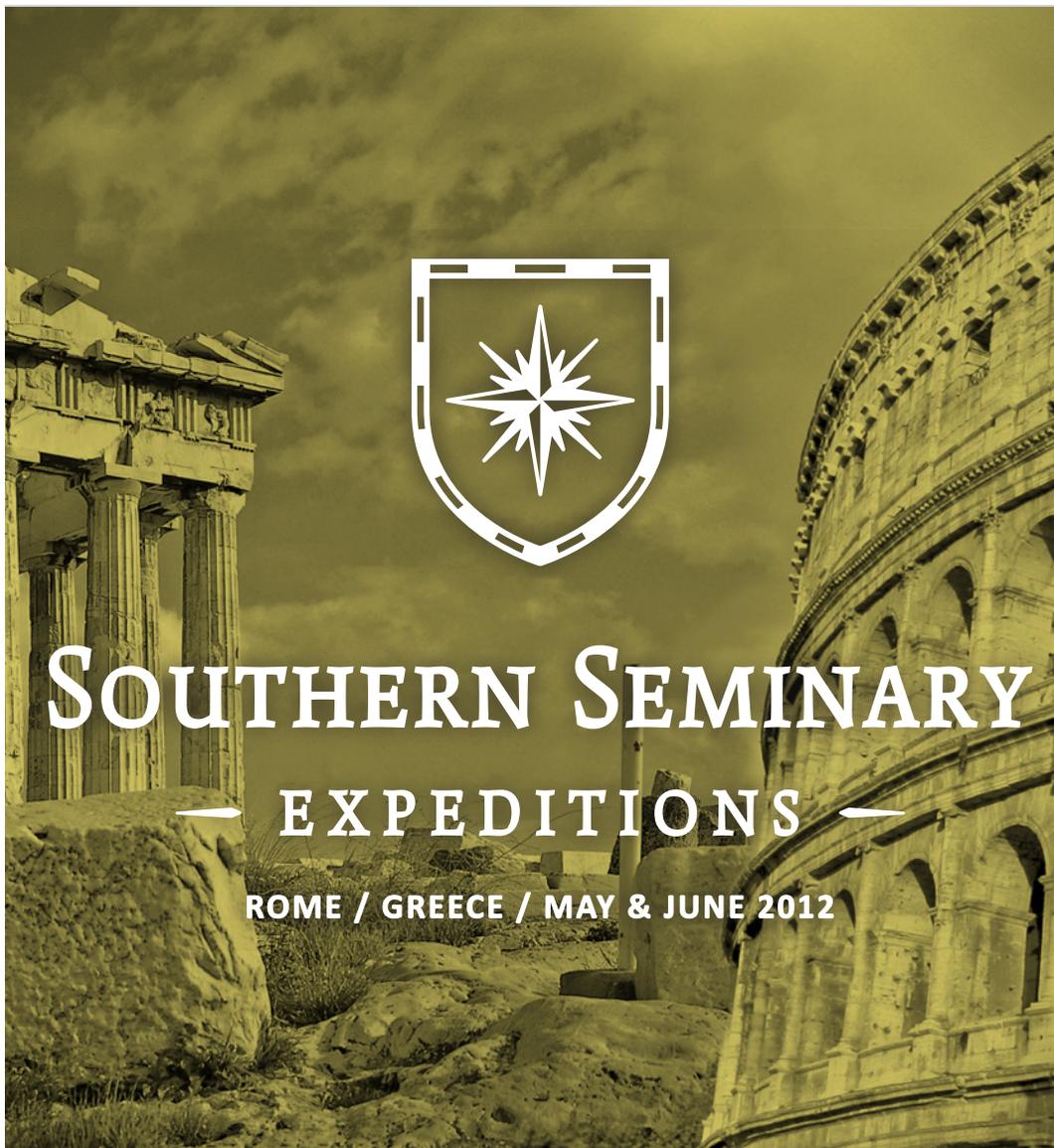
The Fall 2011 *Southern Seminary Magazine*, which won bronze, gives the institution a platform to raise readers' awareness of the urgent need for the church to produce leaders. The cover cleverly poses the question "Who will lead?" with a shepherd's staff functioning as the question mark. The magazine contains a quality layout of the latest news and events in the life of Southern Seminary

along with inventive, complementary spreads accompanying essays about leadership by seminary administration and faculty members. Deeb was the art director and designer for the magazine and Jimenez the creative director. Coobs provided the magazine's photographs. The Fall 2011 *Southern Seminary Magazine* is available at [www.sbts.edu/resources](http://www.sbts.edu/resources)

Taking bronze and rounding out the seminary's four LGDA 100 Show entries is the program for Southern Seminary's Sept. 6, 2011, chapel service celebrating the 60th anniversary of Duke K. McCall's election as seminary president. Accompanying the program's content are images of McCall from various moments throughout his storied, decade-spanning career as a student and administrator of Southern. Included in the program is SBTS church history professor Gregory A. Wills' biographical essay about McCall. Jimenez was art director and designer for the McCall anniversary program with former staff designer John Ross contributing to the cover design.

Deeb, who also works as a freelance designer (Pedale Design), received bronze for three additional personal entries in the show.

The LGDA 100 Show accepts entries from professional and student graphic designers in the Louisville, Ky., area. This year's show accommodated roughly 300 entries. More information about the Louisville Graphic Design Association is available at [www.lgda.org](http://www.lgda.org) ➤



## SOUTHERN EXPEDITIONS OFFERS STUDY OPPORTUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD

By SBTS Communications

**The newly established Southern Seminary Expeditions** offers Southern Seminary students and friends the opportunity to study subjects from the breadth of seminary curriculum at sites around the world pertinent to given topics.

Southern Expeditions provides attendees with field lectures from experts in biblical, theological and historical studies. The courses offered on the expedition trips count as on-campus credit. Each course is

worth three credit hours, both as required classes and electives.

The study tours are open to all. This includes Southern and Boyce students, alumni and friends of Southern Seminary. Approximately 30 spots are available for each expedition.

In Summer 2012, Southern Expeditions will take attendees to Greece and Rome with Drs. Russell D. Moore, Gregory A. Wills and Phillip Bethancourt (Greece only). The Greece and Rome trips will offer courses ranging from systematic theology to advanced electives in church history.

Each trip, like theirs to Greece and Rome, includes the cost of a three credit-hour course. ➤

**More information about Southern Expeditions, including details about registration, is available at [events.sbts.edu](http://events.sbts.edu)**

## PLUMMER RELEASES BOOK IN KOREAN, CHINESE

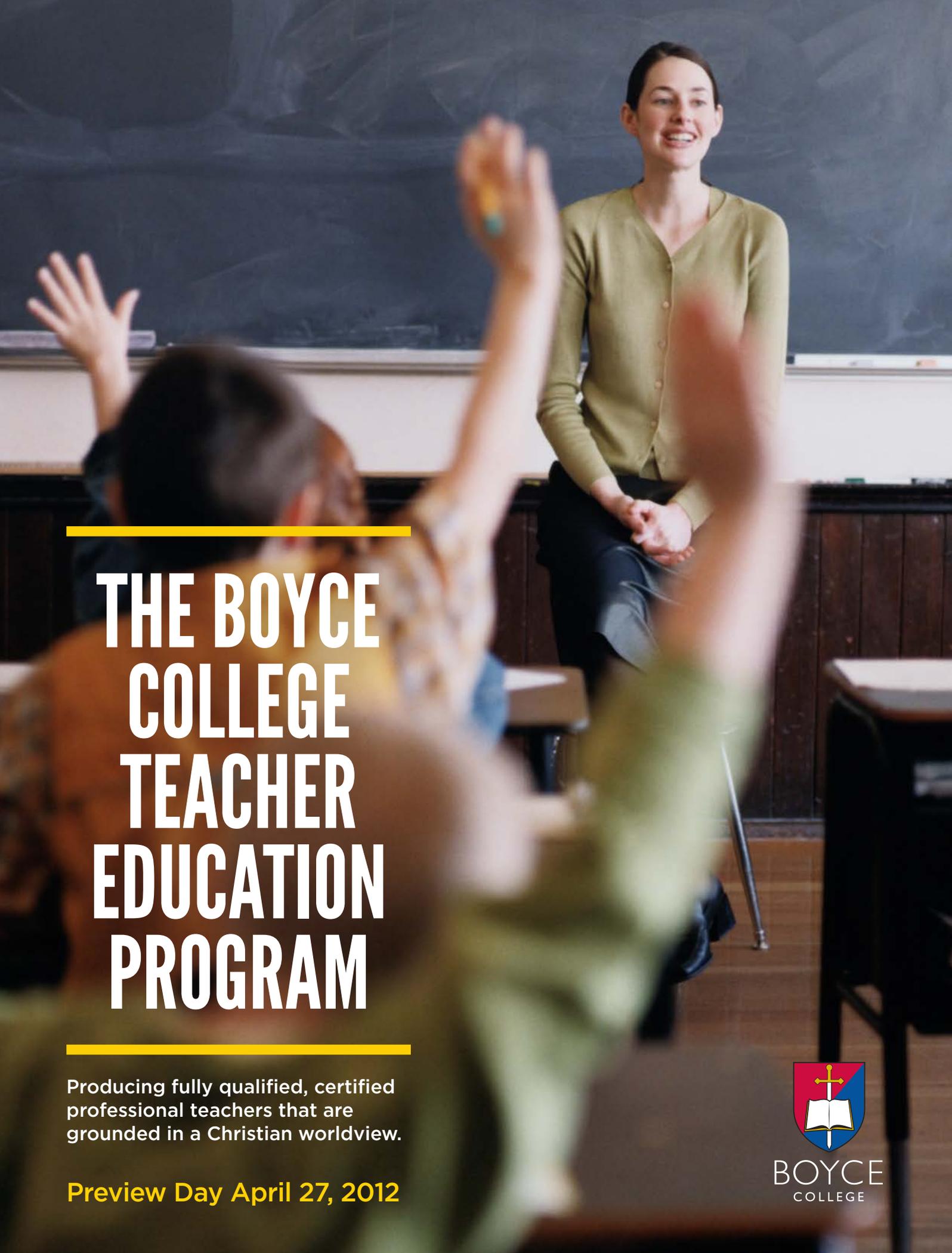
By Aaron Cline Hanbury

*40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*, a 2010 book by Southern Seminary professor Robert L. Plummer, has been translated into both Korean and Chinese. Chung Hyun Cho and Hyun-Gwang Kim of Korean Bible University in Seoul, Korea, translated the book.

*40 Questions* consists of four parts, each dealing with a major issue of biblical interpretation, including “text, canon and translation,” “approaching the Bible generally,” “approaching specific texts” and “issues under recent discussion.”

With the book translated into Korean and Chinese, Plummer’s first-rate text will carry its already significant influence around the world.





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# RADICAL CONFERENCE FEATURES PLATT, DEYOUNG, MOHLER AND MOORE

By Alli Hill

**Southern Seminary hosted the 2012 Give Me An Answer Collegiate Conference, Feb. 17-18.** Featuring plenary speakers David Platt, Kevin DeYoung, Russell D. Moore and R. Albert Mohler Jr., the conference explored the radical difference the gospel makes in the Christian life. More than 800 students and leaders attended.

Platt, pastor of The Church of Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., opened the conference with five pictures seen in the early church that give a portrait of the radical life in Christ. Looking to Acts 4-8, he addressed the early church's radical confidence in prayer, generosity with possessions, devotion to purity, joy amidst persecution and commitment to proclamation.

"My prayer is that God would so grip your heart for one thing that you would gladly leave behind the pursuits of this world to live radically for one thing: the glory of God," he said.

Platt explained that the early church displayed a radical devotion to purity because God is serious about sin in his people's lives. There is no room for the Christian to be casual with sin or pretend to conceal sin before God.

"We do not have time to waste our lives on the pursuits, pleasures and possessions of this world," he said. "Let's live. Let's give our lives and lose them if necessary to make this great news of this great Savior made known to the ends of the earth."

Kevin DeYoung, senior pastor at University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Mich., led the second general session on sexual immorality, saying the topic is one of several significant areas where Christians are blinded.

DeYoung gave four reasons to flee sexual immorality: the effect, your purpose, your union and the one who owns you.

"When you are a Christian, you belong to Christ and are members of

his body," he said. "When you engage in sexual immorality it is as if the members of Christ are engaging in sexual sin. If you can't picture Christ sitting in front of porn or sleeping around, you should not put yourself in those circumstances."

DeYoung encouraged attendees to not awaken love before its time. He said you will never regret what you did not do before you are married.

Moore, dean of the School of Theology and senior vice president for academic administration at Southern, began day two of the conference by preaching from Hebrews 2:14-18.

"To embrace a truly radical Christianity is being able to see a warfare that looks to our fallen, blinded eyes like tranquility around us," he said.

Moore said when the satanic powers accuse believers of sin, Christians can go to the only one who has defeated death and can answer every accusation: Jesus Christ.

"The satanic powers have evidence against us and it is damning, but every accusation comes before an advocate who stands before the Father ... with a crushed snake skull under his feet."

Mohler, president of SBTS, closed the conference with a study of James 4:4, and the deep and radical antagonism between the way the world thinks and the way Christians think.

"How we think determines how we live. Thinking faithfully is what is required before one will live faithfully," he said.

Mohler looked at issues, such as truth, beauty, goodness, pleasure, education, government and politics and morality as well as the need to see them biblically and practice them faithfully.

"We must struggle every day of our lives under the lordship of Christ, within the fellowship of the local church," Mohler said. "Day by day we figure out what devotion to Christ looks like."

The conference included musical guests Shane & Shane, as well as FLAME performing a concert. Twenty-four break-out sessions were offered led by speakers, such as Dan DeWitt, Zane Pratt, Tom Schreiner, Greg Gilbert and others. ➤

Audio and video of GMAA: Radical conference is available at [www.sbts.edu/resources](http://www.sbts.edu/resources)





## NO FLOWER FIELD HERE: ANDREW PETERSON TALKS ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Below recording artist and author Andrew Peterson talks with *Southern Seminary Magazine* assistant editor Aaron Cline Hanbury about imagination in the Christian life.

**ACH:** What is the place of an active imagination in the Christian life?

**AP:** I remember this quote from C.S. Lewis: "The imagination is the organ of meaning." The imagination is clearly

something God gave us and is part of our makeup that we can imagine things that don't exist.

I think that's the image of God at work in us. J.R.R. Tolkien, in an essay called "On Fairy Stories," says that one of the ways we reflect God's image is that we delight in making things. He calls us "sub-creators." The imagination is really tied to that. I think about where, in Hebrews, the author talks about how the temple is just a shadow of something bigger. Every church ever built, on every mission field, is there because someone imagined it first. Someone looked at an empty space and said, "There needs to be something here that wasn't here before." I think

**“** The imagination is something that doesn't work unless you're doing something. The idea of the artist sitting around pondering, sitting in a flower field, doesn't work. You have to get your hands in it. When it comes to creativity, it's very much work.

songwriting is that way and book-writing is that way.

**ACH:** How do you engage your imagination?



## SOLD-OUT CROWD ENJOYS BEHOLD THE LAMB

By Emily Griffin

Southern Seminary welcomed Andrew Peterson to campus, December 2011, as part of Peterson's Behold the Lamb of God national tour. The event, hosted in Alumni Memorial Chapel, was sold out.

In 2000, Peterson and a group of friends wrote and recorded *Behold the Lamb of God*. The album was received with great acclaim, and now every December, Peterson and friends tour the country to sing the song cycle Peterson calls "the true tall tale of the coming of Christ."

The live concert, like the album, features singer/songwriters Jill Phillips, Andy Gullahorn, Ben Shive and Andrew Osenga. Throughout the years the tour has featured artists such as Alison Krauss, Derek Webb and Sixpence None the Richer.



Performing on the Behold the Lamb of God tour with Andrew Peterson (top) were fellow recording artists Ben Shive (left), Jill Phillips and Andy Gullahorn (right). Also on the tour were Jason Gray and Andrew Osenga (not pictured).

**AP:** All I do is get my guitar out of the case – and I have a stand in the house – and I put it there and it's like Jesus' eyes in the painting that just follows you wherever you go. The guitar just stares me down and reminds me that you just have to work. The imagination is something that doesn't work unless you're doing something. The idea of the artist sitting around pondering, sitting in a flower field, doesn't work. You have to get your hands in it. When it comes to creativity, it's very much work.

**ACH:** Are there any authors who, when you read them, particularly spark ideas?

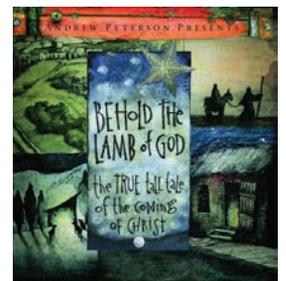
**AP:** C.S. Lewis is an obvious one. He's probably at the top of the list. George MacDonald and Frederick Buechner are both favorites of mine as well.

**ACH:** How can you encourage future pastors and church leaders to learn to communicate theological truths to children and laymen

– as you do in your books and songs?

**AP:** A few years ago, I helped out in a children's Sunday school class at my church and the teacher told the story about the Israelites crossing the river Jordan. Immediately she stopped the story and asked the children, "Can you think of some rivers that the Lord has helped you cross?" The kids started answering the question, but I was thinking, "What about how crazy it is that God dried up a river? Oh my goodness! How amazing is that!" So I was kind of hung up on the story from the kids' point of view. It was like the magic was gone.

The Bible can do its own work. I'm not saying you never apply stories, because there is wonderful and necessary application. But sometimes it's wise to let the story do its work. That would be my biggest advice for pastors. ➤



## DAWN SAYS ‘NEW THEOLOGY’ IS BAD FOR PEOPLE AT GHEENS LECTURES

By Tim Sweetman

**Renowned theologian, author and educator Marva Dawn delivered Gheens Lectures at Southern Seminary, Feb. 14-15.**

The lecture series was Dawn’s first public lectures since acute health issues forced her into a sabbatical. Titled “The New Theologies Are Bad For You,” Dawn’s lectures drew inspiration from the book, *Good News for Anxious Christians* by Philip Cary.

Dawn is the author of many books including *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time*, which exhorts readers to a second look at so-called “contemporary Christian worship.” Her book became the first scholarly work from within the evangelical community to question “seeker-sensitive” worship.

Her first lecture touched on why the new theologies are bad for people intellectually.

“You may have heard the phrase ‘Everyone should be able to hear the Holy Spirit in your own heart,’ or ‘You must have certain feelings as a Christian,’” said Dawn. “But in the Scriptures, it is never your own heart, God always speaks to you on the outside.”

Dawn argued that the idea of following one’s own inner feelings is both dangerous and wrong. Christians are called to whole-mindedness, not to be controlled by feelings.

“We should be adults and treat our feelings intellectually,” she said.

Using Romans 12:1-2 and Philippians 3:7-11 as the foundation for her arguments, she noted that God never stresses feelings. God’s revelation about himself and his will comes not through feelings, but through Scripture.



Often believers who buy into the new theologies lose sight of this truth as they “search for God’s will” in their lives, she observed.

“You discern God’s will by means of God’s Word,” said Dawn. “I knew God’s will for my life. It’s very clear in Scripture. God needs more people who are obedient to his revealed will.”

If people base their ideas of God on their feelings as the new theologies teach, they may very well conclude that God is a wrathful and evil God. However, a theology based upon God’s Word knows the truth.

Her final lecture touched on those who claim to be spiritual, but not religious. “These are folks that are really searching, and they need

compassion,” said Dawn. “Many people find that the church is not open to their uncertainty. I say, through Jesus Christ, that the church should be.”

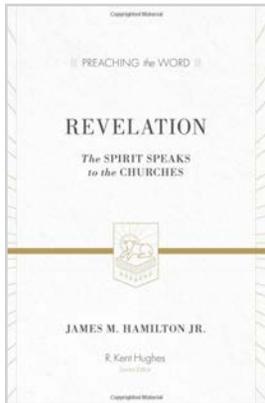
Her argument was that believers should couch their teachings in love, patiently explaining to those who find themselves in this group that Christianity is not simply based upon feelings but upon the whole intellect. Christians are the recipients of forgiveness and reconciliation, the foundation for all spirituality. Morally, they are responsible to continue to pass that message on to the world.

The 2012 Gheens Lectures are available in audio and video online at [www.sbts.edu/resources](http://www.sbts.edu/resources)

# REVELATION: THE SPIRIT SPEAKS TO THE CHURCHES

James M. Hamilton Jr. (Crossway 2011, \$34.99)

Review by Aaron Cline Hanbury



**In his new commentary, *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*,** James M. Hamilton Jr. demonstrates his interpretation of the Book of Revelation, an interpretation not entirely unique but certainly distinct to him.

Hamilton, associate professor of biblical theology at Southern Seminary, argues that Revelation 11:15-19 – the blowing of the seventh trumpet – represents the apex of John’s vision and the whole book unfolds from that point, forming a chiasm. The center of a chiasm is the main point or climax that the author wants to emphasize. So Hamilton understands the

seventh trumpet in Revelation as the climax of the book.

“I think that this seventh trumpet blast falls here at the middle of the whole book of Revelation because the book is structured chiastically, so that everything is centered on this moment,” he explains. “This is the moment when the trumpet is blown, the voices are raised, and the rebellion against the world’s rightful Lord comes to an end. The true King is enthroned, and his reign will never end.”

According to Hamilton, everything changes in Revelation 11:15-19. The mock reign of the evil one ends. The eternal reign of King Jesus begins.

## Hamilton writes:

“God wants us to know the glory of his mercy and his justice, and that is what we see in Revelation: history culminates in climactic demonstrations of the glory of God in salvation through judgment.”

—  
“This book [John’s Revelation] is a circular letter addressed to Christians in churches. That means it is written to encourage Christians. The whole book was probably intended to be read aloud, in one sitting, in a

worship gathering of the local church. In writing to seven churches, seven being a number of completion and wholeness, John writes to all the churches. Being an apocalyptic prophecy, this letter reveals the future to us; it pulls back the veil and lets

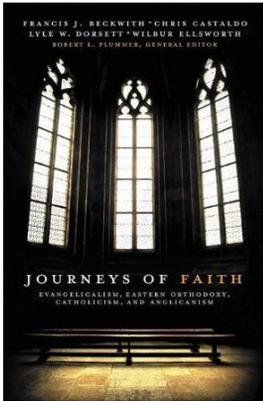
us see the world as it truly is. The book of Revelation is meant to help us see reality. And the truth about his world is that it is a world in which the glory of God will be seen in his justice, which in turn will highlight the gracious and free character of

his mercy, knowing that it is God’s purpose to display his glory in these wars is one of the blessing of reading and studying this book.”

## JOURNEYS OF FAITH: EVANGELICALISM, EASTERN ORTHODOXY, CATHOLICISM, AND ANGLICANISM

Robert L. Plummer, ed. (Zondervan 2012, \$18.99)

Review by Aaron Cline Hanbury



**Robert L. Plummer, associate professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary,** writes that he felt the need for a book that could help evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike understand why persons depart their faith traditions and to understand the fundamental differences between them.

His new book, *Journeys of Faith*, presents four parts: Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Anglicanism and evangelicalism. Each section contains three chapters: an essay by a one-time evangelical who converted to a different Christian tradition, a response by an

evangelical and then a rejoinder by the essayist – except for the section about evangelicalism, in which a Roman Catholic responds to a one-time Catholic turned evangelical. Each contributor is a scholar or Christian figure of note, as are the responders.

In his conclusions, Plummer lists three things he wants his readers to take from *Journeys of Faith*: a better understanding of the complexity of conversions to other Christian traditions; those desiring to convert traditions to be understood and more hesitant; and that the book will be a model of “peaceable ecumenical dialogue.”

### Contributors write:

“This book, I think, will help us better understand the surge in migrations away from Evangelicalism. It will also help, I pray, help us to think more biblically and theologically about what we believe,” writes Scot McKnight in his foreword.

“In the last several years, I have observed several Evangelical seminary students or church members convert to Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, or various other Christian traditions normally viewed as quite distant from Evangelical practice and belief. In responding to questions that

members in my church raised about these conversions, I became aware that there were not many helpful books on this phenomenon,” writes Robert L. Plummer about his motivation for the book.

“This is where my journey of faith has led. I identify with the Evangelical

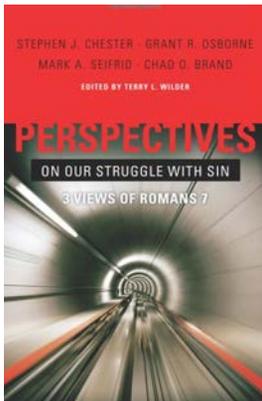
tradition because I believe that its approach to biblical authority and the gospel best reflects the will of God as revealed in Scripture. Insofar as the term Evangelical describes such a person, despite its flaws and negative connotations, I hope to be this kind of man, comporting myself

and relating to others – including my Catholic family and friends – with the character of Christ,” writes Chris Castaldo about his conversion from Catholicism to evangelicalism.

## PERSPECTIVES ON OUR STRUGGLE WITH SIN: THREE VIEWS OF ROMANS 7

Terry L. Wilder, ed. (B&H Academic 2011, \$24.99)

Review by Josh Hayes



**Edited by Terry L. Wilder,**

*Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin* presents treatments of Romans 7 from New Testament professors Stephen J. Chester, Grant R. Osborne and Southern Seminary's Mark A. Seifrid. Chad Owen Brand, Southern Seminary theology professor, offers thoughts about the theological and pastoral issues related to Romans 7 in the book's final chapter.

Osborne contends that Paul speaks of his experience as an unregenerate Jew in verses 7-13 and then describes his struggle with sin as a believer in verses 14-25. Taking the position that verses 7-25

refer to Paul's experience as an unconverted Jew, Chester proposes a "fusion" between the giving of the commandment to humanity in Eden, the giving of the law at Sinai and Paul's experience. And offering a non-binary perspective, Seifrid suggests that Paul describes "the human being confronted by the law," regenerate and unregenerate alike.

Readers struggling to develop their own understandings of Romans 7 will do themselves a favor by looking at the three thorough, well organized exegetical essays presented in *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin*.

### Contributors write:

"Every pastor deals with sin in pastoral ministry, if one has a pastoral ministry at all. People come to us for counseling over a variety of problems that they have in their lives. Extramarital affairs, pregnancy out of wedlock, guilt over an abortion, impending divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, rebellious children

in the home – all these and countless more issues beside are part of the standard counseling fare for pastors, student pastors, missionaries, women's ministers, and others who serve the Lord in churches," writes Chad Owen Brand, associate professor of theology at Southern Seminary.

"The story that Paul

tells is not merely his story, nor simply the story of Israel, nor is it only Adam's history as it is recapitulated in each and every person confronted with the law of God. Romans 7 is 'biography,' yet not *autobiography* but rather *theo-biography*, biography shaped, written, and told by the word and work of God," writes Mark A. Seifrid,

Mildred and Ernest Hogan Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary (emphasis original).

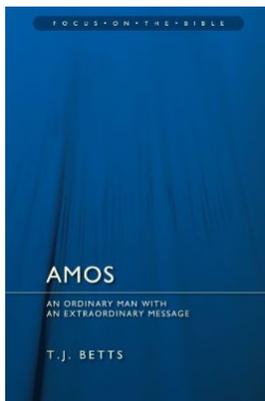
"The specifically chronological sequence and progression in Paul's argument is instead one *from the era of the law to the eschatological era of the Spirit*, made possible by the life, death, and resurrection

of Christ, and individuals either live in the old era or live in the new era of the Spirit through faith in Christ," writes Stephen J. Chester, professor of New Testament at North Park Theological Seminary (emphasis original).

## AMOS: AN ORDINARY MAN WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY MESSAGE

T.J. Betts (Christian Focus Publications 2011, \$15.99)

Review by Josh Hayes



With his new commentary, *Amos: An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Message*, Southern Seminary’s T.J. Betts attempts to connect the biblical world to today’s world.

In less than 200 pages, Betts, assistant professor of Old Testament interpretation at Southern, not only briefs his readers about events that took place probably more than 2,700 years ago, but also surmises why the words of an ancient prophet carry personal relevance today. Throughout the book, he maintains a welcoming style and personable tone as he analyzes the nine-chapter Book of

Amos in 14 digestibly sized portions.

Highlighting the emerging themes and principles of the prophet’s message to the northern kingdom of Israel, Betts focuses on such truths as God’s use of unlikely messengers, his sovereignty over the nations, his expectations for social justice, his promises to Israel of future restoration as well as the mercy at work in his prophet’s messages of imminent judgment. Betts’ *Amos* commentary well expresses and explains an ordinary man’s extraordinary message.

### Betts writes:

“A pastoral search committee would not have been very impressed by Amos’ credentials (or lack thereof), and yet throughout the Scriptures we discover a God who does many extraordinary things through very ordinary people. Amos demonstrated a willingness

to be obedient to God’s call.”

“The Lord never brings down His judgment upon His people without first sending them a word of warning. Why? It is because judgment is not God’s ‘default setting’ when it comes to humanity. God’s desire is for people to repent rather than perish (2 Pet 3:9). James

says, ‘Mercy triumphs over judgment’ (James 2:13). As unfaithful and disobedient to the Lord as Israel has been, God still warns His people so that they might have one more opportunity to repent and experience His forgiveness and reconciliation. The sometimes harsh words of Amos are God’s words

of tough love for His people.”

“Through His prophet Amos, the Lord said He would permanently establish His people in the land when the booth of David is repaired, that is, when the Messiah comes. It is in this Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are securely included in a covenant

relationship with God.”

“Israel put on quite a display in its worship, yet its worship lacked sincerity and integrity. The people’s worship appeared to be more about them than it did God. It was about what they could get from God rather than what they were offering Him.”



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## CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS MIGHT BE IN HEAVEN

By Russell D. Moore

**Christopher Hitchens, the world's most famously caustic atheist, is now dead.**

Hitchens expected this moment, of course, but he anticipated, wrongly, a blackness, a going out of consciousness forever. Many Christians may still be talking about what it was like for Christopher Hitchens to open his eyes in hell.

We might be wrong.

The Christian impulse here is exactly right. After all, Jesus and his apostles assured us that there is no salvation apart from union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, a union entered into by faith. And Hitchens not only rejected that gospel, he ridiculed it, along with the very notion of anything beyond the natural order. The Christian Scriptures are clear: there is a narrow window in which we must be saved, the time of this present life, and after this there is only judgment (2 Cor 6:1-2; Heb 9:27).

But I'm not sure Christopher Hitchens is in hell right now. It's not because I believe there's a "second chance" after death for salvation (I don't). It's not because I don't believe in hell or in God's judgment (I do). It's because of a sermon I heard years ago that haunts me to this day, reminding me of the sometimes surprising persistence of the gospel.

Fifteen or so years ago, I heard an old Welsh pastor preach on Jesus' encounter with the thieves on the cross. The preacher paused to speculate about whether the penitent thief might have had any God-fearing friends or family members. If so, he said, they probably would never have known about the terrorist's final act, his appeal to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). These believing family members and friends would have

assumed, all their lives, that this robber was in hell.

That sermon changed everything for me about the way I preach funerals for unbelievers. Now, deathbed conversions are very rare. Typically, a conscience is so seared by then, so given over to the darkening of the mind, that the gospel rarely is heard. We shouldn't count on last-second repentance.

But, however rarely, it does happen, and who knows? Perhaps you have relatives who, in the last seconds of breath, breathed out a silent prayer of repentance and faith. You might be as surprised as the thief's believing cohort.

And, who knows? Christopher Hitchens heard the gospel enough, often while debating believers. Maybe the seed of the Word might have embedded in his heart somewhere and maybe, just maybe, it broke through sometime in the night, as he

“It's not likely, but it's possible, and, if he did, then Christopher Hitchens's past atheism would be no barrier to communion with God. It would be, like my sin, crucified with Christ, buried and remembered no more.”



gasped for last breath. It's not likely, but it's possible, and, if he did, then Christopher Hitchens's past atheism would be no barrier to communion with God. It would be, like my sin, crucified with Christ, buried and remembered no more.

I don't know about Christopher Hitchens, about what happened in those last moments, but I do know that, if he had embraced it, the gospel would be enough for him. I know that because it's enough for me, and I'm as deserving of hell as he is. I know that the kingdom of God is made up of ex-thieves, and ex-murderers and ex-atheists like us. ➤

Russell D. Moore is dean of the School of Theology and senior vice president for academic administration at Southern Seminary. The entire article is available at [www.russellmoore.com](http://www.russellmoore.com)

# CONVERSION, GOD, AND THE WHOLE SELF

By Stephen J. Wellum

## **From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture**

is clear that conversion is absolutely necessary for individuals to experience salvation and know God. Unless we turn from our sin and turn to God, unless we know experientially what the Bible describes as a spiritual, supernatural circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6; Rom 2:25-29), we will not know God savingly and will stand under his judgment and wrath (Eph 2:1-3).

Three foundational truths underlie the Bible's teaching on conversion, and help us to see why conversion is so important in Scripture, theology and gospel proclamation.

The first foundational truth which grounds and makes sense of the Bible's teaching on conversion is the Bible's view of the human problem. Even though human beings are created as God's image-bearers and thus possess incredible value and significance, in Adam we rebelled against our Creator and thus became sinners who are subject to God's wrath (Gen 3; Rom 5:12-21). When the Bible speaks of sin and humans as sinners, it does not view this as a minor problem. It is not something that can be remedied by self-help, more education or even personal resolve to become a better person.

The second foundational truth that grounds and makes sense of the Bible's teaching on the necessity of conversion is the Bible's teaching about the nature and character God. Our problem can only be seen in its true colors in light of God's own personal, righteous and holy character. Conversion is absolutely necessary because God demands that his creatures be holy as he is holy. Therefore, in order to dwell before him we must be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, transformed by the power of the Spirit and made new creations in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17-21). There is no way for image-bearers to be brought back to the purpose of their creation and to enjoy all the benefits of the new creation without having



their sin paid for in full, being born anew by the Spirit, and being united to Christ by faith.

The third foundational truth that helps us understand the Bible's teaching on conversion is that conversion affects the whole person, and it affects the person as a whole. That is, in Scripture, conversion involves both turning from sin (repentance) and turning to Christ (faith). Both are necessary for conversion. And so repentance and faith are rightly viewed as two sides of the same coin.

In many of our churches, we find people who profess to have been converted, but they exhibit merely an intellectual assent to the gospel apart from any evidence of real change in their lives. Scripture clearly regards this kind of mere mental assent as false conversion (Matt 7:21-23). God demands a whole-person response to him as his covenant creatures. Conversion involves turning from sin and turning to Christ, which involves the whole person – their intellect, will, and emotions (Acts 2:37-38; 2 Cor 7:10; Heb 6:1).

Conversion is not optional; it is absolutely necessary. We cannot understand salvation and the gospel apart from a robust view of it. It is not enough to tip our hat to Jesus; we must experience God's sovereign and gracious work in our lives, giving us new life and enabling us, by the work of the Spirit of God, to repent and believe the gospel.

Our faulty understandings of conversion are often due to our faulty theologies. The remedy to this situation is to return to the Scriptures on our knees, asking that our great God would again revive his church so that in our proclamation of the gospel, men and women and boys and girls would repent of their sins and believe in Christ Jesus our Lord. >■

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Stephen J. Wellum is professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. The above article is available in its entirety in the March/April 2012 issue of the *9Marks Journal* at [www.9marks.org](http://www.9marks.org)

## Patrick Payton

*Homosexuality and the local church: pastor learns gospel change takes place over a lifetime*

*Homosexuality is among the most controversial issues in American culture, and it is also one of the most difficult contemporary challenges facing the local church. SBTS graduate Patrick Payton discovered this firsthand as he and his church grew to understand how best to cultivate a climate conducive and biblically faithful for ministering to those struggling with homosexual temptations.*

**Fresh out of seminary, Patrick Payton (SBTS M.Div., 1998) was pastoring a Midland, Texas, church plant that experienced the growing pains of a typical healthy church plant. Payton and his staff openly shared that Stonegate Fellowship Church was a place where people could bring the baggage of their past. Stonegate would love them and walk with them into the journey of new life offered through a relationship with Jesus. Then, Stephanie and Mike Goeke visited Payton's office.**



**“Most church members knew about their separation, the impending divorce and the miraculous restoration.** But what many did not know was the story this couple had never shared with anyone – especially anyone inside the church. The Goekes sat in my office and, with voices full of fear, began to take me at my word. They heard what we believed as a church and what we said; now, they were going to test it and see if we meant it.”

Mike began to detail for me how his almost-lifelong struggle with homosexuality was the part of the story no one knew anything about. Perhaps most discouraging, he detailed for me his loneliness and fear, especially in the local church. He detailed for me how the very place he should have been able to find help he found mostly hate, indifference, fear and foolishness. Mike and Stephanie even shared their fear of telling me as they were almost certain that their days of service at Stonegate Fellowship were over. But quite the opposite occurred.

**“Following several weeks of very intense and sometimes personal attack and struggle about the importance of sharing this real life story in the body**

**of Christ, I had this precious couple share their story in front of our entire church family.**

“I was amazed at what happened that Sunday morning. After the service, people would not leave. Many stayed to talk with Mike and Stephanie about family members struggling with homosexuality and asking what they could do. Men whom I knew to be very upset about what the Goekes were going to share were in tears asking for forgiveness from Mike and Stephanie.

**“I knew from the beginning that my characterization of homosexuality had been wrong.** My ideas about homosexuality were formed from the harsh rhetoric of evangelical speakers and the images of mainstream media. I never once thought about white-collar professionals like Mike Goeke who had been suffering with this issue for decades and were drowning in a sea of anonymity right under the nose of the church.

**“I was learning some new things about confession and community as well.** Jesus changes a life in an instant, but it takes a lifetime of walking in the new, crucified life in a community of Christ-followers called the local church to really experience the transformed life Jesus came to offer. But for many like me, we have grown accustomed to acting like transformed people should act, while deep down inside we are dying a slow death because we are afraid to talk about our struggles. After Mike and Stephanie shared the rest of their story, the gauntlet was thrown down in my life, and the life of our church. That gauntlet simply represented the fact that Stonegate would be no place for fakers. We would lean heavily on each other with our deepest struggles so that, as a community of Christ-followers, we could share the life of Christ with each other.”

Stonegate Fellowship hired Mike Goeke to come on-staff as executive pastor several months after that great Sunday. Today he is on the church's senior pastoral staff serving in the areas of executive leadership and teaching.

## Toby Jenkins

*Small-town Boyce student leads church, tornado-ravaged community through crisis*

**Toby Jenkins, a Boyce College student from Mississippi, occupied his usual front-row seat in his pastoral leadership class. In God's peculiar providence, Toby's professor spent the class-period telling students that, as sure as sunrise, crisis will shake every pastor's ministry at least once. In these times, the pastor must lead in the crisis with a voice of strength, a voice of direction, a voice for the gospel. Like he did most days, Toby jotted down notes so that he might recall the lecture when, some nebulous day in the future, he experienced a crisis in his ministry. Less than 24 hours later, it happened. A monstrous tornado descended upon Southern Indiana's rural township of Henryville, peeling roofs from houses, battering vehicles with an array of hail and debris, and even erasing a school brick-by-brick.**

**March 1, 2012, Dan Dumas told his Boyce College pastoral leadership class that "One to three times in a pastor's life, he'll have to step up and engage in a crisis situation."**

**Less than 24 hours later, that moment came for Toby Jenkins.**

"Listening to that in class, I thought, 'That'll never be me,'" he said. "But immediately after the tornado hit, I knew I had to step up as a voice. I had to trumpet the gospel in such a time as this.

"I already knew that God called me to be a voice. I knew those things [about which Dumas talked] applied to me, but I didn't think it'd be like this. I never thought I'd be standing in front of a news camera speaking the gospel. Even while it was happening, it took a while to sink in."

After the storm hit, Jenkins, mounting his four-wheeler, rushed to make sure the people in his congregation were taken care of. When state officials and reporters came to him, at first, Jenkins thought he was unavailable.

"I was just running around trying to make sure my people were okay, and that they have everything they need," he said. "The next thing I know, I'm pulled away by

people saying, 'Hey, you need to go talk to the news people.'

**"The first thing I wanted to say was, 'No. I'm too busy.' But I remembered my class lecture and thought, 'I have to be a voice.' And so every chance I get, I'm going to talk about the gospel.**

News crews came to hear the sermon I preached the first Sunday following the storm. I told my staff: 'I'm going to preach a sermon that's so saturated with the gospel and with Christ that if they edit it, they have to edit the whole thing.' They're going to have to work to not hear the gospel."

Despite the physical, economic and emotional damage brought by the tornadoes, the crisis provided Jenkins and his church with a opportunity to speak to broken people about the hope found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"If I've had a stump speech through all of this it's that this is about the gospel," Jenkins said. "When volunteers come to help with cleanup, we tell them that 'This isn't about the tree you're cutting up; it's about the lady sitting over in the dirt crying because she just lost her home, it's about showing her the love of Christ.'"





# THE ROAD AHEAD:

## Challenges Gospel Ministers Can Expect

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

**“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7).**

**W**riting to Timothy, the apostle Paul looks back on his ministry and declares satisfaction that he had finished his course. Paul would be the first to insist that his entire ministry was evidence of the grace and mercy of God, but he was assured that, by grace, he had finished his race.

Paul’s statement of completion must be the goal of every gospel minister. Our calling is not complete until we, like Paul, can know that we have finished our course. For most of us, the race still lies before us, and that makes our goal even more urgent.

When asked about my hope for the future of the church, I point immediately to the corps of young ministers now entering and preparing for ministry. One of the great counter-intuitive developments of our times is the rise of a generation of young ministers who are committed to the faith “once for all delivered to the saints,” and who are eager to run the race to Christ’s glory.

What challenges lie ahead? The race this new generation is called to run will include several unavoidable challenges that will demand the highest level of biblical fidelity and theological courage, matched to keen cultural sensitivity and a deep love for human beings caught in the maelstrom of late modernity.

### **The question of truth**

Amidst the debris of postmodernism (a movement that has basically run its course) stands a great ambivalence about the nature of truth. The great intellectual transformation of recent decades produced

a generation that is not hostile to all claims of truth, but is highly selective about what kinds of truth it is willing to receive.

The current intellectual climate accepts truth as being true in some objective sense only when dealing with claims of truth that come from disciplines like math or science. They accept objective truth when it comes to gravity or physiology, but not when it comes to morality or meaning.

One result of this is that we can often be heard as meaning less than we intend. When we present the gospel, it can easily be heard as a matter of our own personal reality that is, in the end, free from any claim upon others. In other cases, this generation will confront an open denial that any truth can actually be known, except by means of empirical science or similar sources of knowledge.

Beyond this, our truth claims are claims of revealed truth. The modern mind is shocked to incredulity when we make clear that we claim knowledge revealed to us in written form by supernatural revelation.

In other words, this generation will face the continual challenge of making clear that the gospel is not merely interesting, not merely meaningful, but true.

### **The gospel and the church’s mission**

Younger evangelicals are now engaged in a great conversation about the nature of the church’s mission in the world. In the main, I see this as a positive development. But, if we are unwilling to discuss this together, we will see the development of a division within the ranks of younger gospel pastors.

Some of the confusion has to do with >□

## **One thing is clear – the church has to learn how to speak honestly and courageously about sexual morality, but also to speak with true gospel humility.**

language. Some are speaking of the church only in reference to its congregational expression, while others are speaking more generally of faithful Christians.

The church is charged with one central mission – the gospel and the making of disciples from all the nations. But those disciples are to be taught all that Christ commands, and that requires the demonstration of the gospel in acts of justice and righteousness that reveal the presence of Christ's kingdom.

At least some younger evangelicals indicate the temptation to redefine the church's mission so that it no longer centers in evangelism and conversion, leading to discipleship and faithfulness. On the other hand, some seem to insist that the gospel lacks clear kingdom implications.

Thankfully, most in this generation are concerned to find faithfulness in all that Christ has commanded. This generation needs to invest deeply in conversation about this challenge, and to avoid simplistic and reductionistic arguments, much less misrepresentations of the arguments in play.

### **The necessity of getting the story right, right from the start**

Some issues arise again and again, leaving no generation untouched. The continuing debates over evolution and

Genesis are evidence of this pattern, with a score of generations forced to deal with the question of beginnings.

The current debates among evangelicals have reached a vital point – the intersection of Genesis and the gospel. We must affirm that the gospel requires a clear affirmation of the historicity of Adam and Eve and the historical reality of the Fall. The Bible's metanarrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption and New Creation requires the historical reality of God's work in every movement of the story.

The apostle Paul makes the historicity of Adam – and his federal headship – central to our understanding of the gospel. Those who insist that evangelicals must accommodate the gospel to the prevailing evolutionary dogma are actually insisting that the gospel be denied. If we get the story of the gospel wrong in the beginning, we will have what Paul condemned as another gospel in the end.

### **The binding authority of biblical sexuality**

Perhaps the most heated issues of our time are connected to the radical transformation of human sexual ethics and behavior that marks the modern age. The accelerated pace of moral transformation in the realm of sexual ethics is unprecedented, with personal autonomy deployed to subvert the received morality.

This presents gospel ministers with an excruciatingly difficult set of challenges. Many people fully accept that they have the sole right to define themselves in terms of gender, sexual identity and sexual behavior. Many Americans, caught in the cultural revolutions of our time, hear any refusal to condone their chosen sexual identity or behavior as oppression, intolerance or hatred.

The church, like the Bible, is not primarily concerned with human sexual behavior. Our main concern is to seek the glory of God in all things, and to bear witness to the saving power of

Christ's gospel. But the Bible makes clear that God's glory is inherently connected to our sexual behavior and our identity before the Creator. Furthermore, the gospel requires a clear understanding of human sinfulness, including, specifically, sexual sins.

One thing is clear – the church has to learn how to speak honestly and courageously about sexual morality, but also to speak with true gospel humility. In other words, we must make clear that we are not moral superiors speaking to moral inferiors, but those who have been redeemed by God's grace pointing others to his grace to us in Christ.

### **The exclusivity of the gospel**

In this age, few are offended by the claim that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The problem comes when those last words of Jesus are cited: "no one comes to the Father, but by Me" [John 14:6]. The temptation to avoid the offense of the particularity and exclusivity of the gospel is powerful. Given the hatred directed toward any exclusive truth claim – much less this exclusive truth claim – a common temptation is to embrace some form of universalism or inclusivism.

But the problem is clear – the New Testament excludes any inclusivist or universalist rendering of the gospel of Christ. We are simply left no option but the full force of Christ's claims. If we are not faithful in defining the gospel, we will avoid offending people at the cost of misleading them – a failure with eternal consequences.

Of course, this generation of gospel ministers will face challenges yet unknown. But, at the same time, it is inconceivable that these current challenges will become less pressing any time soon. The road ahead will require gospel faithfulness at every turn.

That has been true for every generation of gospel ministers. The real question is this: "Will this generation finish the race?" By God's grace and to his glory, I am confident they will. ➤

Students in the Worldview Studies program spend an evening in Dr. Mohler's library discussing secularism and the university campus.

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# Joan or John? A Dilemma in Christian Ethics

By Russell D. Moore

**C**hristian theology is about cleaning up after a suicide.

What I mean by that is that biblical doctrine exists not simply as a set of abstract, propositional truths, but as a war plan. What we learn from Scripture is that the entire created order exists in the midst of a vast conspiracy – one where the “god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers” (2 Cor 4:4). The task of theology, and by extension pastoral ministry, then, is to show how the gospel itself peels back the veil of this conspiracy and calls people into the life of the One who rights every wrong and conquers the tyrannical regime of this age.

With each new generation, though, the wreckage of sin manifests itself in the lives of the people to whom we minister in new and different ways. And pastors must be prepared to apply the gospel to new and different situations. Take the scenario following as an example.

A 50-year-old woman named Joan has been visiting your church for a little more than a year. She approaches you after the service on Sunday to tell you that she wants to follow Jesus as her Lord. As you meet with her and ask if she’s repented of her sin, she starts to cry, “I don’t know,” she says. “I don’t know how. I don’t know where to start.”

Joan doesn’t know where to start because Joan wasn’t born as Joan. She was born as John.

Early in life, Joan felt like “a woman trapped in a man’s body.” At age 20 she began the process of “transitioning” from life as a man to life as a woman, undergoing extensive hormone therapy and plastic surgery – including so-called “gender reassignment

surgery.” For the past 30 years now, Joan has lived – physically and socially – as a woman. To complicate matters, 10 years previous to this Joan adopted a little girl named Clarissa, who only knows her as “Mom.”

“I want to do whatever it takes to follow Jesus,” Joan tells you. “I know the sex change surgery was wrong. I know that my life is twisted. I’m willing to do whatever Jesus would have me to do to make it right,” she says. “But what would Jesus have me to do? I want to repent. I just, I don’t know how to do it.”

This is the type of question to which pastors must be prepared to give a gospel response. We know, of course, that no sinner is “too messed up to repent and be saved.” But what does repentance look like in this situation?

The first issue is the gospel. Christ Jesus came to save sinners. The Lord Jesus offered up his life as a sacrifice for this person, and his bloody cross and empty tomb are enough to reconcile any sinner, including this one, to God. The pastor should abandon any sense of revulsion because Joan’s situation is “weird” or “perverted.” All sin is weird and perverted. The fact that any of it (especially our own) seems “normal” to us is part of why we need the gospel.

The second issue is repentance. Repentance is necessary for salvation, as is articulated in the gospel message throughout the Scripture (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 17:30). The message Joan has heard is the same message every Christian has heard, “Come, follow me.” The pastor wishes to know, as he would with any sinner, whether she’s counted the cost of doing so. At the same time, the pastor ought to know there is no simple solution here. Whatever Joan

does will leave havoc in its wake.

My counsel would be, after discerning that Joan is truly trusting in Christ (and it certainly appears that she is), to make sure she understands that part of the sin she’s walking away from is a root-level rebellion against the Creator. God does not create generic persons but “male and female,” in his own image (Gen 1:27). In seeking to “become” a woman, John has established himself as a god, determining the very structure of his created-ness. Even though Joan is not going to “feel” like John, the pastor must start ministering to him by helping him identify what life and peace looks like for him – as a man.

To respond to the question as to whether “Joan” should go reverse her so-called “gender reassignment” surgery, my answer is no. First of all, no surgery can reassign gender. The surgery mangled John and sought to create an illusion of a biological reality that isn’t there. There is no way that this surgery can be “reversed.” Additional surgery would only compound the problem. He should see himself as the equivalent of a biblical eunuch, someone wounded physically by his past sin, but awaiting wholeness in the resurrection from the dead. He should, though, stop taking the female hormones, allowing his body to revert to its (relatively) natural state. The issue for John is one of honesty: presenting himself as a man.

The issue of how to deal with Clarissa is, admittedly, the most difficult part of this puzzle.

First, let me say that I’m aware that “Joan” becoming “John” will wreak havoc on her daughter’s life and psyche. I think such havoc will be unleashed

either way, and honesty at this point is less destructive than continuing an illusion. The question, at this point, is not whether the daughter will have a normal life or a traumatic one. The question is whether the people of Christ will be with her through the trauma.

I would counsel Joan to tell her daughter at an appropriate (but not unduly delayed) time, which will be difficult and will call for much time and involvement from the congregation, particularly from John's pastor and many godly women who are willing to

spend hours with Clarissa. This will be a slow, painful process, but, in the end, worth it for the sake of the gospel.

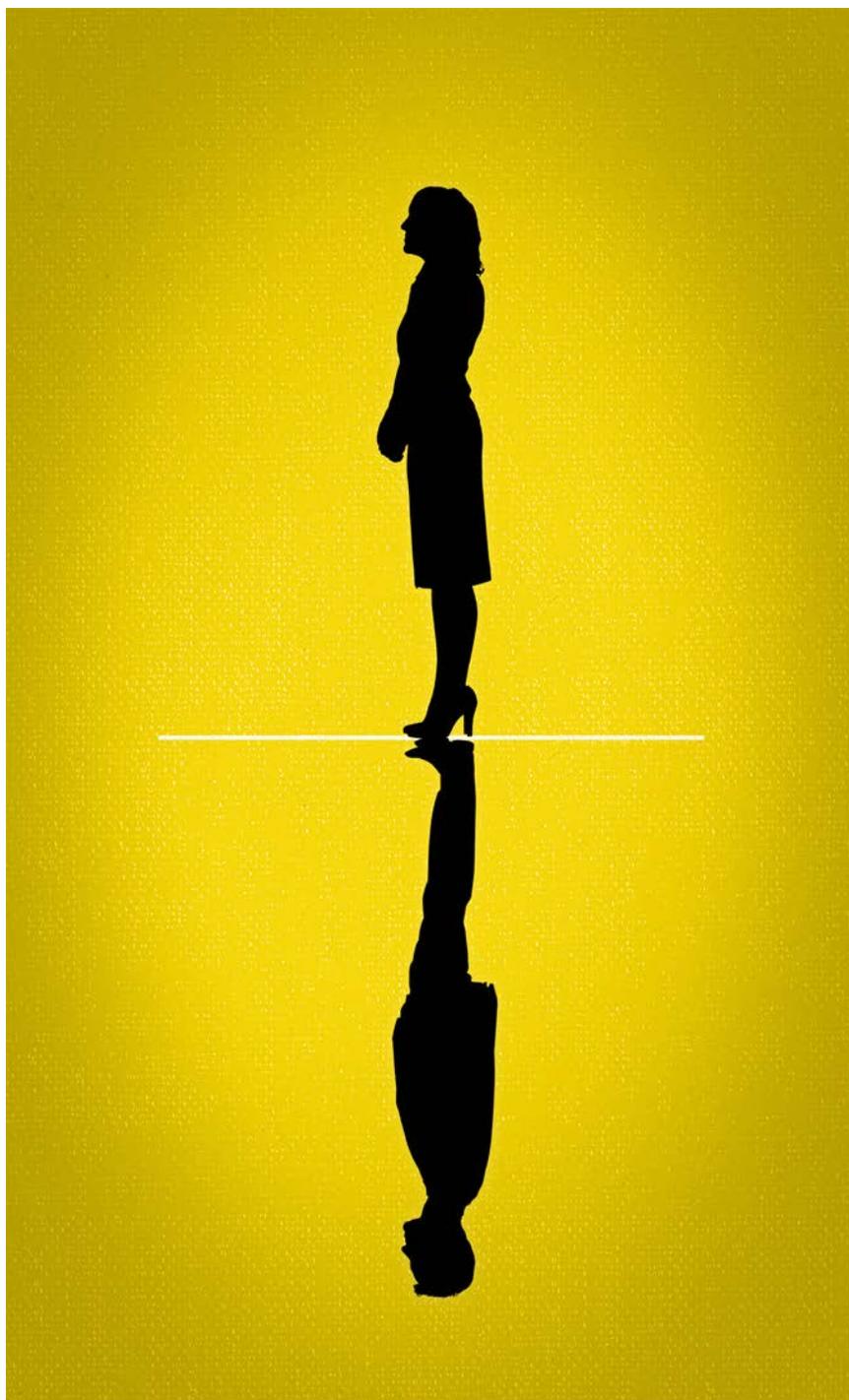
Even though John's presence in your congregation will probably mean that some Pharisaism will emerge, his life in the congregation can be a visible signal of the mercies of God. This means the church should, immediately upon receiving John as a repentant sinner, announce that his sin (not in part but the whole!) is nailed to the cross of Christ, buried with Jesus, and obliterated by his resurrection power. This means any ongoing gossip or judgment of John's sin or John's past is itself violence against the gospel and will be disciplined as such.

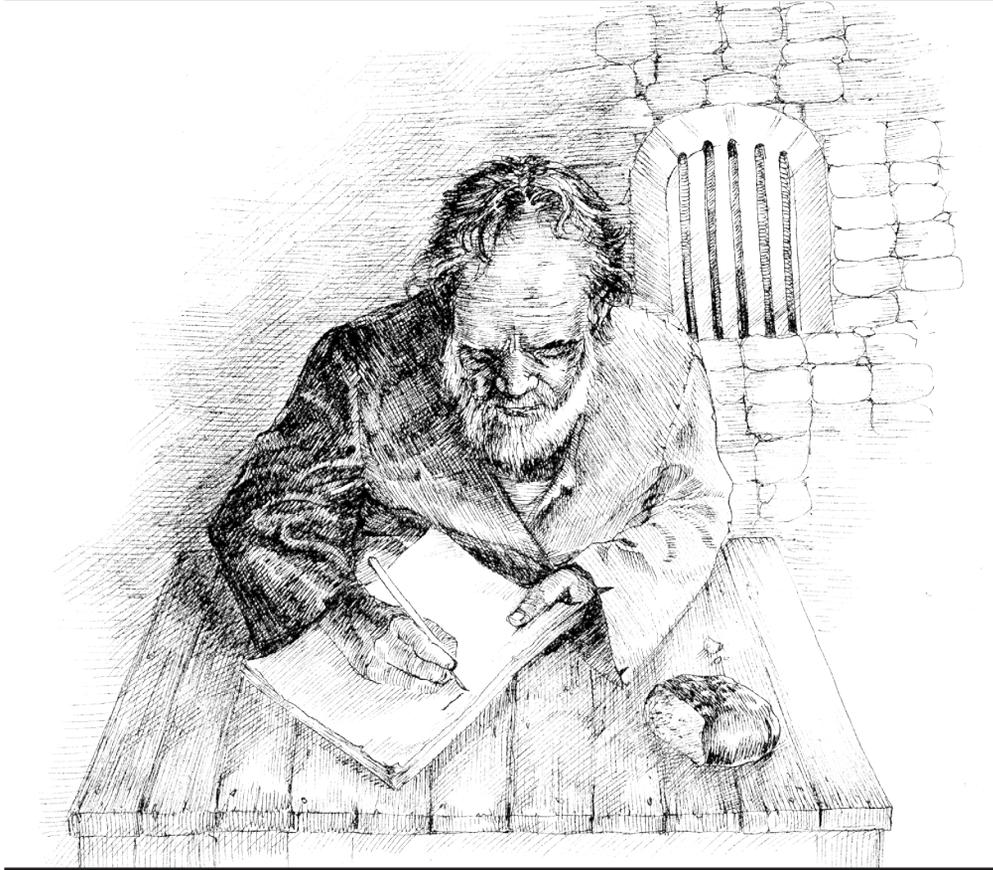
When I have mentioned to people that I have asked this same hypothetical Joan/John question to my classes, I've typically had two kinds of responses. Some Christians have said things along the lines of, "I'm glad I'm not in your ethics class! That question is hard!" Others though have said, "You know, that very situation happened in my church." We're going to have more and more so-called "transgendered" persons in American society, as the culture around us changes.

If Joan comes to your church this Sunday and hears the gospel, if "she" decides to throw away everything "she" knows and follow Christ, will your church be there to love him, and to show him how to stop pretending and to fight his way toward what he was created to be? Maybe it would take a Joan at the altar call to make us question whether we really believe what we say and what we sing. Is there really power, wonder-working power, in the blood of the Lamb? Is our gospel really good news for prodigal sons, even for sons so lost they once thought they were daughters?

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*Russell D. Moore is dean of the School of Theology and senior vice president for academic administration at Southern Seminary. The article above is available in its entirety at [www.russellmoore.com](http://www.russellmoore.com)*





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GOD'S AMAZING PERSEVERING GRACE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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## Through many dangers, toils and snares

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**J**ohn Newton, the writer of the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace,” correctly saw that the Christian life is all of grace. “‘Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far,” he writes, “and grace will lead me home.” From beginning to end, God’s grace constitutes and permeates the Christian life. With regard to personal obedience and perseverance, grace however neither rules out practical means nor does it discount human responsibility. Rather, practical means and human responsibility are the venue through which grace works. This is true for the individual Christian as well as for the corporate reality of the local church, for the New Testament does not acknowledge Christian perseverance taking place outside the context of the local church (2 Cor 13:5; Heb 3:12-14; 10:23-25; 1 John 2:11-18). Throughout the New Testament, the external means by which God preserves the church are warnings and promises, and the means by which believers persevere is the grace-enabled response of faith and obedience to the warnings and promises. God promised that the church purchased with Christ’s blood will triumph in the end (Matt 16:18; Acts 20:28), but this does not skirt the church’s need to heed the warnings with diligence in the face of coming challenges (1 Cor 5:7; Gal 1:8-9; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 4:1-5; 1 Pet 5:8). The following is a sample of New Testament passages related to the experience of the apostles Peter and Paul, each carrying relevance and insight for how the contemporary church must respond to today’s challenges.

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# We have already come

ACCOUNTS OF THE CHURCH'S  
PAST PERSEVERANCE

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## ACTS 20:26-32

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

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## 2 CORINTHIANS 11:24-28

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

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## 1 PETER 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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# Grace will lead us home

WARNING AND PROMISE FOR  
THE CHURCH'S PRESENT PERSEVERANCE

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## 1 TIMOTHY 4:16

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

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## 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

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## 1 PETER 5:1-10

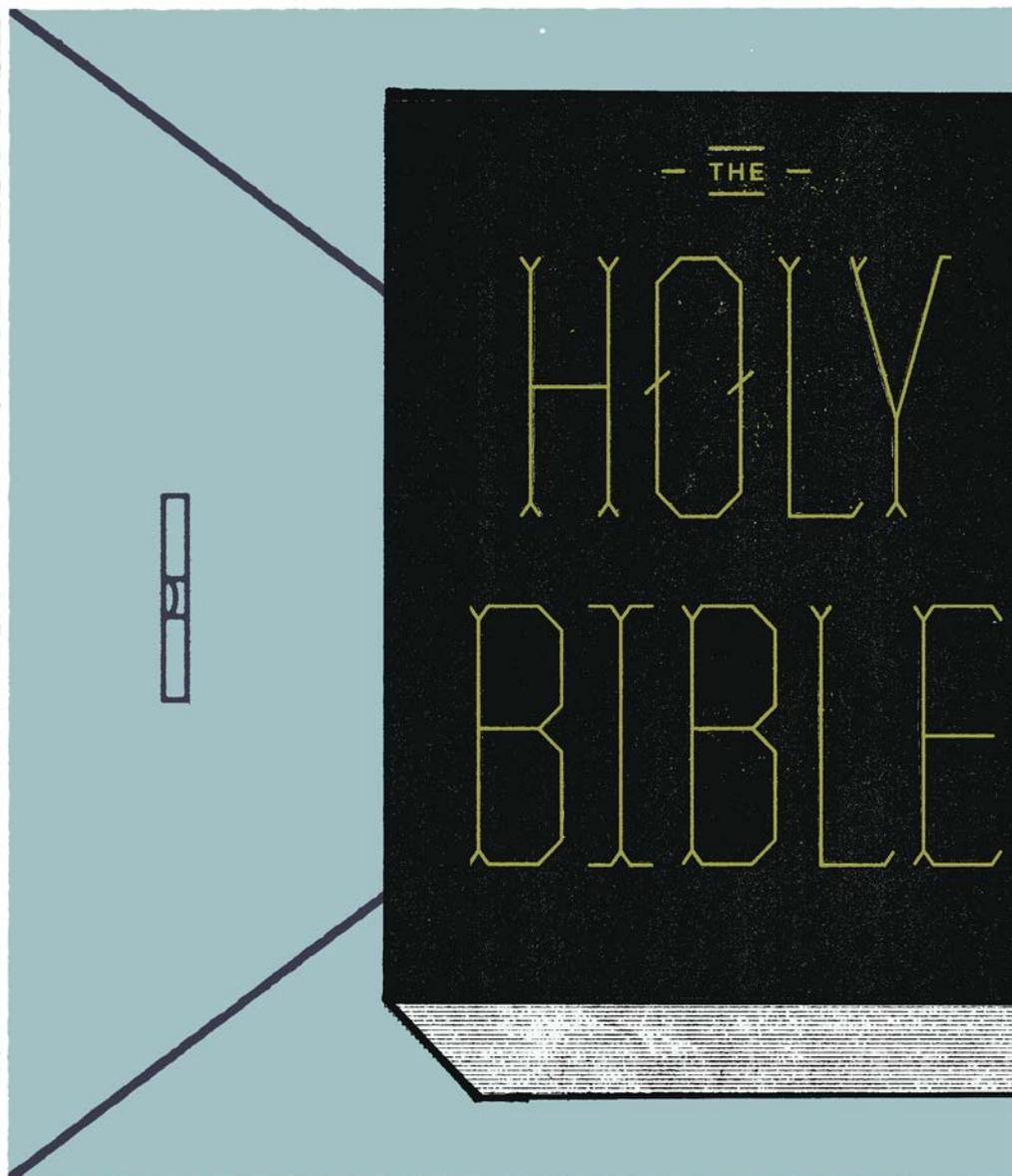
So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. the revelation of Jesus Christ.

# A Word-Centered Culture Instead of a Man-Centered Culture

By Thomas R. Schreiner

**W**e live in a country that loves greatness and that is a good thing, for God has made us to be inspired by what is beautiful and noble and exalted. As Christians we prize and love great preachers. What a blessing God has given us through the preaching of John Piper, Tim Keller, Alistair Begg, John McArthur, Mark Driscoll, Matt Chandler and many more. Their passion and fervency for the Word of God have inspired many to give themselves to Christ and to devote themselves to the Scriptures. Many have “welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

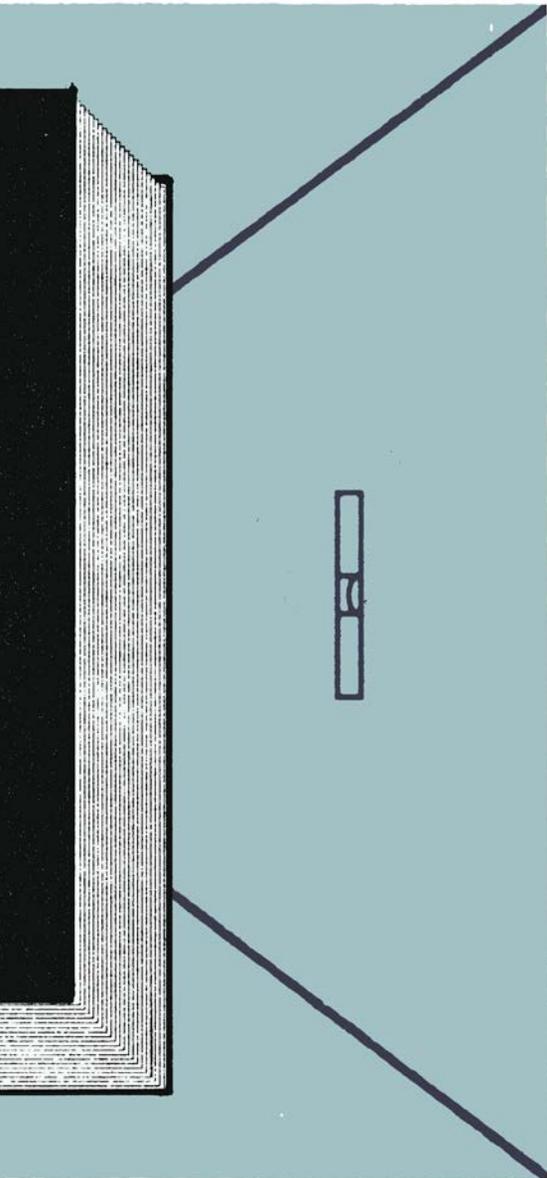
The danger is that we will become man-centered instead of Word-centered, so that we prize the preacher more than what is preached. This is what happened in Corinth, and people claimed to be disciples of Paul, Apollos and Peter (1 Cor 1:12). They forgot that “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Cor 1:18). The Corinthians became entranced with the rhetoric and speaking ability of the various preachers. They were wowed by their presentation and by the messengers instead of their message. Paul feared they would trust him rather than the gospel (1 Cor 2:3), and hence vowed “to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). His “speech and proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a powerful demonstration by the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:4). Paul preached in such a way that the focus was on Christ, the truth of God’s Word and the gospel rather than on himself.



There are two important observations that must be made so that what I say isn’t misunderstood. First, Paul is not saying that preachers should try to be boring and uninspiring. He

is not criticizing rhetorical ability, *per se*. Gifted orators and preachers are given for the edification and good of the church. Preachers should work on making their messages better so

**“Creativity and imagination are gifts of God, but we must be careful, for they can be loosed from the Word of God.”**



that they can communicate clearly and powerfully the gospel of Christ. We have no excuse here for laziness and sloppiness.

Second, the problem in Corinth

was not with Paul or Peter or Apollos. These ministers of the Word were not trying to attract a following. They were not advocating or advertising themselves. They did not name their churches “Apollos Baptist Church” or “Paul Baptist Church.” Remarkably, the fault was with the Corinthians themselves. They wrongly and mistakenly exalted Peter, Paul and Apollos, and they did so because of their own pride and arrogance (1 Cor 1:29, 31). They selected their favorite preacher to promote their own “wisdom” and spiritual insight. They sided with one preacher over another in order to exalt themselves instead of exalting the Lord. How subtle the Christian life is, for that which God has given to us for our good may be used to advance ourselves so that we get the glory rather than God. The implication for today is also clear. We should not blame gifted preachers of today if some follow them in a cult-like manner. As long as such preachers proclaim the priority of the Word of God and exhort their hearers to follow the Word rather than themselves, the fault lies with their hearers if they elevate them to spiritual heights.

What can we do in our churches to cultivate a Word-centered rather than a man-centered ministry? First, preaching should be mainly expository rather than topical. Preaching in an expository manner means that we preach through books of Scripture verse by verse. Now topical preaching is helpful as well, and having some topical series can benefit a congregation. But the focus should be on expository preaching, for then the Scriptures themselves set the agenda for what we proclaim rather than our own imaginations. The congregation clearly sees as we work through book after book that we are appealing to the Scripture as the authority, that the Word of God has the final say on all matters of faith and practice.

Second, our preaching should be clear and understandable. If we are too clever and imaginative in our

preaching, our hearers may be wowed by us instead of the Word of God. Typically, our hearers should be able to see what we proclaimed from the Scriptures when they read it carefully themselves. Our preaching should unpack and communicate what is found in the Scriptures. If our hearers are astonished regularly because of our “amazing insights” and can’t find those truths themselves in the passage preached, we are in danger of forming a cult of personality, so that the congregation begins to place trust in the preacher rather than the Word. Creativity and imagination are gifts of God, but we must be careful, for they can be loosed from the Word of God so that the focus shines on the preacher instead of what is preached.

Third, if at all possible (and it isn’t always possible), we should share preaching duties. In other words, we should not be the only preacher in our church. It is helpful for a church to have several men proclaim the Word of God. By doing this, we teach the congregation that it is the ministry of the Word rather than a ministry of the preacher. If several men preach, the congregation learns that the authority is in the word of truth and not in the person. Congregations, it is hoped, will learn through various preachers that expository preaching manifests itself in different ways through various personalities. If the pulpit is shared (even if one person does the bulk of the preaching), the congregation is prepared to some extent for the day when a new pastor commences his ministry. They have been taught regularly by a number of preachers and have learned that the authority lies in the Word instead of the person proclaiming it, and thus the glory belongs entirely to God instead of to us. ➤

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*Thomas R. Schreiner is James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and associate dean of Scripture and interpretation.*

# The Dissolution of Marriage

By Mark T. Coppenger

**W**e leaned against the pickup-truck fender out in the front yard. One of my laymen, Rick, was inside, talking with the woman of the house while her kids swirled about. I was taking the man through the Continuing Witness Training presentation of the gospel, leading up to willingness and commitment questions. He'd been tracking right along with the gospel as I laid it out along the lines of "God's Purpose; Man's Problem; God's Provision; Man's Response." I thought he might be ready to accept Christ. But then he asked, "Would I have to leave Dovie?" The problem was that he was living, and sharing a bed, with a woman who was not his wife, and he didn't want to give that up.

I sometimes bring up this example for classroom discussion, asking the students what they'd say. On the one hand, you're not saved by righteous deeds, and you can't insist that the convert be sanctified from the start. (As one old pastor told me, "You have to catch 'em before you clean 'em.") On the other hand, repentance means something, as does the lordship of Christ, which the new believer professes. There should be a change of heart. So which is it? Well, good people can disagree about this, but I said, "Yes." He needed to move out, at least until he got things in spiritual and marital order.

I didn't give him a checklist of the behavioral standards he needed to meet in order to be saved. He'd brought up the subject of Dovie on his own, and that told me he was wrestling with the

cost of discipleship at this point. For me to indulge his co-habitation would have betrayed the sweeping nature of the gospel. I think I would have said the same sort of thing if he'd asked, "Do I have to be baptized?" Of course, you're not saved by baptism, but if you're not willing to undergo it, you may well have a salvation problem.

That was just one of many occasions in that church when I had to stand up for marriage. And it all started when I decided to teach through 1 Corinthians. I was so naïve as to think that when I got to the seventh chapter, to its teaching about divorce and remarriage, that my congregation would understand my saying, "Of course, by this standard, there are some weddings I couldn't perform in good conscience" – or something like that.

Talk about a meltdown. I quickly discovered that virtually every family in the church had been touched directly by divorce, that my predecessor was pretty much wide open on the subject, and that our church even had divorced and remarried deacons. Hoo boy! I was inundated with commentaries, recriminations and tears. One deacon even wondered out loud how they were going to pay my salary since folks were

**"I quickly discovered that virtually every family in the church had been touched directly by divorce, that my predecessor was pretty much wide open on the subject, and that our church even had divorced and remarried deacons. Hoo boy!"**

leaving the church over this. (Actually, before long, we began to grow in attendance and giving, but I didn't know that at the time of his visit.)

The best I could tell from my subsequent crash course on divorce and remarriage was that a two-exception, "Erasmian" position (adultery and abandonment) was biblical, though there were some strong evangelical dissenters. Some quoted Barclay to say it was a matter of ideals and not rules, and so counseled liberty. Others urged me to follow Gothard in disallowing all exceptions past the betrothal period.

I got a workout thinking through the standard one-line arguments for a liberal policy: "Yes, I know the Lord said it was not good for Adam to be alone, but unlike divorcees, he was alone in a special way, as the only person on earth"; "No, divorce is not the unforgiveable sin, but there are trailing obligations from the covenants we accept, as when a drunk who stops cold turkey still has to pay the credit card bill for the fifth he bought just before his conversion"; "No, the loving thing is to make sure your kids know the biblical standard so that maybe they will avoid the mistakes that have brought you and others so much heartache." On and on it went, and I was not alone. I'm eternally grateful for the insight and encouragement I got from others, including John Stott and John MacArthur.

That's when I started to preach through books, beginning with Matthew. I discovered that a pastor is something like an mine sweeper, closing his eyes, covering his ears and venturing out through the field. You never knew what will blow up next, taking off a toe or worse.

When I got to the divorce teaching in Matthew 5, I affixed a plumb line to the pulpit and then went down beside the Lord's Supper table to show how culture, both inside and outside the church, tried to pull it out of plumb, first one way and then another. I told them I was trying to let the Bible determine what was plumb, and I think it



helped. It was great to hear from supporters, some of whom were divorced and remarried unbiblically, who appreciated my attempt to preach the Word, and not just social conventions. But I still exhausted my “honeymoon capital” in a month or so.

There’s just no telling what sort of matrimonial and procreative exotica will surface in our culture next. On

the other hand, there is plenty of telling what the Bible will say about it, and that the sacred text will bring light and life to individuals and churches who do their best to follow the teachings of Christ on these matters, for the gospel is not just about getting to heaven. It’s also about avoiding and escaping hell on earth. Besides, how is one to understand the church as the bride of Christ if

we treat matrimony as little better than channel surfing from spouse to spouse until we get the “program” we want? ❏

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*Mark T. Coppenger is professor of Christian apologetics and vice president for extension education at Southern Seminary. He is also director of Southern’s Nashville extension center.*

# The **Ex-Felon** and the Gospel

By Kevin L. Smith

**S**everal years ago, I stood in front of our congregation and introduced a new member. That, in and of itself, was not strange. We regularly introduce new members as we prepare to extend to them the right hand of Christian fellowship - a traditional practice of our 49-year-old congregation.

However, this was different. Not only did I introduce John (not his real name); I also told the congregation about his life story and conversion experience. John was an ex-felon. He served time in prison for a variety of drug and violent-offenses charges. In other words, John had a rough background. But all that was different now. John was a new creation in Christ Jesus and becoming a part of our assembly of God's people, right?

Back then, I was not sure how members of our congregation viewed the gospel's power to change a person. Therefore, I took the opportunity to present John as case number one of the gospel's amazing power. After telling his story, I challenged the congregation to receive John as a brother-in-Christ, with no stigma attached to his membership. Specifically, I asked them to remember (1) the former state of every believer before salvation, (2) our Baptist commitment to regenerate church membership, (3) our Lord's command to do well to them who are "of the household of faith," and (4) how we are not to be like the Pharisees, the hypocrites or the ungrateful servant who would not forgive others after he had been forgiven.

Certainly, we had members with concerns. Sadly, many were unfounded. Our congregational sense of "testimony" meant that everyone knew his background. This was great as far as transparency and honesty. Unfortunately, this sometimes led to overreactions. John had committed certain crimes, not every possible crime. Therefore, we should never assume that he would always make a wrong choice in every situation.

Does new life make things new, or not? Now, obviously, we don't want to tempt a brother in an area of previous sinfulness. Therefore, a former thief can do most things in the church except count money. A former sex-offender can do many things except work with children. Bottom line - we should not be hyper-suspicious of the ex-felon in the alto section of the choir or serving as an usher on the third Sunday.

If John was no longer condemned by God (Rom 8:1), did we have any right to treat him as if he were still condemned in the midst of the congregation? Should the forgiveness of congregations be more difficult to receive than the forgiveness of the thrice-holy God? Certainly not! Several years into my pastorate, I knew I was staking out new ground that day. Our suburban congregation with successful people was stretched that day. Thankfully, they

did not break. This ex-felon was welcomed in our congregation and treated like a repentant sinner who received the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ - just like the rest of us. The rest of the congregation also has a history of sins that offend the very holiness of God.

As Baptists, we believe our congregation members are those who have been "born again" by the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, the ticket for entry is not a cute little moral life without any obvious smears on one's record. I reminded our congregation that our ticket for entry is the testimony and reality that says, "I once was lost, but now I'm found." And it matters not how lost one was - that's the incredible testimony of the gospel's power to save (Rom 1:16).

Once it was clearly understood that this brother was part of the family and "in the house" with us, my next concern was how he would be treated by members. Would he merely be tolerated and treated as a second-class citizen? Would he be embraced as a brother-in-Christ (Gal 6:10)? This was at great concern for me. John was a babe-in-Christ. John still had friends from his previous life who were suspicious of how we "church-folks" would really treat John. Also, the gospel was in question as his former friends wondered if John had really been changed. I spoke to our deacons and small group leaders about John. I spent some of my pastoral capital and warned about mistreating him. Too much was at stake - the gospel and the reputation in the community of the so-called gospel people, the church.

How do you take every opportunity to do "good" to a member with a criminal background? You love them and help them grow in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18), with consideration of their background - as you would for any other member of the congregation. In the case of John, we wanted to do several things: (1) help him develop relationship with several men in the church of different ages and from various backgrounds; (2) help him get back into the flow of living outside of prison; and (3) press him to grow in Christ and not wear his background like some sort of "scarlet letter."

Am I a unique pastor and is our church special? No! Hopefully, we just trust the plain truth that "if any man [even an ex-felon] is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature: old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new" (2 Cor 5:17). >■

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Kevin L. Smith is assistant professor of Christian preaching at Southern Seminary and pastor of Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.



# Gaining a Balanced Picture of Gospel Counsel

By Stuart W. Scott

**W**hether we engage in the private ministry of God's Word as pastors, missionaries, counselors or just a concerned brother- or sister-in-Christ, it is important to answer the question, "What is thorough, biblical help?" Surely, the answer to this question must begin with a faithfulness and an accuracy as we study and apply the Scriptures for God's glory. We must continually adjust the picture of our counsel to that of God's.

## The gospel of Jesus Christ

The gospel of Jesus Christ is at the heart of counseling. It is foundational. It is motivational. It must pervade every aspect of the counsel we give.

Though Christ and the gospel is the heart of what we do, if we take a step back in our view of God's counsel, we can see at least three clear emphases: gospel truth applied (Titus 2:11-14); undivided heart worship (Matt 22:37-40); and active elements of change (Rom 12-16; Eph 4-6; Col 3-4).

No matter what issue brings people to counseling, if we as counselors do not affirm the importance of all three of these emphases, devote significant session time to them and assist those

we help in ways to proliferate them, then our help will be biblically incomplete and less effective.

## The gospel in focus

The gospel is not just a collection of doctrinal truths or personal benefits. It is not a magical buzzword that one can drop incessantly into conversation and counseling. The gospel is all about the pre-imminent person of Jesus Christ, who makes a difference in our daily lives. When we take a good look at the gospel truths, we see, foremost, the God-man, Christ, and all that he is. We see the provision of forgiveness and salvation in him through faith. Then we see, all that he has gained for us and made us (our position or the indicatives), but also all that he deserves and to which he has called us (our practice or the imperatives).

There must be emphasis and balance in all aspects of our presentation of the gospel when it comes to applying it to people's lives. Too little respective emphasis on Christ, our position or our practice gives one a skewed view of the gospel itself and the Christian life also. This skewed view will perpetuate some kind of focus on self, and in this self-focused

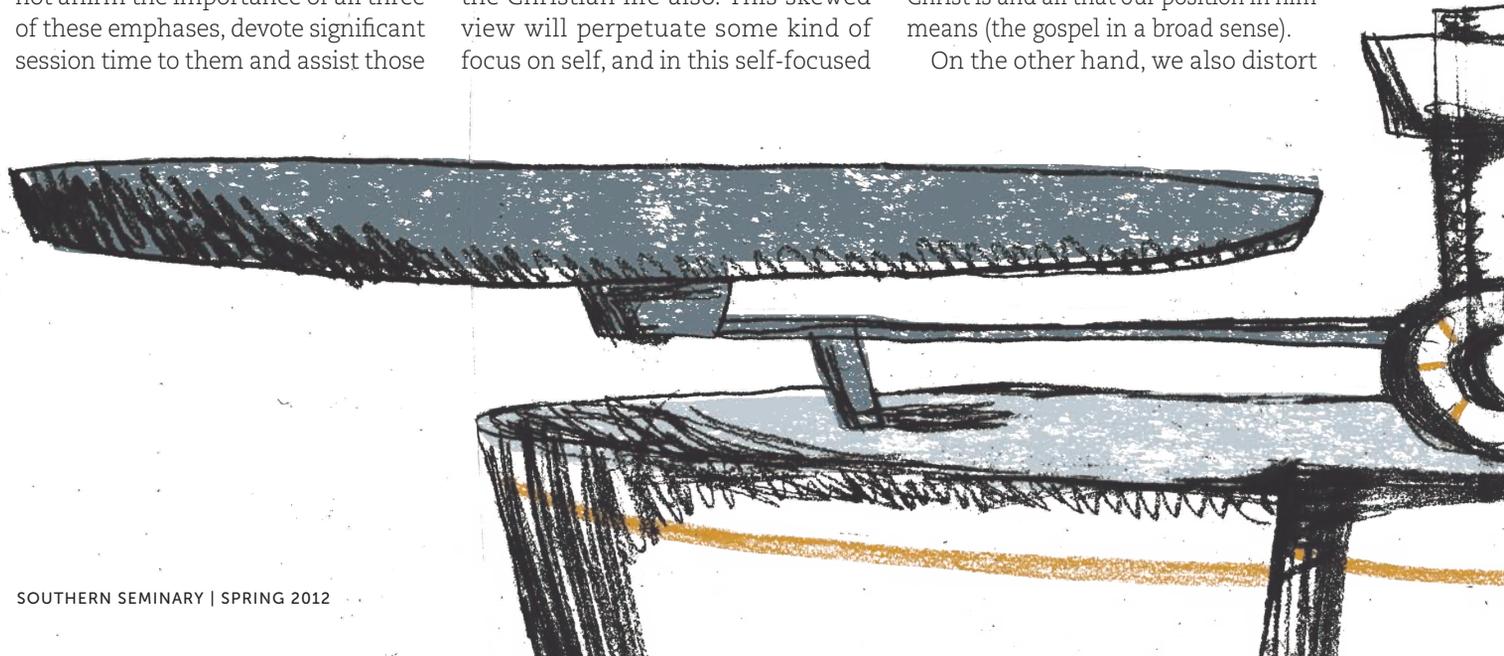
perspective, we will not perpetuate the full intent of the gospel – that we live to the glory of God, glorying in him.

## Don't rock the boat

If in our counsel, we center mostly on our obligations (our practice) without our gaze upon the person of Christ and an appropriation of our position in him, the focus will be on us with either self-righteousness or self-loathing. It follows then that while attention to our practice or our sanctification may be present, it is also problematic as we miss the pleasures and the power and the imputed righteousness of Christ. This lack of emphasis on our position in Christ creates an overemphasis on our work (John 15:5). In this case, true heart worship falls short and or becomes non-existent. And finally, the worship of idolatrous lusts and the turning to false refuges is inevitable (Jer 2:13; Gal 5:16; 1 John 2:15-17).

A lack of emphasis on our position in Christ will not lead to the type of life that glorifies God and that Christ died to procure for those we seek to help. We certainly do not want to encourage anyone toward this Pharisaical and hopeless pursuit. This kind of imbalance fosters pride, a performance-driven life, legalism and moralism. With this imbalance, it is easy to carry on counseling without true salvation having taken place. We must continually spotlight all that Christ is and all that our position in him means (the gospel in a broad sense).

On the other hand, we also distort



the gospel if we center primarily on our position in Christ and all that we have in him and do not emphasize our practice as well. Again, the focus is primarily on self, so true worship is affected and emphasis on the active elements of change and ones practice are lacking. Some of these elements are: spiritual disciplines, putting off/ putting on righteous living, renewing the mind, serving the church, etc.

In this imbalance, we might perpetuate that undivided heart worship alone is all one needs to change. Or, we may see law (God's moral law) as the enemy of the cross or grace, rather than understand that living under the law or for the law or through the law (seeking justification by it) are the real enemies of the cross (Gal 3:21-24). We may become all about grace, but this short-sighted "grace" does not really work to please Christ out of gratitude (Titus 2:11-14). While the gospel in a broad sense is indispensable to change, and even though it is our very motivation for gospel practice, this particular imbalance will not believe in real work that is dependent on God's power (1 Tim 4:7-10; Phil 2:12-13; Col 1:28-29; John 15:5), and inevitably it will lead to stunted growth or even license (freshly living). Southern Seminary professor Thomas R. Schreiner, in his *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, offers this important caution that may help us guard against reductionism of all types:

"We must remember that Paul's theology is multifaceted," Schreiner

**"As we demonstrate a proper gospel balance, we are able to employ rightly the other crucial aspects of biblical counseling."**

writes. "It is possible to diminish the centrality of justification, but it is also possible to exaggerate its importance so that other aspects of Pauline soteriology are shoved into the background.

"It is imperative to avoid reductionism, as if justification were the only part of Pauline theology."

As we demonstrate a proper gospel balance, we are able to employ rightly the other crucial aspects of biblical counseling. This brings us back to the balanced, biblical picture with which we began. There are all kinds of distortions that can arise when any key element is misunderstood, minimized or missing. Even more basic is that these three clear emphases – gospel truth applied, undivided heart worship and active elements of change – must be carried out by the vehicle and exercise of faith in

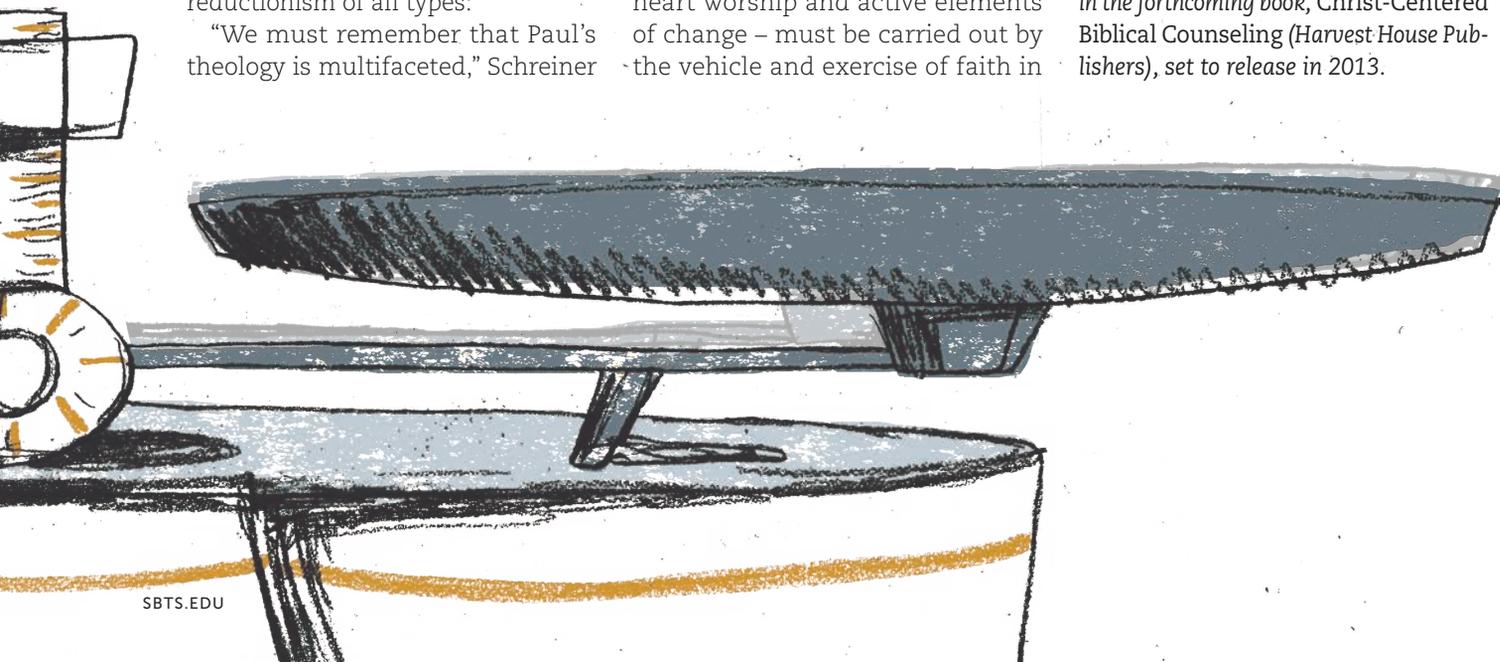
the triune God (Rom 3:22; Heb 11:6; Gal 2:20; Jas 2:26). And so, the character and deeds of God must permeate all emphases. And, faith becomes an integral part of the counselees' apprehension of the biblical help we offer.

### **The bottom line**

What is the very bottom line of this article? We dare not say (similar to some in the Corinthian church), "I am of 'applying the gospel in counseling'" or "I am of 'addressing practical change in counseling,'" or "I am of 'addressing the heart and heart worship in counseling'" (e.g., 1 Cor 3:1-9). Instead, we must be able to say, "I am seeking to be, more and more, a counselor of God's kind, emphasizing faith, emphasizing the application of all aspects of the gospel and what it means, emphasizing undivided heart worship and emphasizing all the active elements of change by Christ's power and for his glory." We must say, "I am one who will continue to learn, grow and adjust faithfully the emphases of my counsel to what God reveals in his Word." ►

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Stuart W. Scott is associate professor of biblical counseling at Southern Seminary and executive director of the National Center of Biblical Counseling. The entirety of the above article originally appeared as a blog post at [www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org](http://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org) and will also appear as a chapter in the forthcoming book, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Harvest House Publishers), set to release in 2013.



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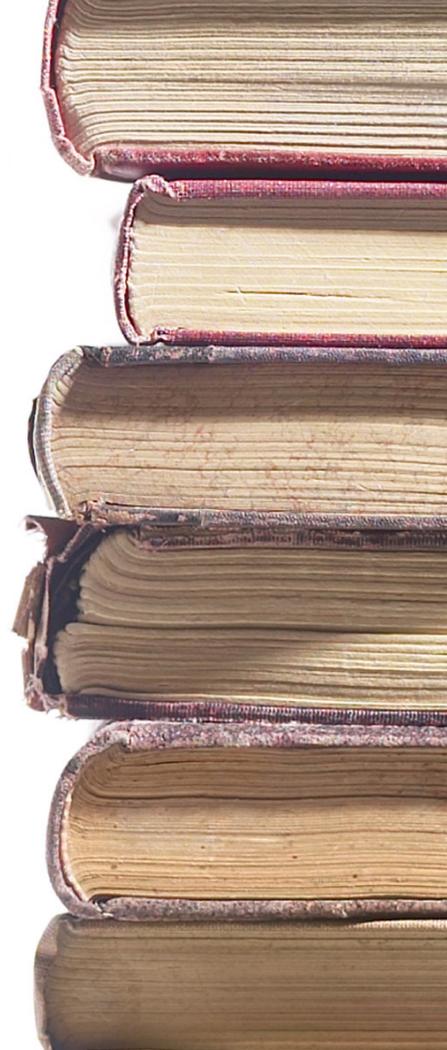
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# Linda and Ramon Nunez

## Standing behind Southern's mission

By Emily Griffin



**F**or Linda and Ramon Nunez, supporting theological education at Southern Seminary stems from a passion to see the Word of God taught accurately and decisively. The couple began their relationship with Southern in the mid-1990s, as members of First Baptist Church, Hollywood, Fla.

As was the custom, church membership at Hollywood First Baptist provided the family with a subscription to the “Florida Baptist Witness.” Through an advertisement in the “Witness” the couple learned about the then-newly founded Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism at Southern Seminary.

“Our pastor was a recent graduate of Southern and he was interested in continuing his theological education,” said the Nunezes. “We coordinated with the seminary and set up a

scholarship account that allowed him to take his graduate studies in the Graham School program.”

While co-sponsoring their pastor’s continued education, the couple became aware of Southern’s Foundation Board and transferred their support to the Foundation Board programs.

Ramon Nunez became a member of the Foundation Board in 1999. In the proceeding decade the couple was blessed, repeatedly, through the ministries and vision of the seminary.

“Our church family has always been important to us. Being a member of the Foundation Board has added an incredibly rich layer to our relationship with church members. The sincere care and concern of the staff and other members of the board really make our Heritage Week visits to campus feel like a homecoming,” said the Nunezes.

“We have met several professors and are both awed and inspired by them. In our most recent visit to the Southern campus, in October 2011, we had the privilege to meet, listen to, have dinner and talk at length with Dean Zane Pratt. We have over the last decade had the opportunity to develop a wonderful relationship with Dr. and Mrs. Mohler and since their arrival, Dr. and Mrs. Allen.”

Jason Allen, vice president for Institutional Advancement and executive director for the Southern Seminary Foundation, spoke of the Nunezes’ commitment to SBTS: “Ramon and Linda Nunez are more than friends of Southern Seminary. They are family. They have involved themselves at every level of institutional life and I am grateful to God for their ongoing support.”

The Nunezes are passionate about the next generation of pastors, missionaries and Christian leaders learning the Bible and how to proclaim the gospel.

Southern’s dedication to biblical inerrancy and taking the gospel to the nations are answered prayer for the Nunezes. As for Southern’s graduates, the couple hopes students leave campus “Spirit-filled, well trained, grounded in the Scripture, confident, and debt-free so that they can pursue and focus on their God-guided mission of spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.”

During the Nunezes’ 20-plus-year Air Force career the couple has called Texas, Florida, Georgia, Arizona and Japan home. In addition to supporting the seminary, the Nunezes have given time and energy to each of the church congregations and communities of which they’ve been a part. Ramon Nunez has been a deacon at numerous churches and the couple has led Sunday school for adults, teens and children. Linda Nunez has been an active choir member in every church they’ve been privileged to be a part of and she is currently president of the Douglas County (Georgia) Master Gardner’s Association, which directs community projects throughout the year. >

## Letting goods and kindred go for the gospel's sake



“May we find hope not in a hymn, but in Christ’s strength, to which ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God’ points.”

One of the most celebrated hymns of the Christian faith is Martin Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Drawing upon Psalm 46, Luther’s hymn buoys the spirit by reflecting on God’s unfailing providence, even in the midst of catastrophe and adversity.

Something of a cultural and ecclesiastical mainstay, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” has been sung at both royal coronations and state funerals – enjoyed as a celebratory hymn in weddings and featured at services of remembrance. Yet, the real meaning of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” is reserved for followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The history of the Christian church is largely a history of hardship among God’s people. Whether it is the apostle Paul’s incarcerations, the early church’s sufferings under Nero, Luther’s flight from papal imprisonment, Baptists laboring for religious liberty or Jim Elliott’s death at the end of a native’s spear, to follow Christ indeed is the call to take up one’s cross. For Jesus’ sake, God’s people have known ostracism, ridicule, persecution and even martyrdom.

However, one need not look to history to

find signs of gospel challenge; one simply needs to look around. Communist regimes abroad and secular thought at home situate the 21st-century church in the midst of gospel adversity. Indeed, the modern era has not alleviated gospel hardship but in many ways has intensified it.

In light of these realities, Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” is all the more heartening. The hymn’s second stanza confesses, “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he; Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.” Luther’s hymn rings true. Christ arms his servants for battle, but he secures the victory.

On the campus of Southern Seminary you will find students who pulsate with gospel courage and are preparing for ministry service in what may prove to be contexts of persecution and peril. Many of these students are training under circumstances of personal and financial hardship, only to be deployed to ministry venues of greater hardship. They have bought into the promise of giving their lives to something bigger than selfish ambition or vain pursuits, and have joined the gospel phalanx of faculty, administration, alumni and supporters of Southern Seminary with a collective conviction to stand on the Word of God. Thus, we say yes and amen to Luther’s concluding appeal in his great hymn, “Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still.”

May we find hope not in a hymn, but in Christ’s strength, to which “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” points. And may we prove faithful to equip and support those Christ is calling out to be, in the words of Basil Manly Jr., this generation’s “soldiers of Christ in truth arrayed.”

**Jason K. Allen**, Vice President for Institutional Advancement and senior Director of the Southern Seminary Foundation

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