

SOUTHERN SEMINARY



MISSIONS IN A WORLD OF RISK



#WeAreN



Counting the cost of Christian missions

In recent months, searing and graphic images coming out of the Middle East show men and women being beheaded by members of the Islamic State. Furthermore, as the international media now confirm, ISIS is strategically targeting Christians throughout much of the Middle East and North Africa. These videos, shocking and barbaric, underline a basic and enduring fact of Christian discipleship: faithfulness to Christ has always involved danger. To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is to identify with the one who suffered and died for his people and invited them to take up their cross and follow him.

Speaking to his disciples in Mark 8:34-38, Jesus said: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his

soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man

deadly, dangerous business.

One of the most moving aspects of graduation at Southern Seminary is the recognition that many of our graduates are going to places in the world that cannot be identified publicly simply because the risk is so great.

Why are they going? Because of the call of the gospel. They are going for

Faithfulness to Christ has always involved danger. To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is to identify with the one who suffered and died for his people and invited them to take up their cross and follow him.

also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Referencing this text in this semester’s commencement at Boyce College, I was reminded that it is Jesus who warned that discipleship is a costly business. The Islamic State videos are shocking to us, but they would not be shocking to many generations of Christians who have suffered and risked all for the name of Christ. The theological reality has never changed. Christian ministry and missions have always been

the same reason that Christians since the time of the apostles have gone into the world for the sake of the gospel. The Christian gospel alone explains why believers who are faithful to the call of Christ respond in the face of such risk. It is because we follow the one who calls us to take up our cross and follow. It is because the call of the nations brings forth an extraordinary Christian courage. And it is because, understood in the saving purposes of God, we actually have nothing to risk.

Features

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On the cover

As part of its campaign of terror, the Islamic State has branded Christian homes and businesses in conquered territories with the Arabic letter "n" (ن), for "Nazarene," illustrating the risk of missions today.

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News

God calls ministers to serve ‘children of light,’ Mohler says at Southern Seminary commencement

God calls ministers of the gospel to affirm the church and serve its members faithfully, said President R. Albert Mohler Jr. in his May 14 commencement address to 2015 graduates of Southern Seminary.

During commencement exercises on the seminary lawn, 297 master's and doctorate students received their degrees. A week earlier, 107 Boyce College graduates received certificate, associate, and bachelor's degrees in a historic commencement that marked the first time a child of a Southern Seminary president graduated from the institution.

In an address from 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 titled “Children of the Day,” Mohler said ministers are called to serve the “children of light” who are destined for salvation and to preach with urgency “knowing that the day of the Lord is coming.”

“A commencement day comes with a flood of reflection and the splendor of hope,” Mohler said. “Right before our eyes, they are about to be flung to the four corners of the earth, sent into the churches and into the nations. On this sparkling day and on this historic lawn we see them in their graduating gowns and regalia. We rightly feel that they are ours, but they are not ours to keep.”

Also at graduation, Mohler presented the annual Findley B. and Louvenia Edge Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence to Gregg R. Allison, professor of Christian theology at the seminary. Allison has taught at Southern since 2003 and is the author of several books, including the popular *Historical Theology* and the recent *Roman Catholic Theology: An Evangelical Assessment*. Allison is an elder at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville. He and his wife, Nora, have three adult children.

Mohler also presented the Josephine S. and James L. Baggott Outstanding Graduate Award to Corbin T. Hobbs, a Master of Divinity graduate from Rogers, Arkansas. Hobbs and his wife, Allie, are members at Sojourn.



Other notable graduates of the 2015 graduating class include Ben Dockery, the son of Trinity International University President David S. Dockery, who earned a Ph.D. from the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry; and Justin Taylor, senior vice president and publisher of books for Crossway, who earned a Ph.D. from the School of Theology. — BY S. CRAIG SANDERS

Mohler's entire address is available in audio and video at the SBTS Resources page, sbts.edu/resources. A complete manuscript of the address, “Children of the Day,” is available at www.albertmohler.com.



SBTS to send 8 teams on short-term trips

Southern Seminary's Bevin Center for Missions Mobilization will send the following student teams, each led by a faculty member, to various parts of the world during the summer of 2015:

Central Asia, May 9-19

North Africa, May 15-27

Middle East, May 16-23

Philadelphia, May 23-28

El Salvador, June 20-29

Italy, June 20-30

South Asia, June 27-July 7

Indianapolis, Oct. 10-12



Southern Seminary trustees elect new faculty, celebrate historic enrollment

Trustees of Southern Seminary elected two new faculty members and received President R. Albert Mohler Jr.'s report summarizing historic student enrollment metrics during the board's April 20-21 meeting.

Elected to the faculty, effective Aug. 1, were Douglas K. Blount, professor of Christian philosophy and ethics, and Joseph R. Crider, professor of church

music and worship. Mohler told trustees that both scholars "are spectacular additions to the faculty."

Mohler told trustees the seminary is experiencing historic levels of student enrollment with a record of 4,792 and full-time equivalents of 3,425 for 2013-2014, the most recent complete data available. The Master of Divinity headcount of 1,952 far outpaces peer institutions accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, he said. Also in 2013-2014, Southern welcomed 1,639 new students.

Trustees also voted to revoke its prior acceptance and decline the gift of a Wisconsin Christian university cam-

pus, as well as to decline to establish an extension campus of Boyce College, the seminary's undergraduate school.

Mohler said he has "great disappointment" that the gift of Northland International University campus in Dunbar, Wisconsin, had to be declined.

In other matters, the board approved the recommendation of its Financial Board for the 2015-2016 budget of \$43.7 million, an increase of 7.7 percent.

Promotions in faculty rank were granted to Randy L. Stinson, provost and senior vice president for academic administration to professor of leadership and family ministry; Barry C. Joslin to professor of Christian theology; and Jeremy P. Pierre to associate professor of biblical counseling.

The board also accepted the 2014 financial audit report conducted by independent auditors Crowe Horwath, which offered an "unqualified or 'clean' opinion" concerning the seminary's financial statements, and adopted a policy prohibiting employment of persons who are "first-degree relations" of current trustees, with certain exceptions.

In response to requests from several trustees, chairman Philip Gunn, who is Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, led fellow members of the board to conclude the meeting by encircling Mohler to lay hands on him and pray for his leadership of the institution. — BY JAMES A. SMITH SR.





Record participation ignites Southern Seminary's third annual 1937 Project

More than 300 students, faculty, and staff from Southern Seminary went beyond the classroom to serve the city of Louisville in the third annual 1937 Project, April 18. The service project, which is part of Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer's Give A Day week of service, commemorates the seminary's role in the 1937 Great Flood that left much of the city under water.

Fischer praised the seminary's service efforts on Twitter, acknowledging their service to 20 different businesses and non-profit organizations during the project, saying, "@SBTSSStudentLife strong work - love seeing you guys all over the community today!"

According to Southern Seminary's

Student Life office, a record 307 Southern volunteers worked more than 750 hours combined in diverse neighborhoods throughout the city. Several of the projects included demolition and renovation, clean-ups, and helping local non-profit organizations breathe new life into their property and buildings. Jeremy Pierre, dean of students, said it encouraged him to see students showing courtesy and love to other people through practical means.

"That's why we do the 1937 Project, to create space in our campus life for being courteous to people who need the gospel," he said. "Our students want to demonstrate such love, and they proved it with the excellent numbers who turned out. We're hoping this only increases year to year."

— BY RUTHANNE IRVIN

More information about the 1937 Project and other Student Life events is available at sbts.edu/students.

Marriage rooted in creation, Mohler says during televised forum

The institution of marriage does not come from human or social invention but God's creation order, said Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. during a televised forum on marriage on Cincinnati's WCPO, April 15.

"[The family] is the first school, that's the first government, and a very real sense, in a biblical worldview, it's the first church," he said at "The Changing Face of Marriage" forum. "What takes place in the home is the most important human institution and it's absolutely essential for human flourishing — it's one of God's greatest gifts to his creatures."

Disagreement regarding marriage generates from opinions about divine revelation and the Bible, Mohler said.

"The dividing didn't just all of the sudden happen over marriage," he said. "The dividing line happened in the 20th century, in the early decades, over miracles, and the doctrine of the Trinity, and the deity of Christ, and the authority of Scripture."

According to Mohler, since marriage is so central to human existence, it ought to be considered in terms of what leads to the good of society.

"It comes down to what we believe really leads to human happiness and human flourishing," he said.

— BY ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Video of the forum is available at www.wcpo.com/marriage.



Mohler receives Meese religious liberty award

For his “significant efforts in publicly promoting and defending religious liberty,” Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. received the 2015 Edwin Meese III Originalism and Religious Liberty Award from the Alliance Defending Freedom, May 15.

The award description said, “Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr.’s tireless efforts embody the enduring commitment to justice that is the hallmark of the American spirit, as personified by the Honorable Edwin Meese III, in whose name this award is given.”

In brief remarks, Mohler said the “eclipse of religious liberty and the threat of a new Dark Age” is a “gathering storm,” borrowing an expression Winston Churchill used to describe events in the 1930s that ultimately led to World War II.



“We are not facing the same gathering storm, but we are now facing a battle that will determine the destiny of priceless freedoms and the very foundation of human rights and human dignity,” he said.

During the ceremony, Meese, the nation’s 75th attorney general who served under President Ronald Reagan, 1985-1988, praised Mohler for his work within the Southern Baptist Convention. Mohler

“stood up” in defense of “sacred doctrines of the Bible” within the SBC, Meese said.

Beginning in 2009 with Meese, past recipients of the award include evangelical leader Chuck W. Colson and former U.S. Solicitor General Paul D. Clement.

— BY JAMES A. SMITH SR.

Mohler’s remarks are available on his website, www.albertmohler.com.



William R. Cromer Jr., longtime Southern Seminary professor, dies at 91

William R. Cromer Jr., a retired faculty member with the longest-serving tenure as a Christian education professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died on March 25 in his Louisville home at the age of 91.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1923, Cromer was committed to Christian education and the training of Southern Baptist teachers and ministers. Dur-

ing Cromer’s 41-year tenure, more than 10,000 students came through the seminary and more 4,000 sat in his classroom, estimated R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, during Cromer’s private funeral service on March 28 in the school’s Alumni Memorial Chapel.

“The multiplied, countless half-lives of Dr. William Cromer’s influence are now being transmitted to generations

of people who may never know his name in this life, but will know a minister who was taught by him in seminary,” Mohler said. “When we get to heaven we’re going to find out that Dr. Bill Cromer didn’t just teach 4,000 students, but those beyond number and limit, and he taught them faithfully.”

Cromer was installed as the Gaines S. Dobbins Professor of Christian Education in 1993. His family requested that expressions of sympathy be made to the seminary’s William R. Cromer Jr. Scholarship Fund.

— BY ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Southern Seminary renovates Dining Hall, Founders' Cafe

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opened the remodeled Dining Hall, Jan. 22. The room seats 232 people but looks more spacious with additional booths and bar seating.

The seminary completed the renovations during winter break. Anna Damico

contributed the architectural design, Robert Koneman served as general contractor, and special projects manager Andy Vincent oversaw the project.

Founders' Cafe reopened April 13 after three weeks of renovations, during which crews finished the concrete flooring, added fresh painting, and improved the seating capacity. Anna Damico contributed the design, and artwork was added on the first and second floors.

— BY SBTS COMMUNICATIONS

Southern Seminary online learning staff honored

The Online Learning Consortium, one of the most prestigious online learning organizations in higher education, recently recognized Southern Seminary's online learning department for its innovation in language learning.

Ryan Baltrip, director of online learning, and instructional designer Brian Renshaw received the Effective Practice in Online Learning Award for "Using Tablet Video Technology to Enhance Language Learning" in Southern Seminary's online Elementary Greek course. Renshaw worked with Robert L. Plummer, professor of New Testament interpretation, to improve the course during the summer of 2014.

The innovative teaching techniques integrate tablet technologies to provide video lectures, on-screen diagrams, and quiz reviews to simulate the in-class experience of the Greek course. The 24-inch tablet is an interactive touch display monitor that allows the instructor to use a pressure-sensitive pen on the display for annotating, writing, and drawing.

Baltrip and Renshaw received the award in Dallas at the 8th Annual Emerging Technologies for Online Learning International Symposium, April 22-24. — BY PAUL BAITY



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Events



Minority status ‘good news’ for evangelicals, says ERLC’s Russell Moore

Christians should be glad the gospel now distinguishes them from American culture, said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, during Southern Seminary’s Gheens Lectures, March 18-19.

“Increasingly, the most basic affirmations of Christianity are themselves seeming strange and odd in American culture,” Moore said. “This is actually good news for the advance of the kingdom, the future of the gospel, and for your ministries in 21st-century America.”

Moore, formerly dean of the School of Theology, delivered a series of three lectures titled “Onward Christian Strangers: The Gospel and the Public Square in Changing Times,” focusing on particular issues relating to Christianity and culture.

Moore pointed out the shift in American culture away from a moral majority, which required a definition of Christianity so broad that it was simply “moral values,” he said. Much of Christianity is driven by nostalgia, but Christians should instead be driven by a yearning for the coming kingdom, Moore said.

Moore argued that the moral majority model of political engagement is a misunderstanding of religious liberty. A Christian engagement that is not theologically rigorous is merely political, Moore said.

“If you’re fencing the table around your political agenda but

you’re not fencing the table around the gospel, then the political agenda is your gospel,” he said.

According to Moore, Christians need a fuller view of the church’s “ambassadorial function” as it proclaims what the gospel looks like to the outside world. As a solution, churches should recognize that they represent an eschatological reality. Moore said the church’s ordinances and gifts signify the victory of its triumphant King Jesus, and its leaders represent the administration of his coming kingdom — leading through serving.

“It’s not that the church is simply a counter culture,” he said. “The church is an alternative outpost, but it is an outward-directed outpost.”

Moore observed that the church’s most significant contemporary challenge is engaging the culture while also being faithful to its mission. The truth is, Moore said, most issues like abortion and pornography are problems on both the societal and personal levels. Christians should build their cultural engagement upon the gospel message, but that does not mean they only focus on evangelism and discipleship.

“Personal regeneration is itself a reaffirmation of the dignity of the human person,” he said. “If personal regeneration and atonement are understood ... you are going to have a different understanding of people, of what it means that God sent his church into the world for people.” — BY ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Audio and video of the Gheens Lectures are available online at sbts.edu/resources.

TGC 2015: SBTS sponsors Spanish Pre-Conference, hosts late night event

Southern Seminary sponsored the first ever Spanish Pre-Conference for The Gospel Coalition National Conference in Orlando, April 12-13. R. Albert Mohler Jr. delivered the final plenary session for the pre-conference, speaking through an interpreter.

“As we follow the storyline of Scripture, we see that God’s people, whenever and wherever they are found, are characterized and often identified by their leadership,” Mohler said in a message on Christian leadership in the 21st century. Mohler, who authored the 2012 book *The Conviction to Lead*, said the marks of such leadership are calling, covenant, courage, conviction, and character.

More than 700 Spanish-speaking leaders attended the two-day event, which also featured Southern Seminary alumnus Miguel Núñez, senior pastor of Iglesia Bautista Internacional in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and Southern Seminary missions professor M. David Sills, who taught a conference course in the Spanish track.

The seminary hosted a March 14 late night event during the national conference, which featured panelists discussing the implications of eschatology for pastoral ministry. The panel topic was in conjunction with the TGC National Conference theme, “Coming Home: New Heaven and New Earth.” More than 6,000 church leaders, laymen, and students from all 50

states and 50 countries attended the three-day conference.

“Eschatology isn’t just something we have fixed out there at the end of our Bibles or at the end of our doctrinal statements, it ought to be something we see lived out every single Sunday morning and in the mission of the church,” said panelist Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

The late night panel also featured Mohler, Núñez, David Uth, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, and moderator Matthew J. Hall, vice president of academic services at Southern Seminary.

Mohler also delivered a workshop during the conference on the sexual and moral revolution in American culture. More than 400 people attended Mohler’s presentation, “Aftermath,” which was one of 48 workshops offered concurrently across three sessions.

“We’re talking about a vast moral revolution, the velocity of which is simply unmatched in human history,” Mohler said, noting how the same-sex marriage movement has taken 25 years to accomplish what it took the abolitionist movement parts of three centuries to do.

Mohler’s workshop highlighted issues he confronts in his forthcoming book, *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong*, to be released in October by Thomas Nelson.

— BY S. CRAIG SANDERS

More information about the TGC National Conference and upcoming resources is available online at thegospelcoalition.org.





Boyce Preview sets record attendance

A record 243 guests, 152 of which were prospective students, attended the April 17 Boyce Preview event. Southern's Preview Day welcomed 158 prospective students for a total of 220 guests.

The two-day events for prospective Boyce College and Southern Seminary students offer two nights of lodging and meals for \$25. Attendees also will receive guided campus and housing tours, an opportunity to interact with faculty, and a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship. —BY SBTS COMMUNICATIONS

For information on Southern's Oct. 16 Preview Day, visit sbts.edu/preview. For more information Boyce's Oct. 23 Preview Day, visit boycecollege.com/preview.

Renown Conference encourages students to love their neighbors

Christians grow in love for their neighbors as they grow in grace and obedience toward God, Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. said to nearly 600 middle and high school students at Boyce College's Renown Youth Conference, March 13-14.

"Increasingly, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, in obedience to Christ who has saved us, we then love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind," said Mohler, preaching from Matthew 22:34-40. "And we then — every day of our lives — as those who follow Christ, those who believe in him and have been saved from our sins, as those who are being conformed to the image of Christ, we love our neighbor as ourselves."

Rick Holland, pastor of Mission Road Bible Church in Village, Kansas, preached from 1 Peter 2:11-12, encouraging students not to underestimate the power of the threat within them: their lustful flesh. "You are your greatest threat," he said, referring to Christian growth and sanctification.

Boyce College Dean Dan DeWitt led a general session, "Finding and Following Jesus in and through the Mess," preaching from Hebrews 11-12. Every biblical hero is flawed, he said, except one: Jesus.

The conference also featured seminary professors in breakout sessions about various worldview topics, aimed at helping students think critically about the world around them.

— BY RUTHANNE IRVIN

Audio and video from Renown are available online at sbts.edu/resources.





Tripp encourages parents to disciple children at Counsel the Word

Biblical parenting is driven by submission to the grace of God in children's lives, said noted author and speaker Tedd Tripp at the May 2 Counsel the Word Conference on "Confident Parenting" at Southern Seminary.

Tripp, pastor emeritus of Grace Fellowship Church in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and author of *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, said parents often misapply the principle of Proverbs 22:6 — "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" — as an if-then promise. According to this interpretation, if parents guide their children faithfully, they will always grow into faithful Christians. But Tripp said the Christian gospel turns on its head this parental "meta-story."

"It's a very humbling thing to realize: 'I cannot save my children. Salvation is of the Lord,'" Tripp said. "If my children grow up to know God and love God and delight in God, it will not be because I got it right, it will be because God is full of grace and mercy. It's because God delights in salvation, it's because God sent his Son into the world to save sinners."

Parents should model discipline through discipleship rather than control and management, Tripp said, and should recognize that the primary problem with their children is not their behavior but their sinful heart condition.

"One of the important things in this middle period of our children's lives — with elementary age kids — is to unpack these truths with our kids so they understand those attitudes of heart," he said. "I can manipulate change for the moment, but it will always revert back to the most natural expression in the abundance of the heart."

The conference also featured Heath Lambert, assistant professor of biblical counseling at Southern Seminary and executive director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, and Stuart Scott, associate professor of biblical counseling and executive director and founder of One-Eighty Counseling & Education. — BY ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Audio and video from the conference are available online at sbts.edu/resources.

Record number of women attend 2015 SWI Seminar Saturday

More than 200 women gathered for Southern Seminary's annual SWI Seminar Saturday, March 14. Seminary wives participated in five one-hour seminars out of 11 offerings taught by Southern Seminary faculty and their wives. Seminar topics included communication in marriage, parenting, home management, body image, and the sexual revolution in American culture. Each lecture was designed to deliver a message that was insightful, theological, and practical for the living of everyday life for ministers' wives.

This year's Seminar Saturday hosted 215 women — a record number for the event — from Kentucky and the surrounding area, including groups of more than 20 from Crossings Church and Mt. Vernon General Baptist Church in Illinois.

SWI classes are offered in two six-week terms in the fall semester and two in the spring semester. They are open to any ministry wives in the area and cost \$35 per course. Following a completion of 13 courses, Southern Seminary awards the women a Certificate of Ministry Studies through Boyce College. — BY CHARISSA CROTTS AND MACKENZIE MILLER

More information about SWI is available at sbts.edu/women.



Commentary on Hebrews

(Holman Reference 2015, \$39.99) Thomas R. Schreiner

In the first commentary released in the Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation series, Thomas R. Schreiner's *Commentary on Hebrews* explores the theology of the New Testament epistle in relation to the biblical canon.

"In considering the theological message of the letter, it is important to locate the fundamental purpose of the writing," Schreiner writes in the introduction. "The readers are called on to persevere, to hold on, and to keep believing until the end. If they fall away, the author insists, they will face destruction and damnation."

The epistle's role in the canon looks back at the storyline of the Bible and warns its readers not to "deny Jesus and all that he had accomplished" — a better priesthood, sacrifice, and covenant.

Schreiner categorizes the structural themes of biblical theology in Hebrews as promise-fulfillment in Jesus, already-but-not-yet eschatology, typology in the divine correspondence between the Old and New Testament, and the spatial orientation of the heavens and earth.

In the verse-by-verse exposition, Schreiner's commentary provides an outline of the particular passage and examines its immediate context before the exegesis. Since Hebrews itself cites Old

Testament passages, events, and figures, the exegesis often highlights the epistle's biblical theology.

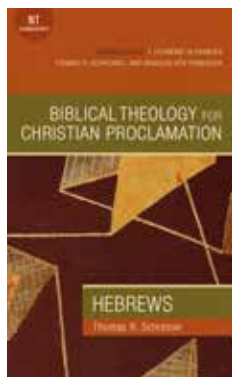
The most significant contribution of this commentary, and the series it introduces, is the concluding section, "Biblical and Theological Themes." Using the theological structures from the introduction, Schreiner extracts nine key themes from Hebrews: the sovereignty and love of God; the nature and accomplishments of Jesus Christ; the better nature of the new covenant; the gift of the Holy Spirit; warnings and exhortations; the readers as sojourners and exiles; faith and obedience for the readers; assurance of salvation; and the future reward.

Schreiner devotes most of the concluding section to the epistle's primary figure, Jesus Christ. He explores the theology of Hebrews

in regard to Jesus' divinity, humanity, eternal priesthood, ultimate sacrifice, perfection and assurance, and resurrection and exaltation.

Schreiner's contribution and the ensuing releases in this new commentary series should prove to be valuable tools for expository preaching, enabling pastors to equip their churches with a better understanding of how each book relates the storyline of the Bible.

— S. CRAIG SANDERS



Excerpts from the book:

1

"They were probably tempted to revert back to Judaism because they were suffering (cf. 10:32–34; 12:4–11). The writer reminds them of the pattern of OT saints and the pattern in the life of Jesus. First comes suffering and then comes glory. Already-not-yet eschatology means the reward promised to believers, the heavenly city, still awaits them."

2

"Jesus is the culmination of God's revelation. The OT Scriptures point to him and are fulfilled in him. We see in the introduction of Hebrews that Jesus is the prophet, priest, and king. He is the prophet, for God's final word is spoken by him and in him. ... The great revelatory events have taken place in Jesus' ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation. Believers do not need any other word from God for their lives. They are to put their faith in what God has revealed in and through Jesus the Christ."

3

"The fundamental issue is whether the readers will remain faithful to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice or will turn to OT sacrifices to secure atonement for their sins. The author makes an elegant and passionate case for staying true to Jesus Christ. ... There is no claim here that divinity and humanity represent all the author teaches about Jesus, for Jesus is described as the Messiah, the high priest, the Son of God, and the Lord."



‘Don’t fall away’: Schreiner discusses the biblical theology of Hebrews

EDITOR’S NOTE: *In what follows, Thomas R. Schreiner, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and professor of biblical theology, discusses his new commentary with Southern Seminary Magazine managing editor S. Craig Sanders.*

CS: Reading Hebrews requires a great deal of biblical literacy. What makes it so important for developing biblical theology and how does Hebrews offer a model for how to do biblical theology?

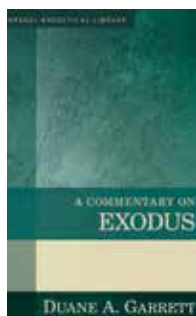
TS: I think Hebrews is paradigmatic because it is written after the cross and the resurrection. So, Hebrews is reflecting on the Christ event, the implication of his cross and resurrection for the people of God. I think Hebrews becomes a model because it examines issues that are fun-

damental for how you put the whole Bible together. Clearly, other books do that as well, but Hebrews does it in such a concentrated way since, I believe, the readers were tempted to revert to Judaism. So the author is required to examine the relationship between not only the old covenant and the new but also the theology of priesthood and sacrifice. Even Paul doesn’t deal with the priesthood in the same way that we find in the letter to the Hebrews. Although Paul does say Jesus is the final complete sacrifice, we don’t have the type of detailed working out of that theme that we see in Hebrews. I think he helps us see how to interpret the Old Testament typologically — that’s one of its main contributions. The author gives us the pattern for a typological reading, not only a typological reading, but a promise-fulfillment reading and a redemptive-historical reading as well.

CS: How did your earlier study on the warning passages in Hebrews help you understand the book as a whole?

TS: I think the warning passages summa-

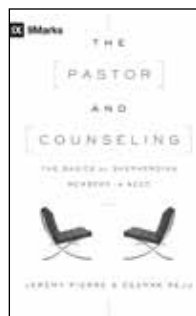
rize the major message of the book: don’t fall away. The warning passages, which punctuate the book, all say the same thing from a different angle, so they ought to be included synoptically or mutually interpret the Word. When we see that, we recognize that the fundamental message of the book is very practical, the fundamental message of the book isn’t that Jesus is our high priest. Chapters 7-10 tell us Jesus is a better priest, a better covenant, and a better sacrifice. But if we were to ask the question, “So what? Why does that matter?” I think the author of Hebrews would say, “Therefore do not depart from him because if you depart from the better priest, the better covenant, and the better sacrifice, you will be dead, you will not enter the heavenly rest.” The warning passages and the Hebrews 11 call of faith are two different ways of saying the same thing. What does it mean to obey the warning passages? It means to trust God. If so, I want to do everything I can to help people see how the book is integrated.



A Commentary on Exodus

(Kregel Academic 2014, \$39.99)

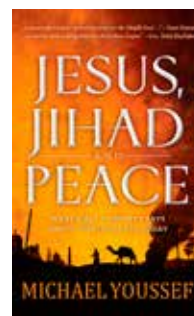
Duane A. Garrett



The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need

(Crossway 2015, \$14.99)

Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju



Jesus, Jihad and Peace: What Bible Prophecy Says About World Events Today

(Worthy 2015, \$15.99)

Michael Youssef

A new commentary from Duane A. Garrett, John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary, defends the reality of Exodus and contends for its relevance in Christian teaching.

In a lengthy introduction to the commentary, Garrett examines ancient Egyptian geography and history, scholarly opinions on the dating of the exodus, the location of the Red Sea and Mt. Sinai, and the primary themes of the book. Rather than making a case for a specific date or pharaoh, Garrett ultimately warns scholars, and especially pastors, not to base their trust in the biblical account on a specific theory.

“I do not think it is wise or right to suppose that we can correct what seems to be a deficiency in the Bible and fix a date for the exodus, describe fully the historical setting, or name the pharaoh of the exodus,” Garrett writes. “We should teach the biblical history and not some reconstructed, hypothetical model that tries to make definite what the Bible leaves indefinite.”

Arguably his most significant contribution to the literary analysis of Exodus is his emphasis on “The Songs of Exodus,” which are also organized in an appendix. Previously, scholars have only recognized “The Song of the Sea” in Exodus 15:1-18, but Garrett suggests that it is one of eight songs in the book.

Garrett’s commentary focuses on highly technical aspects of Hebrew composition, yet his insight into the text is valuable for pastors and scholars alike.

— S. CRAIG SANDERS

In their new book, *The Pastor and Counseling*, Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju guide pastors and laymen alike in caring for hurting people. The authors explain they do not expect the book to answer every counseling question ever posed but rather to equip pastors, laymen, and teachers with the tools to counsel others.

The Pastor and Counseling begins with an exhortation for pastors who serve their people, looking to Scripture for examples of shepherds who fed and loved their sheep well.

“Loving Jesus involves caring for those who are his,” they write. “And caring for those who are his will involve death. ... Death to ourselves for the good of others requires getting involved in their troubles.”

Throughout *The Pastor and Counseling*, Pierre, dean of students and associate professor of biblical counseling at Southern Seminary, and Reju offer practical and attainable goals for counseling. The structure of the 160-page book is helpful for not only pastors but anyone who wants to know more about counseling and is unsure where to begin. Pierre and Reju humbly offer not themselves but Scripture to both counselees and those who want to help other hurting people in churches. The goal, they write, is to cultivate a counseling culture in the local church. And this occurs when a pastor encourages his people to love one another well.

“If you are building a people committed to one another’s spiritual good, they will be more interested in counseling as a tool that can help toward that end.”

— RUTHANNE IRVIN

In *Jesus, Jihad and Peace*, Islamic scholar Michael Youssef explores the rising global tension between Islam and Christianity, demonstrating how God is displaying his eschatological purpose through current events.

“In a world that is crying out for peace, which will prevail: Jesus or jihad?” writes Youssef, a fellow at Southern Seminary’s Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam, in the introduction. “Do recent global events reveal that we are living in the end times?”

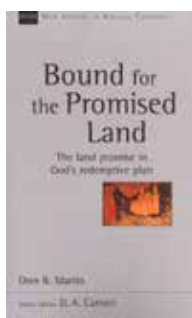
Don’t let the subtitle mislead you — Youssef, who is founding pastor of The Church of The Apostles in Atlanta, insists the book is not “exploiting end-times mania.” Rather, Youssef examines the theology and origins of Islam to show how “militant Islam is the original and authentic Islam of the seventh century.”

Youssef devotes most of his attention to the intersection of Islamic and Christian eschatology. Both “focus on a messianic Savior, an apocalyptic final war between good and evil, and a central role of the city of Jerusalem,” Youssef writes.

Youssef distinguishes between the basic beliefs of Islam and Christianity, including the Christian belief in a “personal relationship with the God of the universe” and the free offer of God to sinners.

With the emergence of jihadist groups around the globe, Youssef’s book is both relevant and timeless. He observes the aims of militant Muslims “to conquer the world and eradicate all other religions,” while also providing insight into the centuries-old beliefs that motivate such groups.

— S. CRAIG SANDERS



Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan
(InterVarsity Press 2015, \$25)
Oren R. Martin

In *Bound for the Promised Land*, Oren R. Martin, assistant professor of Christian theology at Boyce College and Southern Seminary, presents a biblical theology of God's promise of land for his people.

Revised and condensed from Martin's dissertation, the book seeks to trace the land theme throughout the entire Bible, rooted in fundamental assumptions about Scripture's authority, theological continuity, and the need for a grammatical-historical method of interpretation with canonical fulfillment.

Martin writes that the land motif repeated throughout Scripture is crucial to understanding the redemptive plan of God — introduced in Eden, stated explicitly in the Abrahamic Covenant, extended through the nation of Israel's Promised Land, partially fulfilled in the coming of Christ and the apostolic teaching of the kingdom of God, and fully consummated in the new heavens and the new earth.

"The land promised to Abraham, which was inhabited and lost throughout Israel's history, is important because it picks up the place of God's kingdom that was lost in Eden, thus serving as a subsequent place in God's unfolding plan," Martin writes in the book's opening chapter. "This place anticipates and prepares the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, who wins a new creation for his people."

Martin's book closes with his theological reflections upon the debates between dispensationalism and covenant theology, providing a *via media* between the two systems, affirming both the physical fulfillment of the land promise and its application to all his people in Christ.

— ANDREW J.W. SMITH



Engaging with Muslims
(The Good Book Company 2015, \$11.99)
John Klaassen

Now more than ever, understanding the basic beliefs of Islam is imperative for advancing the gospel around the world. But it is also essential if Christians are to engage Muslims living in the United States. In his new book, *Engaging with Muslims*, John Klaassen provides a helpful tool for learning more about what your Muslim neighbors believe and how to share the good news of Jesus.

Klaassen formerly worked in North Africa among Muslims, and currently serves as associate professor of global studies at Boyce College and associate director of Southern Seminary's Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam. In the first section of the book, Klaassen provides a basic overview of beliefs and characteristics of Muslims, clearing up misconceptions and describing the diversity of adherents.

"It is my prayer that as you read this book, you will lose some of the very natural fears you might have about sharing the gospel with a Muslim friend, neighbor or work colleague," Klaassen writes in the introduction. "And as you share that life-saving message, you will rejoice with heaven as the lost are found by Jesus."

While Klaassen offers an accessible and accurate summary of Islamic beliefs and sects, his most helpful contributions are found in his practical guidance for engaging Muslims with the gospel. Klaassen develops a pyramid for fruitful engagement with Muslims, consisting of prayer, presence, proclamation, and persuasion. He also concludes each chapter with "do's and don'ts" for evangelism and stories of Muslim conversions. — S. CRAIG SANDERS



Can These Bones Live: A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization
(B&H Books, \$14.99)
Bill Henard

In *Can These Bones Live*, Bill Henard argues that church revitalization is needed because thousands of churches throughout the United States close every year. God wants his church to spread, Henard writes, so learning how to revitalize a local church is critical to fulfilling the Great Commission.

"The church has a future and a hope. Before any one of us can go forward with the idea of church revitalization, we must arrive at that conclusion," he writes. "In order for anyone to initiate revitalization effectively into the local church, that person must believe Christ's promises about his [c]hurch."

Henard, assistant professor of evangelism and church growth at Southern Seminary and the senior pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, writes that only hoping fully in this future hope enables pastors to initiate effective revitalization.

Although numerous problems face such an endeavor for the contemporary church, Henard argues that revitalization is possible when it emerges from a healthy church dedicated to the preaching of the Word and genuine community.

Henard offers a practical four-step program he calls the "Change Matrix." Pastors should set biblical priorities, like preaching and community life; offer parameters, such as holiness, which guard against unbiblical pragmatism; assign players like deacons and Sunday School teachers to serve faithfully; and embrace the process of reorienting their church's focus toward a biblical and richly communal perspective.

— ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Thoughts



Our hope when the world hates us

By Jeff K. Walters

I'm a guy who loves to be liked. It's certainly a personality characteristic that has helped me in my work, ministry, and mission field. But maybe my quest to be liked is one reason it's hard for me to open the news and see stories of Christians suffering because of their faith. Perhaps this longing is why I struggle when I hear Jesus say, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke 21:17).

We might respond by contextualizing ourselves, our message, and our churches in the name of evangelism to the point that nobody could possibly hate us. Alternatively, we could stop caring what anybody thinks of us. After all, Jesus said we would be hated, so we might as well earn it. I hope we can agree that neither of these is satisfactory in light of an honest reading of God's Word.

The world does hate Jesus and the gospel. After all, a message of grace and mercy that cannot be judged in others or earned by good works removes our pride and self-sufficiency. Just as Jesus was and is hated, so are we as bearers of his good news. One implication of that truth is that our proclamation of the gospel and the way our lives line up with the gospel must visibly tie us to Jesus. The way we handle abundance and our response to suffering also reflect this truth.

At the same time, Christians should not invite hatred by

what we do and how we live, except as we live and do the gospel. Jesus said we would be hated "for his name's sake." We must be careful that what the world hates in us is Jesus rather than our inability to live with grace and mercy in the face of opposition. Jesus isn't giving us an excuse for being unlikeable or disagreeable. He's explaining why, despite our best efforts at love, humility, and kindness, people will hate us anyway.

There's some good news here, too. Jesus also said, "Blessed are you when people hate you ... on account of the Son of Man" (Luke 6:22). The blessing is not the hatred itself but rather the grace and mercy with which Christ fills the holes in our hearts left behind by the world's merciless attacks. As says the old Ira Stanphill song, "Don't think me poor or deserted or lonely, I'm not discouraged, I'm heaven bound. I'm just a pilgrim in search of a city." We will be hated because of Jesus and the cross and the gospel as we proclaim Christ's victory over sin and death. But we shall not perish, and neither shall those who also call upon his name through our witness.

Jeff K. Walters is assistant professor of Christian missions and urban ministry and chairs the Department of Evangelism and Missions in the Billy Graham School at Southern Seminary. He is also director of the Dehoney Center for Urban Ministry Training.

Missions to Muslims: What is stopping you?

By J. Scott Bridger

The outworking of God's plan of redemption began over 4,000 years ago with the pronouncement to our father Abraham that his "seed"—the same seed mentioned in Genesis 3:15—would be the source of blessing to all the families of the world (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). We know that this seed is the Messiah, Jesus, and that we who believe in him are heirs to these promises by virtue of our position in Christ (Gal 3:7–16). We also know that our inheritance in Christ comes with certain obligations (and privileges). Among those is our appointment as ambassadors of the gospel for the benefit of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation on the face of the planet.

Thus, our inclusion in the multiethnic and multinational body of Christ, as well as the standing mandate we have from Jesus to bequeath our inheritance of faith to all peoples, necessitates and implies that we will give ourselves to knowing and understanding those to whom we've been sent. Christ's mandate obligates us to engage Muslim peoples with knowledge, understanding, sensitivity, and preparation. To do anything less would be to violate the clear command and privilege Christ has given us in the gospel.

But one need only glance at the daily headlines to be reminded of the challenges that await those who are contemplating cross-cultural ministry in the Muslim world today. These challenges are compounded for Westerners—Americans in particular—when one considers the animosity that many Muslims har-

bor, whether justified or not, regarding the policies of Western nations toward their countries.

However, an even greater and more insidious challenge than current geopolitical events to the mission enterprise among Muslim peoples is a common sentiment currently found among some Western evangelicals.

Some argue that Christians from the majority world are better suited, culturally and socially, to overcome the challenges of doing ministry in Muslim contexts. Others argue that America's current status in the world makes it impossible for Westerners to have any lasting impact on Muslim peoples. In one way or another, these sentiments are designed to get us to delegate our responsibility or relegate the mandate Christ gave us to the fringes of our concern.

Such sentiments stand at odds with the clear teaching of Scripture (Matt 28:19–20), which does not extend exemptions or waivers on the basis of it being potentially dangerous. Granted, not all are called to go physically, but all are called to be involved in making him known. Unfortunately, this sentiment is part of the reason why the blessings of the gospel have yet to be proclaimed among innumerable Muslims.

What is stopping you?

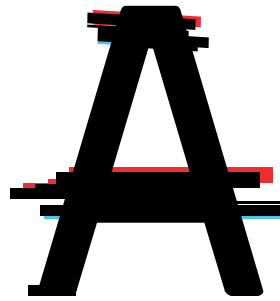
J. Scott Bridger is a fellow at the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam at Southern Seminary.



THE DANGEROUS CALLING OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

BY R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.





America's evangelical Christians are facing a critical time of testing in the 21st century. Among the most important of the tests we now face is the future of missions and our faithfulness to the Great Commission. At a time of unprecedented opportunity, will our zeal for world missions slacken?

Just as doors of opportunity are opening around the world, the church seems to be losing its voice. A virtual re-paganization of Western culture is occurring around us at a velocity unprecedented in human history. At the same time, we are also witnessing the rise of militant Islam. One need only consider the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS to see just how dangerous the missionary enterprise has become.

Christians therefore live in the midst of two competing worldviews, both of which are hostile to the claims of Christ. Yet, we also offer the only meaningful alternative to rampant secularism on the one hand and militant Islam on the other. In other words, America's secular elites do not have a compelling response to the theological claims of Islam. This fact highlights that one of the fundamental problems among Western elites is that they cannot understand a theological worldview — particularly the theological worldview of Islam. Being basically rational and secular in their own worldview, Western elites find it almost impossible to understand the radical actions of Islamic terrorists.

For example, Islamic teaching distinguishes the house of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) — that part of the world which is under submission to the Quran and Shariah law — from the house of war (*Dar al-Harb*) — that portion of the world that is not yet brought under Shariah rule. That logic is simply something that the modern secular mind really cannot understand and the American government seems almost resolutely determined to ignore or even to deny.

Even a cursory glance at the headlines shows the danger Christians now face with the threat of ISIS and other militant groups within Islam. These organizations have undertaken several major attempts to exterminate Christians in much of the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, the Pew Research Center recently reported that the majority of Christians will soon be living in the so-called "Global South" including sub-Saharan Africa. This means that the church of the future is a church more likely to find itself in places of persecution and hostility.

With the moral revolution advancing at breakneck speed and the rise of militant Islam, we are living in a world growing more dangerous by the day. That world — the real world — is one of clashing ideologies and conflicting worldviews. The real world is also a world in which theology always matters, and a world in which an empty secular worldview is no match for an Islamic theology set on conquest and driven by revenge.

In the wake of these potential threats to Christianity, we must remember what Jesus told his own disciples in John 15:18-21:

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my

word, they will also keep yours.
But all these things they will do
to you on account of my name,
because they do not know him
who sent me.

So while international organizations and governments try to determine the root cause of terrorism against Christians, we must remember that Jesus offers us a distinctly theological answer, “But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me” (John 15:21).

Jesus’ reasoning is clear: those who hate Christ extend their hostility to his followers. Seen in that light, the persecution of Christians around the world — the persecution experienced by Christians throughout the history of the Christian church — is something that has deeper theological significance than even the secular world can understand. The secular world sees oppression, martyrdom, and terrorism. Christians, looking through the lens of Scripture, see a theological issue that cries out for a theological response. We come to understand that the reason why this kind of opposition to the church takes place cannot be adequately explained by politics, economics, or sociology. Jesus told his 12 disciples these things even as he himself was headed for the cross.

One of the most lamentable symptoms of today’s emotionalist Christianity is its tendency to inaction and aversion to risk. We can trace this symptom to any number of causes, and most of them are theological. Many Christians suffer from warped understandings of the will of God, the nature of true discipleship, and the character of the Christian life.

Being a Christian, however, has always

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been a dangerous enterprise. In fact, Christian discipleship is inherently dangerous. Jesus himself told his disciples that he sends them as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matt 10:16). These dangers are not only physical but spiritual as well. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).

The call to suffering is inherent in Jesus’ command, “Follow me.” Indeed, if we are listening, we recognize these truths even in the songs we sing in Sunday morning worship. In “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” Luther wrote, “Let good and kindred go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still, his kingdom is forever.” Even in John Newton’s classic “Amazing Grace,” we sing about the “many dangers, toils, and snares” that accompany our life in Christ.

Further, the Apostle Paul, so often a model for Christian faithfulness in the

pages of the New Testament, serves as an example for us here as well. Consider these words from 2 Corinthians 11:23-28:

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one — I am talking like a madman — with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 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.



In the life of Paul, we find that following Christ means being exposed to dangers. Also like Paul, we must not shirk or avoid these dangers — we must embrace them. We embrace them because we know that gaining the world but losing our soul is a futile transaction. We embrace them because we know whatever dangers and trials we may face, Christ is worth them all. We embrace them because we have a resurrection hope which places our hopes for comfort, security, and peace not in this life but in the life to come.

missionary cause are meaningless if we do not produce a new generation of bold, courageous, and committed Christian missionaries. Let us make our convictions clear and commitments firm, even in the face of hostility and danger. Evangelical Christians must take our stand for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has made atonement for our sins. In a day of hostility and danger, we must point to the only gospel that offers salvation. We must learn again to define the true gospel in terms of justification

WE EMBRACE THEM BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT GAINING THE WORLD BUT LOSING OUR SOUL IS A FUTILE TRANSACTION. WE EMBRACE THEM BECAUSE WE KNOW WHATEVER DANGERS AND TRIALS WE MAY FACE, CHRIST IS WORTH THEM ALL.

This world is indeed a dangerous place — Jesus told us that it would be so. With the rise of both militant Islam and the velocity of secularization in the West, Christians cannot afford to remain silent and cease proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. In times like this we must follow the example of men and women like William Carey, John Paton, Bill Wallace, Lottie Moon, and Hudson Taylor. We must remember the words of Jim Elliot: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

This is, as the late Carl F.H. Henry advised, a time for evangelical demonstration. Our words of support for the

by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is the sum and substance of the genuine gospel — and the true gospel is always a missionary gospel — and a gospel that is active even in the world’s most dangerous contexts. ➤

R. Albert Mohler Jr. is president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Joseph Emerson Brown Professor of Christian Theology.

FROM HARDSHIP TO HARVEST: A MODERN-DAY BOOK OF ACTS IN AFRICA

BY S. CRAIG SANDERS

We can't tell you his name because of what he is doing. We can't tell you his location because of what is happening. But a third-generation missionary has been used by God to spark a revival of apostolic proportions in his African homeland. For the first time, he is sharing his remarkable journey from hardship to harvest.

After persevering for nearly two years through many difficulties, this Southern Seminary alumnus and current Ph.D. student has led a great awakening resulting in thousands of Christ followers and scores of churches in a spiritually dry region of Africa.

Six months after he and his family arrived to their new home in an African* village, Timothy* knelt beside the bed of his ailing daughter not knowing if she would survive. His family had battled constant illness acclimating to the mission field, and with scarce medical help, a combination of malaria and typhoid fever threatened his 9-year-old daughter's life.

Sitting in a Louisville coffee shop nearly a decade later, Timothy recalls the tempting voice accusing him this would not have happened had he kept his family safe in America. Weeping at his daughter's bedside, Timothy had resolved to God, "Even if you take away my daughter, I will still serve you."

An Australian doctor in town during that time was able to provide adequate medical care for Timothy's daughter to recover, but not before the missionary counted the cost of missions in his moment of crisis.

A third-generation missionary, Timothy was baptized by his grandfather on the mission field when he was 11. A year later, Timothy encountered a faithful Christian who was released from prison because he was converting cellmates and guards. Frank* lived with Timothy's family for a short time and disciplined Timothy, teaching him how to pray not just for basic needs but for opportunities to share the gospel with others.

His grandfather, whose counsel to seek discipleship had led him to Frank, also encouraged Timothy to grow in his faith through reading Scripture. It was then that he first read Jeremiah 1:5 and began experiencing the missionary call for himself.

"For some reason, like no other passage of Scripture that I read up to that point, that 'prophet to the nations' phrase leapt off the page at me," Timothy said in an interview with *Southern Seminary Magazine*. "And I immediately said, 'Father, I don't know what it means to be a prophet to the nations, but I want to serve you in that capacity.'"

Timothy would pursue that calling, but not before seeking formal theological education. He married his wife in 1994 after they met at a Florida college, and moved to Louisville to study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Timothy decided to earn a Master of Divinity in the School of Theology where he could focus more on biblical studies and church history to complement his experience growing up on the mission field.

While studying at Southern, Timothy helped launch one of the fastest-growing churches in the United States before graduating with his M.Div. in 2001. Timothy remained on staff at

"The sanctifying empowerment of the Holy Spirit in every believer is an unstoppable force; it's more powerful than anything else. We can expect that when we ask people to do something directly from the Word of God, that God himself will empower them to accomplish everything he has set out for them to do."



the church for three years before embarking on a vision trip to North Africa, where he sensed a burden for full-time missions work. He and his wife were appointed by the International Mission Board and moved into their village a decade ago.

For nearly two years, Timothy and his family experienced the hardships of mission work without much gospel fruit. At the time, experts suggested that the best way to make converts was to have them read the Bible in their own language for six months to a year before professing faith in Christ. But that came into conflict with the reality that only 20 percent of the people in their area were literate.

During a training session with the area missions group, a harmony of two Gospel texts helped Timothy envision a discipleship model in step with the working of the Holy Spirit. The lesson for the training focused on Luke 10:2, in which Jesus tells his disciples that “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

Timothy and his wife had been studying the Gospel of John in their private devotion and noticed a striking similarity with Jesus’ lesson to his disciples after his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well: “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” In John’s account, the Samaritan woman places her faith in

Jesus and immediately shares the good news with others, who profess faith because of her testimony.

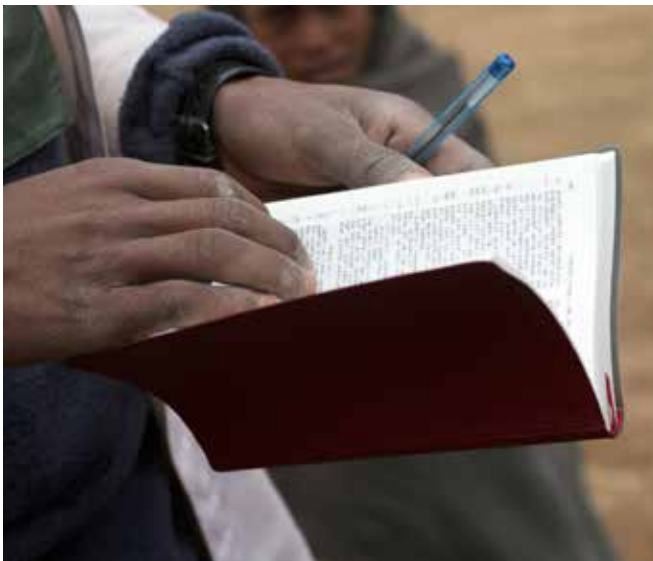
“That really struck us,” Timothy said. “Both my wife and I just stopped as we were in the middle of that and just said, ‘Father, we trust you, that what you’re saying here is true for the people that you’ve sent us to — that the harvest is plentiful and that it’s not years and years down the road, but that the harvest is ripe now. Nevertheless, our faith is very weak. Please strengthen our faith.’”

On Feb. 8, 2008, Timothy and his wife invited five people into their home for afternoon tea. In previous interactions, Timothy would tell a Bible story and discuss it with the group, which consisted of unbelievers. This time, however, he presented the gospel from creation to Christ and concluded with a call to covenant relationship with Jesus.

When all five of his friends made a profession of faith, Timothy asked them if they would be willing to share the gospel with another person. An elderly woman in the group, Sarah*, sought out 12 people that week, four of whom made professions of faith. Timothy says witnessing the Holy Spirit working in the lives of these young believers transformed his understanding of discipleship.

“The Holy Spirit in that woman, as she had just entered into faith, was the same Holy Spirit that wrote the Scriptures, who





raised Christ from the dead, and that power was within her and was guiding her desire to proclaim,” Timothy said. “And here I was, in my lack of faith in the power of God in her, limiting what I thought she was capable of contributing to the kingdom of God.”

“The sanctifying empowerment of the Holy Spirit in every

“By being willing and being in a context where I could invite my children to participate in the work of the ministry, they all had a very early opportunity to understand what their spiritual gifts were and to exercise their spiritual gifts for the sake of the kingdom of God. ... Why wouldn’t I want that?”

believer is an unstoppable force; it’s more powerful than anything else. We can expect that when we ask people to do something directly from the Word of God, that God himself will empower them to accomplish everything he has set out for them to do.”

Timothy continued discipling those five converts, enabling them to pass on to their converts the spiritual and biblical truths they were learning from Timothy. Within six months, 10 groups of 25 to 40 Christians were meeting through the gospel witness of those five people.

The spark of revival did not come without difficulties. Timothy says Sarah was forced to move when her landlady raised the rent 7 times what it was, angered over the house church she was hosting in her apartment. She saw her relocation not as persecution, however, but as a new field of harvest for her gospel witness. Another convert, Adam*, was brought up on false charges on account of his faith, but Timothy says the case was thrown out after Adam shared the gospel before the entire court and converted the judge.

Seven years later, Timothy’s missionary movement has transformed entire villages. His discipleship method of mobilizing and strengthening new converts to share the gospel



“When we step into a willingness to go to the most difficult place we can imagine, we step into a place of total reliance upon God. ... Imagine all of the delight that we can experience in our relationship with Christ as we pour our lives out for him who has given everything for us. There’s just a joy and a delight even in the midst of struggle.”

with others has resulted in such a large number of professions that he estimates to be in the tens of thousands.

In Timothy’s terminology, a generation is the group of converts through one person’s ministry. A first-generation convert is anyone Timothy has specifically led to a profession of faith, and a second-generation convert is one who came to faith through the testimony of Timothy’s disciples. At a recent gathering of church leaders in his area, Timothy encountered a pastor who came to faith in the 14th generation of new believers. Under him were three generations of Christians, more than 200 of whom he converted and disciplined personally.

“It certainly is a work of God,” said Grant Lovejoy, the director of orality strategies at IMB, who has spent time in Africa with Timothy. “It’s a movement that’s deeply committed to following Scripture and being accountable to one another to grow in the grace of the Lord.”

Lovejoy, an expert on storytelling in oral cultures, says one of the key methods Timothy has used in his ministry is discipling people who cannot read or write to memorize the Bible. By understanding his culture, Timothy developed indigenous memory devices for presenting the gospel from creation to Christ and reciting Bible stories. He and his colleagues have also produced audio recordings of large portions of Scripture so that church leaders can memorize biblical passages.

“They recognized that the Scriptures do not require a person to be able to read fluently in order to be a leader. The biblical requirements for leadership have to do with character, godliness, and the ability to understand and defend the faith,” Lovejoy said.

“This particular movement has powerfully demonstrated how it is possible, in a society where many people cannot read and write, that you can have a strong, vibrant, multiplying, Scripture-saturated body of believers who are really having



a transforming impact on the lives of people. Just the obedience of these people to the Word and the extent to which they've gone to be biblically grounded is very encouraging."

Luke* is a former IMB journeyman who served alongside Timothy from 2008 to 2011 before graduating from Southern in 2014. If the astronomical number of conversions is difficult for a reader to comprehend, it is just as challenging for someone who has witnessed the awakening from the start.

"It's not like we're going out and showing [an evangelistic] film and having people raise their hands — it's not that," Luke said, distancing the movement from so-called easy believism. "But it's still hard to believe even though I've seen it with my own eyes just because it's the closest thing I've ever experienced to the Book of Acts happening in real life."

Added Luke, "At some dam in Africa there's all of a sudden thousands of workers there that have believed because one person has sparked a movement that empowered each person to immediately become a witness and a church planter."

Timothy says his children, who range from ages 6 to 17, have also played significant roles in his missionary work. His daughter, who suffered through illness early on in his ministry, has demonstrated a burden for the lost to come to know Christ, often praying for Timothy's evangelistic opportunities when he travels. Timothy says what his children have had to sacrifice growing up in Africa is nothing compared to the spiritual gifts they have been able to develop on the mission field. All his children have made professions of faith, often through the testimonies of their older siblings, and are

active themselves in making disciples.

"By being willing and being in a context where I could invite my children to participate in the work of the ministry, they all had a very early opportunity to understand what their spiritual gifts were and to exercise their spiritual gifts for the sake of the kingdom of God," Timothy said. "Why wouldn't I want that?"

Ultimately, the key for understanding the movement, Timothy insists, is believing the Holy Spirit can work in the lives of these people just as the Bible promises. While Timothy's ministry has likely resulted in tens of thousands of conversions, he says the call to minister in hard places is an invitation from God for his people to know him better.

"When we step into a willingness to go to the most difficult place we can imagine, we step into a place of total reliance upon God, so that we're stripped of our identity, we're stripped of everything — all those things that, in many senses, are encumbrances in our relationship with our heavenly Father," Timothy said. "Imagine all of the delight that we can experience in our relationship with Christ as we pour our lives out for him who has given everything for us. There's just a joy and a delight even in the midst of struggle." ►

*Names and location withheld for security purposes.

S. Craig Sanders is the managing editor of *Southern Seminary Magazine* and a Master of Divinity student.



A missionary in the heart of Mormonism

By Andrew J.W. Smith

When Travis Kerns was a child, a certain commercial kept popping up on his parents' television. A man is riding his bike along the road when a Jeep speeds by and sends a cascade of water all over him. Drenched from head to toe, the cyclist catches up to the driver, whose Jeep is broken down on the side of the road. Instead of yelling at him, the cyclist pulls over, gets off his bike, and starts helping the driver as narration kicks in: "This message brought to you by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

The ad made an indelible impact on a young Kerns, lodging itself in his memory and reappearing at key moments throughout his life.

"I can still see it," he says now. "Just like it was yesterday."

He thinks of it in 1996, as a college student in his New Religious Movements course. The professor is lecturing on Mormonism, and Kerns feels the weight of the thousands

of people who haven't heard the true gospel. On that day, he resolves to live in Salt Lake City someday and take the gospel to Mormons. He thinks of it in 2007 when, as assistant professor of worldview and apologetics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he begins leading short-term mission trips to Salt Lake City, first just with Boyce College students, then Southern students, too. He thinks of it when he cycles — a regular habit he's developed in recent years and his way of building rapport with unbelievers in his community.

And he thinks of it when the phone rings in October 2012. On the other line is his former pastor, Kevin Ezell, who served at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville and is now the president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), the domestic missions arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. Ezell offers Kerns a position as city missionary with NAMB in Salt Lake City, Utah.

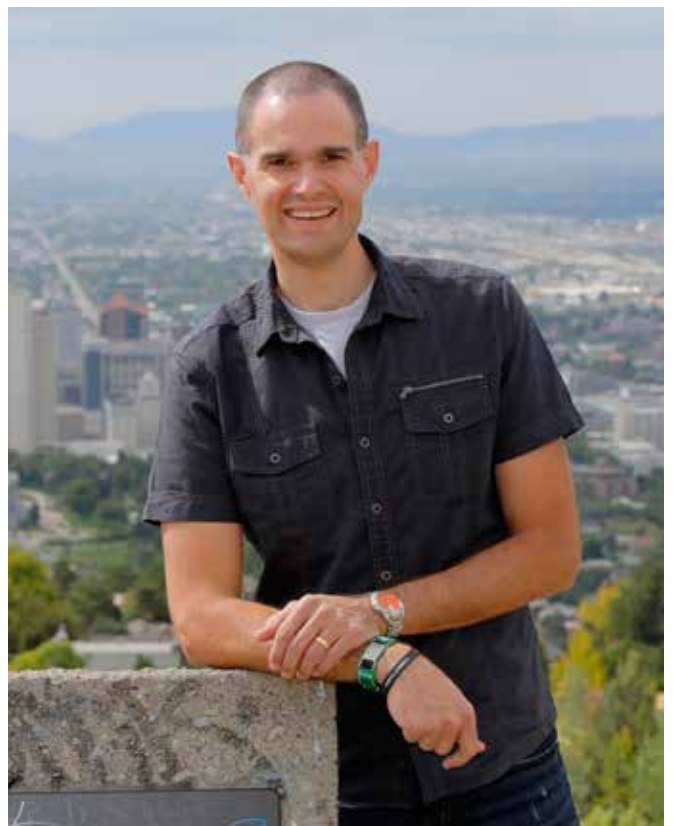


Now, Kerns had earned both his M.Div. and Ph.D. in Applied Apologetics from Southern Seminary. His son, 7 years old at the time, hadn't known anything but living in Louisville. Kerns was surrounded by mentors like Ted Cabal, Robert Plummer, and Russell Fuller — men who challenged Kerns spiritually and academically, “both on the inside and the outside.” Most of his life was spent in Greenville, South Carolina — he was born there, raised there, went to college there, and met his wife there. If these places aren't home, then what is?

“Home is Salt Lake City, Utah,” Kerns says now, in a phone interview. “We feel more at home here than we ever felt anywhere else. When we crossed the state line moving here two years ago, we knew it. This is it. This is home.”

Kerns accepted Ezell's offer, and moved his family — his wife of 16 years, Staci, and his son Jeremiah — to Salt Lake City in 2013. He has served as city missionary for two years, helping

“Home is Salt Lake City, Utah. We feel more at home here than we ever felt anywhere else. When we crossed the state line moving here two years ago, we knew it. This is it. This is home.”







NAMB church planters in Salt Lake City and partnering with existing church leaders in the area.

‘WHAT’S ONE THING IN MINISTRY YOU’LL NEVER DO?’

While the roots of Kerns’ interest in Mormons go back to that television ad, the desire first sprouted when he was a student at North Greenville University during the mid-1990s. When he switched from studying business to religion, he applied for a scholarship available to students in his new major. Local pastors would interview each candidate, and one pastor asked Kerns: “What’s one thing in ministry you’ll never do?”

“I will not be a missionary,” Kerns told him. “I will absolutely not do that.”

The pastor just smiled. “Well, that’s what God is going to call you to.”

Twenty years later — though Kerns and his wife had been interacting with Mormons regularly, including leading short-term teams with Southern — the call to full-time missions work in Salt Lake City became unmistakable.

“I always thought teaching was the endgame,” he said. “Every guy doing a Ph.D. wants to find a teaching job. But, as I started coming out to Salt Lake City with mission teams, this place and people really started to stick out to me and I just couldn’t get past it.”

Even though Kerns had been committed to reaching Mormons from the beginning, the Spirit still had to work in his wife’s heart to make it a long-term reality. Staci knew about her husband’s calling, but hoped it might happen closer to her

“We don’t want to become the anti-Mormon guys. Be pro-Jesus. We’re constantly talking about three things: grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Whatever religion people are in, they need those three things, and that’s especially true of Mormonism. They’re held under such strict, legalistic obligations that grace, mercy, and forgiveness are like a fresh drink of cool water.”

family in North Carolina.

In the summer of 2012, Kerns returned late on a Saturday night from a short-term trip to Salt Lake City. At First Baptist Church of Fisherville the next morning, Brian Payne, currently a Boyce College professor, preached on Luke 9:60: “Jesus said to them, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’”

“For about 90 seconds,” Kerns recalled, “he discussed how we can make our families into idols, and it broke my wife’s heart because she realized that’s what she was doing with her hometown.”

They left the service and got into the car when Kerns’ wife turned to him.

“Call NAMB, let’s go,” she said. Three months later, Kerns received Ezell’s phone call.

‘A SIGNIFICANT DIFFICULTY’

While Kerns has witnessed significant fruit in the last two years — among the 18 active church planters in the area, there have been more than 100 conversions — the intense spiritual warfare has been the most significant obstacle. Twice a year, in April and October, Salt Lake City hosts the LDS General Conference. As many as 150,000 Mormons flock to Salt Lake City, and the entire religion worldwide turns its attention to the city. Each year, Kerns has watched as the spiritual warfare against NAMB missionaries “ramps up.”

“We knew it would be a reality, but we didn’t know the extent to which we would find it here,” he said. “That’s a significant difficulty that every family in our ministry faces.”

In October 2012, the month Kerns accepted the position with NAMB, a tumor started growing on his mother’s pancreas. Exactly a year later, again in October, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer and died weeks later. The following April, his grandmother was diagnosed with terminal cancer and died months later. That same month, the wife of a pastor in Provo lost her daughter late in the pregnancy. She gave birth to a stillborn, despite doctors in the area having no explanation for the complications.

Throughout April and October, many pastors and planters will go through severe bouts of depression and anger for no discernible reason, and the issues will disappear as suddenly as they came once the General Conference ends. The physical manifestation of warfare is real, Kerns says.

Since his job largely involves partnering with extant church

planters in the region, Kerns is on high alert during those months, calling each NAMB planter to make sure things are all right. If they aren’t, Kerns will immediately visit to sit and pray with them.

“It’s kinda Sunday School when I say it this way, but we have to make sure we’re prayed-up and read-up,” he said. “Constant prayer, constantly reading Scripture, constantly being around other believers, it’s mutual encouragement.”

‘WE DON’T WANT TO BECOME THE ANTI-MORMON GUYS’

Seventy percent of Utah citizens are Mormon, while 28 percent claim a non-Christian religion or no religion at all, according to Kerns. Two percent are evangelical.

The 50,000 Christians who live in Utah “stick out” — in dress (jeans and a polo shirt instead of the typical suit and tie), appearance (LDS members do not wear beards, so Christian men will often grow them out to be distinctive), and Sunday activities (going out to eat, while Mormons only walk to the meeting house and back). Even a trip to the coffee shop can identify someone as a Christian, since Mormons don’t consume hot drinks like coffee or tea for doctrinal reasons.

Kerns sees this as a good thing: being a Christian in Utah requires a serious faith. Even an ICHTHUS sticker on the back window of a car — something that can seem mundane and trite to Bible Belt Christians — serves as an automatic symbol of brotherhood in Utah.

“Being a nominal Christian is not going to be a lot of fun,” he said. “It would be much, much easier to be a nominal Mormon.”

Kerns says many Mormons believe they are already Christians, so missionaries must first “deconstruct” their understanding of the gospel. Terms like “Jesus” and “gospel” and “grace” mean something different to Mormons than they do to evangelicals.

“We have the same words but use different dictionaries,” he said.

Kerns credited Cabal, his Ph.D. supervisor, for teaching him an apologetic model that values each person, instead of simply using them as a means of proving a point. It’s more valuable to share the gospel in an appropriate and loving way for each person than merely to parrot an evangelistic formula, he said. Kerns even tells new planters not even to talk about Mormonism at first, pointing out that no one would tell a missionary to move to Saudi Arabia and immediately

begin proclaiming Islam to be false.

“We don’t want to become the anti-Mormon guys,” he said. “Be pro-Jesus. We’re constantly talking about three things: grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Whatever religion people are in, they need those three things, and that’s especially true of Mormonism. They’re held under such strict, legalistic obligations that grace, mercy, and forgiveness are like a fresh drink of cool water.”

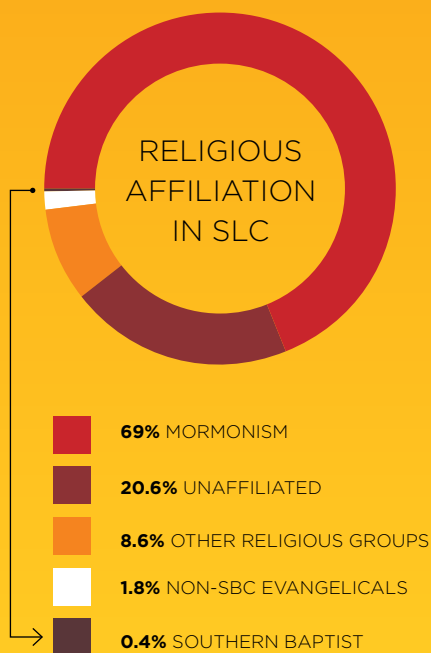
Kerns isn’t interested in publicly debating Mormons about their religious system or proving them wrong. No, his purpose is more important than that.

“God created me to love Mormons,” he said.



Andrew J.W. Smith is a news writer at Southern Seminary and a Master of Divinity student. Photos provided by the North American Mission Board.

Southern Baptists in the heartland of Mormonism



2,611,429

SALT LAKE CITY POPULATION

There is one Southern Baptist church for every 40,942 residents in the Salt Lake City area.

DATA COMPILED FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF RELIGION DATA ARCHIVES.



Missions in spite of — or because of — persecution

By John Klaassen

I ran into a friend on the street one day when we lived in North Africa. Greeting him in the customary way, I asked him how he and his family were doing. I quickly realized this would not be a simple stop and greet, for my friend shared that he and his family were going to relocate right away. His kids, in fact, had to find a new school within the week. When I asked what happened, he explained that a lady in his building had threatened him and his family with a knife. “Go to the police,” I responded, “they shouldn’t let her make threats like that.” “I went,” he said, “and the police told me that when I return to Islam, they will do something about the lady in the building.”

I have never really faced persecution. I have been black-listed and cannot return to a country I loved and served for many years, but I have never been threatened, put in jail, and no one has ever held a knife up to me in a menacing way. I lived for years, however, with friends facing persecution and I have seen the pain on their faces and listened to their gut-wrenching stories. And, I have rejoiced with them as they have proclaimed over and over that Jesus is worth it all.

Christian persecution comes as the light of the gospel penetrates darkness. In the very beginning of Scripture, before the heavens and earth were formed, Genesis tells us that darkness covered the surface of the deep. God’s first words were, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And, God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness” (Gen 1:3-4). The Apostle John later continued this motif in his Gospel. He showed us that Jesus is the true light (John 1:4), he is the light that shines in the darkness. His light, the darkness cannot overcome (John 1:5), even as the world rejects his light because it loved the darkness all the more (John 3:19).

Light pierces the darkness, and where it does, it always defeats the darkness, but people love darkness because light exposes their evil (John 3:18-20). Mark 5 illustrates this tension. One of the saddest passages in the Bible is found in Mark 5:15-17, in which Jesus casts out demons into the pigs and is asked to leave the town.

Though the townspeople could see the amazing work of Christ in this tormented man’s life, they were afraid and asked Jesus to leave. When the light shone and pushed back darkness, they begged the light to leave. This story grieves me because

I often see it happen in the people with whom I work. Even as a friend starts coming close to the light, the light begins to exposes his sin, so he runs. Ultimately, people and cultures reject the light because the light exposes their darkness.

This tension is balanced by another important aspect of light: the light shows our way in the darkness. I was once in a cave in North Africa, but it was no tourist cave with electrical lights installed and a tour guide flipping them off and on. In fact, there was no tour guide at all, and the only light we had were some cheap, old flashlights. The further we went into the cave, the less light I had. When my cheap flashlight burnt out, I was grateful to be with a group of friends who would not leave me, literally, in the dark. I could see their lights and follow their lead. While the light is rejected by many who prefer darkness, light also attracts those who want to see. Those who are called by the Father into the light love to follow the light.

This light motif helps us think about persecution. When light shines in darkness, we can know there will be trouble. No matter where we go, if light is shining in darkness, it will not always be safe. But Jesus didn't call us to safety (Matt 10:34-39). If we are faced with the choice of hiding our light in safety or shining it bright with risk, we must choose the latter. We cannot put our lamp under a basket. Instead, we should put it on a stand for everyone to see. We are to let our light shine so that the world "may see

[our] good works and give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

This mandate prompts a couple of questions: should *we go* where things are dangerous and to places from which we might not return? The answer is, of course, yes. The Great Commission is clear. We are commanded to make disciples of all nations, *panta ta ethne*. How can we disciple the nations if we do not go to them?

The more important question then is *how do we go* where there is persecution? This question is much harder to answer as it demands great discernment, understanding and wisdom. If you are led to serve in a place of great darkness and persecution, let me suggest some keys to ponder:

- » Start with prayer. James 1:5 says if any of you lacks wisdom, then pray. Pray for understanding, asking God for his wisdom.
- » Listen to the "workers" on the ground. What are they saying? Do they want you to come? Sometimes we cause damage by going at the wrong time and other times we stay home out of fear when going would be strategic. Follow the lead of the field.
- » Listen to national believers. We may well put them in danger because of our high profile as U.S. citizens. When we brought American visitors overseas, we seldom let them spend time with local believers

because we knew the police always watched closely foreign visitors.

- » Become a part of the community. The only way to join the community is to learn the language and adapt to the culture. Eat when they do. Sleep when they do. Dress like they dress. Don't stand out as an American. Learn to love what they love.
- » Become friends with locals. Have them in your home. Eat with them. Go on vacation with them. Friends who become family will take great care of you.
- » Follow Jesus wherever he leads. In Matthew 10:28, Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Obey Jesus first and serve him by going wherever he leads. ➤

John Klaassen served on the mission field for nearly 20 years in Spain and North Africa. He is associate professor of global studies and program coordinator for Global Studies at Boyce College. Klaassen is also the associate director of the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam at Southern Seminary, and directs local missions efforts at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville. Photos credit: The Voice of the Martyrs.





Training missionaries in an age of risk

By Zane Pratt

The world is a dangerous place. It always has been. Many people in North America, including many Christians, thought that living in danger was something that only existed “over there,” while safety was the birthright and norm for people here at home. Sept. 11, 2001, shattered that idea and brought the global reality of a dangerous world home to people on this continent.

The years since have only increased that sense of danger. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, political turmoil all over the Middle East, the Ebola crisis in West Africa, and a host of other events have all painted a threatening picture of the world. In recent days, the atrocities committed by ISIS have horrified everyone with their brutality. However, the places

that seem most dangerous are also the places that have the least gospel witness, sometimes none at all. And they are also the places where Christian workers are most needed. How do we train gospel workers to take the message of Christ to places where danger and risk abound?

Part of that training, obviously, involves helping those workers know how to keep themselves as safe as possible without interfering with the spread of the gospel. Just as most multinational companies provide basic risk management training to their employees who live in unstable or high-risk environments, mission agencies can also teach their workers the kind of skills that will help them minimize their vulnerability. Such training was rare before 9/11, but it

is common in today’s global climate.

Risk management training, however, does not lie at the heart of the kind of preparation that Christian workers need before going into these kinds of settings. The basic issue is a matter of Christian discipleship. In order for these gospel witnesses to flourish in context of risk, they most fundamentally need to embrace, at the very core of their being, the conviction that Christ and his gospel are worth more than their lives. In order to come to that point, they need to grapple with several biblical issues and one cultural issue.

The first biblical issue is the surpassing glory of our Triune God. This life seems really good. The things of this life are pleasing and enticing. Only when

we delve deep into the biblical picture of the extraordinary wonder and beauty of God, in a spirit of awestruck worship, do things fall into proper perspective. A superficial understanding of God will neither take a believer into a high-risk

environment nor keep that believer there. Heart and head must be united in knowing and loving God. That means that a thorough study of the character and works of God in Scripture must be combined with passionate worship of

God as he has revealed himself in his word. This adoring knowledge of God is the essential foundation of any preparation for service in the context of danger.

The next biblical issue is actually a set of issues, and those are the many facets of the gospel itself. Christian workers need to know the gospel in all of its radical extremity. They need to grasp the holy justice and gracious mercy of God, the horrible blackness of human sin, the glorious and utterly sufficient sacrifice of Jesus in our place, and the radical gospel demand for repentance and faith. They need to marvel at the salvation they have received through that gospel. They need to embrace the reality that death no longer holds any bondage of fear over them. They need to be convinced that the gospel is the only hope of salvation for anyone anywhere in the world, and that those who have not heard and embraced it are lost. A proper understanding of the gospel will deepen a believer's love for God, establish the absolute necessity of gospel witness to those who have never heard, and expose our fears for the lies they really are. The worst thing that

The suffering now being experienced by Christians in the Middle East is actually closer to the norm, and our experience of habitual safety is the anomaly.

can happen to us is that we go into the presence of our Beloved in infinite and eternal joy.

The final biblical issue that must be taught is that suffering is a normal part of the Christian life in Scripture. The Bible nowhere ever promises us physical safety. It is actually quite the opposite. The Bible promises that the life of Christian discipleship in a fallen world will be beset with danger and tribulation (Matt 5:11-12; John 16:33; Heb 10:32-39). This was certainly the experience of the apostles and the early church, and it has





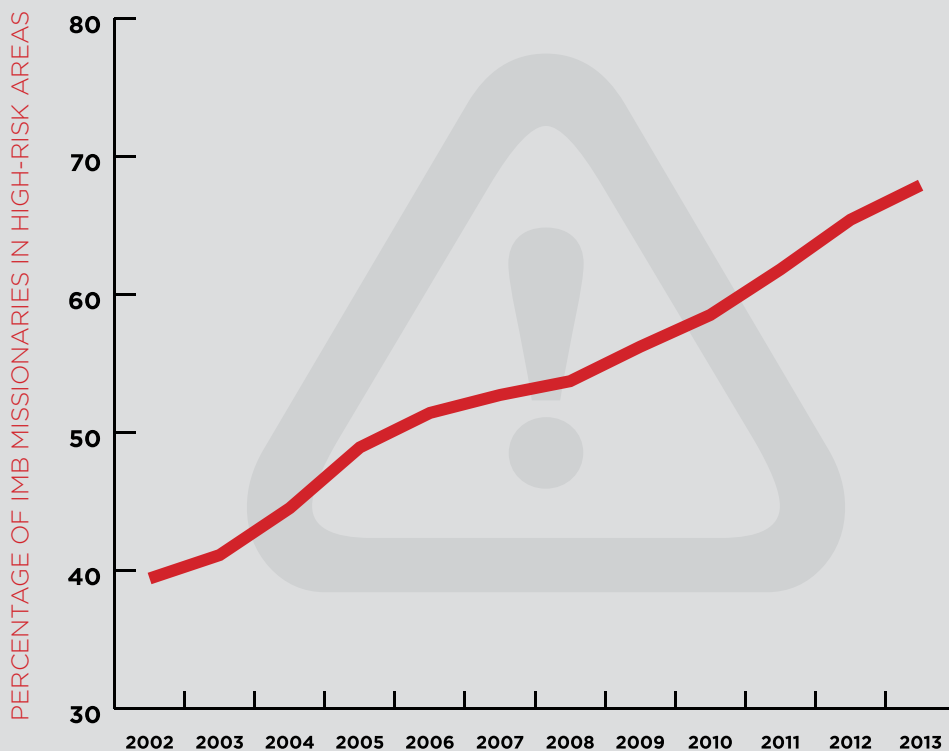
been the experience of most Christians across the world throughout history. The suffering now being experienced by Christians in the Middle East is actually closer to the norm, and our experience of habitual safety is the anomaly. The Bible promises opposition and suffering as the consequences of following Jesus, and both apostolic experience and church history confirm that promise. What God does promise is that we will be more than conquerors in the face of suffering and death, and that he will take us safely home to his presence. That is gloriously enough.

The final thing that must be taught is the skill of separating our own cultural expectations from the teaching of Scripture. Our obsession with safety,

and our willingness to let that obsession constrain our obedience to Christ, is a North American example of syncretism. We have imposed our culture on our faith in contradiction of Scripture. Therefore, we teach missionaries to avoid pointless risks, but we also teach them that it is worth risking, and even losing, your life for the sake of Christ and his gospel. Any other stance will make us useless in the global advance of the gospel. ➤

Zane Pratt is vice president of global training for the International Mission Board and associate professor of Christian missions at Southern Seminary. Photos credit: The Voice of the Martyrs.

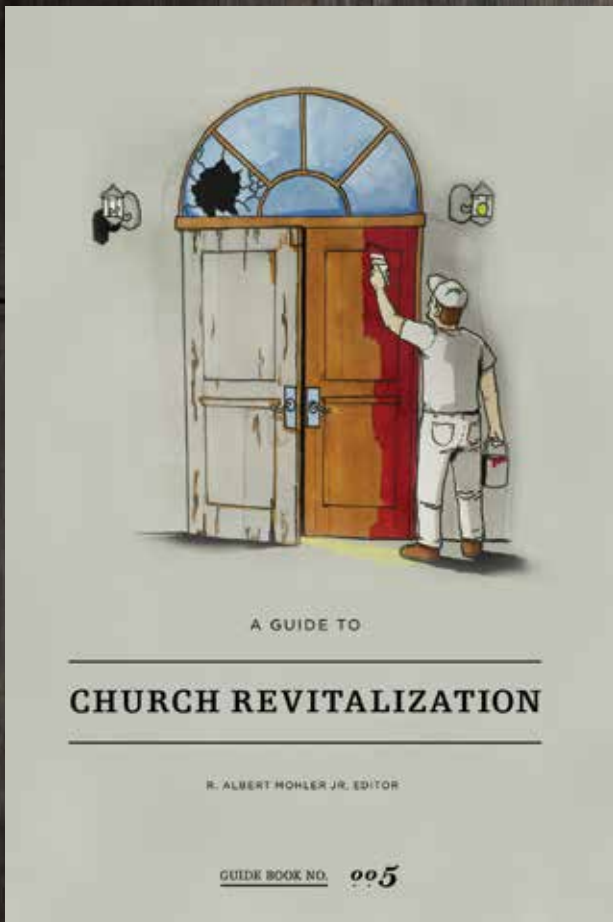
Measuring missionary risk on the field



In recent years, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board has created a system to categorize levels of risk faced by missionaries based on whether field workers can work and witness openly or whether they live or regularly travel in places that are closed or hostile to a gospel witness because of governmental, political, cultural, or religious hostilities. Just in the last decade, a dramatic increase has been seen in the number of missionaries appointed to areas of the world with the greatest risk, as seen in this data supplied by the IMB.

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The risk of missionary compromise in a pluralistic world

By George H. Martin

Risk” is among those countless English terms that are used in so many different ways and in multiple situations. For a fun evening with the family, one might break out the board game Risk. With a huge payoff possible, a Wall Street investor might risk a substantial amount of money in an uncertain investment. Las Vegas is known for its high rollers who risk significant sums of money in casinos and gambling parlors. Certain football coaches are known for their risky play calling, knowing that such creativity can sometimes compensate for a lack of talent.

And then, we discover all sorts of everyday risks. In a 1979 article, Richard Wilson recapped some of these: “The moment I climb out of bed I start taking risks ... I take a drink of water ... the chlorine reacts with organic matter to produce many known carcinogens.” Of course, the stakes can go much higher. Soldiers put their lives on the line. Policemen are constantly at risk as they go on patrol. People incur risks all the time, typically with the intention of achieving gain of one sort or another.

When thinking about Christian missions, other words and scenarios come to mind. Missionaries face harassment, oppression, distress, anguish, even death. Christians nationals in those countries are confronted with the possibility of persecution, slavery, suffering, and death. Not so much, perhaps, does one think of other dangers: error, compromise, confusion, or even heresy. Yet, because the Christian mission is so fundamentally focused on matters of truth, the church faces a particularly noxious sort of risk, particularly when engaging the world’s religions: the risk of compromising the gospel message.

Ronald Nash has observed in *Worldviews in Conflict*, “From its inception the Christian church has been involved in battles involving ideas, theories, systems of thought, presuppositions and arguments.” Always, and it continues to be the case, our “stock in trade” is the preaching of the good news of the gospel.

Whether immediately and always mindful of the danger or not, the forfeiture of the gospel is fatal to the Christian enter-

A comparison of world religions



	JUDAISM*	HINDUISM	BUDDHISM**	ISLAM	ANIMISM***
God/ Supreme Being	One personal God who is Creator and Lord. Rejects the Trinity.	Many gods, who are forms of one Supreme Reality (Brahman).	Generally, non-theistic. Emphasizes individual enlightenment.	One personal God (Arabic, "Allah") who is Creator and Lord. No Trinity.	No real sense of deity. Spirits and powers are pervasive in the world.
Jesus Christ	An unorthodox Jewish rabbi who was wrongly deified by the church.	One of many spiritual teachers. Neither atoned for sin nor rose from the dead.	Will accept him as a gifted spiritual teacher, but not divine.	Born of a virgin, sinless. Neither God nor God's Son, but a great prophet.	No reference to or role for Jesus.
Foundational Texts/ Sources of Authority	The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh, or the Old Testament) as interpreted by rabbinic tradition.	The Vedas, the philosophical Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita, which focuses on Krishna.	Pali Canon ("Three Baskets"), written three centuries after Gautama.	The Quran, often interpreted in light of traditions from Muhammad's life and teachings (the Hadith).	Largely based on local traditions and teachings.
Human Nature	Created in God's image. Each person is a unique, precious being of dignity and worth.	The human spirit lives in a physical body, which dies and is reborn until reunited with Brahman.	No enduring self or soul. Persons are aggregates of matter, feeling, awareness, etc.	Born pure, humans are weak, prone to corruption. Must answer to Allah on the day of judgment.	Like other beings in the world, each human has a unique spirit.
Basic Human Problem	Disobedience to God's commands. Most reject the idea of inherited sin.	The individual is trapped in the cycle of reincarnation, ignorant of its potential.	Attachment to things in the world results in suffering and disappointment.	Disobedience of responsible human beings to the law of Allah.	At the mercy of the powers, which can be angered or placated.
Solution to the Basic Human Problem	Knowing the one Creator God, whose commandments must be followed.	Liberation from reincarnation and realization of oneness with Brahman through good works, meditation, or devotion.	Suffering defeated by eliminating wrong desire through following the "Eightfold Path."	Humans must submit to the will of Allah as expressed in the Quran and Islamic law.	Through magic and ritual, with reliance on specially gifted persons, the animist seeks to influence the powers for good.
Life After Death	Reward for the pious in the afterlife, though much focused on the here and now.	The individual will be reincarnated or reborn until achieving liberation.	Achievement of Nirvana, in which suffering ceases and no illusion of self remains.	Paradise for faithful believers and punishment for nonbelievers, unfaithful Muslims, and apostates.	No real awareness of the afterlife. Focus is upon overcoming the powers present in the world.

Compiled by George Martin.

* Orthodox, or traditional, Judaism. A great range of beliefs and practices is found in other movements within contemporary Judaism.

** The depiction is of the ancient Buddhist traditions taught by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Other streams within Buddhism possess their own authorities, acknowledge deities, and espouse a variety of teachings.

*** Animism can more rightly be described as a worldview than an historical, well-structured religion.

prise. Among all the risks faced by Christian missionaries, the most dangerous, and perhaps the most subtle, risk is that of compromising the gospel. And the danger of such compromise is particularly acute when engaging the religions of the world.

Each religious tradition sees the basic human problem and its solution differently. Hinduism posits that we think of ourselves wrongly, and until we unite with Brahman, the ultimate reality, we are caught in a continual and painful cycle of birth

To watch Jesus as he engaged the religious leaders of his day and to read Paul's epistles and hear him address the danger of legalism in the churches is to begin to understand how dangerous a works-based religion is to the gospel.

Any place one travels in the world, the hidden, and sometimes overt, presence of animism and folk religions can be found. Those who are caught up in this worldview are fearful of the spirits presumed to inhabit every corner of the world

We meet people where they are in their religious traditions, not in order to leave them there but to take them where they need to be, to the gospel of life. Paul's example provides no license to change the gospel in any essential way as we engage the religions of the world.

and death. Escape from that cycle can be achieved through proper ritual, meditation, or devotion. Today, Buddhism is found in many different forms; however, the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, proposed that human suffering has its root cause in unfulfilled desire. These misery-producing desires must be cut off by following the "Eightfold Path," which leads one to the "higher vision," a state in which the Buddhist enjoys contentment and final peace.

Islam and traditional Judaism (some contemporary streams of Judaism see things quite differently), each in their own way teach that adherence to a particular legalistic code constitutes the path to blessing. To be a faithful Muslim is to submit to the will of Allah as revealed in the Quran and other writings.



and, through the use of rituals and fetishes, seek to influence the spirits and the powers for good rather than evil.

The lineup of religions, both ancient and current, is long. Each tradition, in its own way, offers an alternative to the biblical gospel. The Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim, the Jew, the animist — indeed every person — must hear that there is one God before whom all are accountable. No amount of mere human knowledge, effort, or sincerity is sufficient to bring the sinner into a right relationship with the Creator.

Confronted with a multitude of false doctrines, Jude explained to his readers, "I found it necessary to write and exhort you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all" (Jude 3). Paul wrote to Timothy, "Fight the good fight for the faith" (1 Tim 6:12). Of himself, Paul testified, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). In running the race, Paul did what he was called to do: he fully preached the gospel (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:17).

The requirement to fight the good fight and to keep the faith is binding upon every generation. Though we will heal the sick and feed the hungry and visit the widow and do many other good things, there is a sense in which we have only one thing of great import to offer the world — the gospel.

To paraphrase and apply Paul's well-known testimony from 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, we meet people where they are in their religious traditions, not in order to leave them there but to take them where they need to be, to the gospel of life. Paul's example provides no license to change the gospel in any essential way as we engage the religions of the world. The gospel always is at risk; only a full, thoroughgoing commitment to its faithful preaching is adequate for the task of missions. We have the good news every person on earth so desperately needs. "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things" (Rom 10:15). ➤

George H. Martin is professor of Christian missions and world religions at Southern Seminary.



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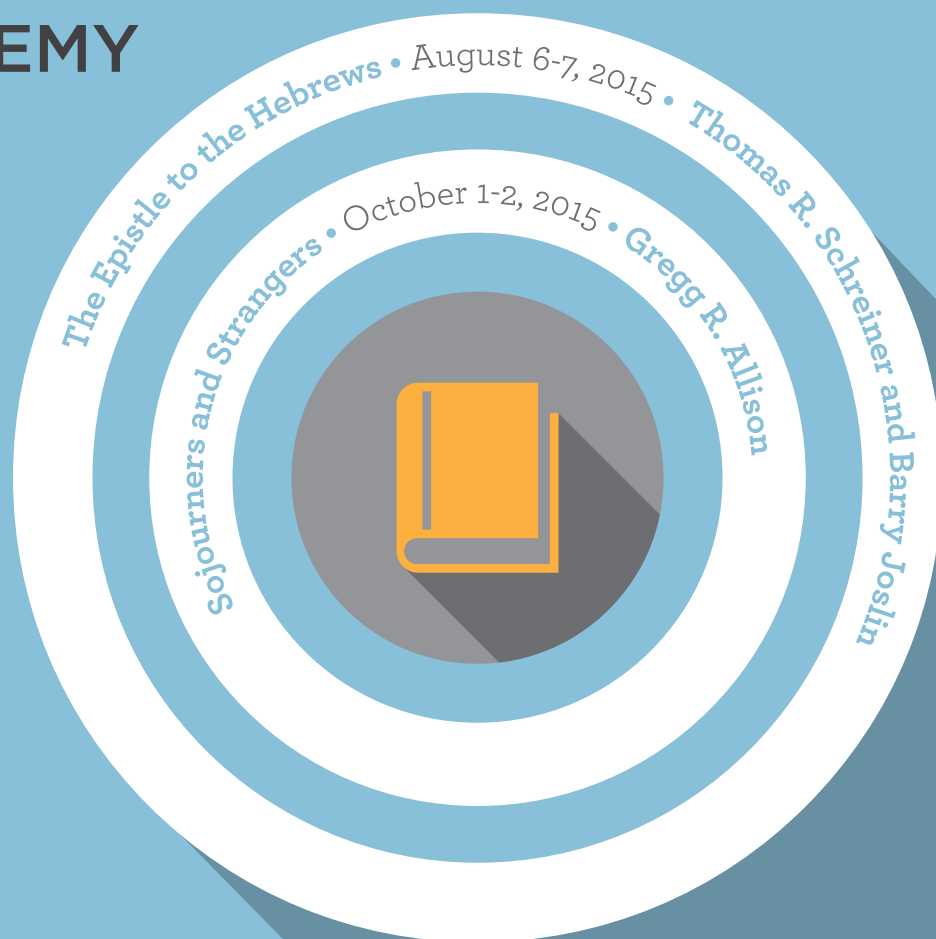
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Paul's theology of suffering

By Robert L. Plummer

As a Western Christian who has faced little real suffering for his faith, I begin this article with the humble confession that the majority of my knowledge of Christian suffering, while biblical, is not experiential. I have spent a significant period of time in largely non-Christian countries and have faced armed robbery, insults, and mild-deprivation in the service of the gospel. These minor inconveniences, however, pale in comparison to the much greater suffering that many Christians face on a regular basis. Such believers know personally imprisonment, beatings, near-death experiences, and other trials that Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. Many modern Christians who have faced such ordeals can say with Paul, "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content" (Phil 4:11).

Christians in the modern West are increasingly aware of a growing societal antipathy towards Christianity. Moreover, the internet streams regular images of the graphic persecution of Christians throughout the world. Yet, personal experience or even carefully documented sociological or demographic studies can never be a foolproof guide to a Christian view of suffering. Suffering alone is simply an event, or series of events. Events must be interpreted. When a Jewish man named "Yeshua" died

on a cross around A.D. 30, some persons looked at the event and interpreted it as the just punishment of a messianic pretender and blasphemer (Mark 15:29-32). Others, looking at the same event, concluded, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). The correct interpretation of both God's unrepeatable historical interventions like the crucifixion of Christ and the repeatable phenomena of Christian existence seen in the suffering of believers must be found in the Scripture.

How does the Bible help us answer the questions of why Christians suffer and the role of Christian suffering in the advance of the gospel? To provide comprehensive biblical reflection on these questions would require more space than this short article. Thus, we will focus on some of the inspired teachings of the early church's foremost theologian and missionary — the Apostle Paul.

Even after a cursory reading of Paul's letters, it quickly becomes apparent that the apostle could not conceive of his apostolic mission apart from suffering (1 Cor 4:9-13; 15:30-32; 16:8-9; 2 Cor 1:3-10; 2:14-17; 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:22-28; Gal 6:17; Phil 1:14, 1:27-30; 3:10; Col 1:24-25; 4:3; 2 Tim 1:8; 11-12; 2:8-11; 3:10-15). What is it about the apostolic mission that inevitably results in suffering?

First, according to Paul, God has ordained the apostles' suffering. In 1 Corinthians 4:9, Paul writes, "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."

Second, the suffering of the apostles serves to magnify the truth and power of their message. Their weakness and hardship show that they cannot be the source of the powerful message they convey and point their audience to God. Paul makes this point in 2 Corinthians 4:7 when he writes, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 4:8-15 by enumerating his sufferings and providing another reason for the apostles' hardships.

From this passage, we discover that Paul thinks suffering not only accompanies the apostles' proclamation of the gospel but also is a proclamation of the gospel. This third fact about the apostles' inevitable suffering is made clear by Paul's metaphorical description of his afflictions and persecution as "carrying in [his own] body the death of Jesus." Paul views his sufferings as picturing, in some sense, Jesus' death. When the apostle suffers in his proclamation of the gospel before potential converts, he puts on a "Passion play" in his own body. The messenger pictures the content of the message. As a result of this vivid portrayal, through Paul's experience of "death" by repeated suffering, he delivers "the life of Jesus" to his hearers.

A fourth fact we should note about Paul's explanation of the apostles' suffering is that Paul understands suffering as the inevitable experience of all Christians. In Romans 8:16-17, Paul declares suffering an essential stage in the progression from initial belief to glorification. He writes, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul writes that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

In fact, according to Paul, the only way to avoid suffering as a Christian is to compromise one's belief in the gospel. In Galatians 6:12, Paul writes, "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ." In summary, one could say that Paul presents Christians with two options: being ashamed of the gospel, and thus denying the faith, or suffering for the gospel (2 Tim 1:8; Luke 9:23-27). In his Galatians commentary, Martin Luther said, "Peace with God, trouble in the world. Peace with the world, trouble with God."

Why did Paul think all Christians would suffer? For Paul, the only valid explanation for suffering is theological. Christians do not suffer primarily because they are misunderstood. Christians suffer because God has willed it (Phil 1:29). And, although that suffering may not entail persecution for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor 11:26), it usually does.

From Paul's "socio-theological" perspective, the main reason Christians suffer is that the offense of the gospel incites non-believers to oppose any person aligned with it (1 Cor 1:18-25; 1 Thess 1:6). Behind a person's rejection of (and antagonism toward) the gospel is not faultless ignorance or misunderstanding but a morally culpable rejection of God's truth (Rom 1-3; 2 Thess 1-2). The gospel heralds God's judgment of human wickedness (Rom 1:16-32) and, in defiance of that message, non-believers will attack the bearers of it (Acts 7:51-60; 1 Peter 4:1-5). Furthermore, behind these human opponents stand demonic forces which oppose God (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 6:10-17; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Thess 2:1-12).

Paul views his sufferings as picturing, in some sense, Jesus' death. When the apostle suffers in his proclamation of the gospel before potential converts, he puts on a "Passion play" in his own body. The messenger pictures the content of the message.

Paul speaks of his personal sufferings as a means whereby Christ's atoning death is made visible to his converts (2 Cor 2:14-17; 4:8-12; Col 1:24-25). It is likely that Paul would agree that the church's suffering also had a missiological function (2 Cor 1:6-7; Phil 1:29-30; 1 Thess 2:13-16). That is, the church's suffering was not only evidence that its members were making known the gospel, but also a means of making it known. If this is indeed Paul's view, it is in continuity with the gospel traditions which present persecution as an opportunity for Christians to testify to the gospel before non-believers (Mark 13:9; Luke 9:23-27; 12:4-12; 21:12-13).

Although the suffering of Christians is ordained by God in a general sense (Phil 1:29), particular instances of suffering are something that Paul and others can legitimately seek and pray to avoid (Acts 22:25-29; 2 Cor 1:8-11; Phil 1:19; 1 Tim 2:1-4). The deciding factors as to whether one should embrace suffering or avoid it are God's will (Phil 1:29-30), the effect on others' salvation or sanctification (Phil 1:23-25; Col 1:24-25; 2 Tim 2:8-11), and the glorification of God (2 Cor 4:15). Analogous to Jesus' death on the cross, the suffering of Christians brings about their sanctification and others' salvation, but it does not excuse or condone the unjust treatment they receive (Acts 2:23; 3:18-19; 5:28). ➤

Robert L. Plummer is professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary. This essay is adapted from his monograph, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission* (Paternoster 2006).

**CHANDLER SNYDER**

M.Div., Great Commission Studies (2015)

How long have you served in Madagascar? My wife, Kelli, and our daughters Waverly (5) and Elodie (1) have been serving in Madagascar since September 2012.

What has serving there taught you about the need to do missions in risky places? Madagascar is the end of the world. Many of the comforts and pleasures we had in America and many other parts of the world simply do not exist here. It is a place that you have to want to be and feel called to be. That being said, nothing is better than seeing people you are investing in begin to walk in the light. Is it risky? Yes. Is it difficult? Yes. Is the gospel worth it? Always. We have to see the gospel as worthy to send people for, worthy to invest money for, and worthy to live life for in dangerous places.

How can risks advance the gospel? Risk advances the gospel because people see that risk. It is not something we flaunt or pride ourselves in, but as you begin living with nationals they see and begin to understand what it costs to carry the message. This weighs on them and sheds light on the seriousness of the message. When they begin to understand the seriousness of the message, then the story begins to pierce their hearts and change their souls.

**BOBBY MASSEY**

M.Div., BTS (2015); D.Ed.Min., Church Revitalization (2018)

Three years after professing faith in Christ, 23-year-old Bobby Massey came to Southern Seminary to work on an M.Div. in Biblical and Theological Studies with the intention of becoming a missionary. By 30, he had completed most of his degree and his training through the IMB, and departed with his wife, Jackie, and four children to East Asia, where he would serve for seven years.

Massey and his family settled into one of the largest house church networks in East Asia as church planters. However, his role quickly morphed into that of a trainer of house church pastors in theological education. He says that the biggest risk for missionaries working in difficult places is that they must risk it all — safety, health, finances, life.

“You risk it all for the sake of Christ. Let’s not romanticize it; it is real and it hurts,” he said.

His family returned stateside last April and he recently accepted the call to pastor First Baptist Church in Kershaw, South Carolina. Massey is also pursuing a D.Ed.Min. in Church Revitalization under Bill Henard.

“When you have been living in a city in isolation for seven years with your family, to be around the influencers and such solid doctrine, to be around the seminary campus and all the people here, is just amazing,” he said.

**PETER***

M.Div., Christian Ministry (2014)

Peter was confronted early on both with the danger of ministering in difficult places and the absolute lack of the gospel in hard places before he had even become a Christian. Growing up as a missionary kid, his family was evacuated from countries multiple times because of medical problems, political instability, or straightforward violence towards Western missionaries. At one point in his childhood, the school for missionary kids he attended was attacked by terrorists who wanted to drive away missionaries by targeting their children.

But Peter’s parents were Christians who, though they loved and wanted to protect their family, recognized that taking the gospel abroad was worth the risk and cost of leaving the support of family and the local church in order to make Christ known to those who had never heard of him. Peter plans to follow their example by pastoring a church that will be intimately involved in planting churches internationally, specifically in restricted places. He believes that one of the reasons the gospel has a hard time flourishing in difficult places is because there is a difference between sending missionaries and establishing healthy, discipling, evangelizing local churches. Peter hopes to use his theological training to do the latter, and support such churches to grow up in places that are even hostile to the gospel.

*Name withheld for security reasons.



Southern Seminary alumnus to plant church in Manhattan amid evangelical drought

When Southern Seminary alumnus Drew Griffin launches Cross Church NYC in the fall of 2015, he hopes for it to be one of the first successful Southern Baptist plants in Manhattan in nearly seven years. He will minister in Yorkville, a neighborhood on the upper east side of Manhattan that has nearly 50,000 people and only one known gospel-preaching church. “I can’t emphasize enough that there’s still tremendous need for church planters in urban areas and church planters up here in New York,” he said.

“I can’t emphasize enough that there’s still tremendous need for church planters in urban areas and church planters up here in New York,” he said.

Griffin came to Southern Seminary in 2009, unsure of his next steps. In 2011, he and his wife Emily took a mission trip to New York, and from that point on they began to discern a call to plant a church in the city they love. After two years of learning about the area, Griffin completed an internship with the North American Mission Board, which led to a

year of apprenticeship onsite.

Only one Southern Baptist church exists for every 83,000 people in the five boroughs of New York City, according to recent studies. Of these boroughs, the Griffins chose Manhattan, specifically the neighborhood of Yorkville. Despite the large population, Yorkville still revolves around relationships. From the beginning, the Griffins have taken a long-term strategy that started with networking. Their desire has been to form relationships, then form small groups, and then grow those groups into a congregation.

“If you don’t respect the city, take time and kind of build some roots,” Griffin said. “Storms will come, and people will leave and if those roots aren’t there you’re not going to be able to stick it out. And so we want to be here, Lord willing, for the long haul.”

Griffin said that he was called into ministry later in life. He professed faith in Christ in 1989. After getting his bachelor’s degree in political science, he worked as a real estate agent for eight years and also became involved in elec-

toral politics. It was upon the death of two of his grandparents on Easter 2008 that Drew began to discern a call to ministry. God used the occasion of their passing to drive him to think about his family’s life, their mission, and their priorities.

Over the past two years, the Griffins and others have worked to build community in Yorkville, they have welcomed dozens of teams from partner churches and schools across the Southern Baptist Convention. This summer Cross Church NYC has begun hosting preview services in their neighborhood, welcoming teams to serve the community and worshipping corporately for the first time this past May.

The Griffins serve as church planting missionaries with the North American Mission Board, and the Baptist Convention of New York. Their sending church and main prayer partner is Cross Church of Northwest Arkansas, led by senior pastor Ronnie Floyd, who also serves as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

— BY SBTS COMMUNICATIONS



Jeremy Westbrook: Covenant community a living hope in nominalist Marysville

When Jeremy Westbrook sensed the call to plant a church in Central Ohio, he didn't know exactly where the Lord was calling him. When Dublin Baptist Church in Dublin, Ohio, wanted to plant a church in nearby Marysville, they didn't know who to call. When a missions director connected Westbrook to Dublin eight years ago, "my where met their who," the Southern Seminary alumnus recalls.

Westbrook was on staff at Kirby Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, when he entered the Doctor of Ministry program at Southern Seminary in 2007. Recognizing Westbrook's calling to plant a church 35 miles north of Columbus, Ohio, Kirby Woods and Dublin established a church planting covenant in February 2008 to support the work of Living Hope Church.

"I grew up in a Southern Baptist culture in Memphis, in the backyard of Adrian Rogers, and now I moved to a place like Marysville where there's many church buildings but not much procla-

mation of the gospel," said Westbrook, who was raised by his grandparents in the neighborhood of Rogers' Bellevue Baptist Church. "We've seen countless people walk through these doors and hear the true gospel for the first time and repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ. There's a lot of nominal religion here, but not true faith."

Indeed, when Westbrook launched Living Hope on Easter Sunday 2009, there was only one Southern Baptist church for every 22,000 people in Central Ohio. In Tennessee, where Westbrook was born and raised, there is one SBC church for every 2,000 people. Southern Baptists are so rare in the Columbus area that when Living Hope held one of its first car wash events, Westbrook says a woman offered him cash to "go back south" when she learned the church's denomination.

Since Living Hope Church opened its doors six years ago, the church has flourished with nearly 200 baptisms and attendance reaching as high as 500. This

is "unbelievable," Westbrook says, in a rural town known mostly for its Honda manufacturing plant and high rates of heroin use and teen pregnancy.

Westbrook planted Living Hope while completing his D.Min. under the supervision of Adam W. Greenway, now the dean of the seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. Westbrook's doctoral thesis, "Developing and implementing a church membership covenant for Living Hope Church, Marysville, Ohio," set the blueprint for how he has combated the nominalism of the town's residents, many of whom were raised in Roman Catholic or mainline Protestant churches.

"Upon joining a local body of believers, the Bible clearly teaches one is entering into a covenantal relationship with God and one another," Westbrook writes in his thesis. "Membership in a local church level ought to mean more than membership at the local country club."

Covenantal church membership, Westbrook says, is an avenue for evan-

gelistic engagement when prospective church members realize that they are not genuine Christians. During membership classes at Living Hope, Westbrook distributes information sheets and provides church covenant statements on which the prospective members are to write out the story of their conversion and baptism.

“We’re striving to engage every single member to be attending, worshipping, giving sharing, serving, discipling, and multiplying,” Westbrook said. “We’re trying to move our membership into discipleship, away from just a Sunday morning gathering but engaging each other throughout the week.”

In addition to fostering a covenant community in Marysville, Westbrook has sought to “tithe” his membership — moving discipleship into church planting in Central Ohio. In 2014, Living Hope sent out its first two missionaries and planted LifeSpring Church in Worthington, Ohio, a larger suburb 10 miles north of Columbus.

Westbrook serves as the vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention

Pastors’ Conference, and his success as a church planter has afforded him the opportunity to travel and speak to pastors and churches across the country. He also partners with SEND Columbus, the North American Mission Board’s church planting initiative for the metro area. His involvement with SEND and his board leadership at Stowe Mission of Central Ohio has strengthened the networking relationships with fellow SBC church

in the city, Westbrook said. He says he also hopes that the historic occurrence of the SBC Annual Meeting in Columbus will encourage the pastors and church planters who have been laboring in the city for decades.

“I hope people catch a heart for what God is doing in Columbus,” Westbrook said. “It’s one of the strongest cities in the Midwest and it’s heavily unchurched. We desperately need gospel-centered

“We’ve seen countless people walk through these doors and hear the true gospel for the first time and repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ. There’s a lot of nominal religion here, but not true faith.”

planters and ministers in Columbus.

His denominational leadership and presence at the 2015 Southern Baptist Convention in downtown Columbus, including a speaking engagement at the Crossover evangelism event, will hopefully raise awareness for reaching the lost

churches planted in Central Ohio.”

More information on Living Hope is available at livinghopemarysville.com. More information on SEND Columbus and its church planting initiative is available at namb.net/columbus.

— S. CRAIG SANDERS





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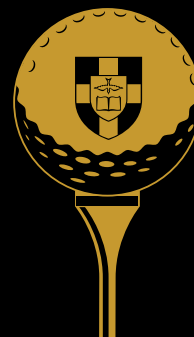


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David and Sue Bains

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David and Sue Bains believe God is moving in the Muslim world in an amazing way. And they believe if seminary students receive the proper education about Islam and how to minister to people in the Islamic world, the church can continue to make a difference for the kingdom of God among them.

A retired attorney in Birmingham, Alabama, David Bains has spent a large portion of his life supporting Southern Baptist



“These reinforce the fact that something exciting is happening in the world as people are being brought to Jesus, especially in the Muslim world. ... It’s amazing how God is moving in the world. And I only feel that if we have the appropriate education for our theologians that they can make a real difference in evangelizing the Muslim community.”

institutions like Southern Seminary, where he serves on the Foundation Board. He said he appreciates Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.’s commitment to theological scholarship, and when he first became involved with Southern Seminary, he knew the training was rigorous, which is another reason for supporting the seminary and its mission.

David and Sue Bains donated \$100,000 for the Jenkins Center for a Christian Understanding of Islam when it opened in the fall of 2014. The center aims to educate seminary students about Islam, offering courses about the history and theology of Islam.

David Bains’ interest in world religions is a lifelong pursuit, and Islam has always fascinated him. He spent much time both in study on his own and traveling to different parts of the world, which gave him a heart to help places like Southern Seminary train students to engage people in the Muslim world.

“I was sensitive to the need for our pastors and trained theologians to be much more conversant on how to deal with Islam,” he said about the Jenkins Center in a recent interview. “I thought this sort of center would be a really important step toward taking care of that need.”

Bains spent time in Israel and Bethlehem last summer, meeting Palestinian Christians and refugees in the area. This trip encouraged him even more in what the Lord is doing in different parts of the world, but especially in Muslim countries.



Bains believes the best way to engage Muslims is to understand their culture and where they come from, “so you can have a discussion with them that is not insulting to them,” he said.

“You should understand culture and religion from other cultures, wherever you do ministry,” he said. “It’s very important to meet people where they are to win them.”

During his time overseas, Bains heard stories about people becoming Christians in unique ways.

“These reinforce the fact that something exciting is happening in the world as people are being brought to Jesus, especially in the Muslim world,” he said. “It’s amazing how God is moving in the world. And I only feel that if we have the appropriate education for our theologians that they can make a real difference in evangelizing the Muslim community.”

— RUTHANNE IRVIN

From the Foundation



Craig Parker is the vice president for institutional advancement and executive director of the Southern Seminary Foundation.



Missions in difficult places

Southern Seminary's mission to train students for faithful gospel ministry is essential to the Great Commission. With so many unreached people groups around the world, the mission of Southern is to deploy students to the dark places, adequately trained and ready to give their lives to people who do not know Christ. Students come to Southern for an education that will prepare them to serve people in dark, closed places with confidence in Scripture and what God does through his people as they obey his Word. I feel compelled to provide the training they need at an affordable cost. Gospel patrons who support the seminary like David and Sue Bains make it possible for students to minister overseas after seminary without debt. Patrons like the Bains also make centers like the Jenkins Center for a Christian Understanding of Islam possible. Educational and financial resources like these train Southern Seminary's students with both academic and practical ministry

opportunities for the future.

I admire our students' commitment to the gospel, and their willingness to give up their lives and comfort zones not only to come to seminary but to live sacrificially so other people can hear and

the Lord's generous provision financially through generous donors.

As the spring semester comes to a close, we continue to pray and work for our students to ensure they have the best education at the lowest cost

With so many unreached people groups around the world, the mission of Southern is to deploy students to the dark places, adequately trained and ready to give their lives to people who do not know Christ.

know the gospel both overseas and at home. This inspires me to do what I do with the Foundation Board. Donors help us send these students to difficult places, and as we pray for more gospel patrons, we praise God for his faithfulness to us in this season of growth at Southern Seminary. Southern continues to expand to serve students around the world through Global Campus and other educational resources. This is only possible through

possible. One of the primary ways we do this is through your generosity to both the seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program. When you and your church give to these institutions, you give to a greater cause; you give to send students to a lost world to fulfill the command of Jesus to go into the world to make disciples. We pray you will join us in sending students on this journey.



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