Evangelism in the New Millennium

The harvest is abundant but the workers are few.

Luke 10:2
The Battle for the Gospel

Professor Marvin W. Anderson was a worthy model of the Christian scholar. He was erudite, irenic, and fascinated with the most arcane details of church history, his chosen field of study and teaching. His death last year robbed us of a great teacher and a cherished friend.

A scholar of the Reformation, Dr. Anderson wrote a seminal book on the centrality of the Bible in the renaissance of biblical truth that dawned in that critical era of church history. His book, The Battle for the Gospel, traces the recovery of the gospel of Christ in its biblical purity. His title ought to capture our attention, for we are once again engaged in a great battle for the gospel.

Benjamin Franklin, caught on the street during a break in the Constitutional Convention, is said to have been asked by a passerby to describe the new order to be proposed. “A republic,” he answered, “if you can keep it.” By definition, evangelicals are to be a gospel people, cherishing, teaching, and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will remain evangelical only insofar as we maintain the integrity of our gospel witness — if we keep it. We are truly evangelical only if we keep our testimony to the gospel clear.

We should be very concerned about certain trends in contemporary evangelicalism that threaten this integrity. The first is an ominous confusion about the gospel itself. The heart of the gospel is the objective truth that Christ died for sinners, and that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ — and Jesus Christ alone.

In our culture of political correctness, for we are once again engaged in a great battle for the gospel. Among some who consider themselves evangelicals, the gospel of Christ has been reduced to a form of self-expression or therapy. Salvation is promised as the answer to low self-esteem and emptiness. Gone is any notion of a holy God who offers salvation from sin and its eternal penalty.

The other pressing front in the current battle for the gospel concerns the exclusivity of the work of Christ. The testimony of the Bible could not be more clear. Salvation comes to all who call upon the name of the Lord. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ — and Jesus Christ alone.

In our culture of political correctness and intolerant tolerance, we are told that such a claim is simply unacceptable. There cannot be only one way of salvation. Who is to say that the religions of the world are wrong, and that Christianity alone is true?

Well, that is the non-negotiable criterion of evangelical faithfulness. Jesus identified himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life — and “no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6). Without this clear testimony, the gospel is emptied of its integrity. The Bible allows no misunderstanding. Without conscious faith in Jesus Christ, there is no salvation.

Dean Kelley, a liberal Protestant, once noted, “Even the most gentle, humble, and loving Christians must divide the world into those who confess Jesus as Lord and those who don’t.” Given the clarity of the gospel, we have no other choice.

Even so, various forms of compromise erupt on this crucial front in the battle for the gospel. Some advocate an open universalism in which all persons are eventually saved. Others promote pluralism, promising that all roads will eventually lead to God, and that no faith has a privileged claim to truth. Closer to home, some have advocated a form of inclusivism in which other religions and faiths are seen to be included in the work of Christ. Yet others advocate a form of “anonymous Christianity” or a postmortem opportunity to confess Christ.

Against these various attempts to evade the simple clarity of the gospel stands the Word of God. Our evangelical integrity stands or falls on this truth — salvation is found through faith in Christ alone.

Sociologist James Davison Hunter warns that the rising generation of young evangelicals has gone soft on this doctrine. Educated in a culture of postmodern relativism and ideological pluralism, this generation has been taught to avoid making any exclusive claim to truth. Speak of your truth, but never claim to know the Truth. Unless this course is reversed, there will be no evangelicals in the next generation.

This is why Southern Seminary has such an urgent responsibility in the present hour. We must turn the tide of theological confusion and prepare a generation of young ministers, missionaries and church leaders who will stand against the stream and stand upon biblical truth. We are a gospel institution serving gospel churches, and there is a battle to be joined.

Charles Spurgeon stated it plainly: “We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our children’s children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to His Word.”

I’ll see you on the front lines of the battle,

R. Albert Mohler Jr.
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The two pillars of ministry

I have built my ministry on two pillars. I have built it on the pillar of biblical exposition, and I have built it on the pillar of personal evangelism. Paul said, “Timothy, if you want God to honor your life and God to honor your ministry, if you want to do what God has really called you to do, then always major on doing two things — preach the Word and reach the world.”

We’re living in a new millennium — the 21st century. We’re being told to be relevant, to be exciting, to be applicable. We’ve got to do all kinds of fancy and new things. Now, I’m all for creativity. I’m all for innovation. But I want to share with you a message that just gets back to the basics.

PREACH THE WORD

I want to call your attention to what I’m going to call “The charge to be faithful.” Here’s what (Paul) charges Timothy to do. He said, “Preach the Word.” I find it very interesting (that) the very first thing he said to Timothy was not, “Timothy, I charge you to heal the sick,” “I charge you to speak in tongues,” “I charge you (to) raise the dead,” (or) “I charge you to perform miracles.” He (instead) said, “Timothy, I charge you, preach the Word.”
Preach it confidently

He not only told Timothy what to preach, but Paul was so bold he told him how to preach. He said No. 1, if you’re going to preach this Book, preach it confidently. He said, “Preach the Word” — not book reviews, not economics, not philosophy, not the latest religious fad. He said, “Preach the Word.” Preach the Scripture. Preach the Bible. Preach the whole counsel of God. He did not urge Timothy to conduct a survey to find out what the people wanted. He didn’t suggest that he study demographic data or do research on the felt needs of his people.

He commanded him to preach the Word — faithfully, systematically, reprovingly, patiently — and let it confront the spirit of the age head on.

Paul said, “Don’t start with the needs of man. Start with the Word of God.” The Bible was not written primarily to address felt needs. It was written primarily to address unfelt needs. You think about it. The first eight chapters of the book of Romans tell us that the greatest needs are these: No. 1, realize we are lost sinners; No. 2, repent of that sin; No. 3, receive by faith Jesus Christ as Lord and as Savior. Those are all unfelt needs. There’s not one person out there seeking after God. No, not one. Only the Holy Spirit can convict someone that he is lost. It is the goodness of God that leads one to repentance. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

If (people) do not know Jesus Christ, their greatest need is to confess their sin and receive him as Lord and Savior. Therefore, preaching that fails to confront the sinner and convict the sinner and correct the sinner and convert the sinner through the Word of God does not meet people’s unfelt needs. It may make them feel good when you preach to their felt needs. They may become better leaders. They may become better lovers. But that type of preaching does not meet real needs.

Preach it compellingly

But then Paul said, “Preach it compellingly.” He said, “Be ready.” The Greek word there is one that was used of a soldier ready to go into battle at a moment’s notice. It refers to urgency, passion, zeal. The prophet Jeremiah was right. He said, “Preaching ought to be like a fire in your bones.”

Preach it continuously

He said, “Preach it confidently, preach it compellingly.” But then he said, “Preach it continuously.” Look at what he said in verse two, “Be ready in season and out of season.” Do you know what that means? You preach this Book when it’s convenient, but you (also) preach it when it’s inconvenient. You preach it when it’s popular, but you (also) preach it when it’s unpopular. You preach it when people like it, but you (also) preach it when people don’t like it.

“He commanded him to preach the Word — faithfully, systematically, reprovingly, patiently — and let it confront the spirit of the age head on.”

Preach it convincingly

It is not my job to make the message acceptable. It’s my job to make the truth available. Look at what else Paul said, “Preach it convincingly.” He said, “Convince.” Do you know what that word means? In the Greek language, it’s a word that means to confront people with the fact of their sin. Convince them. Confront them with the fact they are sinners. We’re being told in the year 2001 that’s a no-no. You can’t do that. You can’t confront people with their sin on Sunday morning.

(A preacher in California) said this, “I don’t think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and counterproductive to the evangelistic enterprise than the un-Christian, uncouth strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.” There’s a good old-fashioned word for that — heresy. That is heresy. My friend, we’ve been told whatever you do, don’t preach in such a way that you might hurt somebody’s feelings.

I like what old Methodist evangelist Sam Jones said: “When I first started preaching, I was afraid I might hurt somebody’s feelings. Now I’m afraid I won’t.” Peter Cartwright was a circuit-riding Methodist preacher back in the 19th century. On one occasion, he was getting ready to preach to a very large congregation, and a man came up to him and whispered in his ear that President Andrew Jackson was sitting in the audience. He said, “You better make sure that your remarks are positive and make sure you don’t offend the president.” Peter Cartwright got up and began to preach, and here were his first words, “I have been told that President Andrew Jackson is somewhere in this congregation. I’ve been asked to guard my remarks. I just want to begin by saying, ‘Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn’t repent of his sins.’” You could have heard grass growing outside. After the service was over, Andrew Jackson walked up to Peter Cartwright, introduced himself and said, ‘Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could whip the world.’

We need more Peter Cartwrights, who will not be afraid to stand up in a pulpit if you have a president of the United States who defends homosexuality and abortion, and say, “Sir, you need to repent. You need to get right with God.” (We need preachers who are) not afraid to say of a governor, if he’s in favor of the lottery and gambling, “Sir, you need to repent and get right with God.” (We need) a man who will say, “Character is important, and if you cannot trust a man privately, you cannot trust a man publicly.”

If the No. 1 goal of your ministry is to win a popularity contest, if the No. 1 goal of your ministry is to try to make sure that nobody ever gets mad at you — that everybody likes you — do
yourself and God a big favor and get out of the ministry. Your goal in life should not be to make the list of the 100 most admired people in America. Your goal in life ought to be to preach the whole counsel of God in such a way that the Word of God — the Son of God — is glorified, the church of God is edified and the Spirit of God is satisfied.

Preach it courageously

(Paul) said, “Preach it courageously.” Look in verse two. He said, “Convince.” Then he said, “Rebuke.” What is the difference between convincing and rebuking? When you convince a man, you confront him with the fact of his sin. But when you rebuke a man, you confront him with the fault of his sin. What Paul said was, don’t just look at people and say, “You’re a sinner.” Tell them how terrible that is. Tell them, “It was your sin that crucified Jesus. It was your sin that nailed him to the cross. It is your sin that has separated you from God. It is your sin that will take you away from his presence forever if you do not get right with him.”

If you’ve never made anybody mad in your preaching, one of three things is true: (1) You haven’t been preaching long enough; (2) They haven’t been listening to anything you’ve been saying; or (3) You haven’t been preaching. I want to tell you (that) in this age of unbridled iniquity and unabated immorality and unabashed indecency, it is no time for weak men, weak messengers or weak ministries. Our calling is not to make a sick world feel better. It’s to make a sinful world straighten up.

Look at what else Paul said, “Preach constructively.” He said, “Convince, rebuke, exhort.” The word means “to build up,” and I say that to say this: We’re not just to be negative in our preaching. Don’t just get up all the time and say what you’re against. Say what you’re for. Yes, we’re to tell people what they are without Christ, but then we get to tell people what they can be with Christ. Preach constructively.

Preach compassionately

Then he said, “Preach compassionately.” Rome wasn’t built in a day. Roses don’t blossom in a moment. Fruit isn’t born in a minute. You will not always see immediate results from preaching the Word. What the Bible does say is that you will see ultimate results from the preaching of the Word, because God’s Word does not return void.

Paul said there’s going to come a time when you’re going to have people in your pews who are going to say to you, “Preacher, don’t make me holy. Make me happy. I don’t care what sound doctrine is. I don’t want to hear it. I don’t care about good doctrine.”

You’ve got people in your church right now who say, “Preacher, talk to me about the love of God. Don’t mention the holiness of God. Preacher, talk to me about the mercy of God. Don’t talk to me about the judgement of God. Preacher, talk to us about heaven. Don’t talk to us about hell.”

Paul says it’s going to happen — sound doctrine will be excluded. Why? Because selfish desires will be exalted. He goes on in verse three, “But according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.” Every church has what I call the itchy-ear syndrome. The average member of your church is not interested in the depth of your message. He’s interested in the length of your message. The average member of your church would prefer it be an inch deep and a mile short, than five miles deep and three miles short. That’s all they care about — “Just get me out on time.”

Here’s the point I want to make: to the average church member, diplomacy is more important than doctrine. Being polite is more important than being profound.

Can I give you a sure-fire tip on how to make your messages a lot shorter? Make them more interesting. Paul said sound doctrine will be excluded, selfish desires will be exalted, but self-delusion will be experienced. Look at what he says in verse four, “And they will turn their ears away from the church and be turned aside to favor myths.” Let me tell you what that means. Let me tell you what an awesome responsibility you have every time you walk into a pulpit. If the solid meat of biblical exposition is not fed to your church on Sunday morning, they will go out and drink the carnal milk of political correctness, New Age theology and Satanic deception. If you don’t teach your people to believe the right thing, they will believe anything.

REACH THE WORLD

There was the charge to be faithful because of the choice to be doubtful which led to the challenge to be watchful. Look at what
he says in verse five, “But you be watchful in all things. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry.”

**Be alert**

In 2 Timothy Paul says that as you get closer to the second coming of Christ, things are not going to get better. They’re going to get worse. They’re not going to get brighter. They’re going to get darker. So Paul says that when you find yourself in the last days — I believe we are in the last days — there are four things you had better do if you want to be a true man or a true woman of God. No. 1, be alert. Look at what he says in verse five, “But you be watchful in all things.” The Greek word there is a word that means “sober.” In other words, he was saying was you’re going to have people who are going to call themselves preachers in churches and professors in schools, and they’re going to be intoxicated with the liquor of liberalism. They’re going to drink from the cocktail of compromise. You just keep your eye on the Word of God. Be alert.

**Be adaptable**

Then he said, “Be adaptable.” He says in verse five, “endure affliction.” I’ve learned this double-fold being president of this convention. When you stand up and you speak the truth on abortion or lesbianism or homosexuality or what God’s Word even says about authority in the church, you had better duck. I’m just telling you — you’re going to endure affliction. You know what else I’ve learned? If your ministry’s going to count, it’s going to cost, because the ministry that counts the most costs the most.

**Be aggressive**

No. 1, he said be alert. No 2, be adaptable. No. 3, be aggressive. Look at what he says again in verse five. He says, “Do the work of an evangelist.” Not every evangelist is a pastor, but every pastor should be an evangelist. Don’t you ever get so big for your spiritual britches that you think you’re too good or too busy to go out and knock on doors and tell people how to be saved. John Wesley well said, “You may be elegant. You may be a good fundraiser. You may be in great demand as a speaker. But if you do not win souls to Christ, you’re a failure.” Charles Spurgeon said, “I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than to unlock all the mysteries of the Word of God.” Be aggressive.

**“Not every evangelist is a pastor, but every pastor should be an evangelist. Don’t you ever get so big for your spiritual britches that you think you’re too good or too busy to go out and knock on doors and tell people how to be saved.”**

**Be accountable**

Then, finally, be accountable. Look at what he says, “Fulfill your ministry.” If you have a worship service, I don’t care what style of music you use. I don’t care if you have traditional or blended. You can have hymns or praise worship. To me, that’s preference. That’s not conviction. But if you have a worship service and you don’t clearly present the gospel and some how give people an opportunity to respond to the gospel, you’ve not fulfilled your ministry. I don’t care what else you do or how well you do it.

Every time you have a worship service, anybody who walks into that building lost ought to walk out knowing how to be saved. Thank God that Robert England followed that advice. Robert England was a deacon in his church in Colchester, England. He woke up one January Sunday morning and the ground was blanketed with a foot of snow. And he started not to go to church because he thought to himself, “Well nobody is going to go.” Then he thought to himself, “Wait a minute. I’m a deacon.” So he got ready and put on his boots, his hat and his coat, and Robert England walked six miles to that Methodist church. Most of the members stayed home. As a matter of fact, even the preacher didn’t show up. He got in there and there were 13 people — 12 members and one visitor, a 13-year-old boy. England had never preached in his life, but he got up, and he took as his text Isaiah 45:22, “Look to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth.” He only preached about 10 minutes. He said something in his heart compelled him at the end of that message look at the 13-year-old boy and simply say, “Young man, if you will look to Jesus, you will be saved.” Well, that 13-year-old boy on the spot, did look to Jesus. That 13-year-old boy was Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

I thank God that when Robert England got up that morning, he didn’t preach a message on how to be up when the weather is down. I thank God that he didn’t get up and preach a sermon entitled, “How to Glow in the Snow.” Thank God he preached the Word, shared the Gospel and gave a 13-year-old boy an opportunity to be saved.

My friends, we don’t need to follow fads or fashion. We just need to keep the ship of our ministry anchored to the rock of this Book — believing it, obeying it, defending it, sharing it and preaching it until Jesus comes. Preach the Word.
Preaching is the church’s urgent priority

The following is an excerpt from a message delivered by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Preaching is an urgent priority in the church. The problem is, as we actually observe the church in action, one might not discern that preaching is of such a priority. However, we know that the church is distinguished by preaching. As a matter of fact, we can affirm with Martin Luther, the great Reformer, that preaching is the first sign of the church, the essential mark of the church. Luther believed so much in the centrality of preaching that he has made his case both positively and negatively. Positively, he said, “Where the true preaching of the gospel is to be found, the true preaching of the Word of God, there is the church.” But negatively, he also made the expression, “Where such preaching is not found, there is no church, no matter what it calls itself or poses itself to be.”

R. Albert Mohler Jr. is the ninth president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This article is excerpted from a message delivered during “Power in the Pulpit.” The text for Mohler’s sermon was Col. 1:24ff.
Paul speaks of his own understanding of his apostolic ministry and of his stewardship of the mysteries of God, his stewardship of the task of proclaiming the Word of God. He speaks of his calling, his message, the purpose of preaching. This is Paul’s declaration of ministry.

Verse 24 explains why Paul submits to suffering. It is because these sufferings have earned for him the opportunity of the preaching of the gospel. He understands himself as a servant of the Word, and he understands his purpose on this earth is to preach this Word and to proclaim Jesus Christ.

Over against this majestic passage with its note of triumph — it’s a sober triumph, (and) not triumphalism — Paul acknowledges the suffering he is currently enduring. But he also understands the victory that is assured in Christ. It isn’t Paul’s triumph; it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Over against that, we look at the contemporary church, and … we notice the exhaustion of preaching, the exhaustion that is taking place in so many pulpits.

Rarely do we hear these days that a church is distinguished primarily by its preaching. When we hear persons speak about their own congregation or they make comparative remarks or qualitative remarks about other congregations, generally they speak about something other than preaching.

They speak of its ministry. They speak of its specialized ministry to senior adults, children, young people. They speak of its music. They speak of its ministries in one direction or another. Sometimes they speak of things far more superficial than these. Perhaps they speak of the church’s Great Commission vigor and commitment, and for that we are certainly thankful. But rarely do you hear a church described, first and foremost, by the character, by the power and by the content of its preaching.

Speaking to pastors, I want to say that … we have a certain product envy. We envy those who build houses or sell cars or build great corporations or assemble automobiles or even those who merely cut the grass. Why? Because they have something tangible to show for their labor at the end of the day. They may be fastening widgets and assembling automobiles, or they may be putting stuff in boxes and sealing them up and sending them out, or they may be cutting the grass.

There is a certain satisfaction from that labor, and the preacher is robbed of that satisfaction. We are not given to see what we would like to see.

As a matter of fact, it seems like we stand up and throw out words and wonder what in the world becomes of them. What happens from it? What, after all, is our product, and where in the world can you see it? (We speak) words, words, and more words. And then sometimes we feel like we are flattering ourselves that people even remember what it was that we had to say. We are chastened from asking our fellow church members for the identity of our text halfway through the next week.

Paul understood that it was possible to hear in vain. And he hoped that was not true of this church, and he spoke to them of such confidence. We have our product envy because we’d like to have, at the back of the church, not just a succession of nice accolades and respectful comments, we’d like to have an assembly line of maturing Christians go out the door of the church, so at least we could see something and note some progress. We could, statistically, even mark what kind of impact this sermon had over against another. But we do not have that.

Since the Lord established his church, there have been preachers, — lots of preachers. Good preachers and poor preachers. Faithful preachers and faithless preachers. Eloquent preachers and pulpit babblers, expository preachers, narrative preachers, famous preachers, infamous preachers, lots and lots of preachers. And to what end? It all accumulates to millions and millions of hours of preaching. You go all the way back to the first century and try to estimate how much time has been consumed in preaching and not only the time of the preacher, but the time and attentiveness of the congregation. There has been a massive investment of human time in preaching, and to what end?

It’s such a deal to be called to preach; you give hard work and you see nothing. Furthermore, this line of work has the nasty habit of getting you into trouble. It seems that the more faithful one is in preaching, the more trouble one encounters.

There is conflict and controversy. … You didn’t come up
with it. This isn’t your opinion. This isn’t something you came up with in order to offend people. You’re simply preaching the Word. After all, it’s your assignment and you get up and the next thing you know, you are on the front page of the papers. You’re the subject of the deacon’s gossip and the deacon’s wives, and the next thing you know the youth group is up in arms over whatever you said.

Conflict and controversy are always real, and they tend to be correlated to the faithfulness in preaching. The harder (you) work, it’s not the less controversy that comes, but the greater.

And it’s not just conflict and controversy; sometimes it’s persecution and martyrdom. After all, the man who wrote this letter at the church at Colossi was himself a martyr for the faith. In giving his final instructions to Timothy in 2 Timothy he speaks of being poured out as a libation.

He is ready to be offered as an offering. The sufferings of which he speaks in verse 24 of this chapter (Col 1) are going to be realized in a martyrdom which is yet before him. And there have been martyrs in the history of the church such that the blood of the martyrs has been the water and the nourishment of the church. Don’t you imagine that your preaching priorities would become self-evidently clear under persecution?

After all, if you’re having to meet in a catacomb. If you’re having to gather together the church, knowing that anytime you might be arrested, you’re going to weigh every word and there isn’t going to be any time for pulpit frivolity. There isn’t going to be any time to promote the next youth program. Everything is going to be concerned with getting down the reality of the eternal Word of God.

Sometimes preachers get ejected and fired. That’s another reality. Sometimes it happens that preaching the Word brings from God’s people antipathy and resistance. Why? Because the Word of God is alive and it is active and it is sharper than any two-edged sword, and as the Lord spoke through his prophet Jeremiah, “it never fails to do what I send it to do.” And sometimes the Lord uses his Word to rebuke and correct his people. And it is the preacher who must speak that Word and reap the response.

I will go so far as to assert that if you are at peace with the world, you have abdicated your calling. You have become a court preacher to some earthly power, no matter how innocuous it may appear. To put it straight: you have been bought.

If there is no controversy in your ministry, there is probably very little content to your preaching. Because the content of the Word of God is not only alive and active, it is sharper than any two-edged sword and that means it does some surgery. It does some cutting and there is some bleeding and by God’s grace there is some healing and there is always controversy.

Our text lands right in the middle of all this and hits us right in the solar plexus. Why? Because Paul is not unaware of all of this. Paul is emphatically aware of the dynamic of which we are speaking. He understands the very real experience of preaching, he understands the frustration and sometimes he articulates it in words. Just read his letters. It wasn’t as if he avoided the controversy. Read 1 Corinthians 1. He laid it right before them. Even to the point where he says, “I am thankful I don’t have to take responsibility for baptizing many of you,” a rather strong word of correction.

But this text hits us right where we need to be hit, because Paul not only endures all of this, he seems to revel in it. He seems to celebrate it. Paul seems to understand all of the frustrations and the conflict and the controversy and the trouble of preaching, and he says, “Bring it on. This is what I was made for, this is what I was called to do. This is what I am here for. Let’s get at it.”

In verse 24 he even rejoices in his suffering for the sake of the church, for the body of Christ and for his glory. “Of this church,” Paul says, “I was made a minister.” I wasn’t made a minister of some hypothetical, non-problematic, non-controversial church. I was made a minister of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the body of Christ on earth, a chosen, purchased possession being sanctified even in the present and struggling against the powers of sin and death and evil and darkness. Paul makes his case.

The first point I believe he makes is found in verse 25, and it is that the central purpose of ministry is the preaching of the Word.

In the end, everything comes down to this. It comes down to preaching. These are vivid terms. Paul speaks in such strong language. He speaks here of the fact that he was made a minister. He didn’t make himself a minister any more than he saved himself on the Damascus Road. He was claimed, and as he was claimed, he was made a minister of the Word.

In fact, he was made an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and he understood his situation clearly. When he writes in 1 Corinthians 15, he explains that Christ appeared to him as one untimely born. He called himself the least of the apostles because he had persecuted the church. But God’s great trium-
phant sign of contradiction was in choosing the chief persecutor of the church to make him the apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul goes on to say he has received this ministry according to the stewardship from God bestowed on him for the benefit of the Colossian church. I think this is very critical to the pastor’s understanding of his calling and the minister’s understanding of the stewardship. We are given, we are assigned a stewardship from God, which is bestowed on us, not for our benefit, but for the benefit of the church.

It is as if we have been drafted, we have been called out, we have been assigned, and we have been granted a stewardship we do not deserve and a stewardship we are not capable of achieving and fulfilling. Nonetheless, we are stewards of the mysteries of God.

What is the bottom line? So that, as you can see in verse 25 ... “that I might fully carry out the preaching of the Word of God.” Paul’s intention was not to dabble a little bit in preaching. It wasn’t to add preaching to his ministerial syllabus or itinerary in order that he might complete himself as a well-rounded minister of the gospel. It wasn’t that he would eventually get to preaching in the midst of other pastoral responsibilities.

I believe when the minister of the gospel faces the Lord God as Judge, there will be many questions addressed to us. There will be many standards of accountability. There will be many criteria of judgement but in the end, the most essential criterion of judgement for the minister of God is: did you preach the Word? Did you fully carry out the ministry of the Word? In season and out of season, was the priority of the ministry the preaching of the Word?

Now we contrast that with today’s minister and today’s congregational expectations, and what we see is the marginalization of the pulpit. There is the recognition that it is, after all, an important piece of furniture in the sanctuary and someone ought to use it for something. So preaching has its place, but let’s not let preaching get in the way of the music, which is, after all, what draws people and that’s what establishes fellowship.

How many of you have gone to church services where you have heard it said or maybe seen printed in the bulletin, “First, we’re going to have some praise, and then we are going to get to preaching.” Or, “First, we’re going to have a worship period and then we’re going to turn to preaching.” What do you think preaching is, but the central act of Christian worship? As a matter of fact, everything else ought to build to the preaching of the Word for that is when the God of whom we have been speaking (and) of whom we have been singing speaks to us from his eternal and perfect Word.

We contrast Paul’s absolute priority with the congregational confusion of today’s church. When you look at, for instance, manuals, books, magazines, seminars (and) conferences addressed to pastors, you’ll notice that preaching, if included, is most often not the priority. When you hear people speak about how to grow a church, how to build a church, how to do this, how to build a great congregation, few and far between are those who say it comes essentially by the preaching of the Word.

And we know why — it’s because growth which comes by the preaching of the Word (comes) slowly — slowly and immeasurably and sometimes even invisibly. And we’re back to our problem. If you want to see quick results, the preaching of the Word just might not be the way to go.

If you’re going to find results in terms of statistics and in terms of numbers and in terms of a visible response, it just might be that there are other mechanisms, other programs and other means that will produce that faster. The question is whether it produces Christians — maturing and faithful believers to the Lord Jesus Christ — because that is going to come only by the preaching of the Word.

Preaching is not a mechanism for communication that was developed by preachers who needed something to do on Sunday. It was not some kind of sociological or technological adaptation by the church in the first century trying to come up with something to do between the invocation and the benediction. It was the central task of preaching that framed their understanding of worship, but not only their understanding of worship, but their understanding of church.

Luther got it exactly right. He was, after all, trying to go back to the first century and understand the central marks of the church, and the first mark is preaching. Where the authentic preaching of the Word takes place, the church is there. And where that preaching is absent there is no church. No matter how high the steeple, no matter how large the budget, no matter how impressive the ministry, it is something else.

“We are given, we are assigned a stewardship from God, which is bestowed on us, not for our benefit, but for the benefit of the church.”
Baptists are a Great Commission people. We have been infected with the gospel of Jesus Christ and evangelism is in our blood. It is the heartbeat of who we are. Without a “hot heart” for soul, we would die, and our death would be deserved.

Baptists seek to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We receive our marching orders from Him. Two passages in particular lay the foundation for who we are and what we are about:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20, NAS).

He (Jesus) said to them … but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall by My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:7-8, NAS).

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Jesus said go and so we go. Jesus said witness and so we witness. Deep within our soul is the conviction that heaven is real and hell is real and Jesus is the only difference. This “soul conviction” does not mean that we do not love and respect those of other faiths or those who have no faith at all. Because of our unrivaled commitment to religious liberty we would willingly die for their right to believe as they choose. However, it is because we do love them that we go, witness, share and tell. We cannot escape the words of our Lord who said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). We are haunted again by our Savior’s warning, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36).

It was exactly this kind of conviction that launched the modern missionary movement through a British Baptist named William Carey (1761-1834) who spent his life in India. Reflecting upon our awesome task, he wrote, “As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event by words, but to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name” (emphasis mine).

This same hot passion burned in the heart of the American Baptist Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) and his wife, Ann. It sent them both to serve and die on the mission field in Burma. This burden for souls stirred the heart of Luther Rice (1783-1836) and set him criss-crossing America to raise support for those who were evangelizing around the world.

Southern Baptists, in particular, recognize that we may be out of step with many current trends in theology. So be it. We reject outright as unbiblical heresy any theology that weakens the missionary/evangelistic mandate. We stand against the modern and postmodern mindset which says,

“No minister ought to be at rest unless he sees that his ministry does bring forth fruit, and men and women are born unto God by the preaching of the Word.” — Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“The minister who is sent of God has spiritual children, they are as much his children as if they had literally been born in his house, for to their immortal nature he stands under God in the relationship of sire …. No minister ought to be at rest unless he sees that his ministry does bring forth fruit, and men and women are born unto God by the preaching of the Word.”

Spurgeon also had a needed and pointed word for parents in this context, and one certainly needed among Baptists today.

“It is very grievous to see how some professedly Christian parents are satisfied so long as their children display cleverness in learning, or sharpness in business, although they show no signs of a renewed nature. ... When a man’s heart is really right with God, and he himself has been saved from the wrath to come, and is living in the light of his heavenly Father’s countenance, it is certain that he is anxious about his children’s souls, prizes their immortal nature ... If you are professing Christians, but cannot say that you have no greater joy than the conversion of your children, you have reason to question whether you ought to have made such a profession at all.”

Spurgeon knew evangelism in the church starts at the top, with those God has called to pastor. Spurgeon also knew that there was no better place for evangelism to begin than in the home. The people called Baptists well understand that our very reason for existing is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. We are also very much aware that there are many things we can do to glorify God in this life and in the life to come. However, there is one thing we can do now to bring our Lord glory that we cannot do in eternity.

That one thing is to share the gospel and tell a lost soul about a Savior whose name is Jesus. And so we go, share, witness and tell. We use the Romans Road, Steps to Peace with God, the Four Spiritual Laws, Wordless Book, Good News bracelet, Win School, E.E., C.W.T., F.A.I.T.H., and many other means as well. Why? Because we know and understand that lost people matter to God, and therefore, lost people should matter to us. Former SBC President Dr. Paige Patterson puts it well, “More than 6 billion souls populate our globe. If the biblical message is true, then hell is a tragic conclusion for those who have not come to God through Christ. The potential of forgiveness and eternal life with God demands that all avenues of evangelization be pursued. The urgency of the task is the most compelling of any assignment the believer has been given.” This assignment is ours and this assignment we will endeavor to fulfill. We must, for the eternal destiny of men and women demands it. Our Lord demands it.
What does it mean to be God-centered in our evangelism? And why is it important to be so? I am sure that there are a number of answers that could be given to such questions. However, I want to answer these questions by focusing on two different but related reflections that I am convinced are crucial for us to consider, especially today. Both of these reflections I will draw from Paul’s important evangelistic encounter at the Athenian Areopagus found in Acts 17:16-34.

Acts 17 recounts Paul’s “missionary furlough” waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy (vv 14-16). Athens was one of the major intellectual centers of the Hellenistic world. It was a magnificent city by all worldly standards with all of its education, philosophy, aesthetics and architecture. Yet, we are told, Paul’s brief relief was broken when he became internally provoked at the idolatry of the city (v 16). What most people and tourists would revel in greatly disturbed and moved Paul to preach and teach the glories of God and the gospel. In fact, we are told that Paul reasoned in the synagogue as well as in the marketplace day by day as he sought to bring the gospel to the Athenian people (v 17). As we think about God-centered evangelism, there are two points that stand out in Acts 17.
First, Paul evangelizes and proclaims the gospel out of a profound God-centeredness. As Paul visits the sights of Athens, what moves him to preach? Does he preach merely because he has been commanded to do so by the Lord of the church? Does he seek to evangelize because he sees the great need of the people in all of their lostness? No doubt these are legitimate reasons that motivate Paul to do evangelism — reasons that should motivate us as well. However, that is not the reason given in this text, and it should never be the primary reason for us either. Clearly, Luke tells us that what moves Paul to evangelize is nothing less than his zeal for the name and glory of the living God. Paul is truly, in all of his thoughts and actions, a God-centered man. For him, anything or anyone that displaces the glory and honor of God provokes within him outrage and jealousy for God’s name. As he describes in Romans 1:18-32, it is no small matter for human beings to exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for images made in the likeness of human beings and creatures. And so Paul preaches out of a burning zeal and love for God.

As we think about being God-centered in evangelism, is it God’s honor that motivates us to speak on his behalf? As we rub shoulders with people who do not honor the name of our great God and Redeemer, does jealousy for his name move us to witness and proclaim? There are many legitimate reasons to evangelize, but surely if the primary reason to evangelize does not come from a profound sense of God-centeredness, then we are clearly out of step with Paul.

Second, Paul is God-centered in that he begins with the centrality of God in his presentation and communication of the gospel. It is this observation that I want to spend more time reflecting upon as we consider the need for urgent God-centered evangelism today. And in particular I want to think through this point in the following steps: observe how Paul proclaims the gospel differently depending upon his context; draw some parallels between the context of first century Athens and 21st century America; discover why the centrality of the doctrine of God is so important in Paul’s proclamation of the gospel.

Paul's sensitivity to context in evangelism

Have you ever noticed when you read the book of Acts, especially with Paul, how the gospel is proclaimed depending upon the context and audience? Normally, when Paul went to a city, his usual practice was first to go to the synagogue where he would reason with the Jews and God-fearers (see Acts 13:5, 14:1, 44-45; 14:1; 17:2, 10, 17). With that audience, his presentation of the gospel would be to demonstrate from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah who in his life, death, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost had ushered in the long-awaited kingdom of God and new covenant era. However, his strategy at Athens is slightly different. At Athens, Paul does not immediately begin where he does in the synagogue. Why?

The reason is tied to context and audience. In the context of the synagogue, both Paul and the Jew had a common worldview. They both believed and worked from the Old Testament Scripture. Thus, when Paul spoke of “God,” “sin,” “Messiah,” “covenants” and so on, he spoke to an audience that held something in common with him. But this was not true in the context of Athens. The Athenians, sophisticated as they were, did not have the Scriptures; they were biblically illiterate. They were very intelligent people, but they were steeped in idolatry, pluralistic in their outlook and without the biblical story-line framework to understand even the most rudimentary truths Paul was seeking to communicate. That is why in Athens, Paul’s evangelism, in terms of its content and starting place, is different than in the synagogue.

In other words, in Athens, Paul does not immediately begin with Jesus Christ. Instead he first develops a biblical frame of reference so that the proclamation of the gospel will make sense and that the Athenians will hear the gospel for what it truly is, in its own categories and on its own terms. Paul is very concerned that the gospel is not wrongly dismissed or re-interpreted into another worldview framework, for that only leads to a distortion of the gospel message. So Paul, in order to present Jesus Christ as not just another god or savior, but the exclusive Lord, Savior and Judge, builds a biblical-theological framework, rooted in the story-line of Scripture. At the end of the day, what Paul does at Athens is to set forth two opposing worldviews — the Christian view and the non-Christian view (whether it is Epicurean or Stoic or something else) — and then attempt to demonstrate the futility of all non-Christian views that do not bow before the Lord.

What does first century athens have to do with 21st century America?

No doubt, there are many differences between first century Athens and 21st century America. However, in relation to gospel proclamation we may have more in common than we would like to admit. In particular I am thinking of two important parallels. First, just as first century Athens was very pluralistic in its thought and outlook, so is our culture today. Second, just as first century Athens was biblically illiterate, so is our
society today. Let us look at each of these in turn.

What do I mean by the term “pluralism?” Pluralism is a surprisingly slippery word in current discussion. On the one hand, it can refer to the empirical fact that we live in a more culturally and religiously diverse country. On the other hand, it can refer to the viewpoint that asserts that no particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another. It is the latter sense in which I am using the word. What are the implications of such a view? There are many implications, both moral and religious, but if we limit our discussion to the religious realm, “pluralism” entails that no religion has the right to pronounce itself true, and the others false or even inferior. In other words, if pluralism is true then the scriptural claim that Jesus is the only Lord and Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) must be rejected as intolerant and unreasonable. Of course, “pluralism” is closely associated with relativism since if no religion has the right to pronounce itself true for all people, then it must be said that no one view can be correct. It is also closely associated with what has been dubbed “postmodernism,” that is, the outlook that questions whether truth is accessible and knowable in any strong sense of the word.

No doubt, the issues surrounding “pluralism” are complex, but they are important to grasp if we are to understand something of our cultural situation. Pluralism, relativism and postmodernism are not simply ideas for the academy; rather they are ideas that permeate our entire society. As various polls have shown, two-thirds of the American public do not believe in absolute truth anymore. People are quite skeptical about any truth claim, and along with a growing pluralism has come an endless number of worldviews, religions and viewpoints that have flooded our culture. It is no longer possible to assume that most Americans embrace Christian views and values or even know about them in any informed way. In a real sense, our culture is not that much different than Paul’s first century Athens.

In addition, one of the contributing factors as well as entailments of a growing “pluralism” is biblical illiteracy. Certainly this is the situation outside the church, but it was not always so. In the past, Judeo-Christian roots largely characterized American society. Even though many people never went to church, there was still a sense that when people spoke of “God,” “Jesus,” “sin,” “salvation,” it was a Christian view they were talking about. However, this is no longer true. Today we live in a society saturated by various “isms” and very much biblically illiterate. Even worse: within the church, there is an appalling lack of biblical knowledge, thought and theological reflection.

Why is this significant to note? Because we must come to grips with the fact that when we proclaim the gospel today, just as Paul did in Athens many years ago, more and more people do not know what we are talking about. It used to be that we could assume people would understand us when we talked about “God,” “sin,” “Jesus” and “salvation.” But today we can no longer take this for granted. We must be very alert to the fact that when people hear us proclaim with the gospel, who do not share our frame of reference, they often hear it differently than we intend.

That is why Athens parallels our situation so well. This is what Paul faced; this is what we face. In Athens, he faces a plethora of worldviews (specifically Epicureans and Stoics). And all of these worldviews know basically nothing about Scripture. The same is true today. How, then, does Paul communicate the glorious gospel given such a situation? How does he evangelize a people who know very little of even a rudimentary understanding of biblical history? The answer is that he sets forth a different worldview framework, rooted in the story-line of Scripture and grounded in the doctrine of God. Paul, in other words, is God-centered in his evangelism, not only in terms of a burning desire for God’s glory and honor, but also in relation to the presentation and communication of the gospel.

The centrality of the doctrine of God for evangelism today

Why does Paul immediately begin with the doctrine of God and not with the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The answer is quite simple. In order to make sense of the person and work of Jesus Christ, one must first place him within the overall structure and categories of the Christian worldview framework. And where does that framework begin and end? With God. For how will anyone understand the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ, our need for a divine Redeemer, our utter lostness apart from the cross or the beauty of grace apart from setting all of these glorious gospel truths within the biblical framework of the God who is there — the God of creation, providence, revelation and redemption? Is this not where Paul begins? And does this not reflect his God-centered approach in evangelism?

Paul begins with the God of creation (v 24). Paul reminds his hearers that the world is not the result of blind chance (contra Epicureans) or an evolution or a world-spirit (contra Stoicism). Rather, it is the creation of the sovereign-personal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who alone is the Lord. But God is not only the Creator; he is also the Lord of providence (vv 25-26). It is he who sustains us. We need him for everything, but he does not need us. He is the God who is transcendent, independent and self-sufficient. As a result, he is not the kind of deity who can be bribed or cajoled. No, he judges in justice and righteousness. And if we receive anything from his hand, it is not because we are worthy or good in our-

“He sets forth a different worldview framework, rooted in the story-line of Scripture and grounded in the doctrine of God.”
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selves, but it is due to his grace.

God is also the God of revelation (vv 26-28). God created us, rules over us, sets us in our exact places so that we may know him. The Athenians had constructed an idol to the “Unknown God.” But Paul makes it very clear that the God of creation, providence and revelation is not removed from this world and unknown, but active in it. And he is active both in sustaining the world, and leading us to come to know him. In fact, God’s purpose in ordering history is to incite humans to pursue him. God is not some far removed deity. He has not left us to our own devices to discover who he is. No, God has created us to know him. He has disclosed himself to us in creation, the human constitution and conscience, and in unique self-disclosures in both word and deed.

Why, then, given this understanding of God’s involvement in the world, do we not know him? That certainly is a reasonable question to ask given this overall framework. The answer, of course, is that we are rebels — creatures who have willfully turned against the God who gives us our very life and breath. As such, we are without excuse. Whether it be the first century of the 21st century, one of the great challenges in presenting the gospel is to communicate a biblical sense of human depravity before the holy God and our need for the Redeemer. In starting with the doctrine of God and placing human beings in their proper frame of reference, Paul beautifully establishes both our human responsibility and the nature of our dilemma. By nature and by choice we are alienated from God, deceived and justly condemned because we have turned from what we know to be true about God and the universe. That is why we as human beings are guilty and in need of redemption.

But is there any hope for us? Is there any redemption? Given this overall structure that Paul has outlined, it is quite clear that if there is to be hope at all, it will never be found in ourselves or in the human race, but only from God’s side and initiative. Only God can save and God alone. God must initiate; God must act in grace if we are going to receive help at all. And that is precisely what he has done in Jesus Christ.

And now finally we come to Jesus Christ (vv 29-31). Given what Paul has outlined, everything now focuses on Jesus Christ, and everything now falls into place. It is important to stress that in the structure Paul has outlined, it is not possible to interpret Jesus as merely one religious leader among many. Rather, Jesus is presented as the sole agent of God’s judgment, or the flipside — salvation. He is the one God has appointed. He is the one, whom God has accredited in history by the resurrection of the dead. He is the one whom God has sent, and through him, he has actively broken into history to bring about God’s appointed plan. In other words, within a Christian understanding of the world, Jesus Christ is nothing less than an exclusive Lord and Savior.

No doubt this went against everything the Greeks believed; it goes against what our society believes. God acting in human history? God working through one individual alone? God raising the Lord Jesus from the dead? But given the biblical framework that Paul has outlined, it makes perfect sense. Why wouldn’t the God of creation be active in human history? Given the nature of human depravity and rebellion, why is it hard to believe that the solution to our problem can only come through the Lord Jesus? Why is it so hard to believe in the resurrection given the fact of the God of creation and providence? Why, given the fact that there is only one sovereign-personal Triune God and given our dilemma, is it hard to believe that there is only one Savior and Lord? Starting with the God of Scripture, rooted in the story line of Scripture, gospel proclamation can now be heard for what it truly is.

The need for God-centered evangelism today

Why do we need God-centered evangelism today? I have sought to give two different but related reflections from Acts 17. First, our motivation for evangelism must flow from a mind and heart that is consumed and enflamed with the love, adoration and glory of our Triune God. Second, in order to communicate clearly and effectively to our generation, our evangelism must be God-centered in that it starts with the structures, categories and framework of Scripture, rooted and grounded in the centrality of the doctrine of God. For unless we do, I am convinced that our evangelism will not be what it needs to be given our pluralistic, postmodern and biblically illiterate culture. In the end the gospel will end up being distorted for some half-baked substitute, which at the end of the day is not the gospel.

Evangelism is a glorious mandate given to the church. May we seek together to be more faithful to our calling today. And may we pray together that our great God may be gracious once again and send a mighty visitation of his Spirit, reviving the church and bringing about conversions that will resound to the honor and glory of our great God and Savior. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Romans 11:36).
Words can’t describe what John saw that day under the blazing sun of Southeast Asia.

The student missionary was in a city, ministering to a group of refugees who had been fleeing from a band of Muslim extremists. Having lost everything they owned, the refugees were simply trying to survive, trying to stay alive. John was walking from person to person — shaking hands and introducing himself — when one particular man caught his attention. John tried to shake the man’s hand, but he couldn’t. The man was missing two fingers. Puzzled, John looked for the man’s other hand. There was none — only a nub.

Questioned by John, the man began telling the story of how he had been persecuted and had undergone excruciating pain. Simply because he was a Christian.

Jihad warriors had cornered the man, asking him if he was a follower of Christ.

“His answer was, ‘Yes I’m a Christian.’ They then cut off his thumb and finger,” John said in an e-mail interview. “Then they said, ‘You can either convert to Islam or we are going to kill you.’ His response was, ‘No, I am a follower of Jesus Christ.’ They then cut off his other hand. The man went on to tell me that for some reason, simply a miracle of God, the group left him there to die, but God spared his life.”

John did not know what to say.

“As I stood there and listened to the man explain the price for following Christ, I realized how little I, and many believers in the States, know about obedience and suffering,” he said.

Such incidents have been taking place for more than two years in the war between Christians and Muslims extremists. The Muslim extremists — known as “Jihad warriors” — have promised to drive out all Christians in specific parts of the country.

The war began months before John arrived there in 1999 as part of the International Mission Board’s Two Plus Two program — a program which allows seminary students to spend the final two years of their education on the mission field.

John’s mission field is enormous. He is assigned to an unreached people group consisting of some two million people — the large majority of which have never heard the gospel. Sadly, there are only 30 known Christians. John said he knows two of them.

Wherever John travels, he sees lost souls. More than 80 percent of the country is Muslim.

“My view of the world has changed as I’ve had the opportu-
I think to myself, ‘How can I or any other Christian be satisfied with simply working for a living and not be involved in going and telling the peoples of the world about Christ? … I think that my time here has re-affirmed my calling to cross-cultural work.’

John said converts to Christianity are rare. The country is grounded in the Muslim faith, and those who do accept Christ are considered outcasts.

“When someone converts to Christianity they are often seen as rejecting the faith of Islam and the family structure,” he said. “One of our national partners converted to Christianity, and he was kicked out of his village, lost his wife and children, lost his family name, and (he) still has death threats.”

The man, though, refused to recant his faith.

“I asked him once if what he gained in his relationship with Christ was worth the price of losing his family and tribal connections,” John said. “His response was that even though there is still pain from losing his family, his relationship with Christ is worth much more.”

John has an apartment in the city, although he often leaves it behind in order to go out into the jungles and the villages. While there, he sometimes finds himself sleeping on a concrete or dirt floor. Some of the villages are easy to get to. Others are not. Motorcycles, four-wheel drives and even speed-boats are required. Christian volunteers accompany him.

“Some villages I have to ride a motorcycle for four hours to get to, because a car can’t make it into the jungle,” he said. “Other places we have to use four-wheel drive trucks to make the trip. Even then you may get stuck for several days depending on the amount of rain (that falls) while you are there.”

Once in the village, he begins building relationships. Sometimes he prayerwalks. Other times he simply shares the gospel.

“Witnessing to Muslims is not easy all the time,” he said. “Most of the time they are listening to me out of respect and not out of curiosity. This practice is OK for me because I know that it is God’s Word that is the power until salvation, and (that) it’s not going to return void even in this case.

“Most of the time, it’s required that you have a relationship with the person before they really are interested in hearing your beliefs.”

Of course, there are times when witnessing opportunities simply fall into John’s lap. Several months ago, he was in an area that was supposedly hostile to Christianity. He was standing there, watching thousands of Muslims walk by, when people began asking him about the English language. They wanted to learn a few new words, so John told them one — Isa Al Masih, which means Jesus.

“Other times I have been out in villages, sitting on the floor eating … with the head of the village, and they will ask me what I believe about a particular topic,” he said. “This gives me an open door to tell a story from the Bible in the presence of all the people that are listening from the inside of the house and the outside.”

John will leave the country later this year, but he hopes to leave a healthy church behind. No Christian church exists among his unreached people group of two million people, although he is in the process of planting one.

“It is our hope and our prayer that many will come to a saving faith in Christ and an indigenous church will develop among them,” he said. “We hope to begin house churches that can rapidly multiply and a church planting movement will begin among our people.”

Upon graduation, John plans on entering missions full-time. He will fly back to the United States later this summer, then re-enter the mission field sometime next year. John said the Two Plus Two program has definitely helped change his life.

“We are currently praying about the location and people group we will work with,” he said. “After being here for two years, I think it would be very difficult to return to the States and live a ‘normal life.’ Once you go and see how God is working all over the world, you are changed and can’t go back.”
Douglas and Jonelle Yates’ backyard at their Welsh residence had become a wall of wool.

A bevy of bleating sheep had broken out of their pen and had taken refuge behind the Yateses’ house.

While Douglas attempted his best impression of a Welsh shepherd, he prayed the owners would show up soon. Yes, the couple had learned a lot of the skills at Southern Seminary needed to serve as missionaries to Wales. Herding was not one of them.

“I had to herd them into a corner and wait for their owner to arrive and put them back into their field,” said Douglas, a 2000 M.Div. graduate from Southern.

But, according to the Yateses, the fluffy farm animals that loitered in their lot are not the only lost sheep in Wales.

Located on the west coast of Great Britain, Wales has a rich Christian history. But, just as their English cousins, the Welsh people have fallen from their first love.

“Only 3 percent of the population of Wales truly consider themselves followers of Christ, with only 60 percent of those considering themselves to be conservative and evangelical in their theology,” Douglas said.

It is this dearth of gospel witness which initially drew Douglas and Jonelle to the historic and picturesque nation.

“Seeing the spiritual condition of the Body of Christ here has confirmed our call to missions,” Douglas said. “Knowing that most of the Welsh need to hear the gospel gives us the desire to stay here and proclaim Christ to the lost.”

The Yateses, who have been in the country for six months, currently serve with the CeLT Team (Celtic Language Team). The team’s role is to proclaim the gospel principally to those people who speak a Celtic language — Welsh, Brezhoneg (in France), Cornish, Manx, Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic.

In particular, the Yateses have a heart for those in that nationalistic and independent country who speak Welsh. Of course, this ministry requires that the Yateses learn the language — a complex and completely foreign tongue despite the country’s proximity to England.

“Our past six months have been won—
The statistics are “grim,” Douglas said. “We have both enjoyed our language training. The Welsh language is hard to get a handle on sometimes, but it is also very rhythmic and musical.”

Having completed their three months of language training, Douglas and Jonelle will soon move to South Wales. There they will continue working on learning the language, and in June, Douglas will start training for his position on the team.

For the CeLT Team, Douglas will serve as the prayer coordinator and volunteer coordinator. He will send out regular prayer updates via letters, e-mails and pamphlets. He will also facilitate short-term mission trips from the States.

“We have a total of 482 young people and sponsors coming this summer to join our team in proclaiming the gospel to Wales,” Douglas said.

Most of these students will come as part of LifeWay’s “M-Fuge Wales.” M-Fuge (Mission Fuge) is a mission ministry created and sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Yateses can’t wait to get started in their new roles. They both have a great sense of urgency for the nation.

The country has seen a staggering religious downgrade in the last 100 years, Douglas explained. Revivals in 1904 and 1905 had returned Christianity to the forefront of many communities. However, over the course of the next 50 years, liberal theology began to drain the gospel from the chapels. (The Welsh refer to “church” as “chapel” because the Anglican church is called the “church” there.)

“The gospel message was no longer the central focus of the Body of Christ,” Douglas said. “The social gospel became the message of the day, and still is to many dying chapels.

“At this point the chapels had left their first love. ... The result of this loss of the gospel today is a next to non-existent true Christian presence, reminiscent to what one reads from Revelation 2.”

Currently, pluralism reigns in a country that, though the inhabitants still claim the Christian name, is filled with lost sheep. The statistics are “grim,” Douglas said.

Yet, Douglas and Jonelle remain hopeful that Wales can be reached.

“However grim it may seem, there are some chapels in Wales that are still very much alive and yearning to be lights in this dark world. It is with these chapels that we are working,” Douglas said.

The Yateses said their training at Southern has proved invaluable to their ministry so far.

“Practically speaking, my years in learning Hebrew and Greek have helped me assimilate the Welsh language and understand how the language works,” said Douglas, who studied in the biblical and theological studies track for his M.Div.

“Hopefully, as we move to South Wales, I will be able to use what I learned at Southern to help me as I begin to take opportunities to preach in some of the local chapels, disciple others and teach others how they can effectively evangelize.”

In fact, they have already had the opportunity to do some of this ministry.

“Most of our time here so far has been spent in language training,” Douglas said. “However in this we have found opportunities to share the gospel. ... Probably the best part of being here is we have the opportunity to meet so many people and to build relationships with them. It is through building relationships with the lost that we gain opportunities to share the gospel and to glorify God by proclaiming his grace through Jesus Christ.”

The Yateses’ mission team has recently increase by one. Jonelle gave birth to their first baby, Brennig Andrew, on May 6.

“Our baby is the first to be born in Wales from our entire Cluster,” Douglas explained. CeLT is part of the BIIP (British Island Indigenous People) Cluster. “With our child being born here in Wales ... he will be eligible to play for Wales’ rugby team. Enough said.”

The child will enter into a ripe mission field — one filled with lost sheep whom the Yateses will try to shepherd.

“We want to see God move again in this land that once had a rich heritage in the gospel,” Douglas said. “We want to see young and old worshipping God together, proclaiming his goodness and faithfulness and glorifying him with their lives.”

Anyone interested in serving as a prayer partner with Douglas and Jonelle may e-mail them at dojoyates@netzero.net. Also, the Yateses have a website for the CeLT Team at www.peopleteams.org. They hope to begin posting prayer requests soon on this site to inform people on how they can pray for the six Celtic people groups.
George Martin’s call to reaching lost persons in far-flung places did not come with the profundity of fire from heaven.

There were no signs and wonders that told him to take the gospel to the heathen. His call was confirmed not by such a subjective source, but an infallible one: holy Scripture.

“I had always imagined, in order to be a missionary, that something extraordinary or even miraculous had to take place,” he said. “You know, sort of like the Lord writing in the sky with a cloud formation: ‘George, go to Southeast Asia!’ Nothing like that ever happened to Donna (his wife) and me.

“I’ll tell you what got us — it was the Bible. At one point it seemed that on just about every page to which we turned in the Scriptures, there was the instruction to go into all the world with the gospel.”

Martin, who is now associate professor of Christian missions at Southern Seminary, was pastoring Kosmosdale Baptist Church in Louisville in the late 1980s when he sensed the irresistible call to the mission field by God through his Word.

From 1988 to 1994, Martin and wife Donna worked as missionaries in Jakarta, Indonesia. It was the lighting of a flame of passion which burns brightly in Martin today as he works to train young missionaries. In 1994, he took a teaching position as associate professor of Religion at North Greenville College in Tigerville, S.C., before coming to Southern in 1996.

Today, his priority is God and seeing his Word shared authentically and in power to the nations.

“My passion is God,” he said. “To know him is to love him. To know the Savior is to desire him above all others. I really want others, all over the world, to know God as he truly is. One of my favorite sections of the Bible is chapters 40-48 of Isaiah. The prophet offers wonderful words of comfort to the exiled people of Israel.

“Essentially, he declares to them that if they have any hope at all, that hope is to be found in their God. In those chapters, it seems that Isaiah is painting a verbal picture of God, who he is and what
he is like. Chapter after chapter, verse after verse, he speaks of the divine attributes and of the Lord’s greatness and majesty and uniqueness.”

In Indonesia, Martin served as founder, professor, and academic dean at Jakarta Baptist Theological Seminary. Martin, his wife and their two children were assigned to Jakarta by the International Missions Board to establish the new seminary.

The institution took root, and today has an enrollment of approximately 45 students. During that time, he also served as a professor at the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary.

The Martins’ third child — Rachel, who is now 10 — was born while the family was in Jakarta.

While the teaching experience was fruitful and edifying, Martin found his most satisfying joy in being a mentor and trusted friend to his Indonesian students.

“There is a big difference between theological education there and here in terms of being able to spend time with the students,” he said. “There, I got the opportunity to be out with my students preaching and teaching the gospel, and there was much more of a student-professor relationship. I got to do a lot of mentoring which I found great joy in. When we were in Jakarta, I used to think, ‘I can’t believe that the Southern Baptist Convention actually pays me to do this. I would pay them to do this.’

Missions was far from Martin’s mind during his formative years. He grew up in central Florida in a conservative Southern Baptist congregation. The church collected its annual missions offerings for Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong, but Martin doesn’t recall hearing much else about missions.

“I don’t remember a strong emphasis on missions from my years there,” he said. “Yes, we collected [those] offerings, and there were some clear, saintly ladies who were always on fire when it came to missions. But it seems that was about it. I sometimes hear others talk about hearing great and famous missionaries speak in their home churches. I don’t recall that sort of thing.”

While he was pastoring Kosmosdale, the urge to undertake missions quickly took root and grew in intensity. Working in theological education seemed a natural. During the time Martin was working on a doctor of theology degree at New Orleans Baptist Seminary in the late 1970s, he taught introduction to Old Testament. In 1982, he also served as a member of the auxiliary faculty at William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Martin said he prefers being on the mission field. He loves mentoring students, teaching them how to carry out God-centered missions and seeing a fire for missions stoked in those who previously were stone cold toward that particular calling.

“The greatest highlight is to see a student, previously not interested at all in international missions, follow God’s calling to take the good news of the gospel to peoples who have not heard,” he said. “Paul described his great ambition of Romans 15 — that is, to preach the gospel to those who have not heard — and it is wonderful to see seminary students catch the same vision.”

Martin tells of a Southern student named Kenneth who agreed to go to Honduras on a mercy mission following a hurricane which ravaged Central America. A Christian foundation phoned Martin, asking him to go, but he could not due to a heavy schedule of seminary work.

Kenneth and his family had plans for the weekend, but Martin asked Kenneth about the trip — which was to last four or five days — and he agreed to forego the plans and travel to Honduras. The trip turned into a two-week ministry which kept Kenneth out of class at Southern but gave him another kind of schooling on the missions field.

“There are things that students can learn in the classroom that they will not learn anywhere else, but also there is much that must be learned on the job,” Martin said. “Kenneth learned and was so moved by the Lord that he and his family are now ministering in Asia. When he returned from that first trip, he said, ‘Dr. Martin, please don’t take offense at this, but I learned more about missions in two weeks in Honduras than in all my classes at Southern.’”

Martin’s passion for missions is matched by his eagerness to see the task carried out according to Scripture. As the Word guided Martin to the mission field, so must it guide everything related to missions, particularly the message and methodology.

“Our manual for evangelism and missions is the Bible,” he said. “Those whom we should model our ministries after are in the Bible. It is in the Bible that God has declared the gospel. The Bible is not only inerrant and authoritative, it is also complete and sufficient for directing our lives and ministries.

“We must be certain that our goals are consistent with those of the Bible. Too often, it seems, we aim for ‘decisions’ rather than conversion; a nod of the head rather than a change of heart; the repetition of a prayer rather than repentance and faith. There is a danger when we use less than biblical methodologies based on less than biblical theologies resulting in less than biblical outcomes. Only a consistent adherence to the theology and principles of the Bible will prevent us from missing the mark in missions.”

“My passion is God. To know him is to love him. To know the Savior is to desire him above all others. I really want others, all over the world, to know God as he truly is.”
By Michael Foust

To this day, Southern Seminary student Tim Nobles can tell the story of his conversion experience as if it happened last week.

The time. The place. The details.
He was standing on the beach of Hilton Head Island, S.C., listening to his friend, Mike Schaffner, share the plan of salvation. Dusk had fallen over the peaceful ocean, but Nobles, a young college student, had anything but peace in his heart. The Holy Spirit was dealing with him, convicting him of his sin.

Soon, Nobles prayed to receive Christ. Feeling overwhelmed, he fell to his knees.
"I just hit my knees," he said. "I won’t ever forget that."

Neither will a handful of people who just happened to be on the beach at the time of Nobles’ conversion. Overjoyed, Nobles ran along the beach, telling vacationers what had just happened. He led three people to Christ. Nobles had been a Christian less than an hour, but he was already fulfilling part of the Great Commission.

An evangelist was born.

"Not only did God save me that night, but he put a word in my heart to share with other people," he said. "I led three people to the Lord — just by telling them what had happened to me. I was telling them what happened to me 10 minutes ago."

Eleven years have passed since that night of Oct. 6, 1990, but Nobles has not slowed down. Now 33, the Georgia native is even more committed to evangelize the lost and to disciple new believers. He serves as singles minister at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, where the number of active members in his Sunday School class has grown from 42 to 100 during his two years of service. He is coordinator of the church’s East Campus, which meets every Sunday morning in the eastern part of the county. He is also coordinator of the East Campus’ FAITH evangelism team, which is comprised of approximately 20 adults who go out every Wednesday night on evangelism visits.

A master of divinity student, Nobles is the father of three and the husband of his wife of eight years, Sondra.
"I don’t think I can do anymore," he
said, laughing.

Such has been the case from the moment Nobles gave his life to Christ. Since that night on the beach in 1990, he has worked to share the gospel with people in every area of his life — especially his job.

After graduating from the Medical College of Georgia (Augusta) in 1991, Nobles and his wife moved to Warner Robins, Ga. God provided both with jobs. Sondra took a teaching position as a speech and language pathologist in the local school system — even though it was mid-school year. Tim worked as an orthopedic specialist within a local hospital, helping people rehabilitate injuries.

From the start, Nobles viewed his career as a mission field.

“I got a list of all the employees that worked at (the hospital) — 2,163 if I remember correctly,” he said. “I began with a highlighter, trying to share the gospel with every employee of Houston Medical Center. As I got to know other Christians, then I would delegate them the emergency room, and they would share the gospel with people in the emergency room.”

Eventually, there was a Christian working within every group of the hospital — except for one. The hospital’s executive board had no Christians, and Nobles did not know what to do. Seeking an answer from God, he fasted for 14 days, drinking only water.

“I fasted for two weeks, (asking) that God would … communicate how I was going to get to share the gospel with this area that was untouched,” he said. “Within the hospital they were an unreached people group. My prayer was answered.”

His answer came in the form of an offer to serve as director of rehabilitative services, a position that would put him on the board of directors. He served as director for three and a half years.

“Within two weeks one of the administrators under the CEO came to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior,” he said.

This message of non-stop evangelism is one that Nobles still stresses.

“I preach ministering on the job,” he said. “That’s where we’re going to get them (lost people). Church is for the assembly of believers to worship God. … Evangelism is for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday in your workplace, in your neighbor-

hood, at your softball game, at your bowling alley. That is where you share the gospel. That is where you lead people to the Lord. Then you bring them into the house of the Lord to worship God.”

God also blessed the Nobles’ ministry at Central Baptist Church, Warner Robins, where the couple was heavily involved. Their young couples Sunday School class started off with six members but eventually grew to 88. A Bible study for youth grew from 37 to 120. A Wednesday night college class grew from four members to more than 40.

The story was the same at the hospital’s rehab clinic. When Nobles arrived at the clinic, there were only two Christians among 27 employees. When he left, 33 of the 35 employees were Christians.

“The whole hospital seemed to have been evangelized,” he said. “It was so easy to walk around and talk about God. … It just seemed like the mission had come to an end, so I knew that change was coming. We — other believers and I — had shared the gospel with a majority of the people.”

During his final three years in Warner Robins, Nobles had been serving as a part-time evangelist, travelling around Georgia and preaching to high school and college students two to three times per week.

Nobles’ call into full-time ministry came on Jan. 11, 1999, which just happened to be his 30th birthday. He was in his backyard that Sunday morning, using a flashlight to read 1 Samuel. God called, and Nobles answered. He entered the house, then looked at his wife.

“Not a word was said. She just looked at me, got real teary-eyed, and asked, ‘How long do I have to pack?’ I said, ‘I don’t know.”’

Nobles’ surrender to preach required that he give up his six-figure-salary career. He knew very little about the world of seminary education, although he did know a little about Southern. The year before, Southern President R. Albert Mohler Jr. had preached at Central Baptist.

“It met him in the hallway and had a conversation with him for about 15 minutes,” Nobles said. “It was a blessing. The very next week he sent me a hand-written letter telling me he enjoyed speaking with me and that he was praying for me. He knew that God had his hand on my life.”

Southern was the only seminary that Nobles visited. He and his wife moved to the Louisville, Ky., campus in the fall of 1999. For two weeks that fall, Nobles used his career training to practice home health therapy. Despite the high pay, Nobles calls it the worst two weeks of his life. He was living out of the will of God.

Without a job in the wings, Nobles quit his job on a Thursday. The following Sunday he met Highview Baptist minister Kevin Ezell, who phoned Nobles the next day and hired him one week later.

Once again, God had provided.

“What we found here was a flourishing ministry at Highview Baptist Church,” Nobles said.

The singles department grew so much under Nobles that it was called upon to form the foundation of Highview’s East Campus, which began services last fall. Ezell asked the majority of the singles to move east, and they did. Every Sunday morning, Ezell preaches three sermons — two at the main campus and one at the East Campus.

At the heart of the East Campus is evangelism. The campus’ sole purpose is to reach that part of the city with the gospel of Christ. The FAITH evangelism strategy is a main ingredient.

“I love the FAITH outreach,” Nobles said. “That’s my heart — discipleship and evangelism. FAITH outreach has been a blessing, because you’re training people to share their faith in a bold manner. It is the lifeline of the church. If you do not train the members of the body of Christ to go out and share the gospel and multiply themselves, your church will not grow. … We’re commanded to go forth and share the gospel.”
By Michael Foust

What do Sunday School classes, church doctrine, clean restrooms and friendly greeters all have in common?

They’re all factors that have helped attract unchurched people to the church — and kept them there. That’s the conclusion of a seven-year study by dean Thom Rainer and a research team at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth. The study, titled “Nine Habits of Churches that Reach and Keep the Unchurched,” combines both old and new research, and includes surveys of more than 4,000 churches and interviews with more than 1,000 individuals.

A highlight of the study is new research into what Rainer calls the “formerly unchurched” — that is, people who had become Christians within the previous 12 months and were active in church. This new research includes interviews with more than 350 formerly unchurched people and examines factors that attracted and kept them in the church.

Rainer, founding dean of the Billy Graham school, said past surveys that simply studied people outside of the church (the unchurched) had weaknesses.

“Something is obviously wrong because the unchurched are telling (researchers) what it would take to reach them, but they are not responding,” Rainer said. “So we asked the question: Is there another group that can give us some insight?”

The answer came in the form of interviews with those who recently entered the church (the formerly unchurched).

“Instead of asking the unchurched what it would take to reach them … why don’t we ask those people who have recently accepted Christ, who have come into the church?” Rainer recounted. “Why don’t we ask them what God did in their lives and what the church did to bring them into the church?”

Rainer is known for his research. Since coming to Southern in 1994, he has put his team’s research into five books, including “Effective Evangelistic Churches,” “High Expectations” and “The Bridger Generation.” He has two books on the horizon that include new research. “Surprising Insights from the Unchurched,” scheduled to be released in August, will include his team’s research of the formerly unchurched. The other book is “Churches That Last,” examining evangelical churches that have flourished for at least 25 years. It is scheduled to be released in 2003.

Interviews with the formerly unchurched were limited to those who are members of what Rainer calls “effective evangelistic churches,” those that met certain requirements regarding the number of annual conversions in relation to their membership. Only 4 percent of the churches in his research met such requirements.

By combining all of this research, Rainer’s team came up with the nine habits:

**Habit of Intentionality.**

Simply put, for a church to be successful it intentionally must be trying to reach the unchurched. In his survey of more than 4,000 churches, Rainer said more than 83 percent of the churches did not have an intentional plan for reaching the lost. However, that statistic flip-flopped among effective evangelistic churches. Among the formerly unchurched, more than 75 percent said that someone from the church shared the plan of salvation with them — and in most cases it was not a staff member.

**Habit of Cultural Awareness.**

“The churches that reached the unchurched were highly intentional, but they [also] understood the culture,” Rainer said. “It does not mean they compromised with culture, but they understood culture. There are some things we can do to be culturally aware.”

**Habit of High Expectations.**

Rainer said there is a direct correlation between how much is demanded of a new member and how long the new member stays active in the church.

“Churches that expect much receive much,” he said. “Churches that expect little receive little.”

**Personal evangelism classes for new members can be very fruitful.**

“One of the most effective ways to get these new Christians involved is to get them sharing their faith with those who are in the world of the unchurched,” Rainer said.

**Habit of Clear Doctrine.**

Rainer said the formerly unchurched told the researchers, “We want to hear about the doctrine on the front end. We’re not going to make a commitment to a church where you will tell us about what you believe later.”

**Habit of Risk Taking.**

“What we found was that churches that are reaching the unchurched do things and take what seem to be risks in the light of the world’s eyes — or maybe in light of the church’s eyes — that other churches do not,” Rainer said. “We see very few churches across America that truly act on faith — not foolishness, but faith.”

**Habit of Dynamic Small Groups.**

Rainer said that prior to his team’s research he had bought into the belief that Sunday school was on the decline. But among the formerly unchurched, 68 percent are involved in Sunday school.

**Habit of Effective Leadership.**

“I cannot understate the importance of leadership in these churches,” Rainer said. “Once unchurched persons visited churches, they said the pastor and the preaching were the most important factors in their returning.”

**Habit of Effective Preaching.**

Among effective churches, pastors spent an average of 20 hours a week on sermons — including the task itself. Among ineffective churches, pastors spent an average of four hours.

**Habit of Prayer.**

Rainer said that churches that prayed together and prayed often kept their new members. Often, he said, church members would call up the new members and say, “We are praying specifically for you.”
Southern Seminary moving ahead on 2 major construction projects

By Michael Foust

Six months after putting a major construction project on hold, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is moving “ahead in faith” to meet the seminary’s housing needs.

The action was taken during the seminary’s spring trustee meeting April 2-4. President R. Albert Mohler Jr. announced at the fall trustee meeting that a multi-million-dollar project to renovate Rice and Judson Halls had been put on indefinite hold following the Baptist General Convention of Texas’ proposal to slash funding of the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries. That proposal eventually passed at the BGCT’s annual meeting, leading to a potential 6 percent shortfall in the seminary’s projected income.

But Mohler announced April 3 that the $6 million Rice and Judson project — which will provide much-needed guest housing and conference rooms — will go forward. That construction has now begun.

“Though the impact of the BGCT is still uncertain, we have decided that we should go ahead with the project, due to its urgent need and financial soundness,” Mohler said.

In another move, trustees approved a major construction project that will add a total of 104 apartment units to the seminary property through a privatization arrangement with Louis and Henry Development. The project will actually come in the form of two apartment complexes — a $4.9 million, 70-unit complex on the south side of Grinstead Drive and a $2.7 million, 34-unit complex on the north side. Grinstead Drive provides the back entrance to the seminary campus.

The seminary will retain ownership of the property but will contribute the lease to Louis and Henry Development. The apartments on the south side will be reserved primarily for students, while the units on the north side will be open to the community. Construction is scheduled to begin this fall, with the apartments set to open in the fall of 2002.

“Many of the buildings on our campus are now over 70 years old,” Mohler told trustees. “We face the dual challenge of building new facilities to meet an expanding student body, even as we must invest considerable funds in older buildings that require continuing attention and renovation.”

Mohler said the Grinstead Drive project should be “highly successful.”

“Both (apartment complexes) will be leased at market rates, and the seminary may gain significant income from the partnership on an annual basis,” he said. “The seminary also retains the option of buying the entire project should we decide that this is in our best interest.”

In announcing that the Cooperative Program will comprise 35 percent of Southern Seminary’s 2001-2002 academic budget, Mohler said the seminary community remains confident that future budget needs will be met. The trustee-approved budget for the 2001-2002 fiscal year is $19,655,922 — an 8.1 percent increase over the current budget. Mohler also told trustees the seminary had received an all-time high of $900,000 in gifts.

Mohler also announced the addition of Katheryn Webb to the faculty as associate professor of Christian education. Webb, who had previously been serving as an instructor, has 16 years of administrative experience in both public and Christian schools. She earned her master of arts degree from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and her doctorate of philosophy from Southern Seminary.

“Dr. Webb brings an incredible background in education and Christian school administration,” Mohler said. “She is uniquely qualified to provide direction in the area of children’s ministry and in our Master of Arts in Christian School Administration degree.”

In other action trustees approved:

- Two renovation projects to campus housing. The Mullins complex, which houses female students, will have its bathroom facilities improved. Springdale Apartments, which houses married couples, will have its external stairs replaced.
- Tenure for six professors: Ted Cabal, James Parker, Sandra Turner, Mark Simpson, Esther Rothenbusch and Brad Waggoner. Cabal was previously dean of Boyce College, but voluntarily resigned from that position because of an illness.
Human cloning experimentation is inherently wrong, has no ethical basis and should be banned by Congress, R. Albert Mohler Jr. said during a panel discussion on “Kentucky Tonight” April 9.

The hour-long program, broadcast live statewide on Kentucky Educational Television (KET), focused on the ramifications of human cloning experimentation. The four-member panel included Mohler, and former University of Kentucky professor Panos Zavos, who recently made national headlines by testifying before a congressional subcommittee in support of cloning and has promised to clone a human within 18 months.

Mohler compared human cloning experiments to unethical experiments on humans in Nazi Germany. He said the arguments against human cloning are many, including the fact that there is a 98 percent failure rate when cloning animals. Mohler also noted that Dolly the sheep — the first cloned animal — is aging far more rapidly than a normal sheep and is abnormally obese for no particular reason.

“I think we need a basic line that is drawn clearly that says, ‘No human clonal experimentation, period,’” Mohler said. “It is too dangerous (and) it is too injurious to what it means to be human. It leads to a complete breakdown, I believe, of the total system of medical ethics and of human personhood.”

Noting that possibly hundreds of thousands of embryonic persons will be lost or destroyed through so-called “therapeutic” cloning for stem cell research, Mohler said a congressional ban on experimentation is needed.

“I wish Congress would adopt such legislation, and I would hope that the president would sign it,” he said.

Although still a theory, human cloning is a multi-stage process. First, an egg’s genetic material must be removed. Then, the genetic material of a single cell — which is taken from the person who is to be cloned — is removed and inserted into the egg. After a jolt of electricity to begin cell division, the embryo is then inserted into a surrogate mother. A sperm is not needed for human cloning. Earlier this year the British parliament passed a law allowing the cloning of embryos for stem cell research, although the embryos must be destroyed within 10 days.

The program’s other two panelists were Alberto Carrillo, an embryologist at a Louisville medical center, and Scott Williamson, assistant professor of theological ethics at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

During one part of the show, a caller asked what would happen to the extra embryos that are not used for cloning. The caller pointed out that thousands of embryos are already frozen in fertility banks.

“Those embryos obviously, eventually, will be destroyed — especially if legislation to ban such efforts comes about,” Zavos said.

Mohler said any destruction of embryos is not acceptable.

“Dr. Zavos has demonstrated a candor here that is quite remarkable in speaking of the thousands — potentially hundreds of thousands — of human embryos that just in therapeutic abortion are routinely discarded and destroyed,” Mohler said.

“We need to take into account that that represents the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of embryonic human beings. That is something that if we as a society begin to normalize, then human dignity becomes trivialized and reduced. When we move to reproductive cloning, it’s interesting that scientists say they know there are going to be mishaps. They know there are going to be mistakes. We’re talking about a 98 percent failure rate in animals.”

An award-winning television journalist with nearly 25 years of experience has been named vice president of communications for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Lawrence Smith, a reporter for WHAS-TV in Louisville, Ky., for the past 11 years, began serving in the cabinet-level position March 26. He replaces James A. Smith Sr., who left his position as director of public relations in February to become executive editor of the Florida Baptist Witness.

As vice president of communications — which is a newly created position — Smith oversees the seminary programs of public relations and media services. He becomes the first African American to serve in a vice presidential position at any Southern Baptist seminary.

“I have spent the better part of 25 years in TV news, and I have truly enjoyed it,” Smith said. “But the opportunity to serve God through Southern Seminary was too good to pass up. I know God has led me here, and I’m excited to be a part of what he is doing here.”

Smith has received various awards during his media career, including the 2000 first place award for continuing coverage from the Louisville Society of Professional Journalists. A 1979 graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, he has worked at six television stations in three states.

“Lawrence Smith is a man of great gifts and deep conviction,” Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. said. “He combines communications expertise with a clear message, and we look forward to his service at Southern Seminary.”
BWA leader Billy Kim underscores America's need for prayer, revival

By Michael Foust

Problems such as teen pregnancy and school shootings will only be solved if Christians turn to God and pray for revival in America, Billy Kim said at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary March 13.

Kim, president of the Baptist World Alliance and pastor of the 15,000-member Central Baptist Church of Suwon, Korea, was on the Louisville, Ky., campus to speak during a Southern Seminary chapel service. Ten members of his church are students at Southern.

Kim used the text in Habakkuk 3:1-3 to speak about the need of revival in the world — and specifically in the United States.

“What America needs today is a generation of God-fearing mothers and fathers willing to kneel by the bedside and pray all night their wandering sons and daughters back to the fold of God,” Kim said. “This nation needs revival. ... “There is no other nation on the face of the earth that has been blessed by God as the people of the United States of America,” he said. “Whether you like it or not, you’re the world leader militarily, economically and even religiously. Whatever you teach here, sooner or later it will influence our part of the world.”

Unless Christians begin to pray for revival, Kim said, the moral decline in America will continue.

“Ninety-six percent of all Americans say they believe in God,” he said. “Eighty percent profess to be Christians. Yet families are splitting apart in record numbers. Countless unborn babies have been killed. And there are a hundred times more burglaries in so-called Christian America than there are in so-called pagan Japan.”

Kim gave more statistics: a major crime is committed in America every 22 seconds; a murder is committed every 34 minutes; 125,000 high school girls become pregnant every year; and 100,000 high school students carry guns to school every day.

“America needs revival. American churches need revival. American Baptist churches need revival. “Prayer is the premise to revival,” Kim said. “The only way that God will send revival across the United States is (if) Christian people begin to take prayer seriously.”

Kim, who was elected president of the BWA in 2000, said he is often asked about the spiritual health of the Korean churches.

“Why is the Korean church experiencing revival?” he asked. “Aside from the working of the Holy Spirit, I believe there (are) five criteria:"

- The Korean church stresses moral and theological purity among its members.

“Our churches must have a high standard,” Kim said before adding that many of the churches in the United States could be confused for social clubs.

- The Korean church praises God in all situations.

Kim told how revival broke out in Korea in 1983 — despite the fact that the nation endured two tragedies. A Soviet fighter jet shot down a Korean Air Lines passenger plane, killing all 269 people on board. Later that year 17 South Korean delegates were killed by a bomb during a trip to Burma. It had been planted by North Koreans.

“Youth that year, Korean churches sold more hymn books than any other nation. Even through all the sad circumstances we have faced, Korean Christians have learned to praise God in all the difficult circumstances,” Kim said.

- The Korean church has endured persecution.

Kim told the story of a church that was burned to the ground when Japan occupied Korea during World War II. At the time its members were inside, worshiping.

“While they were singing, Japanese locked the door from the outside and threw gallons of kerosene [on it] and set the church on fire,” Kim recounted. “A squad of Japanese police was standing all around the church and ready to shoot if anyone would jump out.”

Yet decades later — after Japan no longer occupied Korea — delegations from both countries met together for a time of healing. Members of the Japanese delegation were so heartbroken about the incident that they raised money to build another church at the same spot. It opened in 1971, and Kim was there for the dedication.

Kim said members made a point to sing “At the Cross” because that same hymn was being sung when the church was destroyed decades earlier.

During the church dedication — and during the singing of “At the Cross” — the Japanese delegation stood up and walked over where the Korean delegation was sitting, Kim said. The two delegations “embraced one another. They hugged another. They forgave and they forgot, because that’s the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Mohler: SBC controversy reflects core beliefs about truth, liberty

By Jeff Robinson

The overarching issue that divides Southern Baptist moderates and conservatives is divergent understandings of Baptist identity, R. Albert Mohler Jr. told a group of conferees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Mohler, spoke on the issue of Southern Baptist identity in the opening address of “Southern Baptists in the New Millennium: Identity, Orthodoxy, and Cooperation.”

The SBC controversy is rooted in an argument over Baptist history and what role that history should play in the modern church, Mohler said in addressing the Feb. 26-28 conference on the SBC’s identity and history.

“Here moderates and conservatives have different understandings of its binding authority on Baptists present, or certainly which aspects of Baptist history are to be given deferential treatment over others and greater authority.”

The Southern Baptist controversy, at the most fundamental level, has been over core beliefs and the basic vision for — or worldview of — the convention, Mohler said, with many conservatives and moderates having stood on opposite sides of moral issues such as abortion as well as theological issues such as inerrancy and other core doctrinal beliefs.

The differing parties could be divided into two camps: the truth party and the liberty party, Mohler said. The truth party emphasizes the authority of Scripture and its inerrancy, while the liberty party focuses on personal autonomy. These are the theological underpinnings of the two sides’ differing views of Baptist identity, he said.

“The truth party, to speak mostly of conservatives, spoke very clearly that what was threatened was truth,” he said. “And that truth (is) the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, and those truths are non-negotiable and essential.

“The liberty party argued that what was most threatened was Baptist liberty.”

The controversy as it stands today had its beginnings in 1920 in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy and the framing of the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message statement of SBC beliefs. It escalated in the 1963 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message and the failure of a satisfactory resolution of the Broadman Bible Commentary, then with the election of Adrian Rogers as president of the SBC in 1979.

The differences between the two groups have grown even greater in the past two decades after conservatives regained leadership in the convention, Mohler said.

“The truth and the liberty party are divided by this basic vision, a vision of what the denomination is, what its history represents, what its opportunities are, how its polity is to be organized, what its ethos is to be, what kind of symbols it is to champion and prize.

“The distance between the two parties is more dramatic now, but the seeds of the present reality were sown in the 1920s, I will argue, in the controversy over supernaturalism. They were scattered during the war years, watered during the 1960s and ’70s, and they matured during the last two decades of the 20th century.”

The Southern Baptist controversy is much deeper than some would believe, Mohler said, noting that by the 1990s crises of theology, authority, confessionalism, polity and culture existed along with identity in the SBC.

These factors remain in dividing conservatives and moderates and have been profoundly manifested in recent revisions of the Baptist Faith and Message. Revisions in 1998 — the adoption of the family amendment — and last year displayed publicly the confessional differences between the two sides, he said.

Said at Southern

“There are some people in the ecumenical movement and elsewhere who would say, ‘We need to forget about all this doctrine, all this theology stuff. Just focus on the environment or focus on some good social cause.’ … That is not the way to true biblical unity. We do not purchase biblical unity at the expense of theological integrity.”

— Timothy George, Beeson Divinity School dean, in a Feb. 27 chapel sermon.

“It is chutzpah when we think that what we think about things is more important than what God says about them. Whether he means to do it or not, that’s what a topical preacher says. He says, ‘I think what I have to say about this is more important than what God has to say about it.’ … God didn’t say anything about it, you don’t need to say anything about it, either.”

— Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, on the importance of expository preaching. Patterson was on campus April 2 as part of a one-day preaching seminar entitled “Power in the Pulpit.”

“Abundant blessing from God carries with it temptation. The temptation of blessing is the temptation of pride. … When God calls, don’t look at the size or status of the ministry. Look at God’s call.”

— Wayne Grudem, professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in a Feb. 13 chapel sermon.
Hobbs’ views on Christ, Scripture worthy of embrace, Dockery says

By Michael Foust

During the long struggle to gain control of the Southern Baptist Convention, both sides of the inerrancy controversy tried to claim Herschel Hobbs, the towering figure who had helped lead the denomination into the second half of the 20th century.

Hobbs, though, preferred not to be labeled, saying simply he was a “progressive conservative” and an “old-fashioned Southern Baptist.”

While admitting that Hobbs’ views are indeed difficult to label, Union University President David S. Dockery said Hobbs’ beliefs about Christ and Scripture can be embraced by all Southern Baptists.

Dockery made his remarks March 22 during a Founders’ Day address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Each spring during Founders’ Day, the seminary community celebrates the life of a Southern Seminary pioneer.

Hobbs, a two-time graduate of Southern Seminary, is perhaps known best for his leadership in developing the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement of Southern Baptist beliefs. As SBC president, he helped pen the statement of faith that stood until the 2000 edition was approved overwhelmingly by messengers in Orlando, Fla.

Dockery said that although several controversies arose from the 1963 statement — particularly on issues surrounding the preamble and the article on the Scriptures — Hobbs’ view of the Bible was very clear.

“Throughout his life and ministry, Hobbs unapologetically affirmed the inspiration of the Bible,” Dockery said. “He was quite clear that the Bible is an inspired book. He hesitatingly affirmed that the Bible is historically accurate and scientifically correct. ‘The Bible is not a textbook in science,’ he said, ‘but when it speaks in these realms it speaks truth.’

“Thus, Hobbs, like his mentor A.T. Robertson, maintained that the Bible is inerrant in its original autographs. He insightfully noted that to use the word infallible weakens the statement” because it can have two definitions: “without error” and “anything that does what it is supposed to do.”

Dockery said Hobbs believed “the stronger word for the Bible is inerrant.”

Hobbs also was explicit in his views on Christ, Dockery said.

“Hobbs’ theology was Christocentric in the best sense of that term,” Dockery said. “He believed that Jesus Christ is the key to humanity’s knowledge of God and history. Hobbs saw Christ throughout Holy Scripture. ‘The Old Testament,’ he said, ‘sounds the messianic hope. The Gospels record Christ’s incarnation. Acts relates his continuing work through the Holy Spirit. The Epistles interpret his person and work, and Revelation proclaims his final triumph and glory.’

Dockery said “Hobbs was at his very best describing the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners. ... He explained that by the death of the Son of God and by nothing less could a just God become justifier of sinful men. ... Hobbs believed that Christ’s death was sufficient and substitutionary, redeeming humans from the penalty of sin and reconciling them to God, doing for them what they could not do for themselves.”

Years after the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message was adopted, its language on the Scriptures was at the center of theological controversy. Much of the debate focused on one sentence — “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.” This sentence was used by some individuals as authorization to set the words of Jesus over against the words of Paul, other New Testament authors and much of the Old Testament. The sentence was removed in the 2000 edition and replaced with language identifying Christ as the focus of all divine revelation.

Dockery, though, said Hobbs’ intention in using the language was not to muddy the theological waters. Dockery said the additional phrase “reflects Hobbs’ belief that as an individual reads the Bible it is essential that he keeps in mind that Christ is central throughout.”

The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message was written in part as a response to charges of liberalism within the denomination. The only previous statement of belief came in 1925.

“It (the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message) can easily be said that this was Hobbs’ finest hour,” Dockery said. “The resulting 1963 statement affirmed the convention’s biblical roots and built a consensus that helped advance Southern Baptist work for years, even decades.

“Yet a similar response failed to develop in the early years of the inerrancy controversy. Whether or not the history of the last two decades could have been different is impossible to say. Hobbs conjectured that they may have been.”

Hobbs — who called Southern Seminary “Mother” — said the role of seminaries should be very clear.

“He claimed that if these leaders [students] are to lead as Southern Baptists, they must be indoctrinated as to those things which Southern Baptists believe and practice,” Dockery said. “(The seminaries’) reason for being is to prepare future Southern Baptist leaders for a specific task.”
Every week, Southern faculty and staff minister in scores of churches and institutions – as preachers, guest lecturers, music leaders and many other roles. Here is a selected sample of engagements for recent and upcoming weeks.

**Speaking**

**Austria**  
James Parker, Professor of Worldview and Culture, seminars, European Theological Seminary, Schloss Mittersill, Aug. 4-11.

**Canada**  
Daniel Block, Associate Dean, Scripture and Interpretation, School of Theology, John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, teaching, Trinity Evangelical School at Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, July 9-12.

Ed Stetzer, Director, Nehemiah Project and Church Planting Center, conference leader, Training Leaders for the Church Planting Harvest Conference, Calgary, Alberta, June 21-24.

**Malaysia**  
Stetzer, teaching, Church Planting Training, Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, Penang, July 10-13.

John Mark Terry, Professor of Christian Missions, visiting professor, Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, Penang, July 9-26.

**Philippine**  
James D. Chancellor, W.O. Carver Professor of Christian Missions and World Religions, teaching, Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio City, June 8-July 9.

**California**  
Ronald Nash, Professor of Christian Philosophy, AM Service, South Valley Community Church, Gilroy, Sept. 2.

Mozelle Clark Sherman, Senior Professor of Church Music, workshop leader and facilitator, Chinese Pastor’s Institute, San Mateo, August 5-8.

**Colorado**  
Nash, lecture, Summit Ministry, Manitou Springs, April 14.

Nash, lecture, Summit Ministry, Manitou Springs, May 21.

Nash, lecture, Summit Ministry, Manitou Springs, June 5.

Nash, lecture, Summit Ministry, Manitou Springs, June 11-12.


Nash, lecture, Summit Ministry, Manitou Springs, July 11.

Nash, lecture, Summit Ministry, Manitou Springs, July 30.

Bruce A. Ware, Senior Associate Dean, School of Theology, Professor of Christian Theology, teaching, Campus Crusade for Christ summer Staff Institute, Ft. Collins, July 2-13.

**Florida**  
Daniel L. Akin, Dean, School of Theology, conference leader, Student Leadership University, Orlando, June 28.

Akin, conference leader, Student Leadership University, Orlando, July 5.

Akin, conference leader, Student Leadership University, Orlando, July 19.

Akin, conference leader, Student Leadership University, Orlando, July 26.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President, Theology and the Modern Church Conference, Lake Yale Baptist Assembly, Eustis, Sept. 24-25.

Nash, AM Service, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Naples, April 8.

Thom Rainer, Dean, Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, Leadership Conference, FBC, Callahan, Sept. 8.

Rainer, preaching, Black Creek Baptist Association Evangelism Conference, Orange Park, Sept. 17-18.

Rainer, revival, Neptune Beach Baptist Church, Neptune Beach, Sept. 22-24.

Rainer, Reaching the Unchurched Conference, Jacksonville Baptist Association, Jacksonville, Sept. 30.

**Georgia**  
Mohler, PM Service, Pray’s Mill Baptist Church, Douglasville, Aug. 22.

Rainer, Sunday School Leadership Conference, Georgia Baptist Convention, Toccoa, Aug. 2-4.

Rainer, Sunday School Leadership Conference, Georgia Baptist Convention, Norman Park, Aug. 9-11.

Rainer, keynote speaker, Sunday School Leadership Banquet, Oak Hill Baptist Church, Griffin, Aug. 18.

**Illinois**  
Rainer, speaking, High Expectations Conference, Vandalia, July 12.

Douglas Smith, Professor of Church Music, conducting, Illinois Baptist Youth Orchestra, Bourbonnais, July 23-27.

Ware, speaking, Edgren Fellowship Annual Meeting, Arlington Heights, June 27.

**Indiana**  

**Iowa**  
Nash, speaking, Cedar Falls Bible Conference, Waterloo, Aug. 3-5.

**Kentucky**  
Akin, AM & PM Services, Macedonia Baptist Church, Owensboro, June 17.

Akin, AM Service, Lynn Acres Baptist Church, 50th Anniversary, July 15.

Rainer, Wednesday night services, study on Revelation, Highview Baptist Church, Louisville, Aug. 15-Dec. 12.

**Louisiana**  
Rainer, leader, High Expectations Conference Leader, Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles, Aug. 16-17.

**Publications**

Hal Ostrander, Assoc. Professor of Christian Theology, columnist on faith/science issues in bpnews.net.

New Jersey
Craig Blaising, Joseph Emerson
Brown Professor of Christian
Theology, Assoc. VP for
Doctoral Studies, Summer Bible
Conference, Maranatha Baptist
Church, Hazlet, Aug. 6-12.

New York
Nash, lecturer, Practical Bible
College, Binghamton, Aug. 15.
Stetzer, keynote speaker,
Oversees Chinese Mission
Church Conference, New
York, Sept. 1-3.

North Carolina
Akin, Family Revival,
Edgewood Baptist Church,
Winston Salem, Aug. 18-19.
Rainer, preaching, Sunday
School Leadership
Development Week,
Ridgecrest, July 13-16.
Rainer, speaker, Sunday
School Fall Leadership
Training, Providence Baptist
Church, Raleigh, Aug. 12-13.
Walker, Conference speaker,
National Baptist Congress of
CE, Charlotte, June 18.

Ohio
Rainer, Church Consultation
Conference, Cincinnati,
Sept. 10-11.

Oklahoma
Akin, AM & PM Services,
Graceway Baptist Church,
Oklahoma City, July 22.
Akin, Marriage Conference,
FBC, Duncan, Aug. 10-12.

Oregon
Ware, AM Service, FBC,
LaGrande, July 15.

South Carolina
Rainer, Sunday School
Conference, FBC, Taylors,

Tennessee
Akin, Marriage and Family
Conference, Union Baptist
Church, Knoxville, Sept. 8-9.
Mohler, AM & PM Services,
Bellevue Baptist Church,
Cordova, Aug. 19.
Nash, lecturer, Summit/Bryan
College, Dayton, July 25.
Eric L. Johnson, Associate
Professor of Personality and
Pastoral Theology,
presentation, American
Association of Christian
Counselors conference,
Nashville, Sept. 1.
Rainer, speaker, Metro
Evangelism Conference,
Southern Baptist Evangelism
Walker, revival speaker,
Castala Baptist Church,

Texas
Akin, Marriage Conference,
Lawn Terrace Baptist Church,
Akin, Marriage Conference,
Mohler, AM Services, Hyde
Park Baptist Church, Austin,
June 3.
Parker, speaking, Civa
Conference/Trinity Arts
Conference 2001, University of
Dallas, Dallas, May 31-June 3.
Rainer, preaching, Leadership
Conference, FBC, Grapevine,
Rainer, Church Consultation,
Westminster Presbyterian

Virginia
Akin, preaching, Kempsville
Baptist Church, Virginia
Beach, Aug. 13.
Akin, preaching, Nansemond
River Baptist Church, Suffolk,
Aug. 27.

Wisconsin
Walker, Preaching Conference,
Lakeland Baptist Association,
Milwaukee, May 10-11.

Etcetera
Robert Don Hughes, M. Theron
Rankin Professor of Cross
Cultural Communication and
Missions, English language
pastor, First Korean Baptist
Church, Louisville, Ky.
Rainer, interim pastor,
Northside Baptist Church,
Indianapolis, Ind.
Southern Seminary’s trustees, in their April 2-4 meeting, voted unanimously to give the E.Y. Mullins Award to Patterson. Mohler said the seminary was expressing its “appreciation and thanksgiving to God for the historic role [Patterson] played in putting his life and ministry on the line for the cause of truth. In a very real sense, the fact that we are here today, celebrating what God has done, is a testimony to God’s faithfulness demonstrated to us in putting his life and ministry on the line for the historic role [Patterson] played in putting his life and ministry on the line for the cause of truth. In a very real sense, the fact that we are here today, celebrating what God has done, is a testimony to God’s faithfulness demonstrated to us in every ‘ism’ that comes along.”

Fewer Christians would succumb to unbiblical teaching if more ministers practiced expositional preaching from the pulpit, Paige Patterson said at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary April 2.

Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, was on campus to participate in the second-annual “Power in the Pulpit.” The former Southern Baptist Convention president was the keynote preacher during the one-day preaching seminar.

Saying “that there is no genuinely good preaching except exposition,” Patterson said groups such as the Mormons have taken advantage of church members who had a poor knowledge of the Bible.

“It is imperative today that our people be taught the Word of the Lord,” he said. “(If they are not,) they will not know what to do about the Mormons, who claim that they have more converts from Baptists than from anybody else.”

While disputing the Mormons’ claim, Patterson said that it could be partially true because “we have not taught our people the truths of the Word of God. If we had, they wouldn’t be sitting ducks out there on the pond for every ‘ism’ that comes along.”

Patterson said that ministers who strictly preach topical sermons instead of exegetical sermons do a disservice to the Bible.

“It is chutzpah when we think that what we think about things is more important than what God says about them,” he said. “Whether he means to do it or not, that’s what a topical preacher says. He says, ‘I think what I have to say about this is more important than what God has to say about it.’”

Patterson added that if “God didn’t say anything about it, you don’t need to say anything about it, either.”
60s
David Shreve (’65) is minister of music, Manly Memorial BC, Lexington, VA. He published his second book of trivia: Reminiscence for Seniors. His website is www.EnduringPress.com. Reba Cobb (’67) is coordinator of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Resource Center serving as the organization’s chief operating officer, Atlanta, GA.

70s
Harry Gilbert (’73) is minister of music and senior adults, McCaysville FBC, GA. His wife, Katie, is a professor of music, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, GA. Robert Southard (’73) is pastor, FBC, Kansas City, KS. Paul Fitzgerald (’75) graduated with DMin in Marriage and Family, May 19, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, PA. He and his wife, Sue, have one son, David. Michael Adams (’76) is pastor, Central BC, Jonesboro, AR. He and his wife, Jane, have two sons, Jed and Matt. Bob Reeder (’77) is minister of music, FBC, Oakland Park, FL.

80s
Phil Wilkes (’85) is pastor, Forest Park FBC, Forest Park, GA. Charlie Bridges (’88) is pastor, Grove Level BC, Dalton, GA. Barry Jude (’88) is pastor, Heritage Church, Montgomery, AL. He and his wife, Kim, have four children.

90s
James Dean (’91) is pastor, FBC, Forest City, AR. Jerry Bailey (’95) is part-time youth minister, Crab Orchard BC, Lincoln County Assoc., KY. Susan Hewitt (’95) is a family therapist at a wilderness camp for adolescents, Knoxville, TN. Jonathan Propes (’98) is minister of education, Tabernacle BC, Decatur, IL. Jim Stanifer (’98) is business administrator, Rocky Bayou BC, Niceville, FL. Hub Harvey (’99) is crusade associate, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. He and his wife, Joy, now reside in Spartanburg, SC. He was ordained to the gospel ministry, Feb. 25, FBC, Demopolis, AL. James Smith (’99) is executive editor, FL Baptist Witness, the FL state paper of the FL Baptist Convention. He previously served as director of public relations, Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY.

2000s
Barbara Ham (’00) is child care worker, Connie Maxwell Children’s Home, Florence, SC. Ricky Lee (’00) is pastor, FBC, Booneville, AR and is Cooperative Program promotion and partnership missions coordinator, AR Baptist State Convention. Doug Miller (’00) is young adult associate, KY Baptist Convention, Louisville, KY. He is a fourth-generation KY denominational worker.

MISSIONS
Wayne Terry (’87) and his wife, Joyce, have been appointed by NAMB as church-planting missionaries, Myrtle Beach, SC. He serves as the coastal church-planting strategist, SC Baptist Convention. Joe (’94) and Michelle Silva have been appointed as missionaries by the IMB, Mar. 10. They will serve as church developers in Mozambique. He will initiate church starts among the Tswa and Chopi people and she will conduct church and home outreach. They have two children, Maggie Elizabeth and Aaran Daniel. Larry (’97) and Angie Burt (’98) Sowders serve as church planting missionaries, Cincinnati, OH where Larry is pastor, Lifespring BC, Cincinnati, OH. Jason (’00) and Heather Gumari are serving as church planting missionaries, Oakland, PA.

Southern Seminary couple appointed by IMB

The International Mission Board recently appointed Joe and Michelle Silva to serve as church developers in southern Africa.

The Silvas will work in Mozambique where Joe will initiate and facilitate church starts and Michelle will conduct church and home outreach. The Silvas reside in Fort Smith, Ark.

Joe has served since 1996 as pastor of Long Ridge Baptist Church in Booneville, Ark. Previously, he served as youth minister and associate pastor of Thornhill Baptist Church in Frankfort, Ky. Michelle has worked as a pharmacist with various companies since 1996 and hopes to use this experience on the mission field.

Joe received a bachelor of arts degree from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary. Michelle received an associate of arts degree from Westark Community College in Fort Smith and a doctor of pharmacy degree from the University of Arkansas College of Pharmacy in Little Rock.

BIRTHS
Ted (’78) and Diane Kandler celebrate the first birthday of their grandson, Kandler Gardner Baker, Feb. 26. Bobby (’00) and Marlo McDonald celebrate the birth of Andrew Brice, born Feb. 15. Bobby is the special representative to the president at his alma mater, Erskine College, Due West, SC. The family resides in Greenwood, SC.

DEATHS
James Ned Taylor (’35) died at age 88, Spartanburg, SC, Dec. 6, 1999. He served as a minister for more than 40 years in NC and SC. He served as trustee, Garner Webb College and NC Baptist Children’s Home and as advisor for several religious and education institutions. He was an active member, FBC, Spartanburg. Mary Elizabeth Crocker Taylor (’36) died at age 90, Spartanburg, SC, Jan. 10. She was married to the late James Ned Taylor. She taught for many years and was active in FBC, Spartanburg’s WMU. She is survived by three sons. John Totten (’57) died Jan. 20 at age 75, Winston-Salem, NC. He served 22 years as associate pastor, Knollwood BC, Winston-Salem before retiring in 1990. He is survived by his wife Frances. Donald Rollins (’61) died at age 69, Jan. 29. He and his wife served many years as home missionaries to Alaska starting missions, directing the Alaska Baptist Native School of Theology, and pastoring. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Marianne, who resides in Shalimar, FL.

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