

# Texas Baptist Forum

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### Fertility & theology

“Fertility, not theology, cause of decline” (Oct. 31) introduces a foreign dichotomy. The question to be asked is why “conservative women had more children than mainline women did.” The answer is solidly theological.

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Letters are welcomed. Send them to [marvknox@baptiststandard.com](mailto:marvknox@baptiststandard.com); 250 words maximum.



*"There is only one 'true north' in the Christian life. Only one purpose which will direct your life with unerring accuracy, which will guide you home every single time. ... You and I will need to remember and live by this purpose, this 'true north' every day for the rest of this year, and especially as we draw nearer to the hectic holidays ahead. Otherwise, we'll die the death of a thousand Chihuahuas, one tiny bite at a time."*

**Jim Denison**

*Pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas ("The Word Today" e-mail devotional)*

*"If we present the gospel simply as a life-improvement program, well, boy-there's lots of things that work to improve your life. You could get into yoga, become a vegetarian."*

**Kirk Cameron**

*Actor known for his role in the 1980s situation comedy Growing Pains as well as a more recent role in the Left Behind movie series, commenting on findings of a Newsweek/Beliefnet poll. (Agape Press)*

*"Now that we're prime-time, we don't want to start acting like American idols."*

**Christianity Today**

*An editorial in the monthly magazine, on the responsibility of evangelicals in the news media.*

The biblical worldview sees children as a blessing. God opens the womb (Genesis 29:31) and blesses with the command, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Children are a "heritage of the Lord" and a "reward," "arrows" filling one's quiver (Psalm 127), a reason for one to be "happy" as they gather "like olive plants around your table" (Psalm 128:2-3).

All one has to do is read the stories of Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth, or the desperate acts of Tamar, to get a picture of how women raised in the light of God's instruction viewed children.

The 20th century saw a marked cultural drift from this perspective. It was the century of birth control and abortion, of cultural denigration of the role of full-time motherhood; a century where biology, guided by the individual, not God, determined fertility. Is it so strange that, in churches where the Bible was no longer the center of the worldview, births should decline and attendance should wane?

As a pastor and father of nine, I sometimes quip, "If we can't grow the church one way, we'll grow it another." And, indeed, our church has seven more people than would have been the case if we'd just had the culturally accepted "two." But my reasons are unashamedly theological.

*Thomas Whitehouse*

*McAllen*

### **Problem solving**

So, let me get this straight: In reference to remarks by Gerald Bastin (Nov. 14), in order to solve our Texas Baptist problems, all Paige Patterson needs to do is apologize to Russell Dilday?

Surely our problems are not so petty. Say it isn't so!

*Bob Stanford*

*Austin*

### **Questions of praise**

What do you think about when you hear the word “praise”?

When was the last time you can remember being praised or praising someone else? What is the purpose of praise? Is praise an art form that has been lost in this world of competitive self-sufficiency?

Have we become mesmerized by the pop culture into believing that praise is limited to something we do only when we sing hymns and other religious music? Can we praise the Lord in praising others? Do we not praise others because we sense that we are not worthy of praise, and therefore we are unable to offer something that we do not possess?

Do we believe that only after we depart to be with the Lord will he then, hopefully, say to us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”? Is there no praise from the Lord to his servants in this life for their being good and faithful?

Are we so modernized and so secularized that we think life is all about externals—our works—and have lost the discernment between a successful life and a spiritual life?

According to Scripture, the authority that we possess as servants of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be used to exhort one another, to encourage one another, to edify one another. Praise received and given in the spirit of the gospel is a good fountain of living water that refreshes and regenerates his faithful servant.

*Don Bebee*

*Liberty Hill*

## **God and evil**

In response to James Rudin's article, "How can a benevolent God allow evil?" (Oct. 31): God's purpose from eternity was that he be worshipped and obeyed.

In his appearance in the Garden of Eden, Satan showed that he was in rebellion against God from before creation.

The curse God put on Satan now spreads to earth. For the literal serpent to be "cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field (Genesis 3:14) communicates earth is now under the curse of God also.

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If Adam had not sinned, he could have continued on earth in its Edenic state. Adam's sin removed God's protective and provisional cover, and now Adam suffers from the curse of the ground from which he had been protected.

Mankind victimizes itself in allowing Satan to control him through the three-fold fleshly appetite (Genesis 3:6). Mankind's sin is cumulative on earth, adding to the consequences of God's curse being on earth. Both earth and mankind bring on themselves God's escalating judgment until Jesus' appearing.

Satan's war against God involves all of earth and mankind that produces evil on earth.

*Ernest V. May Jr.*

*Livingston*

## Have 'like minds' replaced the Bible?

A young show-off would have drowned trying to swim too far, and his brother yelled, “Come back!” With every breath, his garbled cry got farther behind. When the swimmer’s pride turned to fear, he went back. My twin was a poor swimmer but followed me.

The fundamentalist pastor yells from the bank while the servant pastor swims. Jesus washing his disciples’ feet is our pattern.

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Fundamentalists ignore 1 Peter 5:3: “Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example.”

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary hasn’t stoned prophets, but its leaders’ practice of control and dominance has split churches and conventions and fired missionaries—all in the name of God.

Its president searched worldwide for “like minds” to replace the “fired” 30 million adherents in the Baptist World Alliance. “Like minds” has replaced the Bible as the doctrinal guideline with Southern Baptist Convention’s 2000 Baptist Faith & Message. If pride had weight, they would need wheelbarrows.

As long as no one takes a stand against pastors being rulers, the International Mission Board acting as Nebuchadnezzar, the SBC drifting toward Catholicism, control and dominance will reign and individual priesthood (born at Calvary) must bow to authority.

Hooray for the BGCT rejecting “like minds” having a booth at their convention.

*Rex Ray*

## *Bonham*

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.