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ATLANTA (ABP) — Rob Nash, one day after being elected global missions coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, urged about 300 Baptists at an Associated Baptist Press banquet to pursue “information integrity” on their way to becoming “citizens of the world.”

In his first public address since election by the CBF Coordinating Council, Nash urged listeners June 22 in Atlanta to become aware of their place in the world.

"For me, the greatest gift that I can possibly give to the world is the gift of my own self-awareness," said Nash, currently dean of the school of religion and international studies at Shorter College, a Baptist school in Rome, Ga.

It is important for Baptists to have and use credible sources of news and information, said Nash, emphasizing the value of ABP, a Florida-based independent news service, and other free Baptist media.

Cultivating self-awareness involves gathering information from a variety of sources and through differing mediums. When Americans read only

American news or watch only American TV, he said, it only reinforces prejudices and confirms the “natural sense of self.”

“Self-awareness can help us to push back and overcome the powerful cultural tug,” he said. “What is demanded, though, is the spiritual discipline of awareness. That awareness occurs only through an intentional effort to step outside our personal space and see ourselves as others see us.”

The process of cultivating "information integrity," Nash said, "helps me to become a citizen of the world, even as I am a citizen of this country. It helps me to distinguish being Christian from being an American."

The son of Baptist missionaries to the Philippines, Nash, 47, lived 13 years in that country and has made extended visits to more than 30 countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and South America. He said his international travel has been vital to an understanding of his own self, and only through that understanding can he help others.

“There’s something about being in a culture that seems strange to you that causes you to learn about yourself,” Nash said. “The picture of myself that I discover is often not a very flattering one."

While a visit to Asia can "help me see myself as I really am," Nash said, he can always count on American culture — like “a nice, warm hot-tub” — to lull him back to complacency. There is nothing more comfortable than spending time with people just like us, he said. And that can be deadly to Christians as they try to spread the gospel.

“When I’m around people who are just like me, I lose myself, because there is not much left against which to identify me for who I really am,” Nash said. “I think the same is true for the American church. We as American Christians often fail to see ourselves for who we really are. It’s an illness that we need to somehow overcome.”

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.