

# Cybercolumn by John Duncan: Forgiveness

August 17, 2007

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## Cybercolumn: Forgiveness

**By John Duncan**

I'm sitting here under the old oak tree, looking for a quote. We live in the age of the sound bite, the dazzling quote, the striking quotation. We are a shorthand society that wants life minimized, shrunk down and sometimes summarized in a few short words or sentences. For these reasons, a quote helps once in a while, and I find myself looking for quotes.

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| John<br>Duncan |
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I guess I could quote Hank Aaron, who after Barry Bonds hit his record-breaking home run, said, "My hope today... is that the achievement of this record will inspire others to chase their own dreams." Chase your dreams! Or I could quote a Crandall Canyon, Utah, miner who felt guilty and wondered if he should have turned back to help his fellow miners: "I think I did everything I could. It was like having your brights on in a fog." Or I could quote, C. S. Lewis. After all, I just returned from Cambridge, England, where he once taught English. He said, "It is astonishing that sometimes we believe that we believe what, really, in our heart we do not believe." He spoke of forgiveness and stated that for a long time he believed in forgiveness, but did not really believe it until he practiced forgiveness, finally forgiving a cruel school teacher from his youth.

The old oak tree here has lived through storms and hard Texas summers and winters, days when limbs have been chopped off. and days when the storms puts stress on the tree's roots, days when life under this old tree delivers pain in the form of broken relationships and small sins under the seismic universe that grow into big battles. C.S. Lewis states the obvious, to live, to heal, and to grow, to enjoy the joy of life and of Christ; forgiveness in its simplest form requires surrender and humility, two of our most difficult human traits. Philip Yancey calls forgiveness a most "unnatural act."

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## **DOWN HOME: Puppies & daughters follow their passion**

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### **DOWN HOME: Puppies & daughters follow their passion**

Have you digested any good books this summer?

Our dog, Topanga, has. Literally. Unfortunately, she's not any smarter or more learned. But she did look sort of full there for awhile.

Every now and then, I read a really good book that gives me plenty to

“chew” on. And I totally ingest the very best books. Absorb them. They become part of me.

Somehow, I think Topanga is more shallow than I. She only chewed on the cover and the corners of a few pages. Also, she hasn’t given any indication the book affected her life substantially.

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# **SBC activist pastor wants God to zap Americans United officials**

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## **SBC activist pastor wants God to zap Americans United officials**

**By Hannah Elliott**

*Associated Baptist Press*

BUENA PARK, Calif. (ABP)—An early candidate for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention has called on Baptists to pray for misfortune to befall employees of a church-state watchdog group.

Wiley Drake, a pastor and radio crusader who spearheaded the SBC

boycott of Disney several years ago, issued an Aug. 14 statement calling for “imprecatory prayer” from his supporters against two communications staffers for [Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#).

Wiley Drake,  
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radio crusader  
from Buena  
Park, Calif., has  
called for  
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two  
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Americans  
United for  
Separation of  
Church and  
State. (ABP  
PHOTO/Greg  
Warner)

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## EDITORIAL: Three surveys &

# some good news

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## EDITORIAL:

### Three surveys & some good news

The “whoosh” you hear is another crop of young adults leaving church. Many of them won’t be back.

Their departure has been documented by a disturbing—but not surprising—national survey. The [LifeWay Research](#) study revealed:

- More than two-thirds of young adults stop attending U.S. Protestant churches for at least a year from age 18 to 22.
- Seventy percent of 23- to 30-year-olds drop out of church.



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# Faith Digest

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## Faith Digest

**Belief in afterlife ages well.** As Americans get older, their confidence in the afterlife increases, according to a recent survey of people over 50 conducted by [AARP](#), the advocacy group for seniors. Seventy-three percent of older people believe in life after death, and two-thirds of those believers say that confidence has grown with age, according to the survey. While 86 percent of the people who responded say there is a heaven, and nine in 10 of them believe they will go there, they are less sure about other people. People who believe in heaven say an average of 64 percent of others will get there, too. Among those who say they believe in heaven, 29 percent believe admittance is based on faith in Jesus Christ, 25 percent believe “good people” go to heaven, and 10 percent think everyone will go there.

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**Committee recommends Haggard's successor.** [New Life Church](#), the Colorado megachurch that lost its senior pastor, Ted Haggard, to a sex and drug scandal last fall, expects to have a new leader soon. Brady Boyd, an associate senior pastor at Gateway Church in Southlake, near Fort Worth, has been chosen by the pastoral selection committee as their nominee to lead the Colorado Springs church. Boyd, 40, previously was senior pastor of Trinity Fellowship Church in Hereford. Boyd was slated to begin spending three Sundays, starting Aug. 12, with the congregation, during which time they will have opportunities to get acquainted with him before they vote Aug. 27 on whether to accept him as pastor.

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# Texas Baptist Forum

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## Texas Baptist Forum

### **Committee really listens**

Four members of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' executive director search committee came to Austin to "listen" to Texas Baptists in this area.

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| • <a href="#">Jump to online-only letters below</a>                                                                                    |
| Letters are welcomed. Send them to <a href="mailto:marvknox@baptiststandard.com">marvknox@baptiststandard.com</a> ; 250 words maximum. |



*"My religious affiliation, my religious practices and the degree to which I am a good or not-so-good Catholic, I prefer to leave to the priests. That would be a much better way to discuss it. That's a personal discussion, and they have a much better sense of how good a Catholic I am or how bad a Catholic I am."*

**Rudy Giuliani**

Republican U.S. presidential candidate, and a Catholic (Associated Press/RNS)

*"My church says I can't drink alcohol, right? OK, should I say as governor of Massachusetts, we are stopping alcohol sales? No. My religion is for me and how I live my life. So don't confuse what I do, as a member of my faith, with what I think ought to be done by government."*

**Mitt Romney**

Republican U.S. presidential candidate, and a Mormon (ABCNews.go.com/RNS)

*"Every time I see my sweet girl Lisa, I believe in God. Every time I see Bart, I believe in the devil."*

**Homer Simpson**

Father in "The Simpsons," when asked about his religious beliefs during an "interview" (USA Today/RNS)

Like many Texas Baptists, I was concerned that the committee had an agenda and came to talk rather than listen. I left the meeting invigorated by the conversation. They really did come to listen and ask some probing questions about what we thought should be the characteristics and attributes of the new director. Yes, and they even took notes and listened to our concerns.

I would like to tell you many Texas Baptists attended; unfortunately that was not the case. I encourage Texas Baptists to attend these sessions when they come to their area.

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## On the Move

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## On the Move

- **Larry Atchley** to Freedom Community Church in Midlothian as pastor.
- **Cliff Cary** to First Church in Amarillo as minister to children from First Church in Brownwood, where he was minister of education and children.
- **Manuel Casso** has resigned as pastor of Second Church in San Marcos.
- **Megan Chadwick** to First Church in Denton as media director.

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# Progressive Baptists protest hip-hop lyrics, global warming & Iraq war

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## Progressive Baptists protest hip-hop lyrics, global warming & Iraq war

**By Adelle M. Banks**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Delegates to the annual meeting of the [Progressive National Baptist Convention](#) have called for protests of music lyrics demeaning to women and minorities.

“We are speaking out publicly against the denigration of women, minorities and the kind of self-hatred that is often perpetuated by bad language and bad music,” said DeWitt Smith Jr., president of the historically black denomination. “Our youth department, in particular, has asked us not to patronize the rappers that use language that denigrates our people and others.”

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# Rich pastors not common, but not endangered species

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## Rich pastors not common, but not endangered species

**By Matt Kennedy**

*Associated Baptist Press*

DALLAS (ABP)—Success in many professions is expected to bring riches. With pastors, however, luxurious lifestyles traditionally are frowned upon. Some people have a hard time listening to sermons against greed and false idols from a pastor wearing a Rolex and a new Armani suit.

Nonetheless, the wealthy pastor is not an endangered species. The growth of megachurches, big book deals and media stardom have increased their number in recent years.

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Joel Osteen discontinued receiving his \$200,000 salary from Lakewood Church in Houston after his first book, *Your Best Life Now*, sold more than 4 million copies. Some sources have reported he could earn up to \$13 million on the contract for his second book. (RNS photo/courtesy of Lakewood Church)

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# Two years after Hurricane Rita, Southeast Texas still rebuilds

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Volunteers

(left to  
right)

Crystal

Moody,

Morgan

McNew,

Natalie

Bagley and

Victoria

Waugh

help paint a

house as

part of

Nehemiah's

Vision.

## Two years after Hurricane Rita, Southeast Texas still rebuilds

**By Whitney Farr**

*Communications Intern*

VIDOR—It sounds like a story from two years ago—victims of hurricane Rita receiving help from total strangers—but this is not an old newspaper.

For most Americans, the horrors of Rita have become a distant memory. But many Southeast Texas residents still live in the same nightmare as in the day the storm struck.

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# Austrian students have Super Summer of service in Texas

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## Austrian students have Super Summer of service in Texas

**By Jessica Dooley**

*Communications Intern*

ABILENE—For the first time all day, students are quiet. They are clean and groomed, with only trace amounts of colored paint on their faces giving away an eventful afternoon. They stand and lift their hands as they sing praises to God.

Hours earlier, the high school and junior high students were playing in bird seed, marshmallows, syrup and a variety of sticky, slimy stuff.



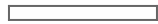
East Texas Baptist University was a host campus for Super Summer, a school of evangelism conducted by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Super Summer offers training opportunities for Christian young people interested in advancing their personal spiritual growth and learning more about how to share Christ with others.

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# Texas Tidbits

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## Texas Tidbits

**Memorials committee seeks names.** The Baptist General Convention of Texas at its annual meeting honors Texas Baptists who have died during the preceding year. The memorial committee invites Texas Baptists to identify individuals whose lives made a contribution to their churches and to the state. Call (214) 828-5348 or email [debbie.moody@bgct.org](mailto:debbie.moody@bgct.org) before Oct. 1.

**BGCT leadership leader takes seminary post.** Reggie Thomas, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas congregational leadership team, is leaving the Texas convention to head the Southern California campus of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. BGCT Chief Operating Officer Ron Gunter will serve as interim director of the congregational leadership team until a new director is named. In other staff moves, Josue Valerio, director of the BGCT missions team, was named interim director of BGCT Border/Mexico Missions, filling the vacancy left when Dexton Shores moved to Buckner International.