

Explore the Bible Series for August 5: Zechariah calls us to joy

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Explore the Bible Series for August 5

Zechariah calls us to joy

- Zechariah 9:1-14:21

[By Kathryn Aragon](#)

First Baptist Church, Duncanville

This week's lesson is a reminder of God's promises—those available through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, as well as those coming on the day we will meet him again. It is a message of hope and a call to live a life of joy.

Ministry sheds light on international sex trafficking

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Ministry sheds light on international sex trafficking

By Whitney Farr

Communications Intern

BANGKOK, Thailand—Lina stood drenched and bleeding in the middle of the street after a woman selling fruit threw a bucket of water on her and proceeded to beat her with a plastic ice cooler.

“She’s not a human being!” the street vendor screamed. “She sells her body!”

Using Bible as his guide, man searches for oil in Israel

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Using Bible as his guide, man searches for oil in Israel

By Matt Kennedy

Associated Baptist Press

DALLAS (ABP)—As much of the world continues to wait for signs of peace in Israel, John Brown continues to wait for signs of oil beneath it.

Brown is the chairman and founder of [Zion Oil and Gas, Inc.](#), a company searching for significant petroleum deposits in northern Israel. Brown says he believes Scripture points to the discovery of oil in the region.

John Brown says scripture points to oil located in Israel.

Mission workers jittery over passport backlogs

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Mission workers jittery over passport backlogs

By Michelle Rindels

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—In the wake of tighter passport restrictions, thousands of jittery missionaries-to-be added something new to their prayer lists—passport delays.

Passport offices have experienced a deluge of applications since new rules went into effect in January that require passports for re-entry after flights from Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean and Bermuda. For churches, delays that can exceed 12 weeks have added more headaches at the height of mission trip season.

Reformers blog wins endorsement from some SBC leaders

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Reformers blog wins endorsement from some SBC leaders

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

NEW YORK (ABP)—In a ringing show of support, several prominent Baptist leaders have publicly endorsed a groundbreaking blog operated by reform-minded pastors within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The endorsers include the presidents of three SBC entities and a college president—Morris Chapman, president of the SBC’s Executive Committee; Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources; Jerry Rankin, president of the SBC’s International Mission Board; and David Dockery, president of Union University.

New blogging site has support from SBC leaders.

Supporters defend seminary homemaking class

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homemaking class

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

FORT WORTH (ABP)—Recent criticism of a homemaking degree at a Southern Baptist seminary has brought some conservatives out swinging, calling the critics “sanctimonious liberals.”

The tiff emerged after [a guest opinion piece](#) by Baptist ethicist Robert Parham appeared in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. In the essay, Parham criticized a new homemaking course program at [Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Fort Worth. Parham is the executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Church corruption, financial scandals live on long past Bakkers

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Church corruption, financial

scandals live on long past Bakkers

By Matt Kennedy

Associated Baptist Press

DALLAS (ABP)—For some, Tammy Faye Messner's death July 20 stirred fond memories of a joyful Christian TV personality, and for others, painful memories of the sex-and-money scandal that destroyed her former husband's popular Christian television network. Her death also reminds Christians that financial scandals are still very much alive in the church.

In 1989, [Jim Bakker](#) was convicted of 24 counts of fraud and conspiracy and sentenced to 45 years in prison (he served five). Messner—known as Tammy Faye Bakker before her remarriage—was not included in the indictment, which accused Jim Bakker of conspiring to defraud partners of his PTL cable TV network out of \$158 million.

Baugh family challenge nets about \$1.2 million in two weeks for agency

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Baugh family challenge nets about \$1.2 million in two weeks for agency

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP)—A Texas Baptist family's spontaneous challenge to jump-start a [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#) capital campaign netted the organization nearly \$1.2 million dollars in just a couple of weeks.

Brent Walker, executive director of the Washington-based advocacy group, announced in a July 24 e-mail to supporters that a matching-funds challenge from the Baugh family of San Antonio has been wildly successful. In little more than two weeks, donors gave or pledged a total of \$688,372 in response. According to Walker, an unnamed benefactor who gave a \$200,000 gift requested it not be matched, meaning the challenge raised \$1,176,745.46.

African American Fellowship honors past, looks to future

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Urging pastors
to see the
world's
growing
problems as
"opportunities,"
Isadore
Edwards,
pastor of New
Rising Star
Missionary
Baptist Church
in Fort Worth,
delivers
keynote at
African
American
Fellowship
James W. Culp
Banquet in
Austin.

African American Fellowship honors past, looks to future

By Barbara Bedrick

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—As African American Fellowship of Texas members paid tribute to the legacy of the group's late president and honored the leadership of a

statesman, they also were challenged to act by another legendary Texas pastor during the James W. Culp Banquet.

Tears glistened on the faces of Sheila Edwards, sister of the late president Ronald Edwards, and many participants, including Michael Evans, fellowship secretary and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield, recalled the legacy of the former pastor of Minnehulla Baptist Church in Goliad.



Nearly 200 pastors and church leaders participated in the 15th annual African American Conference held in Austin.

African American Fellowship elects new officers, casts vision

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The African American Fellowship of Texas elected (left to right) John Ogletree, pastor of First Metropolitan Church in Houston, as president; Michael Bell, pastor of Greater St. Stephen First Baptist Church in Fort Worth, as vice president; and re-elected Michael Evans, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield, as secretary and Marvin Delaney, (not pictured) pastor of South Park Baptist Church in Houston, as treasurer. Steven Young, pastor of New Generation Baptist Church in Tyler was named assistant secretary and Elmo Johnson, pastor of Rose of Sharon Baptist Church in Houston, was named assistant treasurer.

African American Fellowship elects new officers, casts vision

By Barbara Bedrick

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—The African American Fellowship of Texas elected a slate of officers during the organization's 15th annual conference at First Baptist Church in Austin.

Fellowship Vice President John Ogletree, pastor of First Metropolitan Church in Houston, was elected president. Ogletree assumed the president's post after Ronald Edwards, who was president of the fellowship, died May 31.

Cybercolumn by Jinny Henson: Optimism's reward

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CYBER COLUMN: Optimism's reward

By Jinny Henson

The beginning of the journey to Disney—the place where dreams come true—was innocuous. Sunscreen, shorts, our own water bottles and snacks because the tickets cost as much as a compact car. We were set. I had the “unofficial” guide highlighted, which my uptight husband had some issue with since it came from the library. Such a wet blanket that man is. Sheesh.

We arrived at the airport in plenty of time, approached the metal detector and shucked our footwear. I was careful to reign in my sense of humor since a sign blatantly reminds passengers to refrain from making ANY jokes—a thrown-down gauntlet for a comic, I might add. I just want to sing, “gun, gun, gun, gun, gun, gun,” to a Mambo beat whenever I see that thing.

Jinny Henson

Gay-friendly Baptist groups excluded from New Baptist Covenant event

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Gay-friendly Baptist groups excluded

from New Baptist Covenant event

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP)—The organization sponsoring an upcoming historic pan-Baptist gathering has told two gay-friendly Baptist groups they cannot participate in an official capacity.

The [North American Baptist Fellowship](#), under whose auspices next year's "[Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant](#)" is being held, has informed the [Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists](#) and the [Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America](#) that they cannot become affiliates of the NABF. Therefore, they cannot be official participants in the event.