

# **Editorial: Lament our current state of affairs, and then ...**

January 28, 2026

We must lament the current state of our country and our world. And we must not stop there. Lament calls us to do more.

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# **Letter: Racism still a serious problem in America**

January 28, 2026

A Baptist Standard reader expresses his opinion about racism and questions the current administration's position on race.

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# **Voices: Discipleship: Lifelong journey for every believer**

January 28, 2026

Many people today think church is about loud music, the lights, or the atmosphere. Some churches use strobe lights, fog machines, big productions, and even drones to draw people in. But the church was never

meant to be a show. It is not entertainment. It is not a performance.

Church is a place where people learn to follow Jesus. It is a place where we grow into more of Christ's likeness. It is a place for discipleship.

And discipleship—learning, growing, and being shaped by God—is needed for every person, at every age, in every season of life once they have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

## **Discipleship is a long journey (Colossians 1:3-6)**

According to [Barna Group](#): “The most preferred term [for discipleship is] ‘becoming more Christ-like.’”

“A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call to follow Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus to come alive in us,” the Barna report adds.

These definitions beautifully support the heart of discipleship. It is not optional, seasonal, or limited to certain personalities or ages. It is every Christian's lifelong journey of becoming more like Jesus.

## **Discipleship is for every age and stage (Hebrews 5:14)**

Discipleship is not just for pastors or teachers. It is not only for new believers or for people who seem “super spiritual.” Discipleship is for all of us. We all need training, transformation, and a life that honors Jesus in everyday living.

Children need simple truths, stories, and conversations that help them

understand who God is.

Teenagers need guidance, honesty, and safe adults who will walk with them through questions and pressures.

Adults need teaching that challenges them, encourages them, and helps them apply God's word to everyday life.

Older believers need continued growth and opportunities to share their wisdom and faithfulness.

We may experience discipleship in unusual ways and at various levels, but we all need it. No one ever "arrives." As long as we are alive, God is still shaping us.

## **Discipleship begins with a willing heart (Matthew 16:24)**

Jesus said, "Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me" (John 12:26).

Following Jesus is not a one-time decision. It is a daily choice. It is daily choosing to listen, to learn, and to obey.

For some people, this desire begins early. Children often have soft, open hearts. They ask questions. They believe easily. They are eager to learn.

Teenagers face pressures, temptations, and big emotions. They need honest and relational discipleship rooted in truth.

Adults often get busy. Responsibilities grow. Faith can become routine if we are not careful. Discipleship helps us stay grounded and spiritually awake.

Older believers still have room to grow. They also have much to give. Their

stories and steady faith can strengthen the entire church.

## **Discipleship is not a program, but a lifestyle (Ephesians 5:15-16)**

Many churches focus on programs, events, and activities. These things can be helpful, but they are not the heart of discipleship. True discipleship is not a class you take once. It is not a workbook you finish. It is not a six-week program.

Discipleship is a lifestyle. It is a way of living that keeps Jesus at the center. It touches every part of our spiritual life and helps us grow in many different areas.

Depending on our age, season, or spiritual maturity, discipleship may include learning about: God the Father's character, love, holiness, and plan; Jesus Christ's life, teachings, sacrifice, resurrection, and example; and the Holy Spirit's guidance, comfort, conviction, and power.

We also learn about: prayer, talking with God honestly and regularly; Bible study, understanding Scripture and applying it to daily life; obedience, learning to trust and follow God; stewardship, or using our time, talents, and resources for God's glory; witnessing, sharing our faith with gentleness and courage; and abundant life, or discovering the joy, peace, and purpose Jesus offers.

Discipleship is not narrow or rigid. It is rich and full of opportunities to gain experience.

A child may learn through stories and simple truths.

A teenager may learn through questions and honest conversations.

Adults may learn through Bible study, mentoring, or serving.

Older believers may learn through reflection, wisdom, and continued obedience.

God meets each of us where we are and teaches us in ways that fit our season of life.

Some of the most powerful discipleship moments happen quietly, over coffee, in a living room, during a walk, or in a simple conversation after church.

Discipleship grows in relationships, not in performances.

## **The church's role in discipleship (Psalm 92:13)**

The church has a responsibility to help people grow. But this does not mean the church must entertain people or keep up with trends. The church's calling is much deeper.

A healthy church teaches God's word clearly, creates space for questions and growth, encourages believers to use their gifts, provides opportunities to serve, and values spiritual maturity over performance.

A church focused on discipleship may not have concert-style music or excessive technology, though these may have their proper place. But a discipleship-focused church will have something far more powerful—the presence of God and the steady work of the Holy Spirit.

People grow in churches where truth abides, where love resides, and spiritual maturity is valued.

[Aaron Earls](#) with Lifeway Research believes church leaders should take a

Careful look into the state of discipleship in their congregation and make discipleship a priority.

## **God works with our personality (Psalm 139:13-14)**

One of the beautiful things about discipleship is God does not erase our personality. He does not make us all the same. Instead, he works with who we are as we refine our character.

He takes our strengths, gifts, and even weaknesses and shapes them for his glory. He smooths the rough edges. He deepens our love, patience, humility, and faith. He uses our story to help others.

Discipleship is not about becoming perfect. It is about becoming more like Jesus, step by step, day by day.

## **A final invitation**

Church is not about strobe lights, fog machines, big productions, or even drones. It is about Jesus. It is about learning to follow him and becoming more like him.

Discipleship is the path that helps us get there. Every believer, young or old, has a place on this journey. And every believer has something to offer along the way.

Let's keep learning, training, growing, and living a Christ-centered life.

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*the author.*

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## **Editorial: When protesters come to church**

January 28, 2026

Are you prepared for protesters to come to your church? There are different ways to be prepared and one that matters most.

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## **Voices: A call to protect the vulnerable and steps to do it**

January 28, 2026

Candice Sharp Fulton challenges Christians to fulfill scriptural expectations and their moral responsibility for protecting the vulnerable.

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# **Commentary: Why Burma's Christians need the world to act now**

January 28, 2026

Representatives of Burma Research Institute explain why Baptists should advocate on behalf of Burmese Christians in the U.S. and Burma/Myanmar.

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## **Editorial: Baptist Standard in 2026**

January 28, 2026

Here's a look at the Baptist Standard in 2026. Some things are new. Some things are not going to change. And that's important.

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## **Letter: Voices: The light through Christmas depression**

January 28, 2026

A Baptist Standard reader responds to an opinion article about facing



depression during Christmas.

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## **Voices: Unencumbered: Cleaning out the garage**

January 28, 2026

“Cleaning out the garage over the holidays, I had time to think about ‘stuff,’ and the new year,” Ruth Cook begins.

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## **Voices: Like a cow lifts a calf**

January 28, 2026

Pastor, author, and rancher Johnny Teague sees something of spiritual significance in an experience he had with a struggling calf.

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## **Editorial: Carry the gospel in a**

# **disorienting world**

January 28, 2026

Nigeria, Venezuela, Minneapolis, and elsewhere, the gospel is good news, and we are called to carry it in and for this world.

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## **Voices: Point/Counterpoint: Christians and the Court**

January 28, 2026

Jack Goodyear contends politics, not religion, has led to a Supreme Court more accepting of strong executive authority.