

Missouri Free Will Baptist

GEM Magazine

Volume 97 | Number 5 | September-October, 2026

the GEM Magazine

Volume 97, Number 5
September-October, 2026

The Official Publication of the Missouri State Association of Free Will Baptists

In this issue:

From the Editor ..... Page 3
Missouri Missions ..... Page 4
Church News ..... Page 6
Obituraries ..... Page 7
State Meeting ..... Page 10
Retiree Retreat ..... Page 13
Articles ..... Page 15
State Calendar ..... Page 20
Financial Receipts ..... Page 22
Available Churches and Fill-in List ..... Page 23

The Free Will Baptist GEM (1929-present), published by the MO State Association, grew to widespread regional, even national distribution across the denomination. The longest-running Free Will Baptist periodical, the GEM continues to be published today. The Historical Commission invites you to enjoy reading nearly a century of amazing history in the GEM Magazine.

All items for publication must be in the hands of the editor no later than the 1st day of the month preceding the month of issue.

Business Office:
202 West Commercial,
P.O. Box 991,
Lebanon, Missouri 65536,
1-866-532-6537

Address all correspondence relating to the GEM, including subscription and mailing information, to the above address.

Articles and Photos may be submitted by e-mail to stan@mofwb.org

The sermons and articles published in the GEM represent the personal views of the authors and not necessarily the views or policies of the Missouri State Association of Free Will Baptists or the Editor.

Subscription rates:
Single subscription,
$11.00 billed annually

Church Plan,*
$10.00 (per subscription), consisting of ten subscriptions or more, billed annually.

*The Church Plan will continue until it is canceled by the church.

This magazine is published bimonthly and has been in regular publication since 1929.

Editor - Stanley Bunch
Layout - MeMaw's Design Studio



from the Editor, Stan Bunch



Things Have Definitely Changed

A few weeks ago, our three youngest grandsons were visiting us. The oldest, like his police chief father, is quite observant of things around him. He notices changes in the arrangement of our home, even after not being with us for 2-3 months. He asks a lot of questions. "What does 'substantial' mean?" Later, you'll hear him use the word correctly.

Brenda loves her Jeep Wrangler 5-speed stick shift with zero creature comforts other than a heater and A/C. We were taking the boys somewhere, and the oldest asked, "What are these handles on the door for?" as he began turning it. "Oh, cool, this makes the window go down and up. Your car doesn't have window buttons to push!"

It occurred to me that he has never seen a lot of things that are normal for us. I doubt many of you reading this have roll-up windows in your car or a dial-up phone in your house. We have A/C in our cars that some of us did not have until we were adults. Now, we expect ease, automation, and warm or cold air. Things have changed.

This past July 19-22, we were privileged to attend our National Free Will Baptist Convention. Things have changed in the last few years. (positively in my opinion) In every service, there were as many as 10-12 harmonious singers with a director leading the convention worship in song. I counted no less than 25 various instruments composing the orchestra. High school and college students led the public reading of God's Word and taught the adult D6 Sunday School lesson. The auditorium chairs were incredibly uncomfortable, but much better than the hard benches I remember as a boy, or those we sat on in Panama. (if there were any benches) Padded chairs and pews are a welcome change.

Buttons or knobs? They both perform the same function, and one is not necessarily better than the other when we consider the goal we have in mind, which is to open or close the window.

Piano or orchestra; worship team or song leader; young leaders participating or older leaders; chairs or benches. None of these is better than the other when we consider the goal we have in mind, which is to worship our God and creator.

How will you and I handle changes that need to be made in the church? Some will oppose any change and declare it as compromising the Gospel, which most of the time, is not true. Others will push for unnecessary change out of rebellion or arrogance. Some things we do as congregations are based on solid Biblical principles. These should be explained, improved, if possible, and then left in place. Still other folks are apathetic and simply don't care either way!

I watched one of the grands perform a task recently. I had never attempted, nor seen it done the way he did it, but it worked. That's not how I would have done it, but good for him; he taught me something.

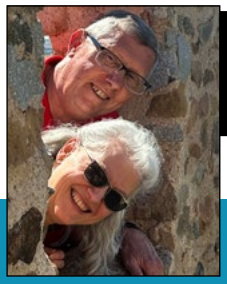
Cultures change. People change. Knobs become buttons, fans become A/Cs, children become teens, which become young adults, which eventually become old adults, which eventually face physical death. Change happens without our consent.

As followers of Jesus, wisdom says that whether a drought or a record harvest is coming, we should prepare. Cursing change does not make it go away. Facing change wisely puts us in charge.

Did you know that car window switches were criticized when introduced? Complaints were that window switches were unnecessarily complex; higher repair costs; reliability concerns; battery drain; safety concerns; cost; loss of manual backup; weight and fuel economy. Who criticizes or complains now?

With knobs or buttons, we're still opening and closing our car windows, and those of us who can remember the knobs, well, the change didn't kill us, or we wouldn't be reading this article.

I'm not reducing the complexity of the cultural changes we face with window regulators. My point is that change is inevitable, yet with God's help, a positive attitude, creativity, and the leadership of the Bible and the Holy Spirit, we can face the future confidently, and make some needed changes.



from the Missions Director, Steve Reeves

A MISSION FIELD NEAR YOU

It has been 40 years ago this week that Linda and I boarded a plane in Tulsa, OK to go to Madrid, Spain to become FWB missionaries. The moment we stepped off the TWA 747 in Barajas Airport in Madrid, I could sense the spiritual darkness. I knew we were on the mission field. The need for the true Gospel of Jesus was evident everywhere.

What thoughts enter your mind as you read the words 'mission field'? Do you think of Adam and Carol Duncan working in the jungles of Ecuador to help heal both body and soul? Or maybe the urban jungle of Tokyo where Ken and Judy Bailey have served faithfully for over 40 years? Perhaps, your mind runs to Bulgaria where Josh and Bea Provow are sharing the love of Jesus with their Muslim neighbors? You might even think of Frank and Debbie Webster as they share Jesus with senior adults in the Villages in Florida, many of whom have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel.

I would like to remind you that the mission field is much closer than you think. Jesus told His disciples in Luke 14:23 to "Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full." It seems to me that Jesus is saying 'the mission field is just down the street or up the road'. You may live in suburbia or rural Missouri, you may live in St. Louis or St. Clair, Columbia or Cabool, the mission field is right where you are.

Let me tell you about my mission field. I live in Columbia, MO. It is the home of Missouri University. Over my back fence is a single, retired man named Steve. He worked at MU for years. He helped me replace some of the wooden fence that separates our yards. He is a great guy, he just needs Jesus. Next to me to the west lives Dorothy and her teenage son. Dorothy is a professor at Mizzou, they have moved to Columbia in the last year. I have invited Dorothy to church, but she hasn't come yet. To my east are three MU students, a brother and two sisters. Linda and I have had a brief conversation with their parents from Lees Summit who bought the house for their kids to live in while they are studying in Columbia. We are looking for ways to welcome these young people to our neighborhood.

Your mission field probably looks different than mine. It doesn't matter. If there is a person who needs Jesus in your vicinity you have a mission field. God wants you to be a missionary, I would even say He has already called you. You don't live where you live by accident. God has planted you right where He wants you. Just as surely as we served on the mission field in Spain, you live on the mission field in your town or county. You have never locked eyes with anyone who does not desperately need Jesus.

The only question now is 'what is your plan for reaching them'? What can you do today, this week, this month to help them come a little closer to the Savior? If you are not sure where to begin, I suggest you get the 'Bless App' through NAFWB.org. I have been using this for a couple of years now. Every morning I receive 5 names of people who live on my street and the two neighboring streets in my neighborhood. It reminds me to pray for my neighbors by name, and it also reminds me to look for ways to have conversations and share the love of Jesus.

A snow shovel or a lawn mower or a dozen cookies or a gift card can all open up occasions to get to know these folks that will spend eternity in either heaven or hell. You may help to determine which it will be.

You don't have to go 5,000 miles from home to find a mission field. Jesus said to look on the fields around you, they are ripe for harvest. God has placed you where He wants you, now is the time to go!

NMB



MMB SHOW ME plan Updates

- STATE -

Paxtons (Cape Girardeau): Grace Fellowship has seen a steady stream of new attenders since the spring. Pray that they will continue to attend and get connected to the church and to the Lord.

Thebeau, Chapman (Rolla): Mosaic Church recently ordained two men, Josh Chapman and Nicholas Lewis, to the ministry. Pray for these men and their families as they serve the Lord.

Flemings (Florissant): Freedom Point Church had to enlarge their meeting space for their children's ministry to help accommodate the young people who attend each week. Pray that they will need to enlarge their space again soon.

Sanchez (Grandview): Esperanza Church saw 5 more young people accept Christ at Camp Niangua this summer. They will be baptized this fall. The Church is celebrating their 2nd anniversary in September.

Mercers (University of Missouri): Bradley and Madison are super busy these days meeting and inviting new international students to "Let's Speak English'. Pray that many of these students will come to know Jesus while they are in the states.

- NORTH AMERICAN -

Websters (The Villages, Florida): Connect Church is presently seeking all the necessary permits and permissions so they can begin construction on their new church facility this fall.

Brazil (Hawaii): The Hilo Team will be launching the new church in September. They recently purchased some land where they can meet. Please pray for this new church.

Smiths (Sumter County, Florida): Pray for Layton and Stephanie and their family as they will move to Florida this fall to begin the new work there.

- INTERNATIONAL -

Baileys (Japan): Ken and Judy hosted an ETEAM this summer. These young people spoke in two Sunday morning services and also helped out in the 'Mommy and Me' program hosted by the KCC Church. Praise God for this program to let high schoolers experience the mission field.

Speer (Japan): Daniel and Kate hosted several CMP students from the USA and another group of Christian college students from Korea this past summer. Pray that those they met and witnessed to in Saporro will be saved

Provow (Bulgaria): Josh Provow and Silas Houser recently did a study of Bulgaria to determine where our Bulgarian missionaries will begin new works in the future. They targeted 10 cities that need a Gospel witness. Pray to the Lord of the Harvest that He will send workers.

Turnbough (Spain): In July, a large wildfire burned very near our churches in the northwest suburbs of Madrid. Thank the Lord He protected our people and our church facilities.

Duncan (Ecuador): Adam and Carol spent August and September in the States as they were here to help get Moriah settled into St. Louis University. Pray for them as they return to Ecuador as empty nesters.

BAPTISMS

Freedom Point Church, Pastor Matt Fleming



April 19, 2026
(fr) Lailah and Luke (br) Lakeisha, Addisyn, Patrick, Retasha, Courtland, Mike, and Isabel



July 12, 2026
Trent'Zell, Promise, Avyn, and Malachi

Berean Church, Pastors Dennis Bowman & Carl Short



Five Baptisms



Michael, Debbie, and Nora

Faith Chapel, Pastor Jason Roberts



July 19, 2026
Alex Danford (2nd from left)



PLEASE SEND BAPTISM PHOTOS

How? Group pictures taken close up are best.
(Fill the frame with the people)
Include the pastor if possible.
Please include dates and names.
Send to stan@mofwb.org.

BAPTISMS

Calvary Chapel, Pastors Mark Elliott & Brandon Mankey





June 21, 2026
Charles Bruton and Dominic Miller



June 26, 2026
Back row, Left to right: Joel Lehman, Sunny & Gage Obernuefemann, Levi and Alexandria Pickney
Front Row: Karina and Abby Nordlund, Layne and Shaw Glor.

In Loving Memory



Ronald Edmund Pierce

Ronald Edmund Pierce was born October 7, 1943, near Dry Knob, Missouri to Edmund Pierce and Roby Myers Pierce. He passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family, on Saturday, April 18, 2026, in his home in Lebanon, Missouri. He was eighty-two years, six months, and eleven days of age. When Ronnie was in Elementary School, J.L. Stone came and presented the gospel of Jesus Christ with flannelgraph, and Ronnie accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. He had been a good and faithful servant since that time, serving as Deacon of Crossroads Freewill Baptist Church for fifty-eight years.

To read the entire obituary online go to
https://www.holmanhowe.com/obituaries/ronald-pierce-lebanon/obituary

Happy Retirement



Pastor Gary Mitchener retired as lead pastor of the Ozark Family Church. Gary & Brenda founded the Ozark Family Church (originally Ozark FWB Church) and led the congregation in reaching souls, several building remodeling campaigns, and the relocation to their current facility. Gary will remain on staff part-time in a support role for the new pastor. Gary was ordained in 1976 and has pastored for over 50 years in Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas. He has served as Associate Moderator in Kansas, as well as chairman of both the Kansas and Missouri State Missions Board. Gary and Brenda led the Ozark Church to be one of the strongest COOP and missions-supporting churches in the Missouri State Association. The MOFWB State Association expresses our appreciation for the continued commitment and years of dedicated service of Gary and Brenda and their family.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY RETREAT

HEIRLOOMS

More information and online registration at MOFWB.com

TELL YOUR STORY





SEPTEMBER 18-19TH

SPEAKER KRISTI JOHNSON

Thousand Hills Resort Hotel

120 Wildwood Dr S
Branson, MO 65616

Cost: $60 + room
$20 late fee after
August 18th

MISSOURI FREE WILL BAPTIST women's MINISTRY

DOUBLE THE IMPACT FOR MISSIONS!

A $25,000 Challenge Gift Has Been Given

An anonymous donor has stepped forward with a generous $25,000 donation to the Missouri Missions Board to establish an endowment for missions — and now they are challenging YOU to match it! This is an opportunity to make your giving go twice as far and help spread the Gospel, support missionaries, and reach lives around the world.

Our Goal: $25,000 Matching Fund

Every dollar you give brings us closer to unlocking the full challenge gift.
$1 becomes $2 - $100 becomes $200 - $1,000 becomes $2,000
Together, we can make a powerful difference for the Kingdom.

Will You Help Us Meet the Challenge?

By check: Mail your check to MOFWB, 202 West Commercial St., Lebanon, MO 65536
In the memo, please write: $25,000 challenge
Online at: MOFWB.com/online-giving (enter the amount, click on other, & write $25,000 challenge)
Questions? Steve Reeves: 573-808-4454 Stan Bunch: 417-718-7717

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel…" Mark 16:15
Your gift today can help change eternity.

CAMP Update Through Teen & Pre-teen 1



13 Students Gave Their Life to Christ
Attendance: Teen = 478 | Pre-Teen = 535






"No Fear
O'NEILL







2026 National Convention Highlights

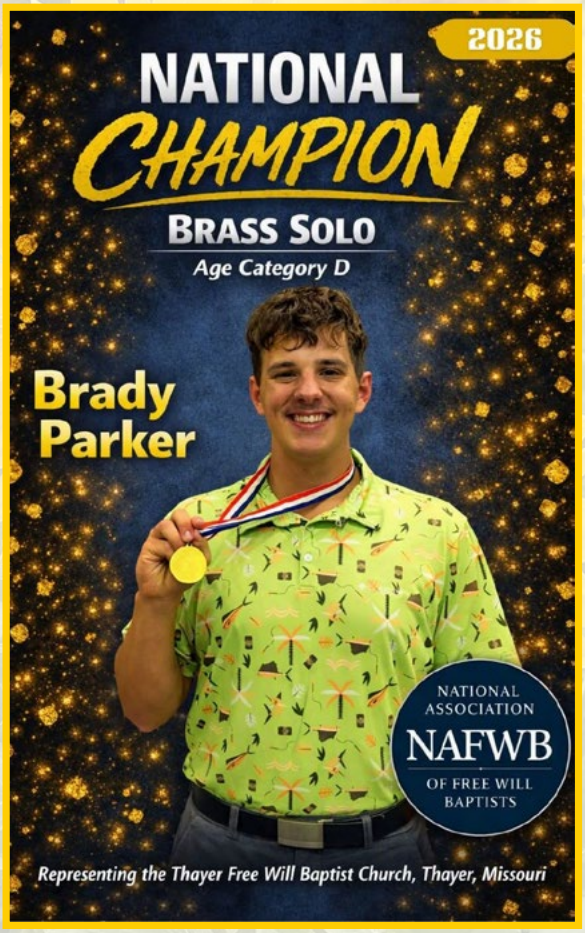
The state of Ohio served as a great host for the recent FWB National Convention. Many were the very positive comments related to the venue, hotels, proximity of restaurants and the general flow of the entire convention.

Total registration for the Convention and Vertical Three student ministry convention was 3,944.* We were well represented with over 250 Missourians present. Congratulations to all the CTS participants who worked so hard to present your ministry skills.

Elected to various National Ministry Boards were:

FWB Foundation.....David Beltz
Executive Committee....Ken Simpson
IM.....Steve Reeves
WNAC .....Brenda Bunch
Asst. Moderator.....Dr. Jackson Watts

For more information, please access the NAFWB website and click on "Convention Review." You may also access thousands of pictures on the review site.





Members from Copper Mines attending this year's NAFWB National Convention in Columbus.



Calvary Chapel CTS Group



Macedonia FWB Purdy, MO
CTS participants from left to right:
Kellie Ash, Daniel Ash, Laura Smith,
Thomas Smith, Macy Garren

2026 Retiree Retreat

Monday, October 26 thru Wednesday, October 28

at Lodge of the Ozarks in Branson

Attendees are responsible for their own lunch on Tuesday.

Hotel check-in begins at 3pm on Monday.

Single $155/person **Triple $105/person**

Double $110/person **Quad $100/person**

$75 deposit per person required with registration.

ALL pastors are welcome to attend!

Registration payment may be made by check (payable to MOFWB Sr. Board) or cash.

Special Music & Speaker:



the Lesters



Rev. Ken Simpson

NOTE: If, AFTER YOU HAVE REGISTERED, you find you cannot attend, please let Bro. Ron know as soon as possible:

(417) 257-9723 or Ronblindafb@gmail.com

Registration Form

Deadline: Monday, September 28th – no room guarantee after deadline.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Church: _____ Pastor: _____

List all persons staying in a room:

_____ _____

_____ _____

Special needs: _____

Mail to: Ron Blanks • 9172 County Road 6990 • West Plains, MO 65775

OCTOBER *is Pastor Appreciation Month*

"Let the elders that rule will be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." ~1 Timothy 5:17

This October, Say "Thank You" to your Pastor

Week after week they pray, preach, visit the hurting, counsel families, celebrate life's joy, and walk beside us through its sorrow.

A faithful pastor is one of God's greatest gifts to His church.

Take time this October to express your appreciation with a kind word, a handwritten note, a special offering, a meal, or simply by letting your pastor know how God has used them to impact your life.

A little encouragement can make an eternal difference.

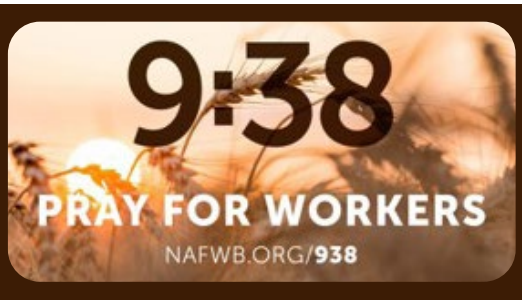
Ideas to Honor Your Pastor

- Write a personal note of encouragement.
- Pray specifically for your pastor and family.
- Give a thoughtful gift or love offering.
- Volunteer to serve your church.
- Share how their ministry has blessed your life.

"Let us not grow weary in doing good." ~Galatians 6:9



RESPONDING TO THE BROKEN PASTOR PIPELINE



On Mother's Day, Axios, an American media company known for non-partisan reporting and signature ultra-short pieces, published *America's Pastor Pipeline is Collapsing*. The article began,

> Fewer Americans want to become pastors, accelerating a leadership vacuum inside of one of the country's oldest civic institutions. Why it matters: As the pastor role becomes lower-paid, higher-risk and less trusted, the U.S. isn't just losing clergy — it's losing a key layer of local leadership, especially in rural and Black communities.

In other words, the broken pastor pipeline has BIG implications for America. The writer especially noted the impact upon rural areas — the areas where 50% of Free Will Baptist churches are located. And, when we look at recent stats, Free Will Baptists have been impacted. Free Will Baptists have declined from 2400 pastors in 1995 to 1600 in 2024.

What happens when we lose pastors? Without pastors, churches close or become inactive. Fewer churches means fewer places for people to worship and grow. As churches close and struggle, people quietly drift away to another church or out of church entirely. Spiritual growth declines, and membership gradually falls.

The bottom line is we need more pastors.

Therefore, we must invest in pastors and pray that God gives us more of them. **This year, we are challenging every Free Will Baptist to pray every day at 9:38 a.m. or p.m. (preferably both)**. This mandate comes from Jesus Himself as recorded in Matthew 9:38: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

We ask every Free Will Baptist in every location to pray daily God would raise up workers for His harvest. While we desperately need missionaries, teachers, and deacons, no need is more essential to the future of our movement than seeing God call more pastors.

What else can we do while we wait for God to answer our prayers? We began addressing this problem more than five years ago in the series of articles below. I encourage you to read or review those articles to acquaint yourself with the complexities of this issue. https://nafwb.org/site/articles/

Take Care of Our Pastors

Refresh Counseling. The article from Axios noted the high number of pastors who considered quitting the ministry. The National Association began offering the Refresh Counseling program in 2022, and to date, we have conducted more than 3,500 counseling sessions. This fulfills our belief that a laborer is worthy of his hire. Several participants indicate the program helped them through burnout and enabled them to continue, even excel, in ministry.

Rekindle Coaching. Pastors, especially those in rural areas often feel isolated. The Rekindle Coaching program allows pastors to work with a mentor on strategy and planning. This fulfills our belief we are not meant to minister alone. It is truly an example of how iron sharpens iron.

The Shepherding Initiative. Many churches stagnate or close when they go without a pastor. The top reason we lose churches is they cannot find a pastor. Through The Shepherding Initiative, Dr. Tim York works with church members to help them stay focused on the church's ministry. He trains them to conduct devotions or make hospital visits and keep ministry moving until the next pastor is in place.

Apply Ourselves to Ministry

We first shared the challenge of the pastoral shortage in the March 2021 article, Everyone's Problem. We shared guidelines for how to pray for and search for pastors and deacons. In the meantime, we must do our best to serve the local church effectively. In short, it appears God is pushing all of us back to Ephesians 4:11-12. Paul made it clear the ministry of the church was never meant to fall upon one person or even a small handful of people. Instead, we all are called to work together to edify the body, working, training, encouraging, and modeling.

If all of us stay busy serving in the unique roles for which God designed us (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12) while also discipling and training others to follow in our footsteps, Free Will Baptists will not only survive "the broken pastor pipeline," but we will also thrive.

Let's stop treating church growth and ministry as "the pastor's job" and start viewing it as our shared calling. We are, and always will be, **Better Together**.

About the writer: Eddie Moody is the executive director of the National Assoication of Free Will Baptists.

WHY PASTORS SHOULD ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO CARRY THEIR BIBLES TO WORSHIP

by Thom S. Rainer, Founder

A new member showed up at our community group not long ago. He was eager, engaged, and clearly hungry to grow. But when we opened our Bibles, he paused.

"I didn't bring one," he said.

I assumed he had simply forgotten. It happens to all of us. But then he added, almost casually, "I don't really use a Bible anymore. At church, everything is on the screen."

In that moment, I was reminded how easily something essential can slowly disappear. No one announces the change. No one plans it. But over time, a generation can lose the simple, powerful discipline of bringing God's Word with them. The good news is that I always carry a new Bible to my community group as a gift for this very reason.

Bringing a Bible Cultivates Personal Ownership of Scripture

When church members bring their own Bible, something subtle but deeply important takes place. They move from being passive observers to active participants in the worship experience. The screen presents a passage for the moment. A personal Bible invites an ongoing relationship.

There is a difference between seeing Scripture and owning it. When members carry their Bible, they begin to think in terms of "my Bible," not just "the verses on the screen." That sense of ownership leads to greater familiarity, deeper trust, and a stronger connection to God's Word. Over time, this habit forms disciples who know where to find passages, return to them during the week, and build growing confidence in Scripture. Ownership is not automatic but cultivated over time. This simple practice plays a significant role.

Physical Interaction Strengthens Engagement and Retention

There is something formative about physically engaging with a Bible. Turning pages. Underlining phrases. Writing notes in the margins. Even the act of locating a passage helps create a mental map of Scripture.

Screens offer convenience, but they often encourage quick consumption. A Bible encourages slower engagement. It invites reflection. It allows worshipers to linger over a verse or revisit a passage without distraction.

Research aside, most of us know this intuitively. We remember more when we interact more. The physical act of handling Scripture reinforces the message in ways a screen rarely can. If we want church members to carry the Word with them beyond Sunday, we must help them engage it meaningfully on Sunday. A Bible in hand is more than a reference tool; it is also part of discipleship formation.

Carrying a Bible Reinforces the Authority of Scripture Over Presentation

Every worship service includes multiple elements—music, announcements, visuals, and the sermon itself. When Scripture appears only on a screen, it can unintentionally feel like just another component in the presentation's flow. But a Bible changes that dynamic.

When members open their Bibles, they are reminded that this is not just supporting content. This is the foundation. This is the authority over everything else that is said and done.



WHY PASTORS SHOULD ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO CARRY THEIR BIBLES TO WORSHIP CONTINUED

A church that consistently encourages the use of the Bible is making a quiet but powerful statement: God's Word stands above our words. It is not dependent on a screen, a slide, or a moment. The Bible is enduring truth. That visible distinction matters more than we may realize. It shapes how people view Scripture—and how seriously they take it.

It Models Discipleship for the Next Generation

Children and students are always watching the adults around them. They are learning what matters, not just from what we say, but from what we do. If the only Scripture they see is projected on a screen, they may never develop the habit of opening a Bible for themselves. Faith can become something experienced in a room rather than practiced in a life.

But when they see parents, grandparents, and leaders bringing their Bibles, turning pages, and engaging the text, they receive a different message. They see that God's Word is personal. It is worth carrying. It is worth studying. Discipleship is often caught before it is taught. A visible culture of Bible engagement provides a living example for the next generation to follow.

It Extends the Worship Service Into Daily Life

A screen disappears when the service ends. A Bible goes home with the worshiper. That distinction is more important than it may first appear. When members bring their Bibles, they are more likely to revisit the passages later. Notes written during the sermon can be reviewed. Marked verses can become part of personal devotion.

In this way, the worship service does not end at the closing prayer. It continues throughout the week. The Bible becomes a bridge between Sunday and everyday life. Of course, pastors do not need to mandate this practice, but they should strongly encourage it. A simple invitation— "Bring your Bible next week"—can begin a meaningful cultural shift.

Because sometimes, the smallest habits shape the deepest convictions. And bringing the Bible back may be one of the most important steps we can take.



Thom S. Rainer (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the founder and CEO of Church Answers. With nearly 40 years of ministry experience, Thom has spent a lifetime committed to the growth and health of the local church and its leaders. He has been a pastor of four churches and interim pastor of 10 churches, as well as an author, speaker, professor, and dean. He has written numerous books, including three number-one bestsellers: *I Am a Church Member, Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, and *Simple Church*. His latest book is *Pray & Go: Your Invitation to Become a Great Commission Christian*. Thom and his wife live in Franklin, Tennessee.

The Man Behind The Message

"The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men."

"A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon."

"Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still. He will never talk well and with real success to men for God who has not learned well how to talk to God for men."[1]

The character of a preacher or pastor is the foundation of an effective ministry. Two very fundamental character traits encompass all that he says or does: honesty and integrity.

Honesty is one bedrock quality of the preacher that affects every dimension and decision of his life. His natural response in all situations is to "…provide things honest in the sight of all men."[2]

A dishonest man is not to be trusted in any matter, more so in relation to spiritual matters, preaching God's word, or leading a congregation.

Another fundamental requirement for ministry is integrity. The man of God is to be upright, reliable, and decent in all aspects of his life; work, recreation, business, paying bills, etc.[3] His conscience is clear, and no one can legitimately call his character into question or bring an accusation against him with a substantive basis.

God's man has a desire to serve God, which is a very basic part of his calling. The apostle Paul said that having a desire to serve as a pastor is a good desire. Some, perhaps as a way of convincing others of their calling, weave long stories and wax quite ineloquent in their attempt to persuade us of their desire NOT to preach. Boasting of how far they backslid and how far they ran from God doesn't convince anyone, especially a young man who might be dealing with a calling. This is unfortunate and unnecessary. A man that is right with God seeks to please God and follow His calling. Desiring to please and obey God is a good thing, as Paul reminds us. If a man dislikes the work of the ministry or is unsure of his calling, he should act; be honest with himself, and others, demonstrate integrity, and withdraw himself. Such a move is indeed honorable to God and avoids potentially doing spiritual harm to both himself and the body of Christ.

The list of requirements for anyone entering the ministry is not exhaustive but includes 17 basic prerequisites. Only Christ fulfills these traits 100% of the time. Doing so, however, should be the heart's desire of a preacher and layperson.[4]

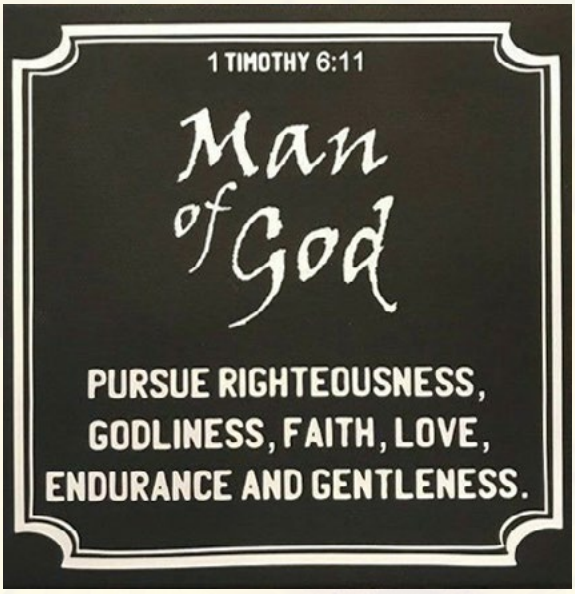
For ease of teaching, we might categorize the traits that Paul mentions into four categories.

1. **Core Qualities of Character**
    - **Above Reproach:** Living with strong moral and ethical conduct so that accusations cannot easily be supported.
    - **Self-Disciplined:** Demonstrating moderation, wisdom, and emotional control. Has a consistent and vibrant prayer life.
    - **Not Greedy but Generous:** Handling money honestly and avoiding the desire for dishonest or selfish gain.
    - **Self Controlled, Gentle and Peaceful:** Avoiding anger, conflict, violence, and argumentative behavior.

2. **Integrity in Family and Relationships**

   Healthy ministry begins with healthy personal relationships:

   - **Faithfulness:** Showing consistent love and commitment to one's spouse and family.
   - Effective Household Leadership: If married with children, leading the home well and raising respectful, obedient children.
   - **Hospitality:** Maintaining a welcoming and caring attitude toward guests, strangers, and the broader community.
   - **Easy for other to "like".**



3. **Competence in Ministry and Service**

   A trustworthy minister combines godly character with faithful service:

   - **Truthful:** Speaking honestly and keeping one's word while communicating truth with love. Avoids gossip and slander.
   - **Commitment to Sound Teaching:** Remaining grounded in biblical truth to teach and encourage others effectively. Refrain from exaggeration & rash statements.
   - **Strong Work Ethic:** Working diligently and responsibly to avoid any appearance of laziness, especially as others consider him. Diligently studies the scriptures and prepares well to preach.

4. **Reputation and Accountability**

   - **Respected by Nonbelievers:** Maintaining an honorable reputation among those both inside and outside the church.
   - **Transparency and Humility:** Living authentically, reducing the gap between public image and private life, and openly acknowledging personal shortcomings.

A person lacking in honesty, integrity, or in contradiction to the Biblical requisites for the ministry, many times does not recognize his deficiency or strives vigorously to whitewash his inconsistency. For this reason, every minister should be involved in association with other brothers who will keep him accountable and be brutally honest with him regarding perceived inconsistencies.

"He who desires the office of a bishop desires a good thing."

Note: For the next several issues, we will be including articles that were originally the topics presented during the Tuesday morning panel discussion on "Preachers and Preaching" at the 2026 MOFWB State Convention.

~Stan Bunch

[1] E.M. Bounds, Power Through Prayer | [2] Romans 12:17 | [3] Prov.11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. | [4] 1Ti 3:1-7

Missouri Free Will Baptist

2026 State Calendar

September 18-19	MOFWB Women's Ministry Retreat - Thousand Hills Resort, Branson
October 26-28	Retiree Retreat - details on page 14
November 2	General Board Meeting - State Office, Lebanon, MO
November 7	E3 Conference - Lebanon First FWB

All events & additional information, as it becomes available, can be found at mofwb.com



HELPS
For Bible Teachers and Pastors

ESword.com - Free program with dozens of bible dictionaries, commentaries.

You Version Online Bible - Phone Bible App

Multiple FWB Resources - https://nafwb.org/site/resources/
https://mofwb.com/resources

Top Reads for Busy Leaders – https://d6family.com/sign-up/

"**The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness**" – Free PDF Booklet- Google the title.

9marks.org/articles/ Helpful Articles - (Note: Doctrinally Calvinist)

Dozens of Studies & Discipleship Materials - https://www.globalreach.org/

Many of these can be found with a simple web search. Please use discernment, as some of these resources may present a doctrinal position other than Free Will Baptist. Inclusion in the list does not indicate agreement with all teachings presented.



Financial Report

Please note: The amounts listed are for two months, June 2026 - July 2026

RECEIPTS

COOP

Alan Kinder $200.00
Alton $477.90
Aulsbury Chapel $1,795.60
Bailey $961.00
Bailey Chapel $293.00
Belton $654.70
Black Oak $1,231.83
Byrd $1,020.00
Calvary Chapel $14,299.96
Calvary Fellowship $6,926.86
Christ Chapel $7,790.00
Copper Mines $2,526.51
Cornerstone $925.00
Cuba $2,234.00
De Soto 1st $3,182.00
Derik Frederiksen $48.32
Esperanza FWB $675.22
Faith - Fair Grove $711.30
Faith Chapel $1,810.00
Farmington 1st $6,652.99
Fellowship $3,480.00
First Day $1,408.89
Fredericktown 1st $1,090.00
Freedom Point $1,041.75
Freeman Chapel $1,437.00
Friendship $737.00
Gary Tune $50.00
Generations $1,311.97
Good News $1,019.50
Gospel Light $800.00
Grace $3,900.34
Grace Pointe $730.00
Grant Avenue $1,526.94
Hannon $1,568.55
Hartville $5,540.00
Hazel Creek $3,747.69
Hopewell $1,074.00
Houston 1st $1,095.35
Hurryville $630.00
Koshkonong $965.54
Lebanon 1st $6,073.82
Lebanon Green Hills $300.00
Liberty - Gatewood $248.30
Marshfield $743.95
Mill Creek $1,179.68
Mine La Motte $46.63
Monett 1st $823.20
Mosaic $2,271.91
Mountain Grove 1st $3,627.50
Mt. Pisgah $1,500.00
Neosho 1st $1,784.00
Nevada $1,328.63
New Home- Lebanon $1,070.00
New Hope $604.00
New Life- Licking $1,218.74
Number One $25.00
Oak Grove- Mtn. Grove $836.05
O'Fallon 1st $4,057.88
One Accord $1,012.10
Ozark 1st - Heritage $817.44
Ozark Family Church $10,481.23
Park Hills 1st $1,570.10
Parkview $944.00
Pleasant Home $239.20
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana $636.00
Purdy 1st $2,000.00
Republic $500.70
Resolve $200.00
Richwoods 1st $756.00
Rock Chapel $1,158.20
Safe Harbor $75.00
Seymour $2,454.00
Smyrna $365.00
South Fremont $2,202.35
Springfield 1st $1,889.00
Stockton $369.30
Stonebridge $1,702.90
Thayer $3,700.00
Trinity $1,818.10
Twin Oak $2,896.40
Union Light $407.50
United $4,414.32
Unity $1,050.00
Verdella $879.01
Victory- Alton $3,278.60
Waynesville 1st $2,167.37
West Plains 1st $4,478.00
Wilderness $1,165.29
Willow Springs $1,730.59
Wolf Creek $2,326.00
Total $174,993.70

Show-Me Plan

Aulsbury Chapel $90.00
Belton $350.00
Black Oak $400.00
Brent Emmerson $50.00
Byrd $50.00
Calvary Chapel $90.00
Cleo Reeder $30.00
Copper Mines $300.00
Cuba $265.20
De Soto 1st $1,646.00
Esperanza FWB $160.00
Farmington 1st $1,126.96
Farmington 1st- WAC $100.00
Fellowship $435.00
First Day $704.45
Frank Webster $60.00
Fredericktown 1st $400.00
Freeman Chapel $2,160.00
Friendship $200.00
Gary Tune $50.00
Generations $258.09
Gospel Light $1,800.00
Grace $989.00
Grace Pointe $275.00
Grant Avenue $90.00
Hannon $500.00
Hartville $350.00
Hopewell $1,186.00
Hopewell WAC $75.00
Jones Chapel $750.00
Joshua Provow $50.00
Lebanon 1st $328.24
Macedonia - Purdy $3,000.00
Mill Creek $140.00
Mine La Motte $300.00
Mosaic $175.00
Mountain Grove 1st $135.00
Mt. Pisgah $900.00
Mt. Pisgah Women's Ministry $275.00
Myrtle $275.00
Neosho 1st $500.00
New Beginning - Odessa $200.00
New Hope $400.00
New Life- Licking $419.00
Number One $60.00
Oak Grove- Mtn. Grove $445.00
O'Fallon 1st $4,246.33
Ozark 1st - Heritage Campus $600.00
Ozark Family Church $450.00
Park Hills 1st $200.00
Pleasant Home $400.00
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana $140.00
Purdy 1st $900.00
Republic $90.00
Resolve $200.00
Richwoods 1st $303.00
Rock Chapel $800.00
Southeast Association $120.00
Springfield 1st $600.00
Springfield 1st .....
Springfield 1st WAC $210.00
Stockton $120.00
Stockton Auxiliary $120.00
Thayer $1,250.00
Trinity $180.00
Trisa Johnson $23.79
Twin Oak Auxiliary $110.00
Union Light $650.00
United $950.00
Unity $490.00
Verdella $1,758.04
Waynesville 1st $1,158.15
West Plains 1st WNAC $75.00
Willow Springs $263.00
Wolf Creek $400.00
Total $39,350.25

Missouri Missions

Calvary Fellowship $966.66
Cuba $99.45
De Soto 1st $260.00
Freedom Point $1,000.00
Lebanon 1st $14.14
Mosaic $5,500.00
Mt. Pisgah Women $60.00
O'Fallon 1st $1,500.00
Ozark 1st - Heritage $200.00
Ozark Family Church $20.00
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana $50.00
Rock Chapel $210.00
Ryan Akers $50.00
Scott Keith $50.00
Springfield 1st WAC $150.00
Thayer $30.00
William Moore $25.00
TOTAL $10,185.25

North American Ministries

Bailey $200.00
Belton $260.47
Calvary Fellowship $360.00
Cuba $99.45
De Soto 1st $925.00
Fredericktown 1st $50.00
Friendship $40.00
Grace Pointe $325.00
Hartville $100.00
Lebanon 1st $500.00
New Hope $100.00
Ozark 1st - Heritage $200.00
Ozark Family Church $1,535.00
Park Hills 1st $100.00
Southeast Association $50.00
Stockton $60.00
Trinity $40.00
Twin Oak Auxiliary $20.00
Union Light $50.00
United $500.00
Waynesville 1st $10.00
Total $5,524.92

International Missions

Alvin Hook $25.00
Black Oak $200.00
Calvary Fellowship $3,550.00
Christ Chapel $300.00
Copper Mines $1,300.00
Cuba $198.90
De Soto 1st $736.00
Fellowship $1,727.97
Fredericktown 1st $800.00
Frieda Hays $25.00
Friendship $80.00
Generations $138.09
Gospel Light $1,490.00
Grace $752.00
Hannon $150.00
Hartville $500.00
Houston 1st $968.00
Jones Chapel $100.00
Lebanon 1st $707.00
Mill Creek $225.00
Mill Creek-Young Adult Class $25.00
MO Mission Bd $2,200.00
Neosho 1st $100.00
New Hope $200.00
O'Fallon 1st $2,050.00
One Accord $220.00
Ozark Family Church $1,650.00
Park Hills 1st $400.00
Pleasant Ridge- Urbana $100.00
Rock Chapel $50.00
Southeast Association $100.00
Stockton $150.00
Stonebridge $200.00
Thayer $200.00
Twin Oak Auxiliary $130.00
Union Light $150.00
Verdella $2,300.00
Waynesville 1st $530.00
West Plains 1st WNAC $50.00
Total $24,777.96

ACM

Bailey $120.00
Total $120.00

Berea Ministries

Bailey $140.00
Total $140.00

CH-TN

Myrtle $200.00
Oak Grove- Mtn. Grove $160.00
Hartville $100.00
Belton $10.00
De Soto 1st $80.00
Union Light $174.06
Total $724.06

Harvest Childrens Ministry

Fredericktown 1st $50.00
Total $50.00

Getsemani

Stockton $30.00
Total $30.00

Rainbow Ministries

Union Light $300.00
Total $300.00

Randall U

Fellowship $60.00
Thayer $200.00
Farmington 1st $100.00
Total $360.00

Welch College

De Soto 1st $120.00
Thayer $200.00
Calvary Fellowship $1,250.00
Total $1570.00

WNAC

Stockton Auxiliary $15.00

Twin Oaks Auxiliary $20.00
Total $35.00

Youth Camp
Belton $122.00
Cuba $150.00
De Soto 1st.....$360.00
Hannon $100.00
Hartville.....$200.00
Lebanon 1st.....$200.00
Mt. Pisgah.....$100.00
Myrtle.....$75.00
O'Fallon 1st $2,306.06
Ozark Family Church.....$20.00
Stockton Auxiliary $30.00
Thayer $200.00
Trinity.....$80.00
West Plains 1st.....$150.00
Willow Springs.....$100.00
Total $4,193.06

Youth Children's Home
Thayer $98.00
Total $98.00

Thank you
for supporting these FWB ministries!!

MISSOURI COOP

By supporting COOP your church can have an impact around the world through FWB ministries including:
Missions
Christian Education
Retreats
Youth Camp
Women's Ministry
Colleges & NAFWB Ministries

Available Churches

Oak Hill
Union, MO
Contact: Richard Webb
636-744-2402

•

Stonebridge
Troy, MO
Contact: Milt Nettles
636-856-7568

•

New Life
Licking, MO
Contact: Mike Coats
417-331-9454

Available for Fill-In

Cody Alley
Lebanon, MO
573-664-6945

Rich Barker
Park Hills, MO
573-664-6947

Lynn Beck
Springfield, MO
417-812-3823

Jack Brown
Kansas City, MO
816-267-0550

J.D. Chadwell
Mansfield, MO
417-224-5894

Izaak Davis
Fordland, MO
417-876-7689

Jimmy Harrison
Cuba, MO
573-885-4422

Jonathan Hoodenpyle
Aurora, MO
479 236-1488

Gene Howell
Ozark, MO
618-926-5000

Dan Minkler
St. Robert, MO
559-977-2299

Justin Ruble
Lebanon, MO
417-718-4539

Gary Parker
314-413-4015

Jason Williams
Ozark, MO
417-260-7078

MEMAW'S DESIGN STUDIO
FROM DESIGN TO PRINT
417.650.8596
memawsdesignstudio.net

Graphic Design
Brand Identity
Web Design
Real Designs

Jeania Schmalhorst
Owner & Graphic Designer
memawsdesign@gmail.com

Page Printing

We can help with all your printing needs.

• postcards • booklets •
• offering envelopes •
• notepads • laser checks •
• much more •

Located on the same block as the MOFWB state office.

Drop by and see us when you are in Lebanon!

220 W. Commercial St.
417-532-6232
pageprinting.net

NEEDED

Niangua Camp is in need of a 2-seater 4WD Side-by-Side with a larger bed.

The unit will be used for frequent maintenance runs around the camp buildings and the horseback riding and disc golf trails. Those interested in donating one or making a reasonable sale on a relieable unit please contact Andy Rains or Chase Spradlin.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

For more information on our scholarships and to download an application visit our state website.



MOFWB.COM/RESOURCES
or use this QR

Missouri State Association
of Free Will Baptists
202 West Commercial
PO Box 991
Lebanon, MO 65536

MOFWB.COM

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #1369
Nashville, TN

Serving Missouri Free Will Baptists Since 1929

Your child has more going on inside than they're telling you.

D6 FAMILY MINISTRY

Promotional Resource



The Sharing Trees is a discipleship processing tool for kids, tweens, and teens, helping parents and mentors move beyond surface-level conversations into honest discussions about emotions,identity, fears, faith, and everyday life. Through engaging storytelling, guided questions, and biblical truth, this read-along resource creates safe spaces where children feel seen, heard, understood, and spiritually guided.

Order your copy here: https://store.randallhouse.com/e1uf29gi/product/the-sharing-trees/